

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 7 February 2024

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: ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (10:02): I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) Amend the routine of business on Thursday 8 February 2024 as follows:
 - (a) at the conclusion of general business notices of motion for bills, the House to proceed to general business notices of motions or orders of the day (not being bills) for up to 70 minutes;
 - (b) at 11.00 a.m., question time and its associated routine of business, directly after which the Premier to move a motion of condolence for the Hon. Michael Egan, former Treasurer;
 - (c) at 1.30 p.m., the Speaker to leave the chair;
 - (d) at 2.30 p.m., resumption of the condolence motion, if required;
 - (e) resumption of general business notices of motions or orders of the day (not being bills);
 - (f) Government business for up to 20 minutes, if required;
 - (g) if not earlier completed, the introduction of and completion of the second reading speech for the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2023; and
 - (h) at 4.00 p.m., business to be interrupted for the petition debate.
- (2) Postpone the committee reports take-note debate order of the day No. 1, report of the Modern Slavery Committee entitled *Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018* to Wednesday 20 March at 1.00 p.m.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (10:03): The Opposition supports those changes.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: The member for Oatley will come to order. I remind members that this time is for the giving of notices of motions, not for debating them.

Bills

CRIME AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 6 February 2024.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (10:20): It is a pleasure to be back to continue debate on the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I will continue from where I left off yesterday. The bill amends the Act, by item [8] of schedule 2, to provide a discretionary power for the head of a New South Wales correctional centre to accept or refuse a transfer from the Australian Capital Territory. Currently,

New South Wales correctional facilities must accept full-time detainees from the Australian Capital Territory into New South Wales State custody. This requirement predates the development of correctional centres in the Australian Capital Territory. With the development of a correctional facility operated by ACT Corrective Services, a mandatory requirement for New South Wales to accept detainees from the Australian Capital Territory is no longer required.

Items [10] to [18] of schedule 2 to the bill introduce a new category on the Victims Register: an "interested person". An interested person is not a victim of an offender but can demonstrate that their life or safety is reasonably expected to be endangered because of a connection between them and an offender. The bill proposes a new section, section 279A, enabling the Commissioner of Corrective Services, upon application by a person, to record an interested person in the Victims Register. This allows the lawful disclosure of information relating to the offender, like changes to release date, death or escape of the offender and parole decisions. An interested person will gain access to the same information provided to victims to assist the implementation of safety measures. This proactive change will further protect our community from the impact of crime, preventing yet another person from becoming a victim. New section 279A contains a list of relevant factors between an interested person and offender that might give rise to a risk to safety, including a previous domestic relationship or role as a witness in proceedings against an offender in a court.

I turn now to amendments to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to strengthen procedural protections for victims in apprehended violence order [AVO] proceedings. Item [2] of schedule 3 to the bill amends section 32 of the Act to clearly outline that on the first return date of a provisional apprehended violence order the court may dismiss the application, revoke the provisional order or make an interim or final apprehended violence order. If the court does not exercise any of these functions, the provisional order becomes an interim order. Importantly, this amendment confirms the status of the AVO. An AVO is designed for short-term, urgent protection. By converting a provisional order to an interim order at the first instance in court, the amendments clarify rights of the protected person and their standing for legal proceedings.

According to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 21,966 AVOs were breached during the last financial year across New South Wales. To improve the effectiveness of AVOs as a protective measure for persons experiencing domestic, family and personal violence, we must increase understanding of the law and enforcement processes. Amendments in schedule 3, items [4] to [6], ensure that evidence given in a prescribed sexual offence proceeding is also admissible in an AVO proceeding. The bill amends section 40 (5) (c) of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act to replace references to specific sexual offences contained in the Crimes Act 1900 with the term "prescribed sexual offence", as defined in the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. This amendment ensures that section 40 (4) of the Act will apply equally to all prescribed sexual offences.

The bill amends the Criminal Appeal Act 1912 to improve efficiency in workplace health and safety prosecutions. Items [1] and [2] of schedule 4 allow SafeWork NSW and the NSW Resources Regulator to commence sentence appeals in the Court of Criminal Appeal in matters where the regulator had carriage of the prosecution. Regulators can commence criminal prosecutions in the District and Supreme courts; however, appeals from these prosecutions must be referred to the Attorney General or Director of Public Prosecutions. Recognising the expertise of workplace health and safety regulators, this bill removes inefficiencies caused by the current legislation to support timely resolution of sentence appeals. SafeWork NSW notes that, for every 1,000 warehouse sector employees, 41 workers sustain an injury or illness. As the electorate of Prospect contains the largest manufacturing area in the Southern Hemisphere, it is chiefly important that legislative provisions are equipped to support our community in the instance of accident or injury in the workplace.

Schedule 5 to the bill amends the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. Item [1] of schedule 5 confirms that, where an accused person enters a guilty plea in committal proceedings, the District Court or the Supreme Court can sentence the person on a charge certificate without filing an indictment in that court. Section 102 of the Criminal Procedure Act gives a higher court the jurisdiction to sentence an offender who has pled guilty to an offence in committal proceedings in the Local Court. This amendment makes clear that the higher court can proceed to sentence on a charge certificate under section 102. A sentencing judge is expected to disregard any prejudicial material on the charge certificate and consider only relevant material. [*Extension of time*]

The bill will further amend the Criminal Procedure Act, to expressly prescribe recorded police interviews with child sexual assault complainants as sensitive evidence by inserting a new subsection, 281B (1C), into section 281B. The prosecution cannot be required, by subpoena or any other procedure, to give an accused person a copy of the recording. This protects child complainants by preventing recorded interviews from being copied and misused. Importantly, the amendment will not prevent an accused person and their legal practitioner from viewing or listening to these recordings to prepare their matters before the court. A study by Dr Christine Eastwood of the Queensland University of Technology found that 67 per cent of children who sought justice for sexual assault offences in New South Wales said they would not report again. This amendment recognises the inherent

vulnerability of children in criminal proceedings and is another important step to better protect child victims from re-traumatisation when seeking justice.

Next I will briefly address the amendments that the bill makes to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 [DMTA]. Currently, section 10 (2) of the DMTA provides that possession of a prohibited drug is lawful if a person is acting in accordance with an authority granted by the Secretary of the Ministry of Health, where possession is for scientific research, instruction, analysis or study. However, there is no express statutory authority that provides for New South Wales police to supply a prohibited drug to an authorised person. Currently, the NSW Police Force must apply to the Secretary of the Ministry of Health for an authority to supply an already authorised drug. Items [1] and [2] of schedule 6 to the bill remove that unnecessary requirement by amending section 25 of the DMTA to give authorising powers to the NSW Police Force. Item [3] of schedule 6 also concerns that authority and amends the DMTA at section 42 to enable the Secretary of the Ministry of Health to issue a certificate of authority. The certificate is prima facie evidence of whether the person in possession was authorised.

Lastly, the bill endeavours to update the digital evidence access order scheme in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, also known as LEPR. The bill amends section 46 (1) of LEPR to enable the NSW Crime Commission to apply for a digital evidence access order for search warrants issued under the Criminal Assets Recovery Act 1990. The bill amends sections 46 (1), 76AA and 76AF of LEPR to enable the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission to apply for a digital evidence access order under the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016. Early last year the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Digital Evidence Access Orders) Act 2022 allowed the ICAC to apply for digital evidence access orders in relation to search warrants issued under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988. The proposed amendment gives the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission similar powers to the ICAC, equipping our State's two primary integrity agencies with sufficient powers to investigate corruption and misconduct.

We are entrusted to ensure the laws developed in this House continue to reflect the values of our communities and support the needs of our communities after they come into effect. To achieve that, the law must respond to relevant decisions, policy changes and developments within the criminal justice system. Ultimately, the bill clarifies legislative provisions to assist timely access and just outcomes for our communities. These amendments will improve the frameworks addressing crime in society whilst maintaining the integrity of criminal proceedings. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (10:31): I speak on the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The Greens support the bill although we flag that we will be looking at moving amendments in the other place. I acknowledge the work of our gendered violence spokesperson, Abigail Boyd, MLC, and our justice spokesperson, Sue Higginson, MLC, in the other place, who have been consulting with stakeholders regarding the legislation on behalf of The Greens.

The bill expands the recording eligibility for the Victims Register to include interested persons as well as victims themselves. That means parents, partners and family members of victims of domestic violence will be included when the New South Wales police monitor the connections between victims and offenders. The bill also requires appropriate notice to be given to those same connected people—parents, partners and family members—when an offender is nearing release. In my nine years in office a number of my constituents have been caught up in what that looks like—it is horrendous. The bill will ensure that victims are better protected from perpetrators of domestic violence, including the horrendous stalking that can take place.

Pleasingly, the bill ensures greater agency for survivors of domestic violence during the court process. It makes sure that the protected person can make their own application for a domestic violence order [AVO], which puts the power in the hands of the victim rather than forcing them to rely on the police. The bill also expands the definition of a "serious offence" to include all forms of prescribed sexual offences as defined in the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 for the purpose of an interim AVO.

There is no such thing as a minor sexual assault. It is incredibly important that our justice system treats any sexual assault with the utmost seriousness if we are to stamp out the domestic violence that women and non-binary people experience on a daily basis. I do not need to recount the statistics. Tragically, the first woman to be killed in 2023 at the hands of a violent partner was one of our own community members, Lindy Lucena, in Ballina. That was a source of great sadness to our community. Since Lindy's death local organisations have redoubled their efforts to stamp out domestic violence across the Northern Rivers and across the country. I take this opportunity to mention the Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond and also our local domestic violence liaison committee. The Rotary Club has organised a number of local events but, most notably, club members went to Canberra recently and launched a national campaign.

In my community, in every organisation and every business, people are wearing T-shirts saying that it is the responsibility of all of us to stamp out domestic violence. Neighbourhood centres, such as the Mullumbimby

& District Neighbourhood Centre, Byron Community Centre and WardellCORE, have also provided support for local women. Members would be aware that just a week ago there was a report about the horrendous sexual assaults which occurred in evacuation centres after the 2022 floods. I am not someone who uses hyperbole, but the thought of women and children trapped in those situations then being assaulted made me genuinely sick to my stomach. That is unacceptable.

I am sure the member for Lismore would concur that the Northern Rivers Women and Children's Services Inc. and the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre also do incredible work in representing victims of domestic violence. Local caravan park owners are also working with groups like Zonta. Vulnerable women can seek emergency accommodation, a shower and other services. It is done confidentially and can be accessed through my office. The housing crisis is beyond the pale in the Northern Rivers and women in domestic violence situations have no choice. I particularly thank the Zonta Club of the Northern Rivers for its work in supporting local women.

I turn now to youth justice. The bill makes important changes to permit the NSW Resources Regulator and SafeWork NSW to commence appeals against sentences to the Court of Criminal Appeal in work health and safety prosecution, and it enables junior offenders to be released 24 hours before their parole date. Young people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in particular, are absolutely overrepresented. These important reforms should not be minimised, but I need to draw the attention of the House to a number of other issues in the criminal justice system in our area. Domestic violence support services are chronically underfunded by both State and Federal governments. The work that they are doing is essential and government needs to stump up.

For years successive governments have ignored calls from the domestic violence prevention experts for a billion dollars annually from the Federal Government—that is while State and Federal governments waste \$11.1 billion per year on subsidies to the fossil fuel industry. One in three women in Australia who experience domestic violence are turned away from vital support services and I know every local member sees them. It is the end of the line if a woman is seeing her local member when she is facing violence and threats of death. That is not good enough. Government should drastically increase funding for prevention and advisory services.

The Greens have been trying for nine years, collectively with the community, to get a women's advisory service in Ballina. I am still working on that. The Federal Labor Government has not funded several Aboriginal Legal Service offices, which has resulted in the Aboriginal Legal Service satellite office in Byron Bay being closed. That has denied local people an important avenue through which to access justice. It is clear policy for The Greens that locking children up as young as 10-years-old and spending millions of dollars to do so is not in the best interests of our communities. Primary-school-aged children should not be in prison. I have worked in prisons as a teacher and 10-year-olds are being set on a path that, I believe, cannot be reversed. Letting kids out 24 hours before their parole date is a good step but it means very little if they have been traumatised for years on end from the age of 10 or as a teenager. Raising the age of criminal responsibility and radically ramping up investment in prevention is the way to go. The Greens will continue to speak up on such important issues. We support the bill but, as I said earlier, we will be looking at moving amendments in the other place.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (10:39): I make a brief contribution in support of the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill aims to enhance legislation by providing clarity and updates to the law where required, rectifying inconsistencies and supporting the operation of agencies across the criminal justice system. The amendments in the bill will enhance the functions of both youth and adult correctional centres; strengthen and clarify existing safeguards for victims; provide efficiency, clarity and uniformity of criminal justice procedures; and update the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 and the digital evidence access orders scheme as needed.

The bill makes amendments to the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 to address an inconsistency in the legislation pertaining to the provisions regarding orders for the release on parole of juvenile offenders and the discharge of juvenile offenders at the end of their sentence. The bill aims to clarify that a juvenile offender who is being released on parole can also potentially be subject to the early discharge provisions outlined in the Act. That clarification ensures that both parole and early discharge provisions can be applicable to the same individual, preventing any incorrect releases from detention.

The bill amends the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to allow all inmates, regardless of the length of time they have left to serve, to request or consent to a delay in release from custody. As the law currently stands, only convicted inmates whose sentences are about to expire can request a delay in their release. The amendments in the bill will ensure that all inmates have access to necessary support and arrangements when leaving custody.

Currently under the Act, the governor of a New South Wales correctional facility must accept a full-time detainee from the Australian Capital Territory into New South Wales custody. The bill amends the Act to empower the governor of a New South Wales correctional centre to either accept or decline an incoming transfer from the

Australian Capital Territory. That will ensure the governor can evaluate each transfer request and can refuse those deemed unsuitable or unnecessary. Before the sentencing reforms in 2018, the Act specified that the State Parole Authority must revoke certain reinstated intensive correction orders. However, as a result of the sentencing reforms, the bill aims to correct that section of the Act and will no longer provide the State Parole Authority with the means to revoke an intensive correction order.

The bill will make amendments to the Act to expand the scope of who can be registered as an interested person under the Victims Register. Currently the Act only allows direct victims of an offender to be registered. The amendments will allow individuals who are not victims themselves but have a connection with the offender that may put their life or safety at risk to register as interested persons. Further, the bill will introduce a significant change to the existing legal framework to allow the Commissioner of Corrective Services to record an individual as an interested person in the Victims Register. However, that recording is subject to the commissioner's satisfaction that the individual's safety or life is reasonably expected to be in danger due to their connection to the offender.

The bill will make amendments to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 regarding offenders serving a sentence of imprisonment in the community under an intensive correction order. The proposed amendment will update the wording from "returned to custody" to "taken into custody". That change is due to situations where an offender serving an intensive correction order in the community might not be considered to have ever been in the custody of Corrective Services.

The bill will make various amendments to the Act that aim to enhance protections for victims in apprehended violence order [AVO] proceedings and provide clarity for courts. Those amendments will clarify that on the first return date of an AVO, the court has several options including dismissing the application, revoking the provisional order, making an interim or final AVO, or letting the provisional order become an interim order if none of the other options are taken. The bill specifies that a provisional AVO is revoked if the application for an AVO is withdrawn. The bill will guarantee that an interim AVO is made to replace a provisional order when the matter is before the courts in order to streamline processes and eliminate ambiguity.

The bill recognises the importance of work health and safety regulators in New South Wales. The amendments will allow SafeWork NSW and the NSW Resources Regulator to appeal sentences to the Court of Criminal Appeal when they have prosecuted a case. The bill proposes various amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to provide improved procedures and clarity to the law. The amendments clarify that when an accused person enters a guilty plea during committal proceedings, the District Court or the Supreme Court have the power to sentence the person based on a charge certificate without the need to file an indictment.

The bill sets a standard maximum fine of \$5,500 for table 2 offences in the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 to avoid prescribing a maximum fine for each new table 2 offence. It also classifies a recording of a child complainant's interview with police for sexual offence proceedings as sensitive evidence, preventing it from being accessed by an accused person inappropriately, in order to protect the child in the case. Further, the bill amends the process for analysing prohibited plants and substances to ensure that a single analyst responsible for reviewing the entire case details and scientific data provides the scientific conclusion expressed in the certificate of analysis.

Finally, the bill empowers the New South Wales Crime Commission to apply for a digital evidence access order in connection with a warrant issued under the Criminal Assets Recovery Act. Additionally, those amendments grant the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission the power to apply for digital evidence access orders in connection with search warrants issued under the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act, similar to the powers of ICAC. The bill shows the dedication of our Government to our criminal justice system—to enhancing its procedures and streamlining its efficiency. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (10:48): I speak in support of the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill will amend eight different Acts: the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987; the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999, regarding delayed release, Australian Capital Territory transfers and the Victims Register; the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, regarding provisional apprehended violence orders and AVO evidence; the Criminal Appeal Act 1912, regarding oversight and independence; the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, regarding charge certificates, maximum penalties and sensitive evidence; the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985; the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, regarding digital evidence and expanding who can have access to orders; and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022.

The policy reasons for the bill are pretty straightforward. Legislation needs to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that laws remain fit for purpose and keep pace with developments in community mores and the legal system. The amendments update and improve the legislation. Government is about continuous improvement

and service delivery. The amendments add clarity to processes in the criminal justice system in response to matters identified by a range of stakeholders, such as members of the community and various agencies and institutions, and through decisions made in court processes. The policy objective is to have an effective and fit-for-purpose criminal justice system. That is essential to maintaining community safety, and a fair and just legal system. That can be quite a balance given that our system operates on the rule of law, and we have to make sure that that is protected at all costs.

Some of the amendments address gaps in legislation. Those gaps are frequently found through the administration of justice in the courts. Not addressing those gaps would mean more time and resource burdens for courts and legal agencies, and would risk an inconsistent approach, particularly to the application of the law. The amendments will take effect on assent, when the relevant provisions in the bill commence. There was a lot of consultation and the views of stakeholders were sought and considered in making the policy. In fact, some of the amendments came in the first instance from stakeholders who raised issues.

Stakeholders included heads of jurisdictions—the Supreme Court, the District Court, the Chief Magistrate, the Children's Court, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal—the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid NSW, Court Services NSW, the NSW Police Force, Corrective Services NSW, Victim Services, Youth Justice NSW, the NSW Crime Commission, the NSW Trustee and Guardian, the Cabinet Office, Treasury, the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited, the Law Society of New South Wales and the New South Wales Bar Association. There was targeted and forensic consultation with the impacted stakeholders, including the Women's Legal Service. It is always important to make sure that women's voices are heard, particularly in matters dealing with the justice system.

The amendment in schedule 1 to the bill relates to children and detention centres. It concerns early discharge from custody and in what circumstances it would be required for a young person on parole. Early discharge may be required to address operational or logistical concerns when arranging discharge from detention. In the course of my public life and in law I have seen discharges happen without those things being taken into account. That just sets the young people up for failure, because there needs to be a plan in place. Operational and logistical concerns may include staff shortages if the release day is a public holiday, lack of transportation, issues with accommodation or where young people will go and what programs there are to help them reintegrate into society. The amendment to section 50 of the Children (Detention Centres) Act clarifies that the early discharge provisions will allow a detainee to be discharged at any time during the 24-hour period before the actual release date, and it will apply to a young offender being released on parole. That is sensible and also shows care for the young people.

Schedule 2 to the bill includes amendments concerning delayed release from Corrective Services NSW. Normally there is no delayed release. Once an inmate's time is up, their time is up and they are released from Corrective Services. Later I will tell a story from a completely different jurisdiction. An inmate can request to delay release by completing a form provided by Corrective Services. The reasons for delayed release are outlined in the form. They can include transport problems, safety or security concerns, medical requirements or flood or natural disaster. We all know a lot about those! The governor or officer in charge of a correctional centre will consider the request—they have the delegation from the commissioner—but the inmate can withdraw their request at any time. It is important that they are given that agency. The delayed release provision is generally applied to inmates in custody, but the drafting of the current provision limits it to inmates released under a certain section that deals with the release of convicted inmates whose sentences are about to expire. The proposed amendments correct the drafting so that all inmates will be able to benefit from delayed release in appropriate circumstances.

I will share a story from another part of my life. It is to do with Timor-Leste when Xanana Gusmão was a prisoner in Cipinang prison. A friend of mine, Joao Camara, was a student activist who was imprisoned with him and helped to look after him. My friend was due for release but he said, "I don't want to go, because who'll look after the old man?" They let him stay. This is a very serious bill, but when I was reading it I could not help but reflect on a jurisdiction that kindly let someone stay so they could look after their leader. My friend stayed for quite some time in that prison. The story was brought to mind as I was reading the provisions of this bill, although it was a different jurisdiction, a different issue and a different time.

Another amendment in schedule 2 concerns section 44 of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 and the circumstances that would give rise to the transfer of an inmate from the Australian Capital Territory. *[Extension of time]*

When section 44 was enacted, the Australian Capital Territory did not have an operational correctional centre and Corrective Services NSW provided the service for offenders sentenced to imprisonment in the Australian Capital Territory. The section currently requires that all transfers be accepted. While the Australian Capital Territory now operates its own correctional centre, the transfer of inmates from the Australian Capital Territory can still occur for a variety of reasons. That may include for receiving appropriate care near relatives,

for mental health treatment plans or for tailored services for rehabilitation. Building in a legislative discretion for Corrective Services NSW to accept or refuse transfers from the Australian Capital Territory could allow unsuitable transfers to be avoided, which has sometimes not been the case. Having that corrected will make the system work better. The Australian Capital Territory has its own prison, and transfers will still be possible. The amendment simply ensures that New South Wales is able to refuse transfers that are not appropriate. That was not the case before, but it is long overdue.

The next amendment in the bill is about expanding the Victims Register. The bill says it will not have any cost or resourcing implications. The impact of being cost neutral is good for government. The Victims Register will not be inviting submissions from interested parties in the way that submissions are invited for registered victims. If an interested party phones and seeks to make a submission, the Victims Register will assist them with information.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): It being 11.00 a.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for question time. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

Announcements

PARLIAMENT HOUSE LIFTS

The SPEAKER: The member for Cessnock informs me that there are ongoing problems with the lifts. Members will know that there were problems with one particular lift yesterday, and we also have one lift out—

Mr Chris Minns: We will kick in some more money for the Parliament.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Premier for that offer. One lift is not working, so we only have four working today. Some members may be delayed because of this. I will use discretion during any divisions today and extend the ringing of the bells for an additional minute. I will consider further time extensions as necessary. I hope members will bear with the Department of Parliamentary Services staff who are working to fix the problem. It is most frustrating.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery guests of the member for Balmain, Vid Shetty, the member's husband, and Vijaya Shetty, the member's mother-in-law, who has travelled from England. I welcome them to the New South Wales Parliament. I also welcome Kerrie Edwards, a guest of the member for Wakehurst.

Question Time

GENERAL PRACTITIONER PAYROLL TAX

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (11:05): My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, representing the Treasurer. Given the Government's refusal to rule out applying its general practitioner tax retrospectively, can the Minister honestly—

The SPEAKER: The member for Keira will come to order. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time. I call the member for Summer Hill to order for the first time. I call the member for Hornsby to order for the first time. The Leader of The Nationals will be heard in silence.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS: We will see. My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, representing the Treasurer. Given the Government's refusal to rule out applying its GP tax retrospectively, can the Minister honestly tell families across New South Wales that the Minns Labor Government's tax grab will not cause the average price of a GP consultation to rise by \$12 during this cost-of-living crisis?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:07): The big guns are out this morning, aren't they? The member for Dubbo has picked up *The Daily Telegraph*—an august journal that did a great job making me look 99 years old yesterday—and found himself his only tactic today. He referred to something that he has known about since 2018. What did those opposite do when in government? They sat on their hands. The New South Wales Government continues to engage with general practitioners and stakeholders as it finds a solution to the mess it inherited, like so many other things. Whether it is housing, transport or investment in public spaces, the Government is cleaning up the mess it has inherited. The Government inherited \$187 billion of debt. Members opposite do not ask about the Government's debt-reduction approach and the fact that it has taken pressure off inflation and interest rate rises.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister is going nowhere near answering the question, and it is time those opposite owned the problem.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Tamworth. I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: So says the man who wants to own the National Party leadership. The New South Wales Government has not imposed additional payroll tax. Sorry, Gurmish. I know it is one of the two of you. We have not imposed additional payroll tax.

[*Members interjected.*]

I am happy to wait.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: What about Tooley?

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Is he still here? Oh, he is!

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. Most of the interjections are coming from Government members. The member for Canterbury will come to order. I remind the member for Summer Hill and the member for Keira that they are on calls to order. I ask Government members to show some restraint. If members continue to interject they will be called to order.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: In August last year we did what the Liberals and the National Party did not do in government: We paused the payroll tax audits and debts for GPs so we could consult with the industry to find an outcome. We did not take them to court like the members opposite were doing while they were in government. Instead, we have put in place a pause on the audits and the debt collection and we are working with stakeholders. The New South Wales Government, led by the finance Minister and the health Minister, who is in this place—the question could equally have been asked of him—will continue to actively engage with GPs, practices and industry stakeholders while the 12-month pause is in effect and will find an outcome.

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (11:10): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the New South Wales Government's progress on renewable energy? Are there any other policies?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:11): That is an important question. Members would have seen that the Governor of Tokyo was in the Parliament yesterday, and we took the opportunity to sign a new sister state agreement with Tokyo during her visit. Tokyo is investing heavily in hydrogen, aiming to cut greenhouse gases by 50 per cent by 2030. Members will know that New South Wales currently relies on coal-fired power for about 70 per cent of its electricity, but we are taking action. By the end of 2023 a raft of approvals were pushed through the planning system for new wind and solar plants and battery storage, including the first wind farm plan approval in 2½ years for New South Wales. There are 18 renewable energy projects under assessment at the moment, which could provide enough energy for more than 2.7 million households a year, and, as the Parliament would know, we have legislated for net zero targets of 50 per cent by 2030, 70 per cent by 2035 and net zero by 2050.

But there is an emerging opposition to what was once a bipartisan effort in relation to renewable energy. It is true. In fact, the Federal National Party has come out in the past two days. As was reported in the paper today:

New renewable energy projects in regional Australia must be stopped now, Nationals leader David Littleproud has declared as he claims the nation should downgrade its commitment under the Paris Agreement ...

The former Leader of the National Party in New South Wales, the member for Bathurst, told *The Land* on 1 February that "these projects"—renewable energy projects—"are ruining farming practices, ruining livelihoods and ruining prime agricultural land". He said they need to be stopped because we need to feed and clothe New South Wales, and we "don't want these industrial factories" in our backyards. The member is nodding his head. In fact, the member for Bathurst is opposing the Glanmire Solar Farm. The member for Tamworth is opposing the Hills of Gold Wind Farm. Sam Faraway is opposing the Kerrs Creek Wind Farm. The member for Goulburn is opposing the Gundary Plains solar factory. The member for Terrigal is opposing the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone. The member for Oxley said, "The headlong rush into renewables at all costs is crazy", and Dave Layzell has opposed a wind farm on Bowmans Creek and wind farms in general.

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Alister Henskens: The Premier has strayed from the New South Wales Government's progress on renewable energy and seems now to be talking about other people's opinions rather than the Government's progress. He is doing that because the question contains the words "Are there any other policies?", which in the past you have ruled as being inappropriate. The Premier should be brought back to the substance of the question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will address the substance of the question. As it is the first time that point of order has been raised in a while, I remind members that it was agreed questions should not contain the phrases "or any other policies" or "Are you aware of any alternative policies?". The wording is certainly questionable, but I will not prevent the Premier from answering on this occasion.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I am aware of alternative policies. There was another contribution from the member for Hornsby, who spoke at COP28 in Dubai. He said, "Right now we know what the solution is. It's rolling out wind and solar at scale." [*Extension of time*]

He said, "I am proposing wind and solar at scale because that will give us some of the cheapest energy per unit anywhere on the planet, and that gives Australia an enormous competitive advantage." So we have the National Party over there and the member for Hornsby and the member for Vaucluse over here. Can you breach these two? While we are speaking about Federal politics, who has been watching *Nemesis*?

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Hey Dom, what is one word to describe Matt Kean? Loyal? Humble?

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The Premier will not engage directly with members across the Chamber. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Matt Kean: It is Standing Order 129 on relevance. We know how caucus is describing the Premier at the moment. How long until the member for Maroubra knocks on his door?

The SPEAKER: The member for Hornsby will resume his seat.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: In relation to *Nemesis*, Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison agreed on nothing other than that they all dislike the member for Hornsby. That was it. But at the end of the day, the Liberal Party and the National Party are working on two separate policies. We might think that is embarrassing, but it is not; it is designed. They recently conducted a review where it was said they should explore opportunities for managed separation on contentious issues rather than endeavouring to force two parties in opposition. This is designed chaos.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Port Macquarie rises on a point of order. Members will come to order. I remind the Premier that I can only deal with the standing orders that are before me, which means I must hear the point of order. I remind the member for Port Macquarie that she needs to stand in her place and seek the call.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Mr Speaker, I think you know what I am going to say.

The SPEAKER: I have no idea.

Mrs Leslie Williams: I refer to Standing Order 129. The Premier's comments have absolutely nothing to do with the question. I ask that you bring him back to the substance of the question.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Port Macquarie. I rely on my earlier ruling on the point of order taken by the Manager of Opposition Business. The Premier will be allowed to answer the question.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: This is designed chaos. They have separate policies. So when they run at the next election the electorate will ask, "Are you for renewable energy or are you against renewable energy?", and they will say, "We are both." Are they for native logging or are they against native logging? They are both. This is a joke. It is a rabble of a political movement, riven in two and with no future.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for North Shore to order for the first time. She is engaging in debate.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER PAYROLL TAX

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (11:19): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister guarantee that the Minns Labor Government's general practitioner tax grab will not increase emergency department overcrowding?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:19): What an interesting question. I acknowledge the member for Heathcote and her passionate advocacy when we were at Sutherland Hospital the other day.

Ms Eleni Petinos: We funded it! We delivered it!

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

Mr RYAN PARK: Give it time. Ask for an extension. Everyone relax. It is very interesting that those opposite should ask about the GP payroll tax like it is a new concept. In my first week as Minister, one of the first of the 420 questions I asked was around the issue of GP payroll tax. Stupidly, I asked, "How long has this been going for?"—thinking it might have only arisen in the couple of months before the election. The answer was, "Minister, this has been an issue since 2018."

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat. The Leader of The Nationals rises on a point of order.

Mr Dugald Saunders: My point of order relates to relevance. I gave the Minister a full minute and a half to get to the point. The point of the question is the GP tax grab he is presiding over. He is in government—

Mr RYAN PARK: Yes, we are, and the people of New South Wales are very pleased we are.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Will that increase emergency department needs—yes or no? Has he factored it in?

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of The Nationals. The Minister will answer the question more directly. It does not require a yes or no answer.

Mr RYAN PARK: I asked a logical question about the GP payroll tax: "How long has this been an issue?" I thought it may have been since the back end of 2022 or even early 2023. I was prepared to go back to 2021 because those opposite move slowly, and The Nationals need pictures to understand what they are reading. But the reality is that it is a 2018 problem. I say to the member for Miranda, this is becoming a frequent occurrence. Those opposite had a problem they did not fix; we fixed the problem. It is like surgery waitlists, which blew out to 20,000-odd under the previous Government. We have reduced them to 2,000. It is like emergency department performance and staffing numbers—they wanted to cut 1,112 nurses; we fixed the issue with 1,112 nurses.

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The Manager of Opposition Business rises on a point of order.

Mr Alister Henskens: The question is directed towards whether there will be an increase in emergency department overcrowding. The Minister has not gone within a country mile of answering that part of the question.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The wording of the question is questionable as it refers to a "tax grab". That is argumentative. If the question was framed more directly, I might uphold the point of order. There is no point of order.

Mr RYAN PARK: This side of the House has done more to resolve this issue in less than 12 months than that lot did in 12 years.

Mr Matt Kean: By taxing GPs.

Mr RYAN PARK: We did not take them to court. The Minister for Finance and I are engaging with the GPs. We understand how important they are, and we will continue that engagement.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (11:23): My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's commitment to deliver an additional 1,000 apprentices and trainees across government and rebuild the TAFE and training sector to address critical skills shortages in New South Wales?

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:23): I thank the member for Cabramatta for the question, and the member for Cessnock for accurately pointing out that the job of this Government is to fix up the messes that we have been left with. It was great to be with the Premier and Minister Dib this morning to announce superb progress on our commitment to deliver 1,000 additional apprentices and trainees across New South Wales government agencies. We were at Service NSW with Braeden, who has just completed his traineeship. He gave an excellent account of why he came into the job at Service NSW and how much he enjoys serving members of the public in his role, which was terrific to hear.

We have committed to 1,000 new apprenticeships. We have started that off with 250 roles available this year. Pleasingly, we have had an incredibly enthusiastic response. The applications are available online. We are getting a very high response from people right across New South Wales. More than 50 per cent of these places are available in regional New South Wales—which I am very pleased about, as are my regional colleagues. They range from traineeships in office positions, in things like business services, through to electrical apprenticeships, positions in the water industry, on the roads and even in areas like cybersecurity. A broad range of positions are available under this program. They offer a great opportunity for young people or people wanting a change of career to get into a secure, well-paid government job, where we really need them.

We have a huge skills shortage in this State, and this is one of the ways the New South Wales Government is delivering on its election commitment to address that problem. The Government has allocated \$93 million to the program. One of the key things this means is that we will almost double the number of apprentices and trainees coming into government agencies each year over the next few years, reversing the decline that occurred when the Liberals and The Nationals were in government. It is frightening that from 2011 onwards, under the previous Government, there was a 33 per cent decline—

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

Mr STEVE WHAN: —in the number of people commencing apprenticeships and traineeships in New South Wales.

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

Mr STEVE WHAN: It is an appalling record. The member for Wahroonga should own up to that fact. *[Extension of time]*

It is time for the Opposition to own up and say, "Look, we didn't handle that very well. Our ideological penchant for hammering TAFE and for reducing its funding has meant that our State isn't doing what it needs to do to build and to address the skills shortages." But those opposite are not big enough to do that. Listening to those opposite, it is like the world started the day the election happened and no history went before it. I am constantly amazed by that. This Government is committed to ensuring that apprenticeship and traineeship rates continue to increase. We are working with industry. We are working to improve TAFE and TAFE funding in New South Wales. We are working to reverse the reckless actions of the previous Government under which apprenticeship and traineeship commencements dropped by 33 per cent across the State.

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

Mr STEVE WHAN: We have programs across the State focusing on building apprenticeships. We have other commitments, including our centres of excellence, which we have been consulting on across New South Wales. We will be working with the Federal Government to develop more apprenticeships in areas like the transition to renewables, where we are so short on skilled workers. I am pleased to say that one of the areas where we have seen really strong interest this year is apprenticeships in the electrical areas, where TAFE applications have increased up to 60 per cent. As this Government delivers on its commitment of 1,000 additional apprentices and trainees, works to improve our TAFEs across New South Wales and works with private providers, we will start to address the backlog of need created by the neglect of those opposite.

SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO LGBTIQ HATE CRIMES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:28): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the NSW Police Force act on all recommendations relevant to it from the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:29): I thank the member for Sydney for his question and continued advocacy for equality for the LGBTIQ+ community. Late last year the New South Wales Government released the final report by the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes. The inquiry was established to examine unsolved, suspected hate crime deaths of LGBTIQ+ people, or people who were presumed to be members of this community, between 1970 and 2010. First, I acknowledge the enduring pain and suffering experienced by victims of such crimes, their families and loved ones and their many years of fighting for justice. I thank the special commission for its diligence in undertaking the inquiry, which has given a voice to victims who were not previously heard.

I also acknowledge, on behalf of the NSW Police Force, the shortcomings in historical investigations, particularly in responding to violence and discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community and in the management of exhibits and evidence in cases examined by the inquiry. To right these past wrongs, the NSW Police Force has fully supported the inquiry, recognising the critical role that it plays in addressing the unsolved deaths. I know that the NSW Police Force, under the leadership of Commissioner Karen Webb, is deeply

committed to learning from the past and continuing to strengthen its relationship with LGBTIQ+ communities into the future. In recent years, the NSW Police Force has already implemented a number of key initiatives aimed at ensuring an inclusive and supportive environment, not only within the community but also within the Police Force itself.

One example is the development of the Sexual Gender Diversity and Intersex Portfolio, the Gay Lesbian Liaison Officer and the LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officer program within the NSW Police Force. As the member for Sydney will be aware, these programs play a crucial role in developing trust and respect between police and the LGBTIQ+ community. In relation to the findings of the report and the member's question, there have been significant advancements in training, forensic technology, management of records and exhibits, and improved investigation practices. *[Extension of time]*

However, the NSW Police Force recognises that further improvements are needed. I cannot overstate the NSW Police Force's commitment to the inquiry. It produced more than 100,000 documents for examination, which is a mammoth effort. The final report is significant in length, reflecting the forensic examination undertaken by the inquiry. Given the scale of the report and the significance of the findings, it is appropriate for the NSW Police Force to take adequate time to review the report and its recommendations.

The NSW Police Force has established an internal working group to address the recommendations relating to it. I am advised that responses to all recommendations are being coordinated by the Cabinet Office, with the NSW Police Force providing responses to its recommendations through that process. I understand that a progress report will be published in due course, which I know will be of great interest to the member for Sydney. I would be pleased to provide the member for Sydney with a briefing from the NSW Police Force to outline its responses to the inquiry recommendations once they are finalised. I look forward to keeping the member for Sydney and this House updated on the progress of the NSW Police Force's response to the special commission of inquiry report. Again, I thank the member for Sydney for his question.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:34): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister outline the suite of initiatives the Government has announced since the March 2023 election to deliver the housing choices the people of New South Wales need?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:34): I thank the member for Parramatta for her question. I was pleased to recently announce with her \$10.6 million to fast-track pedestrian infrastructure to support the great growth of the Parramatta community. Over the past few months the Government has announced an ambitious program of planning reforms aimed at getting more people into homes in New South Wales. We understand that the heart of the housing availability and affordability problem in Sydney and the rest of the State is a lack of supply. It has to increase. But part of the problem is that the hard work should have started years ago. We are well behind the eight ball on this issue.

Sydney did not become the second least affordable city on the planet, or the 859th least dead city on the planet, overnight. In fact, under the previous Government, only 13 of the 33 councils in Greater Sydney achieved their housing targets. It is even worse in some places. Ku-ring-gai, for instance—just one that comes to mind—aided and abetted by the local member, the member for Wahroonga, is the only council in Sydney not to have a housing plan at all. In fact, if you google the Ku-ring-gai housing strategy, "page not found" comes up. That flies in the face of what people want. Along with change comes scaremongering.

[Opposition members interjected.]

There's the scaremongering from the Opposition. It is amusing because members opposite quietly come up to me and say, "Can you just get this one approved? I'll make a bit of noise, but it will be fine." Then they run local campaigns against housing saying, "It's the end of the backyard. There'll be no more trees." My favourite is "People might have to live in apartments." How shocking! Young people would love to live in apartments because they are locked out of all sorts of housing at the moment. All of that is part of Opposition members' aim to deny aspiration and opportunity to young people in New South Wales. That is what they are about. They are denying the very things that Menzies formed the Liberal Party on. He would be rolling in his grave. We cannot keep saying no to young people. The idea that we can just say no to more housing is gone.

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: They should tell young people no and see how they go. We must help with the cost-of-living crisis by making the biggest cost-of-living issue—housing—more affordable. Our changes will help deliver well-located, well-designed and well-built homes in New South Wales long into the future.

Mr Mark Coure: What about your backyard?

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I have plenty going on in my backyard. Wollongong is a great place. You should move there—see what a great city looks like. You would love to match it in Oatley. Our changes include changes to low- and mid-rise housing.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point or order—

The SPEAKER: The member for Port Macquarie rises on a point of order. I commend the Minister for starting off so well.

Mrs Leslie Williams: He did start off well, but I ask that he direct his comments through the Chair, as is appropriate under the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The Minister started so well. I know he can continue in the same manner.

Ms Donna Davis: I seek further information.

The SPEAKER: An additional two minutes is granted.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Our changes to low- and mid-rise housing are a policy that the previous planning Minister, Minister Stokes, tried to introduce in 2018, but he was stymied by his party. Not a lot happened in that year, it seems, for the other mob. Our reforms include a transport-oriented development program, with more homes around transport links; affordable housing bonuses and affordable housing in perpetuity around transport links; more capacity for government agencies like Homes NSW and Landcom to deliver more homes; and infrastructure contributions reforms to make sure funding is available for school, hospitals and local roads.

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: The previous Government could not deliver that either. Our reforms also include a \$2.2 billion housing and infrastructure plan delivered as part of the budget; an audit of government land to ensure that surplus land can be put to better use for housing; a strengthening of the powers of the Building Commissioner, as we heard from the Minister for Building yesterday, to oversee and ensure quality and make sure it does not come at the expense of quantity; and the design of a pattern book to accelerate good design through the planning system. The reforms have been welcomed. For instance, Scott Langford, group CEO of St George Community Housing, said:

NSW Government reforms make it faster and easier to build more affordable housing that will help us to get blood to the muscle of the economy, those workers who need access to housing they can afford in proximity to where the jobs are located.

Eamon Waterford, the CEO of the Committee for Sydney, said:

This will allow many more people to access jobs, parks and education, while maintaining the low-rise nature of these suburbs – a win for new residents, and a win for existing residents.

But more people are commenting, including, as I pointed out yesterday, the Opposition spokesperson being right behind it. But guess who else? The Leader of the Opposition. What did he say? He said, "The Opposition is in furious agreement with ramping up housing supply and that will involve substantial rezonings along rail corridors."

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order: The question is about the Government's initiatives. It is not about comments on the Government's initiatives.

The SPEAKER: That may be the case but, as we all know, the Minister's time has expired.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (11:40): My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. This morning the Inner West Labor mayor, Darcy Byrne, said, "Essentially the whole of the inner west would be rezoned under what has been proposed." Given the Minister's previous answer, and given that even Labor mayors and councillors can see this is not the right approach, will he drop the lazy one-size-fits-all planning policy that will have the same impact for communities from Medowie to Mollymook?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:41): This is the exact sort of thing I am talking about. After years and years and years of sitting on their hands and doing nothing when it comes to the planning reform needed to deliver housing, Opposition members want to embrace scaremongering. Councils are always going to express a view about planning because that is what they do.

Councils do that, or some councils do that. Ku-ring-gai, as we know, does not even have a housing strategy. They are not doing any planning, at the behest of the member for Wahroonga.

Mr Chris Minns: Not in his backyard.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Not in his backyard. At the moment the department secretary and senior department staff are going around and speaking to councils about our reforms. We have an ambitious agenda; there is no denying that. We have an ambitious agenda because we are catching up on work that should have been done decades ago. As I said, in 2018 the previous planning Minister, Minister Stokes, who was well respected around the place, tried to do some of the things that we are doing now. He was stymied by his own side. As a result, we have a city that now has less diverse housing choice than it had 100 years ago. We have areas of the city where the terraces and townhouses, which we are all so proud of and which are part and parcel of the culture of housing in Sydney, have been stopped from being part of Sydney's future. We are going to bring that back. Why? Because it is about housing, opportunity, jobs, transport, access to amenity, and ending scaremongering.

The incredible work of the Opposition has done a couple of things. It has made Sydney the second most expensive city in the world. Opposition members blocked home ownership. They blocked young people. They blocked aspiration. They want to block opportunity. As a result, we have tens of thousands of people, often young people, leaving New South Wales each year. We want to see young people set up and start families and be part of our innovation culture. They are coming up with great new ideas that they can take to market from their global city. We have opportunities for young people who are starting and growing businesses, but because members opposite left them so far behind at the end of their term—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. I will hear the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Chris Minns: Whose backyard are you protecting today?

Mr Alister Henskens: What about the boarding house in your street, when you opposed it and went along to the rallies opposing it? Is that a little bit different? It got downscaled.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahroonga will resume his seat. The member has forfeited his right to take a point of order based on his conduct. He did not have to respond. All he had to do was take his point of order, and he failed to do so. He failed the test. The Minister has the call.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: It is not the only test those opposite have failed. They failed the test to deliver homes and jobs and opportunities for young people. They keep failing it.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. I will hear from the Leader of The Nationals.

Mr Dugald Saunders: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. It is fairly clear that we want to know about the one-size-fits-all planning approach and whether there will be actual consultation and different approaches, or just one size fits all.

The SPEAKER: Based on the way in which the question was written, I believe the Minister has the right to answer the question in the way he chooses. I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister has the call.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: If the Leader of the National Party wants the answer on a one-size-fits-all approach, there isn't one. It is designed around transport hubs, town centres and areas where planning restrictions in the past have reduced opportunities for people to get into homes, at the expense of housing availability and affordability.

EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (11:44): My question is addressed to the hardworking Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier please update the House on the infrastructure backlog inherited by this Government and how the New South Wales Government is delivering greater access for families to free quality education by building schools where people actually live?

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:45): I certainly can. What a novel idea: building schools where families actually live! We think that is the sensible thing to do, and haven't I got a story for you, Mr Speaker. A big priority for us as Government members and one of the most important things we believe we can do for New South Wales parents is to ensure they have access to free quality public education.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: We inherited a situation from members opposite because, when they were in government, they did not build schools where people actually live. That is a fact.

The SPEAKER: The member for Myall Lakes will come to order.

Ms PRUE CAR: They abandoned our growing suburbs. There are so many examples, and I am happy to go through them again.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: They abandoned our growing suburbs and racked up \$188 billion in debt and still did not deliver the schools we needed. In fact, despite our population exploding, particularly in Sydney, members opposite left office with fewer public schools than they inherited. But what else exploded on their watch when they were in government? What should we give them a gold star for?

Mr Warren Kirby: Demountables?

Ms PRUE CAR: The member for Riverstone has got it. He is a very good student. There was a 35 per cent increase in demountables. That is poor planning and simply a lack of investment. In fact, under those opposite we would have been more likely to find a demountable than a teacher in a New South Wales public school. That is the situation that we have been working hard, day and night, to remedy upon coming to government. I should put some meat on the bones and go through some of the details of where some of the demountables were at their worst. In the growing parts of Western Sydney there are 19 demountables.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was directly about increasing access to quality education. We are now talking about things that are not relevant to that in any way, shape or form.

The SPEAKER: I cannot uphold the point of order. The Minister will resume giving her answer. Government members will come to order. They are far too noisy.

Ms PRUE CAR: It is a weird day when an education Minister is said to be not relevant when talking about building schools. That is insane and completely strange. The former Government did not build them. *[Extension of time]*

The environment we inherited from members opposite is entirely relevant because this is the situation that we are dealing with. We are trying to turn a very big ship around. At schools like Castle Hill, there were 19 demountables. At Carlingford West, there were 64 demountables. There were 26 demountables at Cumberland High School. The reality is that in the growing parts of Sydney—north-west and south-west and Western Sydney, in particular—as well as regional New South Wales, we inherited a situation where whole suburbs of tens of thousands of families existed without access to free public education.

Yesterday the member for Leppington was talking in this Chamber about how we speak of education as a choice for some families. In his electorate, they do not have a choice. They have not had a choice until now, even for public education, because there was not a high school there. But now, thankfully, under the Labor Government, we are building a high school in Leppington. Thanks to a \$3.5 billion investment in Western Sydney, we are delivering for the communities abandoned by those opposite: Gregory Hills, Gledswood Hills, Leppington, Schofield, Tallawong and, close to my heart, Jordan Springs and Marsden Park.

I was very happy to hear the suburb of Medowie mentioned by the member for Manly. Medowie is finally getting its high school after decades of waiting under those opposite. I know that the skills Minister is very happy about the new school coming to Googong. We are delivering where those opposite refused to give the families, particularly of south-western and north-western Sydney, access to free, high-quality public education, because that is in our DNA on this side of the Chamber. We believe that every single child has a right to free, accessible public education.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (11:50): My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. This morning the Mayor of Fairfield, Frank Carbone, said the Minister's lazy, one-size-fits-all planning policy would "bring the end to the family home; it's the end of the backyard". Why is the Minns Labor Government bringing an end to the family home?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:51): I am still processing that question.

The SPEAKER: Opposition members will come to order. The question came from their side.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Apparently, creating more homes for people will end the family home. "More homes" means no homes. This is quite extraordinary. We are undertaking a series of planning reforms to deliver more homes for more people. We are delivering more homes for more people. That is not less homes, as the education Minister said. This is the arithmetic lesson you can get from the education Minister: "More homes" means more homes, not less. The fact is that business as usual under members opposite got us to the situation where we are the second-most expensive city on the planet. We have a massive problem with unavailability of housing. Young people are locked out of the opportunity to get into a home, not just to buy but to rent.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Key workers.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Key workers are having to spend hours in the car, paying their tolls, to get to and from work. This sort of inequity of opportunity is what the Liberal Party is determined to protect. We want it gone. We want young people to be able to live in well-located, well-built and well-designed homes near to transport, jobs, opportunity and amenities. And those opposite do not want that, or at least some of them do not. When we released some of our housing reforms, what did the Leader of the Opposition say? "The Opposition is in furious agreement with ramping up housing supply, and that will involve substantial rezonings along major corridors." That was from the Leader of the Opposition. He is away, and it seems that they have forgotten their policy. I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition has had some mixed views on housing. He has tried to heritage-list some stuff to avoid housing near a train station. Other members are trying to heritage-list derelict petrol stations to avoid housing. The reality is that all that will do is reinforce intergenerational inequity.

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order: My point of order is direct relevance. There is no room for any movement. This question is directed towards the Labor Government's policy, not the policies of the Opposition. He is straying outside of the direct relevance of the question. That is not directly relevant.

The SPEAKER: I appreciate that. The question is whether the Minister has been directly relevant to the question, and I believe he has been. The Minister has the call.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: The reality is that we are creating more homes, not fewer.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (11:54): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on the ongoing impact of the former Government's bungled overseas transport procurement strategy?

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:55): I thank the member for Strathfield for his ongoing advocacy for reliable, high-quality public transport services. I am pleased to announce to the House that we are replacing the engines of the three overseas-built Generation 2 Emerald class ferries that those opposite bought overseas. We are replacing the engines. What does that mean? It means that passengers will have safer, smoother, more frequent journeys on our most popular ferry route—the Manly to Circular Quay F1 route. I am very pleased to inform the House that the *Balmoral* was pulled out of service on Sunday and will be turned around in about 10 weeks with its new heavy-duty engine. Then, once the *Balmoral* is back in service, the *Clontarf* will go in, and then the *Fairlight* in August this year. Each ferry will be dry-docked one at a time to make sure we do not have impacts on the timetable.

I am pleased also to tell the House that the F1 Manly service will continue to operate on the extended summer timetable. That means more services for passengers. Services will continue to run with the two Freshwater ferries that this Government brought back and the two Emerald class ferries. We brought back the iconic Freshwaters to make sure that our ferry network is more reliable so that we could do upgrades like this. That is a win for passengers. The program to refit those ferry engines will be carried out at the Balmain shipyard by 30 local skilled workers. We will not be outsourcing that work, as those opposite would. We will be supporting our local fitters and turners, engineers, electricians and tradies because, on this side of the House, we support secure, long-term, high-quality, skilled jobs for locals. That is what we do. I assure the House that the cost of refitting those engines will be paid by Transdev, with no cost to the New South Wales taxpayers.

It is important to remember that, when we came to government, ferry passengers were living a total nightmare of regularly broken-down ferries and cancelled and disrupted services. It was a total mess. I have got to say that the briefings I received about Sydney ferries were pretty shocking. It is completely unacceptable that passengers were impacted like that. We inherited ferries bought overseas riddled with defects, such as steering

failures, cracked fuel tanks, exploded engines and leaking hulls—you would think that would be fairly fundamental for a ferry. *[Extension of time]*

In heavy swells, rudders were damaged and windows shattered. The fact is that the Liberal Party's obsession with buying overseas resulted in ferries that were not fit for purpose. It was an approach that comprehensively failed and let passengers and the taxpayers of New South Wales down. We are cleaning up the mess. I am very pleased that, because of the hard work of those local workers at the Balmain shipyard, those defects have been fixed and, most importantly, under this Government the new fleet of the Parramatta class ferries will be designed and made in Australia.

The good news is that solid progress has been made. In fact, the first of those seven ferries is due to be completed this month. She will sail into Sydney under her own power. Trials will start on the Parramatta River and on our harbour next month, with services to follow very soon. That is exciting news, particularly for those passengers in Parramatta. The Government's approach to ferries is the same approach taken across transport. We are delivering more reliable services for passengers and quality Australian-made infrastructure for taxpayers. We are supporting skilled workers. We are trusting our tradies to fix the mess that we inherited and build the future ferries, trains and buses that we need. It was not that long ago when a former Premier and a former Minister for Transport rubbished Australian-made ferries and transport and the work of Australians. What a difference a change of government makes.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (12:00): My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. In October 2017 the now Premier said, "No-one is taking responsibility for the community infrastructure that is needed for this level of density. No-one is explaining how stressed schools, roads and trains can cope with thousands of new people in our cities." When will the Minister release the infrastructure modelling supporting the Government's lazy, one-size-fits-all railway station rezoning decision?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:01): I thank the member for Hornsby for his question because Hornsby Shire Council has been positive about the Government's housing reform. Just quietly in the background, the member for Hornsby has been backing in the mayor. Who is the mayor of Hornsby? It is Philip Ruddock. The man who understands that young people need opportunity and are looking for good homes to live in near transport has been quietly backed in by the member for Hornsby. But when the member for Hornsby comes into this place he has to display an alternative view, like a rooster in the henhouse.

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order: The question has nothing to do with the Hornsby master plan; it is about the infrastructure modelling to support the Minister's policy.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: When it comes to infrastructure to support our policy, the Premier has been critical in the past because that infrastructure was lacking. The previous Government did not build it. The previous Government's whole housing strategy relied upon pushing—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Wahroonga to order for the third time.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: —further west and pushing people away from infrastructure, as we just heard from the Minister for Education and Early Learning. There were no schools in communities with thousands of homes. This Government has brought in infrastructure contributions reforms, which, strangely, are similar to the reforms that the member for Hornsby took to the last election when he was Treasurer. Now the previous Government runs away from them because it understands that the key part of infrastructure is paying for it. This Government will pay for the infrastructure and deliver it along with the homes.

ESSENTIAL WORKER WAGES

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:02): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on the action taken by the Government to value essential workers by lifting the wages cap and providing professional rates for paramedics in New South Wales?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:03): I thank the member for Heathcote for her question. Isn't she performing well in this place. We remember the former member for Heathcote, Mr Evans. All members are elected to this place to make a difference and to leave a legacy that improves the lives of the men and women that we are so lucky to represent. That is common to all of us no matter what side of the Chamber we sit on. In December last

year this Government made a landmark decision on what was a legacy initiative: to finally pay paramedics as the health professionals that they truly are. For the first time in over 15 years paramedics received a pay increase of around 25 per cent, averaged over four years. The big increases in pay recognise their incredible skill, commitment and dedication to the people of New South Wales. Over the first 12 months, and particularly the first seven or eight months, we negotiated day in, day out. I had hundreds of discussions with the Health Services Union [HSU], its leadership and its membership as well as frontline paramedics. I make no apology for our hands-on approach to the issue because we needed to fix the situation fast.

When I first engaged with the union I was dismayed that paramedics, under the former Government, were the lowest paid in the country. On the worst day of our lives, we rely on those paramedics to deliver healthcare services. As I went around the control centres and stations and met them in their lunchrooms, I heard time and again stories of their wages slipping further behind those of their interstate colleagues. The Premier, the Treasurer and I knew we needed to turn that around quickly. The decision to increase their pay was a landmark decision that every member on this side of the House can be proud of when they leave this place. [*Extension of time*]

There are big increases in pay for interns coming into the profession—around \$5,000. For P4 paramedics who have been in for a number of years, it is about \$6½ thousand, and for specialised critical care paramedics, it is \$10,000. But it is not just that; it is also that we will, for the first time, be able to retain them in New South Wales, particularly in areas to the south and to the north that border the other States that did not have the damaging wages cap in place. As a government, we are determined to reform the way in which we deliver health services in New South Wales, the largest State in the country. We have to get it right so that we can keep our professionals here because we look after more people and we respond to more 000 calls.

It is incredibly rewarding to know that our frontline paramedics are not only being paid more but also doing more. Just a few months ago I witnessed firsthand highly trained paramedics starting extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, which is a heart and lung bypass. It is done on the side of the road and in the bush but it is a procedure that is normally done in intensive care units. Those paramedics are not ambulance drivers; they are highly trained professionals. The most rewarding thing was when I spoke to Tess Oxley, who is one of the champions and strong advocates for her profession and who is working so well with the fantastic HSU. She said, "What I'm so proud of now is to be a paramedic here in New South Wales." That is this Government's legacy, and we are determined to deliver those health services.

TAFE NSW FUNDING

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:08): My question is directed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Given the fact that there has been no increase in TAFE funding for 13 years, and the Government has saved considerably after being given support for fee-free placements from the Federal Government, will the Minister be diverting the money saved into TAFE and increasing the TAFE budget quantum?

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (12:09): I thank the member for Ballina for her question. Last week I was pleased to visit the Wollongbar TAFE with the member for Ballina, the Lismore TAFE with the member for Lismore, and the Kingscliff TAFE with the member for Tweed to see some of the fantastic work that is going on there. I will talk more about those campuses in a moment. I assure the member for Ballina that this Government has engaged in the difficult process of reversing the neglect for TAFE that we saw over many years from those opposite. This year we have seen a real increase in funding for TAFE. Government members inherited a situation going into this year's budget where the forward estimates left to us by members opposite saw a reduction from \$1.996 billion to \$1.801 billion for TAFE. That is a \$196 million decrease in the forward estimates for TAFE, which is why we intervened to increase the TAFE funding.

We were then able to sign the five-year National Skills Agreement with the Commonwealth, which Opposition members failed to secure in their time in government. It guarantees a minimum of \$2.8 billion in Federal funding for our skills and TAFE system over the next five years. I am happy to announce that, following the signing of the national agreement, the Government was able to add additional funding for TAFE in the half-yearly budget review. That means that not only have we completely filled the former Government's shortfall and pulled TAFE back from the funding cliff that Opposition members quite deliberately left it on when they were in government, but also we were able to see a record 2023-24 operating budget of \$2.131 billion for TAFE. That represents a 6.8 per cent increase on the financial year 2022-23 operating budget and an increase in the actual expenditure from the previous year as well.

The overall skills budget has increased under this Government by 6.33 per cent in recurrent funding, which is a strong achievement given the parlous financial situation left to us by members opposite. We can all be very proud of that. In visiting the North Coast TAFEs the other day, I was really impressed to see the range of work that is going on, and particularly to hear from the amazing staff at the Wollongbar TAFE campus about the role

that that TAFE and the Kingscliff TAFE played in the flood operations in the area a few years ago. It is quite sensational to see the work they did as evacuation centres and as places for the emergency services to reside while they were there. I congratulate all those staff.

Ms Tamara Smith: I request a short extension of time. I just made it.

The SPEAKER: I do not agree, I am afraid. I was watching the clock intently. I also note that we have only three minutes and 30 seconds remaining for the last question and answer, so I am not willing to allow any wiggle room. The Minister's time has expired.

ENTERTAINMENT QUARTER CONCERT CAP

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (12:12): My question is addressed to the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government has lifted the concert cap and unlocked the potential of the Sydney Cricket Ground precinct?

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:12): I thank the member for Camden for her question—a fantastic local member and an excellent question. I am more than happy to inform the House that we have lifted the archaic concert cap from four concerts to 20 concerts a year. We are bringing entertainment back to the entertainment precinct. Not only are we bringing back the entertainment but also we are bringing back business to Sydney. Each concert is estimated to bring \$5 million to \$7.5 million in economic benefit to the local economy, and that is nearly \$120 million a year and billions over the lifetime of the stadium.

I have to maintain my calm; last time I spoke about the concert cap I got a little excited. Regrettably, I said that Opposition members closed Sydney to business and I called the Opposition leader a wowser. I know he was personally offended by that. I regret that, but I was right. I will try to remain calm on this occasion, but it is hard to remain calm because this is a big win for Sydney. We are returning Sydney to its rightful place as the premier destination in the Asia-Pacific—a truly global city. It is a commonsense policy where everybody wins—it is a win for business, for music fans, for Swifties, for Beliebers and for the Beyhive.

As I said, it is a commonsense decision. As soon as I heard the result I raced up to my good friend the Minister "Disco" John Graham and we cracked open the Tia Maria and started cranking the B-52s. My staff have informed me that the B-52s may not be the right music for the Allianz venue, so I decided to ask a few of my colleagues what they would like. Given the wide range of responses, I think we will only be able to do one song per artist. The member for Wahroonga wanted *Use Somebody* by Kings of Leon; the member for Epping, *Somebody That I Used to Know* by Gotye; and the member for Oatley just wanted to *Be Somebody*. When I asked the Treasurer what he wanted, he said *Money*. I assume he was referring to Pink Floyd, but you never know with that guy. [Time expired.]

Personal Explanation

BACK TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:16): By leave: Yesterday in this House I took a point of order during an answer to a question by the education Minister, and Deputy Premier, which the Speaker upheld. That answer was in response to a question on back to school vouchers. While I was taking the point of order, the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education interjected words to the effect that I was seeking the vouchers for myself and did not need them on my salary. During question time today another Minister interjected in reference to me that I am seeking "a back to school bonus just for you".

The inference that I am somehow utilising my position in this place to seek personal financial gain is an offensive imputation and smear against me, and I will not allow that kind of personal attack to be made. It is a matter of public record that just yesterday my first child started kindergarten. That is an incredibly exciting time but an expensive time for families, regardless of their salaries. In this place none of us fully know each other's personal circumstances. Some people here know that I have been a single mother since my son was only a few months old. Regardless, I am fortunate in many ways and my salary is a matter of public record, as are the even more significant salaries of the two men who chose to make those comments about me.

I will not accept me or the women who work hard across New South Wales, whether earning a higher or lower wage, being subjected to judgement and shame because they have faced some cost-of-living challenges while trying to ensure their children gain the education they so rightly deserve. When I speak in this place I speak for them, not for my own gain, and I expect their challenges and needs to be respected without disrespectful and personal smears.

*Bills***COMBAT SPORTS AMENDMENT BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

Second Reading Speech

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:19): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024. This bill will improve the combat sports legislative framework to promote the health and safety of combatants and reduce the regulatory burden. These amendments are significant for the combat sports sector and have been the subject of extensive consultation. I am proud to be the Minister to bring these important safety reforms forward, and this Government is committed to supporting safety in the combat sports sector.

The bill proposes amendments in response to recommendations from a review of the Combat Sports Act 2013 and Combat Sports Regulation 2014 conducted by the Combat Sports Authority of NSW. The authority conducted an extensive review of the Act and the regulation following the death of a combatant in 2015 and the consequent coronial findings. The review was broken into two phases. The first phase resulted in amendments to the Act in 2018. Further consultation was subsequently conducted in the second phase, focusing on reforms that will improve the health and safety of combatants. The proposed amendments in this bill arise from recommendations from the second phase of the review.

This bill represents significant reforms to the combat sports sector and includes changes that have been requested and expected for a number of years. The main purpose of the bill is to minimise the risk to combatants of concussion and other serious head injuries, and to modernise the regulation of combat sports. The bill includes important safety reforms, including mandatory concussion and other serious head injury training for all registered persons, the introduction of an accreditation class for attending medical practitioners, and provisions to suspend a contest to conduct an assessment of a combatant where a head injury is suspected. The bill also includes the creation of a public register of registered persons to make the matchmaking process for contests simpler. The Government recognises the significant impacts of concussion and other serious head injuries, and we want to ensure there are safeguards in place to protect combatants.

I now turn to the detail of the bill in relation to its amendments to the Combat Sports Act 2013. Item [3] of schedule 1 inserts new definitions in section 4 to clarify a number of terms, including sparring and exhibition contest. This is important to provide increased clarity around what does and does not constitute a combat sports contest. Schedule 1 item [4] to the bill amends section 5 of the Act to change the way in which amateur and professional combat sports are distinguished. Section 5 will now define what an amateur contest is with all other contests being deemed professional, rather than defining a professional contest with all others being deemed amateur. Item [4] of schedule 1, for the purposes of defining amateur contests, focuses on the rules, endorsement of the contest and registration of participants.

Item [6] of schedule 1 amends section 6 (1) to facilitate the simplification of the "trainer" and "second classes" into a single class of registration called "trainer". Schedule 1 item [7] inserts section 6A and creates a new term of "close associate" and defines what constitutes a "close associate" for the purposes of security determinations and other provisions of the Act and regulations pertaining to promoter and manager corporations. This is a necessary reform to enable the registration of corporations. Schedule 1 item [10] amends section 8 to introduce a new offence for approved amateur bodies failing to comply with conditions on their approval. This provides the authority with an option, other than revoking their approval, to take action against an approved amateur body where they are found to not be complying with their obligations.

Schedule 1 item [19] amends section 16 to enable a combatant that has held registration in a professional class to seek registration as an amateur where appropriate. The intention of this is to facilitate combatants that may have competed professionally being able to compete at an amateur level again, similar to other jurisdictions. For example, this may enable a former professional combatant to compete at an Olympic or Commonwealth Games. This reform is one that has been requested by the combat sports sector to ensure we have the best athletes representing Australia. Other jurisdictions around the world allow former professionals to compete at the Olympic Games, and this will ensure New South Wales athletes can compete on a level playing field. It also recognises that there may be situations such as where a combatant takes on a professional contest and then decides they would

prefer to compete as an amateur. Under the amended section 16 the authority is granted powers to develop guidelines for making these determinations.

Schedule 1 item [20] creates a section 16A that introduces automatic medical suspensions of combatants, which was previously in the authority's rules. Automatic medical suspensions are imposed after knockouts or technical knockouts that are the result of a suspected head injury. The intent of this provision is to ensure that the focus of automatic suspensions is on preventing concussion and other serious head injuries. A technical knockout within sports rules can include where the referee stops a contest because a combatant is outclassed, for harm minimisation purposes. Previously a medical suspension was triggered by any knockout or technical knockout. We want to ensure that harm minimisation practices are encouraged and that a combatant is not unnecessarily burdened with a medical suspension when they have not suffered a head injury.

The medical suspension length and escalation is in schedule 2 item [11] and defines the length of the escalating suspension regime. Schedule 1 item [20] also introduces sections 16B to 16G and contains other provisions related to medical suspensions, including a provision that the combatant must notify the authority if they have been subject to a suspension in another jurisdiction. These provisions are important in order to protect the health and safety of combatants and limit the potential for repeated head injuries in a short period of time.

Schedule 1 item [21] amends section 17 (5) to enable a public register of combatants. A public register will streamline the process for creating a fight card. Interested people, including promoters and matchmakers, will be able to determine, by checking against the public register, when a combatant is eligible to compete. Currently promoters or matchmakers are required to contact the authority to confirm that combatants are eligible to compete at a certain date. This creates an administrative burden for the authority and industry. A public register will allow interested persons to look up essential information without needing to contact the authority during business hours.

Schedule 1 item [27] inserts section 23 (1A) to allow a corporation to apply for registration as a promoter or manager. This is reflective of modern business practices where it is rare for an individual to be solely responsible for an event. This change will also facilitate sports organisations registering as promoters. These organisations are crucial for driving participation and taking contests to the regions. Schedule 1 item [23] amends section 20 to introduce significant penalties for registered corporations contravening parts of the Act. Schedule 1 item [28] amends section 23 to mandate that corporations applying to be registered promoters or managers will be required to provide the authority with a list of close associates. The primary purpose of this is to conduct security determinations under the Act.

Schedule 1 item [43] creates part 2A for the accreditation of attending medical practitioners. During the coronial inquest into the death of a combatant in 2015 it was raised that there were no minimum training standards for medical practitioners. In addition to concussion training, it is the intent to mandate advanced life support training for accredited attending medical practitioners. These are the ringside doctors who perform assessments of combatants and also have a role in the emergency management of combatants. By creating an accreditation, specific training standards can be mandated. Item [55] of schedule 1 amends section 53 to increase the fine for failing to ensure an attending medical practitioner is present. This is intended to ensure compliance with the new accredited attending medical practitioner requirement. This Government is committed to supporting combat sports while also ensuring that combat sports are made safer for combatants.

Items [72], [74] and [76] of schedule 1 create sections 63A, 64A and 66A, which outline the circumstances that allow a contest to be suspended by the referee for the purpose of conducting a modified head injury assessment. The purpose of these provisions is to protect the health and safety of combatants. The head injury assessment will be conducted, and the contest will either be allowed to resume under section 66A or stopped under section 66. The intent of these provisions is to create greater clarity around the signs of head injury and to ensure that contests are suspended or stopped. By defining category 1 and category 2 signs of head injury within the authority rules, we can provide referees, attending medical practitioners and combat sports inspectors with a clear set of criteria to determine if a head injury is likely to have occurred. These indicators will be informed by advice from the medical advisory committee. Item [81] of schedule 1 creates sections 85A to 85C to introduce new powers for combat sport inspectors to enter premises and outlines the powers they can exercise upon entry. These powers are necessary to ensure that combat sport inspectors have appropriate powers to stop non-permitted events from taking place.

Item [87] of schedule 1 amends section 102 to provide a power to the authority to grant residents of New South Wales an exemption from the suspension-of-contest provisions under sections 63A, 64A and 66A for a particular contest. The Government is committed to important safety reforms; however, it also recognises that New South Wales must remain competitive in event attraction. The intent of this provision is for it to apply to high-level contests to ensure New South Wales remains a preferred event destination. The suspension-of-contest reforms puts the safety of the combatant at the forefront; however, other jurisdictions in Australia and around the world are not yet at the point of widespread introduction of safety features of the same nature. To remain

competitive in securing international content, such as world title contests, we need to ensure the legislation has the flexibility to operate under international rules for certain contests.

The second component is that there are existing exemption provisions for overseas and interstate referees. The additional exemptions are required to ensure that functions of combat sport inspectors, medical practitioners and referees are aligned so that the contest operates smoothly. There is a strong desire from spectators to see live combat sports events in New South Wales, and they make an important contribution to the visitor economy, as evidenced by the success of UFC 293 in Sydney. It is important to note that other health and safety protections will still apply, such as the power of a combat sport inspector to direct a contest to be stopped. Item [96] of schedule 1 to the bill provides a transitional provision that gives the authority the power to extend the term of a person's registration for the purposes of enabling them to comply with a safety training condition. The intent of this provision is to allow the authority to align the registration of certain classes, if needed, to deliver concussion training and ensure that the term of the training aligns with the length of registration.

I turn to schedule 2 to the bill, which seeks to amend the Combat Sports Regulation 2014. Item [1] of schedule 2 introduces clause 6A, which creates a requirement for combatant registration that the applicant must have completed safety training specified by the authority. The intent of the amendment is to enable the mandating of concussion and other serious head injury identification training. Item [6] of schedule 2 introduces clauses 7A and 7B, which specify the information that must be kept on the register of combatants and what information can be made public. Item [12] of schedule 2 creates clauses 9B to 9D, which outline the combatant's obligations regarding particular medical examinations. The intent of these provisions is to inform the status of a combatant's registration. Medical suspensions from other jurisdictions will apply to a combatant's registration in New South Wales.

Item [19] of schedule 2 inserts a new provision in clause 19 that mandates the completion of concussion training by industry participants and promoters as specified by the authority. Item [29] of schedule 2 to the bill introduces provisions pertaining to accreditation of attending medical practitioners. The intent of these provisions is to allow the authority to mandate specific training for attending medical practitioners and to ensure they have knowledge of concussion and the ability to identify it. Item [40] of schedule 2 inserts part 7A, which stipulates matchmaking requirements pertaining to fight cards. These provisions serve to simplify and clarify the matchmaking and fight card requirements. Item [52] of schedule 2 amends clauses 33 and 34 to clarify the requirements for pre- and post-contest medical examinations. It includes additional requirements for the combatant to disclose if they have suffered a concussion in the 30 days prior. The intent of these provisions is to clarify the medical examinations and protect the health and safety of combatants against the health risks of concussion.

Item [59] of schedule 2 creates a framework for the mandatory provision of medical equipment at contests and an offence for noncompliance. The equipment is to be specified in the rules to allow for simpler changes over time with the evolution of medical advice. Item [62] of schedule 2 amends clause 46 to remove the ability to provide a serological clearance one hour before a contest and, instead, specifies five days, which is when the fight card is lodged. This amendment is intended to ensure that when a final fight card is lodged, the promoter is aware if someone is eligible for a contest. This will limit the cancellation of contests and provide greater clarity. The authority still has the ability to agree to a different time frame in the event that a combatant is coming from overseas or another circumstance.

Item [75] of schedule 2 clarifies the exemption of combatants from registration requirements and the timing for providing documentation. A combatant is exempt from registration requirements if they do not ordinarily reside in New South Wales and is registered in the jurisdiction they ordinarily reside. These provisions are important, as they allow New South Wales to attract high-level contests that may have international or interstate combatants. In conclusion, this bill is an important part of the Government's ongoing work to improve the regulation, safety and administration of combat sports in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (SEA BED MINING AND EXPLORATION) BILL 2024

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Paul Scully, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:39): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Sea Bed Mining and Exploration) Bill 2024 proposes amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, which I will refer to in this speech as the EP&A Act, to prohibit the carrying out of seabed petroleum and mineral exploration and recovery. Under the EP&A Act a person will be prohibited from undertaking those activities in the coastal waters of the State. Importantly, the bill exempts coastal protection works and certain dredging activities that are not related to mineral exploration and recovery.

The bill will also prohibit other development anywhere within the State, including in the State's coastal waters, for the purposes of seabed petroleum or mineral exploration or recovery. In practice, this will mean that the prohibition could hinder or add significant costs to any exploration and mining projects which are undertaken in the offshore area of New South Wales beyond the limits of the coastal waters of the State. Contravention of the prohibitions will result in a tier 1 penalty under the EP&A Act—the highest penalty available under that Act. The bill additionally restricts the grant or renewal of authorisations under the Offshore Minerals Act 1999 and the Petroleum (Offshore) Act 1982, which I will refer to collectively as the Offshore Acts for a prohibited purpose.

The New South Wales Government does not support offshore mineral or petroleum exploration or mining for commercial purposes either in or adjacent to New South Wales coastal waters. I acknowledge that many members have raised that issue in this place, particularly noting the strong advocacy of the member for Sydney and the member for Wakehurst, and I consider the concerns of the members are reflected in the Government's position as outlined in the bill. The impacts of seabed exploration and mining are significant. They are a threat to our State's sensitive marine environments, coastal areas and Indigenous heritage. Offshore mining activities can have a devastating impact on our marine fauna and their habitats, including the release of harmful or toxic materials, the removal of habitat and the creation of harmful sediment levels.

The Government's policy on offshore mining is outlined in the Offshore Exploration and Mining Policy, which was first published in February 2022. However, there is currently no legislative prohibition on those activities and no limitations on development within the State for the purposes of offshore mineral or petroleum exploration and mining. The bill is intended to give certainty to our communities and industries about the Government's position on offshore exploration and mining by giving legislative effect to the Offshore Exploration and Mining Policy. The legislation is a responsible and balanced approach to banning seabed mining and protecting our coastline and waters. It will give certainty to the community and industry by ensuring that any move away from the prohibition on these activities would require a future Act of Parliament.

It is possible that petroleum or mineral exploration could occur in the offshore area beyond the New South Wales jurisdiction. However, the bill will ensure that no development can be undertaken in our State to support that activity. It is a powerful message about this Government's policy. In effect, the bill will not only ban exploration and mining in the coastal waters of New South Wales but will also ensure that development in New South Wales does not support exploration and mining projects in the offshore areas of New South Wales which are beyond the limits of our State.

I turn now to the details of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill proposes a new schedule 10 to the EP&A Act, titled "Sea bed petroleum and minerals development". Clause 2 (1) (a) prohibits seabed petroleum or mineral exploration and recovery in the coastal waters of the State. This prohibition is intentionally limited to mining and exploration activities in New South Wales coastal waters only—that is, up to three nautical miles from the coastline. That is the region of the New South Wales coast over which the New South Wales Parliament has legislative authority and proprietary rights in relation to seabed minerals and petroleum. The proposed clause does not seek to apply to the offshore area of New South Wales, which is the responsibility of the Commonwealth.

Proposed clause 2 (1) (b) of schedule 10 further prohibits other development within the State for the purposes of seabed petroleum exploration or recovery, or seabed mineral exploration or recovery. The application of subclause (1) (b) is further clarified in clause 2 (3), which provides that the provision applies to seabed mineral and petroleum exploration and recovery whether within the coastal waters of the State or elsewhere. In practice, this will mean that no pipelines can be built in our coastal waters to pipe petroleum to shore in New South Wales. It will also prohibit the development of any other facility in New South Wales that is intended for the purpose of supporting offshore mining.

I turn now to the exceptions from the prohibition, which are provided for in proposed clause 2 (2) of schedule 10. The bill provides for two important exceptions. Firstly, it exempts coastal protection works as defined under the Coastal Management Act 2016, including beach nourishment. Beach nourishment is the practice of removing sand for the purposes of placing it onto the shoreline to compensate for natural erosion. It is a common practice, and it is a simple, natural and cost-effective way of ensuring that our coastline is protected. The exception also covers beach scraping, which involves removing a layer of sand from the foreshore and transferring it to a different location on that same beach, rather than bringing sand in from another location. This is an important practice to strengthen the upper part of a beach to protect dunes and cliff systems from erosion.

The bill exempts certain dredging activities, provided that they do not require an authorisation under the Offshore Acts, meaning that they will not involve mineral exploration or recovery. Dredging is a routine practice with environmental and economic benefits. It is important to ensure that some dredging practices can continue and remain subject to existing regulatory regimes—for example, to ensure that vessels can access a port or marina or to provide for anchorages or berthing areas. The bill also provides additional flexibility for exceptions in the form of a constrained regulation-making power in proposed clause 3 of schedule 10. This will accommodate other limited exceptions that offer an environmental or public benefit, and which are deemed necessary through the implementation of the bill. Regulations would only be made on the recommendation of the Minister administering the EP&A Act following consultation with the Minister administering the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997.

Finally, proposed clause 4 of schedule 10 will also prevent the grant or renewal of certain authorisations under the Offshore Acts that relate to the development which is prohibited under the schedule. This will ensure prevention of ineffectual "zombie" authorisations. The bill will ban offshore mining and exploration in New South Wales permanently and unequivocally. There is no place for harmful seabed mining on our precious State coastline. The bill will ensure that commercial interests cannot prevail over the protection of our coastal waters for future generations. The bill will also reduce the viability of any exploration and mining projects in the offshore area of New South Wales to the extent possible within the jurisdictional limits of the New South Wales Legislature. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

CRIME AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (12:48): I speak in support of the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill proposes several amendments which will enhance the legislation by providing clarity and updates to the law where needed, rectifying inconsistencies and supporting the operation of agencies across the criminal justice system. The amendments will support the operation of youth and adult correctional centres; improve and clarify existing protections for victims; add efficiency, clarity and consistency into criminal justice processes; and provide necessary updates to both the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 and the digital evidence access order scheme.

Laws relating to crime and criminal procedure are critical to protecting community safety and maintaining the integrity of the justice system. Failing to update legislation through regular review and amendment risks an assurance that our laws are fit for purpose and keeping pace with changes within our communities and the legal system. Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 to rectify an inconsistency between provisions relating to orders for the release on parole of a juvenile offender and the discharge of a juvenile offender at the end of their sentence. This amendment will not have any practical or operational impact on the early parole of young offenders and will still ensure they are closely consulted on discharge planning.

Items [1] to [7] of schedule 2 to the bill will amend the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to provide that the release of any inmate from custody can be delayed at the inmate's request or with their consent, and make consequential amendments. The current provisions only apply to convicted inmates on remand, inmates released under mental health orders or inmates who successfully appeal a custodial sentence. Inmates subject to unscheduled release are often not released until the evening and may not have access to immediate support such as transport, accommodation, medication and food. Allowing their release to be delayed can enable appropriate arrangements to be made. This amendment will ensure that any inmate, and not just convicted inmates whose sentences are about to expire, can request or consent to have their release from custody delayed.

Item [8] of schedule 2 to the bill will amend section 44 of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to provide discretion for the governor of a New South Wales correctional centre to accept or refuse a transfer from the Australian Capital Territory—and understandably so. Jokes aside, the existing provision dates from a time when there was no operational correctional centre in the Australian Capital Territory. The proposed amendment to section 44 provides the governor of a New South Wales correctional centre with a discretion to accept or refuse an incoming transfer, therefore allowing them to refuse unsuitable transfers from the Australian Capital Territory.

Item [9] of schedule 2 to the bill will repeal section 175 (1A) of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999, which relates to the State Parole Authority's power to rescind a previous revocation of an intensive correction order. Items [10] to [18] of schedule 2 to the bill will amend the Act to allow a person who is not a victim of an offender, but who can demonstrate that their life or safety is reasonably expected to be endangered

because of a connection between them and the offender, to be registered as an "interested person" under the Victims Register and to receive the same information regarding the offender that is provided to victims, if they make an application to do so.

Proposed new section 279A includes a non-exhaustive list of examples of the types of connections between a person and an offender that might give rise to a risk to the person's safety, including where the offender has a history of mental harm or physical violence against the person, where the offender had a domestic relationship with the person, or where the person was a witness in proceedings against the offender. Schedule 3 to the bill amends the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to strengthen procedural protections for victims in apprehended violence order proceedings and provide clarity for courts to ensure a consistent application of the law.

The bill also improves efficiency in processes for work health and safety prosecutions by amending the Criminal Appeal Act 1912. Items [1] and [2] of schedule 4 to the bill will allow SafeWork NSW and the NSW Resources Regulator to commence appeals against sentence to the Court of Criminal Appeal where the regulator had carriage of the prosecution. Schedule 5 to the bill makes multiple amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to provide clarity in the law and improve processes. I draw attention to item [3] of schedule 5 to the bill. Under the proposed provision, a recording of a child complainant's interview with police for sexual offence proceedings will be classified as "sensitive evidence". This will mean that the prosecution cannot be required, whether by subpoena or any other procedure, to give an accused person a copy of the recording. This protects child complainants by preventing recorded interviews with police from being misused. Importantly, this amendment will not prevent an accused person and their legal practitioner from continuing to have access to these recordings to prepare their matters.

Schedule 6 to the bill makes multiple amendments to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985. Finally, item [1] of schedule 7 to the bill makes amendments to section 46 (1) of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to update the digital evidence access order scheme. All in all, the bill makes necessary amendments across eight Acts to enhance the processes and operation of the New South Wales criminal justice system and maintain its integrity in the twenty-first century. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:55): I make a brief contribution to debate on the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I acknowledge the Attorney General, who is in the Chamber. I thank him for his diligent efforts to ensure that these legislative changes are in place. I note the shadow Attorney General's comments, which insinuated a need for broader scoping. Frankly, I found that remarkable, as he would know that miscellaneous amendments to legislation are very important for legal practice. The bill makes miscellaneous amendments to legislation related to crime and criminal procedure. The amendments enhance legislation by providing clarity and updates to the law where needed, rectifying inconsistencies and supporting operational improvements.

More specifically, the amendments will support the operation of youth and adult correctional centres; improve and clarify existing protections for victims; add efficiency, clarity and consistency to criminal justice processes; and provide necessary updates to both the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 and the digital evidence access order scheme. Regularly reviewing and updating legislation is an important mechanism to ensure the law is fit for purpose and keeps pace with developments in the community and the legal system in New South Wales. The bill was developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders across government and external stakeholders in the legal sector. They were invited to submit proposals for consideration, provided with opportunities to comment on proposals and invited to give feedback on the drafting of the proposals.

The Attorney General is very conscious of consultation; it is in his professional fibre. I commend him for his diligence in that regard. Good consultation and engagement with the sector, the industry and the fraternity is vital. As a lawyer, the Attorney General knows the importance of consultation and gives it the attention it requires. That is very important for a government. The bill makes a number of key amendments to eight separate Acts. It improves protections for victim-survivors by expanding eligibility for the Victims Register under the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to include "interested persons", and by amending the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to confirm that a provisional apprehended violence order becomes an interim AVO on the first return date at court unless the court makes an alternative order. The member for Castle Hill has read into this aspect of the bill thoroughly and prepared some valuable written contributions. I appreciate his interest and efforts, and I have passed that documentation on to the Attorney General. I am advised that the Attorney General's office will be in contact with the member to discuss what more can be done.

Amendments to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 ensure that the transcripts and evidence in all related prescribed sexual offence proceedings are admissible for apprehended violence order proceedings. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 classify a recording of a child complainant's interview with police for sexual offence proceedings as "sensitive evidence", which means the prosecution cannot

be required, whether by subpoena or any other procedure, to give an accused person a copy of the recording. Amendments to the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 and the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 provide consistency and support operational practices across correctional centres, which is so important. The Attorney General's office received that feedback and, again, with good consultation, it is included in the legislation. Amendments to the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 update the digital evidence access order scheme, including enabling the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission to apply for digital evidence access orders.

In conclusion, the bill makes a number of necessary amendments across eight Acts to enhance the processes and operation of the criminal justice system, maintain its integrity and ensure that it keeps pace with developments in the community and the legal system. I commend the bill to the House and thank the Attorney General for his efforts.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): It being 1.00 p.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for orders of the day (committee reports). I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

Committees

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Reports

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:02): As Chair: I speak to the *Report on the Sydney Metro West project* of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure. It is the committee's second report in the Fifty-Eighth Parliament and its second report on the Sydney Metro West project. The report follows an interim report, which the committee tabled in November 2023. The inquiry commenced following a referral from the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Jo Haylen, MP, in August 2023. The terms of reference required the committee to examine the original business case for the Sydney Metro West project—I will come back to that later—the establishment of the route and selection of station locations; the cause of blowouts in project costs and time lines; whether the Minister at the time considered any other consequential benefits that could be achieved from the project; and other matters relevant to the Sydney Metro West project.

The committee's interim report highlighted the obstacle posed by the committee's inability to secure the original business case, as it was an important element of the terms of reference. To address that, the committee recommended that the House consider making an order for the production of the business case, without which some fundamental decisions of the previous Government could not be tested. I draw the House's attention to the committee's second report, which focuses on the remaining terms of reference, based on the evidence received to date. The committee heard from 34 submission makers, including members of the public, non-profit organisations, local councils, government agencies, industry bodies and advocacy groups. It also heard from 28 witnesses at a public hearing in October 2023. The report outlines stakeholders' concerns about the Sydney Metro West project's route alignment, station selection and potential to support urban and economic uplift along the route corridor, and about the overall delivery of the project. We heard that the Sydney Metro West project is a critical piece of infrastructure that should go ahead and that this Government has committed to.

The committee recommended that additional stations between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park, and between Five Dock and the Bays precinct, be considered. It also recommended that the New South Wales Government consider developing a business case on the efficacy of amending the route alignment to support housing uplift between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park. Those recommendations responded to concerns that the project was shaped by the emphasis on a 20-minute journey time between Parramatta and Sydney CBD, as well as concerns about the gaps between the stations—in particular, the seven-kilometre gap between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park stations and the 4.3-kilometre gap between Five Dock and the Bays. The committee heard and understood that the gap between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park would be one of the longest in the world for any metro system, that patronage and travel patterns have changed considerably since the original business case and that a key focus of the project should be connectivity, not just travel times.

Again, without a copy of the original business case, the committee could not put to task the previous Government's original decision on a 20-minute travel time. It recommended that the value of an eastern extension to the project be considered. That is particularly important for huge housing projects that have been built. Stakeholders said that the project should be extended past the Hunter Street terminus, or at least that an extension be planned for in the future. Stakeholders also spoke about the importance of supporting housing and economic uplift along the project corridor. The committee recommended that urban master plans be completed to support that. The committee heard that only three of the nine planned Sydney Metro West stations have an urban master

plan and recommended that the New South Wales Government consider establishing a single authority to manage the Sydney Metro West project. The committee heard about the difficulties and inefficiencies caused by the need to obtain approvals across multiple agencies.

I thank my fellow committee members, Deputy Chair Nathan Hagarty, Judy Hannan, Warren Kirby and Ray Williams, for their collaboration and assistance on the committee. I also thank the committee secretariat. Obviously, as we are talking about one of the largest spends on infrastructure that this State has ever seen, it is important that we get it right. We extend our thanks to all the stakeholders who participated in the inquiry. They made an enormous contribution to the inquiry and to this Parliament's understanding of what the future vision should be. I commend the report to the House.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (13:07): As the Deputy Chair of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, I make a brief contribution on what is a very important report. The inquiry into Sydney Metro West was important because the project is a very significant spend of the public's money. As we do in this place, it is important to apply scrutiny to such projects. The committee has done a very thorough job, and I congratulate the Chair on her chairing of the inquiry. In her contribution, she touched on most of the committee's findings and recommendations. I will also touch on a couple. The thing that stuck with me during the inquiry was a point made by Sydney YIMBY in its submission: that metro policy is housing policy. There has been a lot of discussion, and there was a lot of debate during question time today, about housing supply. There is a lot of debate, discussion and column inches about the housing affordability crisis that is currently gripping the State, and Sydney in particular. If we look at any place around the world where metros have operated well for a significant period, we can appreciate the sentiment that metro policy is housing policy.

I think this report makes some very important recommendations in that space, namely recommendation 6, which is that the New South Wales Government consider establishing a single authority for the management of Sydney Metro West. I must commend Ms Gail Connolly, who is the CEO of Parramatta City Council. During the inquiry Parramatta City Council put forward a similar suggestion and recommendation. It is rare that a council will, in effect, suggest that some of its planning power and oversight be given to the State Government for the greater good, but that is essentially what has been suggested here. If anyone has taken a trip along the M4 in the past year or so they will have seen that, from about Sydney Olympic Park driving west to Parramatta—I tend to do that quite a bit, as a westie—a housing corridor is developing where the metro is about to go. Apartments are springing up sporadically, but we do not want that to happen organically without some type of oversight and master planning to ensure that the people who end up living there have good access to amenity and public transport and are not just shoved into concrete shoeboxes.

That recommendation is effectively being made here and I think, with the addition of some standard operating procedures that are in this report, it could be the best outcome for Sydney and for the country regarding good modern urban policy along transport corridors. This is an important inquiry. I thank the Chair and my fellow committee members, the people who made submissions and, of course, the hardworking committee staff.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:12): As Chair: The Legislation Review Committee tabled the *Legislation Review Committee Digest No. 9/58* yesterday. The committee examined eight bills and reviewed 15 regulations and statutory instruments, commenting on six. As members are aware, the committee has the important role of reviewing all bills introduced and all statutory instruments tabled in the Parliament. The committee's scrutiny of legislation informs members of both Houses and the community about the potential impact of legislation on personal rights and liberties, and any potential inappropriate exercise of government or legislative power.

I draw members' attention to some of the key issues raised in the digest. The Ageing and Disability Commissioner Amendment Bill 2023 will amend the Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019 to allow the commissioner to share personal information with private entities who provide support to vulnerable adults. The committee noted that the bill might also broadly expand the existing information-sharing scheme by providing that the regulations may prescribe additional private entities. The committee acknowledged that the amendments limit the provision of information to a private entity by the commissioner for purposes related only to safety and welfare. It recognised that these amendments are intended to practically facilitate service provision for vulnerable adults and strengthen protection of their safety and welfare. However, as it was unclear whether or when the

commissioner is not required to seek consent from relevant individuals before disclosing their personal information, the committee referred this issue to the Parliament.

Turning to a private member's bill, the committee reported on the cognate Constitution Amendment (Rights and Freedoms) Bill 2023 and the Constitution Amendment (Rights and Freedoms—Referendum) Bill 2023. The rights and freedoms bill seeks to amend the New South Wales Constitution to provide that the New South Wales Parliament does not have the power to make a law that would establish a religion, prohibit the free exercise of a religion, restrict freedom of speech and the press, or restrict the right to peaceful assembly and the right to petition the Executive or Parliament. The referendum bill would require that this proposed amendment is voted on by New South Wales electors at a referendum.

The committee noted that the law-making power of the Parliament is fundamental to the system of representative and responsible government under the Constitution. Express restrictions may broadly limit the Parliament's ability to make laws for the "peace, welfare and good government of New South Wales". This may undermine the system of representative democracy in New South Wales and thereby possibly impact the democratic rights of New South Wales voters. The committee acknowledged that restrictions on State legislative power are not uncommon. However, the committee noted that the bill does not appear to propose any limitations to the broad restrictions concerning those rights and freedoms. It was also not clear how the proposed amendment would interact with existing New South Wales laws. For those reasons, the committee referred the issue to Parliament for its consideration.

Finally, the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Voluntary Assisted Dying Substances) Regulation 2023 seeks to amend the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008, which is made under the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966. However, the regulation would make provisions for the handling of voluntary assisted dying substances that are regulated by the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022. The committee acknowledged that the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act provides that regulations may make provisions around the handling of therapeutic goods. However, this regulation would make references to, and provisions about, substances regulated under the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act. The regulation would also add penalty notice offences in relation to matters covered in the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act, even though the Act does not specifically provide a power to make such penalties. The committee was concerned that the operative effects of the regulation or the relevant statutory power under which it is made could be unclear to a lay person. As a result, it referred this issue to Parliament.

That concludes my remarks. I encourage everyone to read the digest, which is available on the committee's webpage. I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions to the digest, and the secretariat for its support. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:16): A new year and a new report—great! I commend the member for Auburn for chairing the Legislation Review Committee and presenting the report, and I thank the secretariat, which works so hard to make sure that the committee delivers. It was great work by all. Eight bills and two sets of regulations were considered in the current period. The committee had no issues with four of the bills: the Constitution Amendment (Executive Council) Bill 2023; the Constitution Amendment (Water NSW and Local Water Utilities) Bill 2023, which is good legislation that was very well written by the member for Cootamundra; the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition on Spit Hoods) Bill 2023; and the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Regulation of Personal Adult Use of Cannabis) Bill 2023.

Upon review, the committee identified four bills as having issues. The Institutions Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 was assessed as having no issue in terms of engagement with section 8A or section 9 of the Legislation Review Act, and therefore I make no further comment. But I will comment on three other bills, the first being the Ageing and Disability Commissioner Amendment Bill 2023. The committee identified that there were some privacy rights issues with the bill, certainly including the sharing of personal information with private entities. The bill creates an exception to the Privacy Act 1988 by allowing personal information to be shared without the consent of the individual.

The bill does not require consent to be obtained from individuals before disclosing information or provide clear criteria as to when consent is not required. For those reasons, we generally ask the Minister to have a close look. It is a time when personal information has a value in our society. Of course, we need to protect privacy and information as much as we can and ensure that that information or that data is protected from those who would misuse it. We certainly refer that back to the Minister to look at.

The second item I comment on is the Constitution Amendment (Rights and Freedoms) Bill 2023. We recognise the attempt to replicate some of the provisions and protections for individuals in the United States First Amendment, but how that amendment would react with our laws could be very complicated. A significant amount of work needs to be done to investigate that because it could restrict this Government from making laws in this

Parliament to protect the safety of people. Finally, the wide regulation-making powers in the Pill Testing Trial Bill 2023 have raised concerns. The committee would like to see more of the bill's provisions in legislation rather than regulation. On that note, I commend the report to the House and encourage all members to read it.

Report noted.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

Bills

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Jo Haylen, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (14:30): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2024. The bill proposes amendments to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988. The Independent Commission Against Corruption's primary objective is to maintain public trust and confidence in the Government's institutions by uncovering and addressing instances of corruption. It is in the public interest that the ICAC is provided with an appropriate legislative framework that enables the efficient and effective exercise of its principal functions. The Government is committed to ensuring that the ICAC is effective, strong and independent. This bill is evidence of that commitment.

In this speech I will deal with the provisions of the bill thematically for the benefit of members, including outlining the significant work done to make the case for the reforms contained in the bill. Schedule 1 [3] to [6] propose amendments to the ICAC Act that implement recommendation 8 of the ICAC's report of its investigation into the conduct of the then member of Parliament for Wagga Wagga and the then Premier and others, known as Operation Keppel.

Before I turn to the content of this bill, I take this opportunity to address a matter before it arises. It is not appropriate for me to comment on the substance or findings of the Operation Keppel report. It is not responsible or appropriate for anyone in this place to comment on ongoing proceedings relating to Operation Keppel. This bill has no bearing on any issue relating to the ICAC's findings or its recommendation to obtain the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is a matter of public record that there are ongoing court proceedings regarding the findings in the Operation Keppel report and that there is the potential as well for further criminal proceedings to be brought. Members should be respectful of those proceedings and be mindful so as not to impose upon them with any conduct during debate. I hope that is the last comment that will be made on that, or any related issue, in this place.

Recommendation 8 of the Operation Keppel report is "that the New South Wales Government considers amending section 111E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to set requirements for the Premier on behalf of the New South Wales Government and Presiding Officers of each House of Parliament to respond to the corruption prevention recommendations of the Commission." The Government's response to the Operation Keppel report accepted this recommendation. This is the only recommendation of the Operation Keppel report that requires amendment to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. Currently, section 111E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act applies only to public authorities. A "public authority" is defined by section 3 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act to include a number of government entities, including a public service agency, a statutory body representing the Crown, a local government authority and the NSW Police Force. It does not currently include a Minister of the Crown, nor the Parliament, its Presiding Officers or committees. This amendment changes that.

Schedule 1 [6] inserts a new subsection, section 111E (4), into the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, that creates and defines a new term—namely, "relevant public authority or official". This term includes not only a public authority but also, significantly, a Minister of the Crown and the Presiding Officer of either House of Parliament. Schedule 1 [3], [4] and [5] make consequential changes to section 111E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. The effect of the proposed amendment is that, pursuant to the proposed amended section 111E, the Independent Commission Against Corruption may direct a corruption prevention recommendation to a "relevant public authority or official", which includes a Minister and the Presiding Officer of either House. Upon receipt of a corruption prevention recommendation from the ICAC, the

relevant public authority or official must inform the ICAC in writing within three months, or such longer period as the ICAC may agree to in writing, whether it proposes to implement any plan of action in response to the recommendation and, if so, of the plan of action.

Further, a relevant public authority or official that informs the ICAC of such a plan must provide a written report to the ICAC of any progress in implementing the plan both 12 months after informing the ICAC of the plan and, if the plan is not fully implemented, 12 months after that. This proposed amendment makes it a legislative requirement for Ministers and the Parliament to engage with the recommendations of the ICAC within a fixed timeframe and in a particular way. While it has been the practice of the current and former governments to provide responses to the ICAC's recommendations, making this a legislative requirement beneficially impacts the accountability of our public institutions. Accountability ensures that public authorities and officials are answerable to the people that they serve.

Schedule 1 [1] and [2] propose to amend section 111 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act: the secrecy provision. Section 111 is an important provision in the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. It creates an obligation of secrecy on certain people identified by section 111 (1), including an officer of the ICAC, a legal practitioner assisting the ICAC, a person who is an officer of the Inspector of the ICAC and other identified persons. Such persons shall not directly or indirectly make a record of any information or communicate to another person any information that they have acquired during the exercise of their functions under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, except as permitted by the Act itself. A breach of this requirement, set out in section 111 (2) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, is punishable by a maximum penalty of 50 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or both. The persons to whom the section applies are also prohibited from producing in any court any document or thing that has come into their possession, custody or control in the course of their functions under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. They are also prohibited from communicating to any court any matter or thing that has come to their notice in the exercise of their functions under the Act.

An exception to this prohibition on using information, noted in section 111 (3) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, is the case of prosecution or disciplinary proceedings instituted or conducted by the ICAC in exercise of its functions. Section 111 (4) of the Act outlines several other exceptions to the secrecy requirements of section 111. Relevant to the bill is the exception set out in section 111 (4) (c): That a person to whom section 111 applies may divulge any such information in accordance with the direction of a commissioner or an inspector if a commissioner or an inspector certifies that it is necessary to do so in the public interest. Section 111 (5) of the Act operates so that any person to whom information is divulged under section 111 (4), including by direction of a commissioner or an inspector, is bound by the same secrecy requirements as if they had received the information in the exercise of functions under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. This requirement applies to persons receiving information and also a person who is an employee or under control of that person.

In other words, sections 111 (4) and 111 (5) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act currently operate so that a person who is permitted to receive otherwise-protected information in the public interest, pursuant to a direction of a commissioner or an inspector, cannot make a record of that information or further divulge or communicate that information to any other person. The bill proposes to amend sections 111 (4) (c) and 111 (5) of the ICAC Act to the effect that, where a commissioner or inspector makes an order permitting certain information to be divulged in the public interest, that order may also specify further conditions or restrictions on the use of that information. In particular the bill proposes to amend section 111 (4) (c) so that the ICAC may include in an order permitting information to be divulged that the person to whom the information is divulged, or a person or employee under the control or authority of that person, may make a record of the information or may divulge or communicate the information to another person. A commissioner, or the inspector, is also able to include conditions and restrictions on the further use of the identified information.

The bill also proposes a consequential amendment by inserting new section 111 (5A), effectively carving out an ICAC direction from the operation of that secrecy provision to the extent a person is in compliance with the direction of the ICAC. These amendments to the secrecy provision of the ICAC Act were requested by the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC. The proposed amendments recognise that there may be many occasions where it would be appropriate that restrictions on the further use of information apply under a section 111 (4) (c) direction. However, the uniform application of the restriction upon further use of information contained in section 111 (5) of the ICAC Act results in a lack of flexibility in how information may be used.

There are circumstances where the further release of the information would not prejudice the ICAC's operations and would otherwise be appropriate or in the public interest. There will be circumstances where it is in the public interest to make certain information public but that is not currently provided for in the ICAC Act. Such an amendment ensures that the legislative protection of the secrecy of the ICAC's work is not applied beyond the

circumstances in which it is necessary for the ICAC to perform its functions. This proposed amendment will increase the transparency of the ICAC and also retain the flexibility needed to ensure its effective operation, including by imposition of appropriate and adapted secrecy provisions. The proposed amendment complements the other important work of the Government in increasing the transparency and accountability of the ICAC, namely the ICAC and LECC Legislation Amendment Act 2023, which instituted the requirement for the ICAC to develop, publish and report on its performance against time standards for releasing reports relating to its investigations.

The Government is proud of its record in ensuring that the ICAC Act serves the needs of the ICAC and the needs of the people of New South Wales. The amendments proposed by the bill honour the Government's commitment to ensure the effective functioning of strong and independent integrity agencies within New South Wales. The amendments, while not voluminous, should not be mistaken for being merely technical provisions. They are meaningful amendments that are a testament to this Government's dedication to the principles of accountability and transparency. They reflect our collective resolve to ensure that our integrity institutions are equipped with the necessary tools to fulfil their vital role in safeguarding our democracy. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

CRIME AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (14:44): I speak in support of the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill includes changes to legislation on crime and criminal procedure in New South Wales. Several of those changes are of particular relevance to the prevention of domestic and family violence. I work closely with colleagues across government in the pursuit of improved policy and program responses to domestic and family violence, not least the Attorney General. I am pleased to be able to support the bill currently before the House. We of course want protections for victim-survivors of crime and domestic violence to be more effective, clearer and more consistent, and the bill contributes to that outcome.

I turn to specific measures in the bill to support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. Items [10] to [12] of schedule 2 to the bill include reforms to the Victims Register. The Victims Register provides victim-survivors with certain information about offenders in prison to assist them with safety planning. That includes information about a change to the inmate's release date, the name of the correctional centre in which the inmate is being kept, the escape of the inmate, the classification of the inmate and whether the inmate has been granted a leave permit. Currently only victims of offences for which the inmate is serving a sentence are eligible to be registered with the Victims Register. The bill expands access to the Victims Register to a new category of interested persons. An interested person can be someone who is not a defined victim but who can demonstrate a reasonable risk of endangerment to life or safety by the offender. In practice that could apply to a former intimate partner, a previous victim or a witness in proceedings in which the offender was convicted.

Under the changes, an interested person can be provided with the same information as a protected victim. It is a sensible change that provides greater peace of mind to persons who may be at risk from a perpetrator of domestic and family violence. It also complements the significant work underway on primary prevention and early intervention measures. Our approach with primary prevention and early intervention is to implement evidence-based programs to stop domestic violence before it happens and to hold perpetrators to account for their actions. We recognise that we need to work with offenders to effectively change their behaviour to break the cycle of domestic and family violence.

Turning to another element of the bill, schedule 3 amends the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to bolster protections for victims and provide clarity to courts in apprehended violence order [AVO] proceedings. The amendments ensure that victim-survivors have clarity about the status of an existing AVO and whether it is in force. The amendment also ensures that the affected parties, including victim-survivors, have appropriate standing to participate in related proceedings. For example, it will enable a victim-survivor to seek a variation to the terms of the order, if they think they need it. The changes are designed to simplify AVO proceedings and reduce confusion in what can be highly confronting matters. I reiterate my support for the bill. The changes align with the New South Wales Government's priorities to keep victim-survivors safe. The bill simplifies legal processes and offers increased protection to those at risk of violence. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (14:48): I contribute to debate on the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. As a former police officer and former lawyer, as many in this house would be aware, I have appeared on numerous occasions in the Local Court and the District Court in criminal proceedings. I therefore add my own contribution to the debate. The Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 amends eight Acts. The amendments to many of the Acts make some slight but important changes. One important role of government and those departments administered by Ministers is to regularly review legislation to ensure that, as the need arises, appropriate amendments are made to keep legislation modern and to reflect the values of our society. Legislation sometimes requires amendments to take into account decisions of the courts. I am sure some of the amendments that are proposed have regard to court proceedings.

We are now considering one such bill that makes amendments to keep various Acts current or otherwise fit for purpose. I note that many members of this House have already spoken in debate on the bill, and therefore it is not my intention to repeat the contributions on some of the schedules that amend the various Acts. I will limit my contribution to a few of the Acts that are amended by the bill. First, the bill makes some minor but important amendments to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. The amendment to section 8 (1) omits the words "release date" from the section. By implication, the release date then appears within the new section 8 (2) by reference to the fact that, pursuant to the amendment, the inmate may be released "at any time on the day the current sentence expires." The changes proposed by the bill permit an inmate to request a delayed release. That would generally occur in circumstances where the inmate has not had the opportunity to arrange housing, transport and so forth, which sometimes happens. New section 8A states:

- (1) An inmate may be released from custody at any time during the period of 4 days after the inmate's release date if—
 - (a) there is, in the opinion of the Commissioner, a good reason to delay the release, and ...
 - (b) the inmate requests or consents to the delay.

The introduction of section 8A is a sensible addition to the Act, and it will assist those being released to have a smooth transition from custody back into society. The second change to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act is to section 44, which permits the governor of a correctional centre to refuse the transfer of a prisoner from the Australian Capital Territory. Since the opening of the Alexander Maconochie Centre in 2008, the Australian Capital Territory has had its own correctional facilities, and therefore it is no longer necessary to impose mandatory requirements upon Corrective Services NSW. The third change is new section 279A, which I agree is a sensible amendment to assist victims and those people who fall within the ambit of section 279 to have their interest recorded on the Victims Register as interested persons and to receive the same notifications. It is a sensible amendment that is well made within the amending legislation.

Second, the bill amends section 32 of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. Those who have knowledge of the Act will know from experience the confusion that has existed in the courts regarding provisional orders and interim orders. I recall acting in a particular matter as a solicitor in 2021 when difficulty occurred as to whether the defendant was restrained by either a provisional order or an interim order. The amendment proposed by the bill adds to the machinery provisions to make it clear that if on the first return date the court does not dismiss the application, revoke the provisional order, make an interim order or make a final order then the provisional order becomes an interim order, which is made on the first return date. The interim order is made on the same terms as the existing provisional order. As I have previously mentioned, the bill provides the machinery for what will occur with respect to a provisional order on the first return date. I note that the Attorney's second reading speech referred to the service of the interim order. The Attorney stated:

If the court does not do any of these things—

meaning dismiss the application, revoke the provisional order, make an interim order or make a final order—

then the provisional order becomes an interim order on that date and service of the order is not required.

I must say I had some difficulty with that statement because new section 32 (4) (b) provides that revocation of the provisional order only occurs:

... when the defendant is served, in accordance with this Act, with a copy of the interim court order or final apprehended violence order.

I assume the Attorney meant that it will only be revoked once the service of that order takes place. I also mentioned earlier that I appeared in proceedings in 2021. I had a look at some notes I made, and this is the problem that the bill seeks to amend: Magistrates would not make an interim order on the first return date. Some magistrates made the decision to leave the order as a provisional order. I had a conversation with a particular magistrate in May 2021, and she indicated there was a lot of discussion at the time. The Chief Magistrate had indicated that when police take out a provisional order, it remains in place and cannot be varied on an application by the defendant. That is in accordance with the legislation. The magistrate commented to me that Her Honour was "always careful

to not make an interim order", so it seems that there was a process by the courts at that time to leave a provisional order in place. That would stop defendants and persons in need of protection [PINOPs] from making applications to vary the orders.

The Attorney's second reading speech referred to ambiguities and procedural complications if the Local Court does not expressly make an apprehended domestic violence order to replace the provisional order. The ambiguities would arise in the cases that I mentioned where the court did not make an interim order. Many members have also indicated that the bill will assist in granting standing to victims or persons in need of protection in apprehended violence proceedings. I note that defendants and persons in need of protection have standing under the current legislation to vary or revoke an interim order. That appears in section 72, which is found in part 10, division 5 of the Act. Section 72 defines "interested party" to mean "each protected person under the order, whether or not the protected person made the application for the original order"—as well as the defendant and other persons—so PINOPs already had standing to make an application to vary or revoke an order.

The bill sensibly clarifies that if the magistrates do not make an interim order on the first return date then an interim order will automatically be made, which will give both defendants and PINOPs the opportunity to vary or revoke an order. That needs to be made clear. Earlier today I provided the Attorney with a copy of the decision on 20 April 2023 in *Wass v Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW)* [2023] NSWCA 71. In that decision Justice Leeming, with whom Chief Justice Bell agreed, indicated that there are some ambiguities in section 72A. It was an application where a defendant had sought to revoke an order after the expiration of the order. Because section 72A states that an application may be made to a court at any time, there were some issues in the case. Justice Leeming found:

... even if the conclusion I have reached is right—

namely, that it could not be made—

I would respectfully suggest that the statute be clarified so that the thousands of people affected by this legislation need not read this judgment in order to understand the position. It would suffice to include a provision "For the avoidance of doubt, an application to revoke an order may not [or may] be made after the order has expired."

As I indicated, Justice Leeming, with whom the Chief Justice agreed, suggested that some further consideration be given to amending the legislation. [*Extension of time*]

I hope and I believe the Attorney will look into that. The last point I make is that I note that the bill also seeks to amend the Criminal Appeal Act 1912. The Opposition will be moving amendments to that provision in the consideration in detail stage. Otherwise, I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Before I call the member for Gosford, I welcome the guests in the gallery. We are debating the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (14:59): I speak on the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill makes miscellaneous amendments to legislation related to crime and criminal procedure. While miscellaneous, these small changes will play a significant role in protecting and supporting community members across New South Wales and will implement necessary changes to interactions with our criminal justice system. Importantly, this bill is the result of consultation with key industry stakeholders, such as the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, Youth Justice NSW and the Women's Legal Service NSW, who look to ensure the best outcomes for our community.

The amendment of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to expand eligibility for a delayed release ensures equity across inmates. Currently, section 8 (2A) of the Act only applies to convicted inmates with sentences set to expire. No other inmates are able to apply for delayed release under the Act. Further, inmates subject to unscheduled release often face the reality of having no access to the necessities required to successfully integrate into society, including transport, accommodation, medication and food. I give the example of one of my constituents, Mel. Mel was released and taken to a station in the Blue Mountains. He missed the last train. He had hardly any money, no food and no accommodation to go to. The train had just pulled out. Poor old Mel went into the pub. He blames that release circumstance for his ongoing alcoholism, which led to homelessness. He is now home, but not very well. I am sure that if he had been given more support as he left the justice system, Mel's life might have taken a different trajectory.

The risk of reoffending is high; just under a quarter of adults found guilty in 2021 reoffended in the following 12 months, according to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. The lack of supports is one cause of this. A delayed release will give inmates valuable time to make appropriate arrangements and ensure they have supports in place to assist their transition back into the community. It is a small change that potentially has positive implications for human rights, social justice and community safety. Today I thank Martin White, who has had to intervene because a lot of people leave the criminal justice system with very few resources. Martin is a very

generous gentleman in my community whose brother has been involved in the justice system on a number of occasions. Dear Martin takes people on when they leave the justice system and looks after them as best he possibly can—until he becomes so frustrated with their shortfalls that he brings them to my office to seek additional help. If the justice system was a little more supportive at the time of release, maybe those people would not end up with Martin in the first place.

Importantly, the bill also amends the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to introduce the category of interested parties in the Victims Register. In doing so, individuals who are not a victim of an offender, but who can show that their life or safety is reasonably expected to be endangered due to connection with an offender, can be registered as an "interested person" and receive the same information regarding the offender that is provided to victims. This allows interested persons to be notified of matters relating to the offender as prescribed by the Act, including changes to release date, the death or escape of the offender, or parole decisions undertaken, so that they are able to change their circumstances accordingly. Crucially, this allows interested persons to obtain relevant information so that they can implement appropriate safety measures.

The relationship between offenders and individuals can be incredibly complex and varied. As such, the proposed amendment would allow for a non-exhaustive list of interested persons, including where the person was a witness in proceedings against the offender and where the offender has a history of harm against the person. Protecting all parties who have been impacted by offenders is of the utmost importance. Through this bill, the New South Wales Government recognises the importance of the support provided by the Victims Register, including the important extension of safety plans to interested parties.

To further support vulnerable parties, the bill will amend section 281B of the Criminal Procedure Act to expressly classify recorded police interviews with child sexual assault complainants as sensitive evidence. Therefore, the prosecution cannot be required to give an accused person a copy of the recording. This is an incredibly important protection for child sexual assault complainants, preventing their police interviews from being misused. The changes proposed under the Crime and Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 may be miscellaneous; however, their impact is significant. Across a range of categories, this bill will increase support for vulnerable persons as well as protect our community. The bill will amend eight Acts. I support the Crime and Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and I thank the Attorney General for bringing it to the House.

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (15:04): I speak in support of the Crime and Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I commend the Attorney General for his work in this space. The bill will amend legislation related to crime and criminal procedure. Laws pertaining to crime and criminal procedure are essential to keep our community safe and maintain the integrity of the criminal justice system. These amendments aim to improve legislation by providing clarity to the law where needed, rectifying inconsistencies and supporting operational improvements. In particular, the bill will implement amendments to eight separate Acts.

Schedule 1 amends the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 to rectify an inconsistency between provisions relating to orders for the release on parole of a juvenile offender and the discharge of a juvenile offender at the end of their sentence. Sections 50 (2) and (3) of the Act will be amended to provide clarity that a juvenile offender who is being released on parole can also be subject to the early discharge provisions under section 31 of the Act. The bill also introduces various amendments to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. Items [1] to [7] of schedule 2 amend the Act to provide that the release of any inmate from custody can be delayed by up to four days if there is good reason to delay the release and the inmate requests or consents to the delay.

Item [8] of schedule 2 prescribes discretion for the governor of a correctional centre to accept or refuse a transfer from the Australian Capital Territory under division 4, section 44 of the Act. When this section was enacted, the Australian Capital Territory did not have an operational correctional centre. I note that in 2008 the Alexander Maconochie Correctional Centre was opened by ACT Corrective Services. Given the existence of that correctional centre, it is no longer necessary to impose a mandatory requirement upon Corrective Services NSW to accept a full-time detainee from the Australian Capital Territory into New South Wales custody. A key amendment provided by items [10] to [18] of schedule 2 is the expansion of eligibility for the Victims Register under the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to include the category of "interested person". This will allow a person who is not a victim of an offender, but who can demonstrate that their life or safety can reasonably be expected to be endangered because of some connection with the offender, to be registered as an interested person and receive the same information concerning the offender that is provided to victims.

Item [2] of schedule 3 to the bill amends the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to clarify that a provisional apprehended violence order becomes an interim AVO if, on the first return date, the court does not dismiss the application, revoke the provisional order or make an interim court order or a final apprehended violence order. Converting a provisional order to an interim order provides clarity and security about the status of the order and the rights of protected persons. Under these amendments, this includes having the ability to

participate in proceedings relating to the AVO, such as having the standing to seek a variation to the terms of the order to provide victim-survivors stronger protection if needed.

Items [4] to [6] amend the Act to ensure that the evidence given by a complainant in prescribed sexual offence proceedings may be admissible in AVO proceedings. This amendment, however, does not change the burden of proof concerning AVO proceedings. Schedule 5 to the bill makes several amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to provide clarity in the law. Items [3] to [4] amend the Act to classify a recording of a child complainant's interview with police for sexual offence proceedings as sensitive evidence. This means that the prosecution cannot be required, whether by subpoena or any other procedure, to give an accused person a copy of the recording. However, the accused person and defence practitioners will still be able to access the recording through established mechanisms for the purposes of preparing their matters. These amendments in the bill serve to protect sensitive evidence and demonstrate this Government's ongoing efforts to improve and clarify protections for victim-survivors.

Another key function of the bill is to provide consistency and to support operational practices across correctional centres in the State. That is facilitated by amendments to the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 and the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. Schedule 6 provides necessary updates to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 to streamline procedure, ensure consistency and reflect current practice. Another provision of the bill pertains to the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. Items [2], [3] and [5] of schedule 7 to the bill update the digital evidence access order scheme to enable the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission to apply for a digital evidence access order in connection with a search warrant issued under the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016.

The bill demonstrates this Government's commitment to regularly reviewing and updating legislation to ensure the law is fit for purpose. The necessary amendments across the Acts improve the criminal justice system and maintain the integrity of law enforcement. Laws pertaining to crime and criminal procedure are critical to keeping our community safe. Review and reform of related laws serve to enhance the operation of the criminal justice system, providing security to the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (15:11): In reply: I thank the member for Wahroonga, the member for Prospect, the member for Ballina, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Lismore, the member for Parramatta, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Charlestown, the member for Castle Hill, the member for Gosford and the member for Fairfield for their contributions to debate. The bill updates crime and criminal procedure legislation to ensure that the law is fit for purpose, effective, responsive to operational needs and in line with community expectations. I briefly address some of the matters raised during debate on the bill. The member for Wahroonga described the bill as "housekeeping" due to the varied and technical nature of many of the amendments. However, the ongoing maintenance and update of legislation is a critical part of good governance to ensure the laws of New South Wales meet the needs of the community.

The member for Wahroonga also spoke about the Opposition's proposed amendment to remove schedule 4 to the bill. The Government does not support that amendment, and I will speak to that further in a moment. The member for Ballina noted the important role the amendments in the bill play in supporting survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual offences through the justice system. The introduction of "interested persons" as a category in the Victims Register will allow the Victims Register to lawfully disclose information to people who have demonstrated a risk to their safety and will assist their welfare and wellbeing by enabling them to exercise a safety plan. The member for Ballina also commented on an amendment to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 that ensures that evidence given by a complainant in proceedings for a prescribed sexual offence is admissible in related proceedings for apprehended violence orders. In doing so, the bill removes an artificial distinction between AVO proceedings and criminal proceedings for prescribed sexual offences, where such provisions already apply.

The member for Castle Hill acknowledged the importance of undertaking updates to legislation through bills such as this one to keep pace with the needs and expectations of the community. In particular, the member noted the sensible operational improvements made by the amendments to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. I thank the member for Castle Hill for his further comments on the amendment to the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, which confirms that provisional apprehended violence orders are automatically converted to interim orders on the first court date, unless the court orders otherwise. Under these amendments, victim-survivors will still have the immediate protection of a provisional apprehended violence order in urgent circumstances.

By converting a provisional order to an interim order on the first day that the order returns to court, the amendments provide certainty and clarity about the status of the order and the rights of protected persons. That includes having the standing to participate in proceedings relating to the apprehended violence order, such as standing to seek a variation to the terms of the order to give them stronger protection if they think they need it.

The ongoing maintenance and improvement of crime and criminal procedure legislation is an important part of our role in this place. The bill makes amendments across eight Acts to address legislative gaps and responds to identified needs in the criminal justice system to make sure our legislation is fit for purpose. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Mark Hodges.

Consideration in Detail

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): By leave: I will deal with the bill in one group of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 to 3 and schedules 1 to 8 be agreed to.

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (15:15): I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2023-135A:

No. 1 **Criminal Appeal Act 1912—appeals for work health and safety offences**

Page 10, Schedule 4, lines 1–23. Omit all words on the lines.

In support of the amendment, I rely on the speech given by the shadow Attorney General, the member for Wahroonga, during the second reading debate. He specifically indicated that the schedule contains changes to the Criminal Appeal Act 1912 that would allow SafeWork NSW and the Resources Regulator to bring appeals against sentences in the Court of Criminal Appeal on their own action without the current need to get the approval of the Attorney General or the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Opposition appreciates the expertise of the work health and safety regulators that the Attorney General referenced in introducing the bill and the goal to ensure that sentence appeals from work health and safety prosecutions are conducted in a timely and efficient manner. I note that is the intention of most legislation, particularly in civil proceedings: just, quick and cheap. However, it is the Opposition's view that the change in legislation is out of step with the rest of the Criminal Appeal Act, which invests the right of appeal generally in the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Opposition says that the legislation will create a possibility of inconsistency with the policy and administration of criminal law by removing the oversight of either the Attorney General or the Director of Public Prosecutions in the case of criminal appeals by these regulators. Oversight is important. The law needs to work well, and it needs to operate in a cohesive system. The Attorney General, as the first law officer, has an important role to play in maintaining that cohesion, particularly in respect of appeals, as indicated. The Opposition amendment is sensible and should be supported by the House.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (15:18): The Government opposes the Opposition amendment, which would remove provisions in the bill that will enable SafeWork NSW and the NSW Resources Regulator to appeal sentences arising from prosecutions that they have conducted. Currently, those regulators do not have the power to appeal sentences under the Criminal Appeal Act 1912 arising from prosecutions that they have conducted. Instead, potential sentence appeals must be referred to either the Director of Public Prosecutions or me.

The bill will amend section 5D of the Criminal Appeal Act 1912 to empower those regulators to bring their own sentence appeals. This is appropriate given their subject matter expertise and ensures the matters are conducted in a timely and efficient manner. I note the Opposition has raised concerns that giving those regulators the ability to commence their own appeals will cause inconsistency and will be out of step with the provisions of the Criminal Appeal Act 1912, but that argument fails to recognise that it is not a novel or unique ability, even within that very Act. The Environment Protection Authority, which is a regulator with enforcement functions, has had the power to commence its own sentence appeals under the Criminal Appeal Act 1912 since 1998.

The Opposition has also suggested that requiring the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Attorney General to commence appeals in matters where they were not the original prosecutor will somehow enable the efficient use of court time. It is not efficient, in fact. It requires a prosecutor who has not conducted the original prosecution to get across the brief of evidence and the entirety of the previous proceedings before the appeal can even be commenced. The New South Wales Government amendment recognises the subject matter expertise of the work health and safety regulators, SafeWork NSW and the NSW Resources Regulator, and will assist those work health and safety regulators to more efficiently enforce and ensure the safety of workers in New South Wales. In fact, enabling those regulators to initiate sentence appeals is likely to assist in the avoidance of delays and support compliance with recently introduced Supreme Court filing time lines for appeals.

Finally, the Opposition suggested that because SafeWork NSW and the NSW Resources Regulator are given a moiety in penalty, they would not be independent and dispassionate prosecutors when prosecuting an

appeal. It is not at all clear what the basis is for that claim. Both SafeWork NSW and the NSW Resources Regulator have established their own prosecution guidelines to safeguard consistency and independent decision-making in their conduct of prosecutions and appeals. The relevant SafeWork NSW prosecution guidelines, for example, draw on key principles set out in the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions' guidelines—presumably the very guidelines that the Opposition says safeguard the appeals process—as to the rare circumstances in which appeals should be sought. The amendment proposed in the Government's bill is a sensible and practical change and one that was subject to consultation with both peak industry groups and legal stakeholders. The Government opposes the Opposition amendment.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:22): I commend the member for Castle Hill for bringing forward the amendment, and I make a short contribution in regard to those matters. Unfortunately, when the member for Castle Hill said that the amendment would promote efficiency of court time, the only argument put against that by the Attorney General was that it would potentially take some time out of court for the Attorney General or the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] to review the basis for a proposed appeal. That is no argument against the proposition that the member for Castle Hill put as to the efficient use of court time. Indeed, if such an out-of-court review, before the appeal by the DPP or the Attorney General commenced, disclosed that it was not in accordance with accepted principles of sentence appeals by the DPP, that would save court time because it could potentially mean that appeals that would otherwise go ahead would not.

The fact of the matter is that the legal principles for sentencing and the legal principles with regard to appeals for sentences are the same, regardless of whether it is an environmental, WorkCover, mines, rape or murder prosecution. It is only the particular circumstances of the matter which may be different, and those are matters which the relevant DPP appeals reviewer can determine—whether those circumstances are coming from a Crown prosecutor who conducted the trial at first instance in the DPP or whether they are coming from somewhere else. It is eminently sensible that the same people who are regularly conducting appeals in the Court of Criminal Appeal are all making the same decision. That is what the Opposition is saying.

The bill allows for the administration of appeals to be fragmented, disjointed and inconsistent. That is why the member for Castle Hill moved the amendment on behalf of the Opposition. It is brought in good faith to ensure the system is operating the best it possibly can. Nothing that has fallen from the Attorney General really countermands the common sense of the amendment, and I encourage all members to support the amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-135A be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes35
Noes48
Majority..... 13

AYES

Amon, R
Anderson, K
Ayyad, T
Clancy, J
Cooke, S
Coure, M
Cross, M
Dalton, H
Davies, T
Di Pasqua, S
Griffin, J
Hannan, J

Henskens, A
Hodges, M
James, T
Kean, M
Kemp, M
Lane, J
Layzell, D
Marshall, A
Perrottet, D
Petinos, E
Preston, R
Provest, G

Saunders, D
Singh, G (teller)
Sloane, K
Taylor, M (teller)
Thompson, T
Toole, P
Ward, G
Williams, L
Williams, R
Williamson, R
Wilson, F

NOES

Aitchison, J
Atalla, E
Bali, S
Barr, C
Butler, L
Butler, R

Finn, J
Greenwich, A
Hagarty, N (teller)
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J

Mehan, D
Park, R
Quinnell, S
Regan, M
Saffin, J (teller)
Saliba, D

NOES

Car, P
Catley, Y
Chanthivong, A
Cotsis, S
Crakanthorp, T
Daley, M
Davis, D
Dib, J
Donato, P
Doyle, T

Hoenig, R
Holland, M
Kaliyanda, C
Kamper, S
Kirby, W
Leong, J
Li, J
McDermott, H
McGirr, J
McKeown, K

Scully, P
Shetty, K
Smith, T
Stuart, M
Tesch, L
Vo, T
Voltz, L
Warren, G
Washington, K
Whan, S

PAIRS

Crouch, A
Roberts, A
Speakman, M
Tuckerman, W

Watson, A
Wilkinson, K
Minns, C
O'Neill, M

Amendment negatived.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The question is that clauses 1 to 3 and schedules 1 to 8 be agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 3 and schedules 1 to 8 agreed to.**Third Reading**

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.**DETENTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PROHIBITION ON SPIT HOODS) BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from 29 November 2023.**

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (15:35): On behalf of the Opposition, I express our support for the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition on Spit Hoods) Bill 2023, as proposed by the Government. The bill will enshrine the current operational decision by officers in places of detention in New South Wales to not use spit hoods and ensure that only Parliament can authorise the use of spit hoods in the future. A spit hood covers the face or mouth of the wearer to prevent them from spitting or biting other persons. Spit hoods have been associated with significant trauma, injury and death over time. Spit hoods are not used in New South Wales; however, this bill will prevent spit hoods from being authorised for future use.

The bill gives effect to the recommendations of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General. Importantly, the bill introduces a statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods across all of the Acts that govern places of detention, across a number of ministerial portfolios. The bill supports the position held by various bodies that have recommended the prohibition of spit hoods, including the Australian Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, and the Australian Federal Police. Alternative methods of protection are available to law enforcement and correctional officers, and health staff, which they can continue to use to safeguard them against spitting and biting. They include staff-worn personal protective equipment like face shields, masks and gloves.

This legislation comes before the House following a number of reviews across several Australian jurisdictions, including one undertaken by the Australian Federal Police, which recommended that spit hood use be discontinued in view of the limited evidence that biting or spitting assaults pose a medical risk to the victim. The Australian Human Rights Commission made a submission to the Australian Federal Police review into spit hoods. It included three recommendations: one, the use of spit hoods should be discontinued by the Australian Federal Police for all people of all ages and in all settings; two, every step should be taken to ensure that spit hood use is kept to an absolute minimum and should be removed as soon as possible; and three, all police officers be provided with education addressing the risk of transmission of communicable diseases, immediate testing and

support for any officer injured in the course of duty by biting and/or spitting, and additional training in de-escalation and alternative response methods. This will ensure that officers faced with difficult situations are equipped with the skills to improve both their safety and the safety of the perpetrator.

In late December 2022, the Standing Council of Attorneys-General created a national, coordinated legislative prohibition on spit hoods. This noted the negative effects of spit hoods and encouraged a national response to prohibit spit hood use across all jurisdictions. Spit hoods have also been investigated by Amnesty International. It raised concerns over breaches of human rights and torture as a result of spit hoods, particularly in relation to their use on youth in other jurisdictions. The South Australian Ombudsman investigated spit hoods in 2019, noting that their use is "unreasonable and unjust" as well as being "contrary to law". This evidence demonstrates the negative impacts that spit hoods have on communities. The specific detail of this bill responds appropriately to the call for spit hoods to be prohibited in New South Wales.

Schedule 1 to the bill will introduce new section 22A into the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 to define "spit hood" and state that officers in juvenile justice, corrections and the Police Force must not use spit hoods in the exercise of their duties. Many schedules to the bill create a similar legislative framework across a number of Acts to define spit hood and provide that officers must not use spit hoods to exercise their functions. The amending schedule to the bill defines a spit hood as "a covering, however described, intended to be placed over a person's head to prevent the person from spitting on, or biting, another person". That does not include a helmet designed to prevent self-harm, which is used without posing a risk to the wearer by restricting airflow and placing them in a dangerous situation. In essence, the bill makes it clear that spit hoods will never have a place in detention centres in New South Wales. On that basis, the Opposition commends the bill to the House.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:40): I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition on Spit Hoods) Bill 2023. I acknowledge my colleague and Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General who is in the Chamber during my contribution. I also acknowledge the Attorney General and his staff for their efforts in bringing the bill before the House. The bill seeks to amend legislation governing places of detention and the exercise of police powers by introducing a statutory prohibition on use of spit hoods. Many people, whilst they have heard the term, might be wondering what a spit hood is. A spit hood is a hood that covers the face or mouth of the wearer and can usually be secured at the base around the wearer's neck. Spit hoods prevent persons from spitting on and biting other persons but can also cause trauma, injury or death to the wearer.

Spit hoods are not used in New South Wales. To protect against the risk of spitting, law enforcement and health officers use personal protective equipment—otherwise known as PPE—such as face shields or other risk-mitigation strategies, if appropriate in the circumstances. However, there is nothing preventing spit hoods being authorised for use in the future. The bill will ensure that only Parliament will be able to authorise any future use of spit hoods. The bill has arisen following consideration by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General—otherwise known as SCAG—of the feasibility of a nationally coordinated approach to prohibit the use of spit hoods. Jurisdictions agreed to individually review the use of spit hoods in their respective jurisdictions. The use of spit hoods in other jurisdictions varies. South Australia is the only other jurisdiction that has introduced a statutory prohibition.

In more detail, the content of the bill seeks to introduce new section 22A into the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 to define spit hood and provide that a juvenile justice officer, a correctional officer or a police officer exercising functions under the Act must not use a spit hood in the exercise of those functions. It also introduces new section 236R into the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to define spit hood and provide that a correctional officer, police officer or person employed in a private correctional centre exercising functions under the Act must not use a spit hood in the exercise of those functions. It also introduces new section 49A into the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act 2007 to define spit hood and provide that a person exercising functions under the Act must not use a spit hood in the exercise of those functions.

The bill introduces new section 231A into the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to define spit hood and provide that a police officer or other detention officer exercising functions under the Act must not use a spit hood in the exercise of those functions. It introduces section new 69A into the Mental Health Act 2007 to define spit hood and provide that an authorised medical officer or another person exercising functions under the Act must not use a spit hood in the exercise of those functions. The bill also makes a consequential amendment to the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020 to ensure that new section 69A of the Mental Health Act 2007 applies to the treatment of forensic patients and correctional patients. Notes to those provisions in the bill indicate that contraventions of the provisions may constitute an unauthorised and unreasonable use of force.

The bill defines a spit hood as a covering intended to be placed over a person's head to prevent the person from spitting on or biting another person. The bill also clarifies that a spit hood does not include a helmet designed

to prevent self-harm, even if the helmet incorporates a part designed to stop spittle. In terms of stakeholder consultation, again, I acknowledge the Attorney General, his team and everyone involved in the preparation of the legislation. I am delighted to advise the House that all affected New South Wales government agencies were consulted during the drafting of the bill.

There are some important questions that I believe need to be checked off. As with every piece of legislation that comes before us in this place, we must ask ourselves why the policy is needed, based on factual evidence and stakeholder input. A spit hood covers the face or mouth, as mentioned before. I outlined the five Acts amended by the bill. I am delighted to hear that the Opposition will be supporting the legislation. I acknowledge the member for Winston Hills, a sensible member who makes sensible contributions based on fact and what is known to be best. What is the policy's objective, couched in terms of the public interest? It is in the public interest to ensure that detention practices in New South Wales are safe and secure and align with community expectations, and that the use of spit hoods in places of detention is prohibited.

Spit hoods present a risk of choking and asphyxiation and can cause trauma, injury or death to the wearer. What alternative policies and mechanisms were considered in advance of the bill? The reforms implement recommendations arising from the Standing Council of Attorneys-General to consider the feasibility of nationally coordinated action to prohibit the use of spit hoods, including legislative prohibition, and for Attorneys-General to review individually any residual authorities' use of spit hoods in their jurisdictions. Introducing a statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods in places of detention can only be done through legislative amendment. As places of detention in New South Wales are not governed by a single Act, the bill amends various Acts, as I have previously stated—five in total—to ensure that the use of spit hoods is prohibited in all relevant settings.

In relation to analysis, what were the pros and cons, and benefits and costs of each option considered? Spit hoods present a risk of choking and asphyxiation, as I previously referred to, and can cause trauma, injury or death to the wearer. The Government considered it appropriate that legislation governing places of detention in New South Wales be amended to prohibit the use of spit hoods by officers exercising functions under relevant Acts. People who work with detainees can be protected from spitting in ways other than by using spit hoods—for example, by using personal protective equipment such as face shields or other appropriate risk-mitigation strategies.

In terms of the pathway, what are the steps and the timetable for the policy's rollout and who will administer it? The bill will commence on assent. The statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods legislates existing operational practice in places of detention in New South Wales and agencies do not need to take steps to implement the statutory prohibition. In relation to consultation, the detention settings in New South Wales are governed by multiple Acts, as I have outlined, and various ministerial portfolios. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the relevant Ministers who played a key role in this legislation coming before us today for consideration—the Minister for Health, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, the Minister for Corrections and the Minister for Youth Justice—and for the introduction of statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods in places of detention as part of the consideration of this issue. I thank the House for its indulgence and I commend the bill.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:50): On behalf of The Greens, I support the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition on Spit Hoods) Bill 2023. The introduction of a statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods is long overdue in New South Wales. The Greens have been echoing the calls from the community to ban the use of spit hoods across this country for years. Spit hoods are dehumanising, dangerous and archaic. They should never have entered into use. It is disgraceful that they are still being used and have not been outlawed or banned in all parts of Australia.

The use of spit hoods is a gross violation of human rights. It is a clear method of restraint that is humiliating and degrading, and, as the Australian Human Rights Commission has said, "Contrary to the right to be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person." It is significant to note that spit hoods are not currently used in New South Wales, which is a very welcome and critical factor. However, up to this point, South Australia is the only state in Australia to have enacted an absolute legislative ban. It is good that New South Wales is now following suit.

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In its sixth periodic review of Australia's compliance with the convention, the United Nations Committee Against Torture noted concern regarding the use of spit hoods, particularly within the Australian policing context, and deemed it "an archaic practice that amounted to ill-treatment". It went on to recommend that in Australia, "The State party should also take all necessary measures to end the use of spit hoods in all circumstances across all jurisdictions." Alternative and more effective measures exist that are not dehumanising and inhuman, including a lot of measures which are in place in New South Wales. The use of spit hoods or any such device is never justified. It is even more appalling when modern personal protective equipment is plentiful and readily available.

We must remember that this significant bill would not be debated here today if it were not for the tireless campaigning efforts of Wayne Fella Morrison's family, human rights activists and First Nations activists around the country, particularly in South Australia, who fought tirelessly to ban the use of spit hoods in that State. It is the work of community advocates and activists that has got us to this point—the brave work of First Nations activists, family members and warriors leading the charge. We acknowledge them and thank them for their ceaseless efforts to see spit hoods banned across the country. I make specific mention of Latoya Rule, sister of Wayne Fella Morrison, and place her words on the record. She said:

The assumed need for use of spit hoods is purely based on stigma against some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The implications of the use of spit hoods on First Nations people cannot be stressed enough. In a system where physical and social control is exerted by those in power and we see systemic racism infect our institutions, a practice that has continued since colonisation and invasion, and which continues today—namely, the horrific and vile use of these torture devices—must cease. We are now seeing the New South Wales Government act to put a ban in place, which is absolutely welcomed. There is still so much work to be done, though, because time and time again we see the disgraceful and unrestrained overreach of power by police and authority that continues to disproportionately target young people and First Nations communities. There are clear and systemic issues with excessive use of force by police, the excessive power that the police hold—which is given by people in this Chamber—and the excessive harm that that causes in our community.

We absolutely need to ban the use of spit hoods. We also need to ensure that there are human rights protections for all who reside and participate in society in New South Wales. That means we must continue to strive to uphold every person's human rights and listen to First Nations communities' longstanding demands for justice, for recognition of oversight and accountability of the police and for recognition of the ongoing harm to First Nations people in custody, including deaths in custody. We must continue to strive to uphold every person's human rights and to protect our communities from such harm. The Greens commend the bill to the House. We hope that the Government will not stop here when it comes to ensuring that we respect people's human rights in regard to policing in this State.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (15:55): I commend the members who have spoken to the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition on Spit Hoods) Bill 2023 because they come from across the political spectrum, and this is essentially a bill that defends human rights. The prohibition on spit hoods is an important human rights protection and, whilst they are not used in New South Wales, it is important that we make it illegal for that to happen. It has been explained that a spit hood is a hood that covers the face or mouth of the wearer and is usually secured at the base of the wearer's neck. The idea is that it prevents people from spitting on or biting others and it is usually used when trying to restrain someone, normally in law enforcement or perhaps in the mental health sector or prisons and the like.

Given that the hood is usually kept around the neck and that someone who has to be restrained in a way to stop them from spitting or biting is potentially not of sound mind or acting rationally, there is a risk of trauma to the wearer as well as injury or death, and if someone is spat on there are risks of disease. Looking at ways to stop this from happening is a good thing. There are other ways of protecting those dealing with the person being restrained, such as eye protection and mouth protection. Those are the kinds of things that are currently being used in such instances.

In order to prohibit the use of spit hoods, this bill effectively amends six Acts: Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987; Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999; Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act 2007; Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002; Mental Health Act 2007; and Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act of 2020. Each of those essentially defines what a spit hood is and then prevents its use by people in the justice or correctional sector, so Juvenile Justice officers, Corrections officers, police officers et cetera, whilst still able to exercise their functions under each of those Acts, cannot use a spit hood while carrying out those functions. Contravention of those provisions will constitute an unauthorised and unreasonable use of force. The bill goes on to make other amendments. The important point is that extensive stakeholder consultation has been undertaken. The appropriate New South Wales Government agencies have been consulted. The NSW Police Force, the Ministry of Health, Corrective Services and Youth Justice are the primary ones.

The bill follows consideration by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General of the feasibility of a nationally coordinated approach to prohibit the use of spit hoods. It is good that it is not just New South Wales leading the way; it is a national initiative. One jurisdiction still allows the use of spit hoods, and I will come to that, time permitting. The bill is an important reform, which will ensure that when people, unfortunately, need to be detained in this State, for whatever reason, it is done in a safe, secure way and is in line with community expectation, which is, of course, that people should be treated in a humane manner.

In addition to the stakeholder consultation that has been undertaken, recommendations have been made by a number of organisations. For example, in the NGO space, groups such as Amnesty International previously called for a ban on the use of spit hoods. In 2017 in the Northern Territory, a royal commission inquired into the detention of children, and in 2019 the Ombudsman in South Australia undertook an inquiry. Both inquiries recommended that spit hoods should be prohibited in certain settings. In October 2022, the United Nations subcommittee on the prevention of torture visited Australia. In June 2023 it handed down its recommendations, which included a complete ban on the use of spit hoods. Non-government organisations, State jurisdictions, international bodies and representatives of the major parties in this place all recommend that, which is good to see.

Earlier I said that there is one jurisdiction that still allows the use of spit hoods in certain circumstances. But I got that the wrong way around. South Australia is the only jurisdiction with a statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods. It led the way following a review of the death in the Royal Adelaide Hospital of a person who was on remand and had been restrained and placed in a spit hood. There is a push towards statutory prohibition of the use of spit hoods in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. I strongly suggest that my colleagues in other jurisdictions move quickly to implement that prohibition because it is important to stamp out the use of spit hoods right across Australia. The South Australian Act is omnibus legislation similar to the bill before the House and came into effect in November 2021. I am sure the South Australian legislation has played a part in shaping the provisions of the bill before the House. The bill is an important reform. I am proud to have participated in debate on the bill, and I commend it to the House.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:03): I support the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition on Spit Hoods) Bill 2023. Before I provide some background to the bill, I make the point that using a spit hood is very inhumane. I cannot think of any other word to describe it. There has been a lot of debate about it, but it is simply inhumane. Apart from that, a spit hood presents a risk of choking and asphyxiation, and can cause trauma and injury to or the death of the wearer. Spit hoods must be prohibited because a restraint that has the ability to cause such harm should not be used. However, to mitigate the risk of spitting, law enforcement and health officers in New South Wales may use personal protective equipment, such as face shields, eyewear, masks and gloves, and employ other risk mitigation strategies where appropriate. In exceptional circumstances, restraint may be relied on to de-escalate challenging behaviours. But we must make sure that anything we do is safe.

In the course of their duties, if a worker is spat on by a detainee the worker may be eligible to apply for mandatory testing under the Mandatory Disease Testing Act 2021. All the various reviews and reports have expressed concern about the use of spit hoods on both adults and children in detention and have recommended that they be banned. For example, non-government organisations have recommended a ban, and even people who work within detention systems have said they want spit hoods banned. The final report of the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory and the 2019 report on the South Australian Ombudsman's investigation concluded that spit hoods should be prohibited.

The bill amends legislation that governs places of detention in New South Wales to prohibit the use of spit hoods by officers who exercise functions under a range of Acts. The bill ensures that only Parliament will be able to authorise the future use of spit hoods. I hope that there will never be an occasion when Parliament has to deal with that. The bill will achieve prohibition by inserting into a range of Acts that govern places of detention provisions that prohibit the use of spit hoods. The Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 will capture youth detention centres; the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999, correctional centres and court cells; the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act 2007, treatment centres; the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, police cells and the NSW Police Force generally; and, importantly, the Mental Health Act 2007 and the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020 will capture mental health facilities.

New section 22A of the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 defines spit hood and provides that a juvenile justice officer, a correctional officer or a police officer exercising functions under the Act must not use a spit hood in the exercise of those functions. The bill is clear and gives direct expression to the prohibition. The bill inserts the same clear prohibition into the other Acts I have mentioned. In relation to mental health, the bill makes a consequential amendment to the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020 to ensure that the prohibition applies to the treatment of forensic patients and correctional patients, who come under Justice Health. Importantly, as I said, they are being prohibited because of the risk of asphyxiation, other trauma and even death in some places. I make clear that they are not used in New South Wales, which is an important point, but this legislation actually gives a legislative prohibition. It puts even more beyond doubt that it is not a practice that we in New South Wales want happening in any of our institutions. We know about the reports and the reviews et cetera, but, importantly, the bill has arisen following consideration by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General, or SCAG, of the use of spit hoods.

Mr Geoff Provest: That is a good acronym.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: I just know it as SCAG. I call it SCAG, as does the member for Prospect. It works carefully and quite cautiously at times, and it can consider these issues in great detail and take the time to do so. The nationally coordinated approach was considered in April 2023, and in September there was agreement to review any residual authorities for the use of spit hoods in their respective jurisdictions. The bill gives effect to those recommendations but also to the will of the legislators and community of New South Wales. As I said before, the New South Wales Government considers it appropriate that this legislative prohibition be introduced, which will ensure that only Parliament can authorise any future use of spit hoods. As the member for Lismore, I hope that such a thing never comes before the Parliament, so that we do not have to deal with it. Multiple Acts are being amended because there are multiple places where they could be used. Unfortunately, we have seen spit hoods on TV in rather dramatic, unedifying and undignified circumstances. I can only say it is cruel and inhumane; that is how I reacted to it, and I think a lot of people did. The bill defines a spit hood as:

a covering, however described, intended to be placed over a person's head to prevent the person from spitting on, or biting, another person.

Generally, a spit hood is a hood that covers the face or mouth of the wearer. It can usually be secured at the base, around the wearer's neck, and can be made from various materials including mesh, which could be rather dangerous. As we know, spit hoods are designed to prevent the wearer from doing a whole range of things, including biting. Also—and I cannot say this enough—spit hoods present a risk of choking and asphyxiation and can cause trauma, injury or death to the wearer, which we cannot abide. I know that there are situations where officers need protection. All the protections they can avail themselves of are there. We are mindful of that as well.

The bill's definition of a spit hood provides that a spit hood does not include a helmet designed to prevent self-harm even if the helmet incorporates a part designed to stop spittle. When required, Corrective Services NSW uses padded helmets designed to prevent the wearer from self-harm. Those helmets are constructed out of solid material, allow for ventilation, do not restrict air flow and do not pose a risk of injury to the wearer. With those comments, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:14): I briefly contribute to debate on the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition on Spit Hoods) Bill 2023. I compliment the member for Lismore for her in-depth contribution. Undoubtedly, it has improved my knowledge of spit hoods. As previous speakers have said, the object of the bill is to amend six Acts providing for the detention of a person, to prohibit the use of spit hoods, which are placed over the head to prevent a person from spitting on or biting other persons. I will not go through the different Acts, but I felt obligated to rise and briefly contribute to this.

A number of years ago, I chaired the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety, and we held an inquiry into attacks on emergency workers. At that time, the Police Association, NSW Ambulance and the Health Services Union, in the person of Gerard Hayes, whom we all know around the traps here, and the Nurses and Midwives' Association attended. One of the things we found hard was determining who is an emergency worker. We all know the paramedics, the police and the firies. We quickly got into the surf lifesavers, the RFS and the SES, and the list went on. It was a bit hard to determine whether hospital workers were. It was easier to say doctors and nurses were, but then we had people who provided security in the wards. We had catering and administrative staff. We defined it as anyone who worked at a hospital.

It is a long story but, at the end of the day, one of the major objectives that came out of it was about passing bodily fluids. One of our recommendations was that there be mandatory testing of a person who did so; we had representations from a lot of civil libertarians, all meaning well, and they were concerned we would target people with AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases and things like that. I remember the member for Newtown objecting to a number of things, but the committee's general view was that you gave away your rights when you passed your bodily fluids onto an emergency worker. If you were an emergency worker and somebody passed blood or spit to you, you went through three months of what I guess you would call hell; if you were in a relationship, you would say, "Hang on. I can't have any contact with you. I have to have a number of blood tests to see whether I have hepatitis or any other diseases." The Police Association's president spoke about the amount of emotional break-ups and the stress.

All these emergency workers do a stressful job fabulously. I think Western Australia had such a mandate, but it was not in long enough to work out its effects. But I am pleased to say that we are moving towards that. I am a great supporter of that. I think we should do all we can. I am horrified to think of what those people went through for the next three months if they were spat on or had blood injected or whatever. They have to go through three or four tests. It is a bit like Russian roulette. I think anything we can do would be a plus.

I can understand how spit hoods came in, in the old days. I think I was younger when *The Silence of the Lambs* came out, and I was quite horrified by that show. We have got to keep working to protect our frontline

workers from bodily fluids. When I started work on that inquiry, I knew nothing about what that meant, really, until I heard some horrifying stories from our emergency workers. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:19): On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In reply: I thank the member for Winston Hills, and shadow Minister for Corrections; the member for Campbelltown, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier; the member for Lismore, and Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery; the member for Leppington; the member for Newtown; and the member for Tweed for their contributions to debate on the Detention Legislation Amendment (Prohibition Spit Hoods) Bill 2023. I thank also all those members who have spoken to me and to the Attorney General for their support of the bill.

It is not often that the Liberal Party, the Labor Party, The Greens and The Nationals all agree on a piece of legislation, but this bill has achieved exactly that. It pools our agreement because of the barbaric act of using spit hoods in the past. We have seen time and again in the media, in police and human rights reports the impact on those incarcerated who are subject to spit hoods. I note what the member for Tweed said about the transmission of bodily fluids to frontline workers. I remember those debates well and I totally agree with him. We have to find a balance in looking after those who are under arrest, accused of crimes or incarcerated, as well as those who work in law enforcement and in other services to help our community. That is the case in so many places throughout the world, including Australia. The bill puts that balance well and truly in place.

As the member for Winston Hills noted, the bill enshrines the current operational decisions by agencies administering places of detention in New South Wales to not use spit hoods. As the statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods legislates existing operational practice, the bill has no operational impact on affected agencies and those agencies do not need to take steps to implement the statutory prohibition. It is a credit to New South Wales, to our law enforcement and correctional services and others, that we do not use spit hoods in this State. We have seen horrific actions in the Northern Territory and other places where spit hoods have been used. There is no place in Australia for such things, or anywhere else.

The statutory prohibition on the use of spit hoods is not limited to within places of detention. It also applies when officers exercising functions under the respective Acts are exercising those functions outside of places of detention—for example, if a correctional officer is escorting an inmate to hospital. Given the risks posed to persons as a result of the use of spit hoods, the human rights implications and, in particular, the negative impacts on children, the New South Wales Government considers that it is appropriate that a legislative prohibition be introduced that ensures that only Parliament can authorise the future use of spit hoods. I shudder to think if that day ever comes. I cannot imagine any situation where we ever will.

The bill was introduced following consideration of the use of spit hoods by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General. In April 2023 the Attorneys-General considered the feasibility of a nationally coordinated approach to prohibit the use of spit hoods and in September 2023 they agreed to review any residual authorities to use spit hoods in their respective jurisdictions. The bill gives effect to those recommendations. I reiterate the position of the New South Wales Government is that the use of spit hoods in places of detention is an outdated practice that does not align with community expectations for the treatment of persons in places of detention. Spit hoods are not used in New South Wales but that does not mean that they could not be used in the future. If so, Parliament will decide. The bill makes it clear that spit hoods will never have a place in detention settings in New South Wales. The bill also aims to ensure that detention practices are safe, secure and align with community expectations. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT: On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (EXECUTIVE COUNCIL) BILL 2023

Second Reading Speech

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (16:24): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Constitution Amendment (Executive Council) Bill 2023. The bill proposes amendments to the Constitution Act 1902, which includes provisions relating to the meetings of the

Executive Council. At those meetings the Executive Council and the Governor convene to make decisions and perform key government functions. The meetings traditionally occur in person. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary legislative arrangements were introduced to allow meetings of the Executive Council to be held virtually. That ensured the continuity of executive government in circumstances where the Executive Council was unable to meet in person. Those temporary arrangements were automatically repealed on 27 September last year. The bill seeks to make those temporary arrangements permanent and allow meetings of the Executive Council to be held virtually on an ongoing basis.

The Executive Council plays a critical role in the governance of New South Wales. The primary function of the Executive Council is to provide formal advice to the Governor in relation to the Governor's statutory responsibilities. Those statutory responsibilities include giving legal effect to matters such as the appointment of persons to statutory offices, the making of regulations and proclamations, the compulsory acquisition of land and other administrative acts such as the allocation of legislation and the establishment of government departments. The Executive Council consists of the Governor and Ministers of the Crown who are appointed as members of the Executive Council. Ministers formally convey the advice of the government of the day to Her Excellency who acts as the Governor-in-Council on the advice of the Government. In practice, meetings of the Executive Council are traditionally convened in person at Government House. The Governor presides at the meetings accompanied by the Clerk of the Executive Council and a minimum of two Cabinet Ministers in attendance. That practice reflects the significance of the decisions and advice tendered within meetings of the Executive Council.

The Executive Council was established in 1825 through letters patent. The initial royal instructions received by the Governor emphasised the role of the Executive Council, requiring the Governor to preside at its meetings, consult with its members and, subject to a few permitted exceptions, act upon its advice. The practice of the Executive Council has evolved over time, with later royal instructions prescribing the quorum for a meeting of the Executive Council to be two members, allowing for a more flexible and efficient decision-making process. The requirements for meetings of the Executive Council remain today, embedded in the provisions of the Act and other legislation, including the Interpretation Act 1987.

The Act requires the Governor, or other vice-regal official in the absence of the Governor, to preside at meetings of the Executive Council. The Act also stipulates that a quorum for any Executive Council meeting must consist of at least two of its members. Those requirements reflect the foundational principles of the Executive Council. Traditionally meetings of the Executive Council have been conducted in person and until recently were not explicitly authorised to be held otherwise. It was the COVID-19 pandemic that necessitated changes to the way meetings of the Executive Council were held.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Act was amended to allow the making of regulations that could prescribe the ways and forms in which meetings of the Executive Council could be conducted. The regulations allowed individuals who were required to be present at Executive Council meetings to be present by way of teleconference or videoconference. The foundational principles of Executive Council meetings were maintained—the Governor still presided and the quorum remained at least two members. The purpose of the regulations was to ensure the continuity of the essential government functions, even in circumstances where in-person meetings were not reasonably practical. The capacity to convene meetings of the Executive Council by way of teleconference or videoconference provided significant flexibility during the pandemic.

Those enabling provisions and associated regulations were automatically repealed on 27 September 2023, meaning virtual meetings of the Executive Council were no longer expressly authorised. While the COVID-19 emergency has since evolved, circumstances which make it impractical for meetings of the Executive Council to be held in person may arise again in the future. The purpose of the bill is to make permanent the measures allowing Executive Council meetings to be conducted in a manner other than in person. The bill achieves that by way of an amendment to section 35D of the Act, which allows Executive Council meetings to be held remotely should it be required to meet the needs of the Government.

The amendments provide that meetings of the Executive Council may now be convened in person or by means of a teleconference or videoconference. Further, the amendments confirm that the Governor or other presiding member may similarly preside over a meeting of the Executive Council either in person or by means of a teleconference or videoconference. The need for these changes is clear: The ability to convene the Executive Council remotely guarantees uninterrupted government decision-making in instances where in-person meetings are impractical.

I am advised that Her Excellency the Governor is supportive of these measures, noting that, while there is a preference to hold meetings of the Executive Council in person where possible, the availability of virtual meetings provides a valuable contingency should exceptional circumstances arise. The provisions of the bill will commence on the date of assent. The amendments proposed in the bill will allow meetings of the Executive Council to take place virtually on an ongoing basis. I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (16:30): I speak on behalf of the Coalition in debate on the Constitution Amendment (Executive Council) Bill 2023. The bill seeks to amend the New South Wales Constitution and would extend the extraordinary provisions introduced during those extraordinary times that were the COVID pandemic. This is the second time in the life of this Parliament that the Government has sought to amend the Constitution—the first pertained to Sydney Water—and we must be cautious to ensure that this second time is much more than a matter of mere convenience and does not undermine the institutions of government in New South Wales. It behoves us to look very carefully at any changes to the important document that provides the authority for lawmaking in this State.

Section 5 of the New South Wales Constitution confers power on the Legislature "to make laws for the peace, welfare, and good government of New South Wales in all cases whatsoever", and in section 3 (1) the Legislature is defined as meaning "His Majesty the King with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly". Section 7 (1) of the Australia Act makes it clear that that power of the King is to be exercised at all times by the Governor of New South Wales unless the King is personally present in New South Wales. Section 35B of the New South Wales Constitution provides that the function of the Executive Council is to provide the advice to the Governor in respect of the government of the State that is contemplated by section 5, which is a necessary part of the doctrine of responsible government that is expressly preserved as part of our constitutional arrangements under section 35A.

The Executive Council is not some mere historical artefact left over from a bygone era; it is an integral part of our system of government and a constituent element of our tripartite legislative process. The provisions of the Constitution referring to it should only be altered with care, which is why, while members on this side of the House recognise that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, in ordinary times there needs to be a compelling case for changes to the operation of the Executive Council. That case has not been made adequately by the proponents of the bill, being the Government.

As the Hon. John Graham said in his second reading speech, the extraordinary times of COVID required an amendment to the Constitution Act 1902 to allow individuals who were required to be present at Executive Council meetings to attend by way of teleconference or videoconference. Those temporary measures were introduced in response to a temporary challenge, which is now behind us. However, it is foreseeable that similar circumstances in the future may require flexibility to ensure the continuity of Executive Government and Executive Council meetings. In that sense, it is not unreasonable to introduce this amendment to enable meetings to be held remotely where necessary. I emphasise the words "where necessary"—not as a matter of course but as an exception.

The Minister's second reading speech noted the preference to hold meetings of the Executive Council in person where possible. It is not clear that the bill is addressing any current issue other than the convenience of Ministers. In its current form, the bill provides for remote meetings of the Executive Council at any time and for any reason, without regard to necessity. The Coalition believes that presents a risk that future Ministers will be able to literally phone in on one of the most important stages of the carriage of Government business within New South Wales. The cooperation of the Governor with Cabinet is an essential part of the uniquely successful nature of our democracy, and we should not tamper with it without a clear and present need. As such, the Coalition will move an amendment to the bill in the consideration in detail stage.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:34): I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Executive Council) Bill 2023. I acknowledge the Minister's efforts and thank her for her contribution, as well as the efforts of my friend and Minister in the other place the Hon. John Graham and his team in bringing this together. Whilst I acknowledge some of the points raised by the member for Winston Hills, the intention of the bill is not to have the Executive Council meeting online all the time. But one thing the member said that I agree with is the importance of the Executive having every opportunity to function as effectively as possible.

There may well be a circumstance or a situation where the Premier or a couple of Ministers have COVID and cannot be around other people, or where it would be irresponsible to do so. The bill means that they can tune in via teleconference or videoconference or whatever means are in place. If COVID showed us anything, it showed us that we must learn to still live and function. There are not too many more important functions in New South Wales, and I think the expectation of the people of New South Wales is that the Executive Government functions. So this is a sensible step because we learnt during COVID that we still have to function, and the Government is putting steps in place so that, no matter what happens, the Executive can still function.

The Minister stated that obviously the preference is to meet in person, but there may well be circumstances at certain times when the Executive still has to meet but its members are unable to meet in person. Whilst

provisional measures were put in place during COVID to ensure that the Executive met and remained functional, that only displays to us the importance of having those provisions in place all the time, because the Executive Government must be able to function effectively all the time. That is what this change does. Ultimately, as the Minister stated, the bill allows meetings of the Executive Council to be held by means of teleconference or videoconference. That provides a useful contingency and ensures the continuity of Executive Government should the Executive Council be unable to meet in person.

As I stated before and as the Minister made very clear, it is on a needs basis. If the Executive needs to meet remotely via teleconference or videoconference, this legislative change allows that to happen. All that the amendment being proposed by members opposite would do is put barriers in front of the fluid process for the Executive Government to meet. That is why the bill is so important, and I commend the Minister. At the end of the day, legislative reforms need to include all the important functions of government. I do not think there would be too many more important functions of government than the role of the Executive and the capacity for it to meet without any barriers.

If this measure was not in place and the Premier, the Deputy Premier and our good transport Minister all came down with COVID, they would be put in a position where legislation in this place could be held up because they were unable to meet. Does that serve the people of New South Wales well? Of course it does not, because that is why we have elected Ministers and a Premier—to represent the interests of the people of New South Wales based on the Government's agenda. It is the role and responsibility of each and every member of the Government, from the Premier down, to ensure that we fulfil the obligations of the Government's agenda that was mandated at the election. That is what the Government is focusing on. This change will make sure that that can happen. It may seem quite menial or less of a priority, but pressing matters on the Government's agenda, which is based on the needs of the people of New South Wales, could otherwise be held up. The bill ensures that the Executive can meet irrespective of prevailing circumstances.

As the Minister stated, the bill proposes an amendment to section 35D of the Constitution Act 1902, which includes provisions relating to meetings of the Executive Council. It inserts two new subsections into section 35D of the Act: section 35D (3A) and (3B). These new subsections provide that a meeting of the Executive Council may be held in person or by means of a teleconference or videoconference, and the provision extends to the Governor or other presiding members. The bill makes permanent arrangements for virtual Executive Council meetings following the successful temporary arrangements that were introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and which were repealed on 27 September 2023.

I repeat that virtual meetings would only occur on an as-needs basis. I urge members opposite to give serious and strong consideration to their position on supporting this bill. A lot gets said in this place. We talk about the previous Government, and Opposition members talk about the members of the current Government and what we are doing or have not done. At the end of the day, when there are sensible measures to be put in place, sense must prevail. This is a sensible change to ensure a fluid process for the Executive to meet without barriers when required. If the bill does not pass there are potential barriers that would at times stand in the way of the Executive Government functioning at the capacity expected by this Parliament and by the people of New South Wales. It is sensible that this bill has come before us for consideration and it is equally sensible for every member in this place to support it. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:41): I speak in support of the Constitution Amendment (Executive Council) Bill 2023. As members know, the purpose of the bill is to allow the meetings of the Executive Council to be held by means other than face to face, such as by teleconference or videoconference. I realise that requires a change to the Constitution Act 1902, which takes some time to do, but in this day and age it is surprising that some of these changes have not happened sooner. The bill provides for a useful contingency measure—and it is a contingency. It is not to become the norm. It ensures the continuity of Executive Government should the Executive Council be unable to meet in person.

Having lived through COVID, we know the disruption that it caused to a whole range of things, including to how this place operated. We had to make changes to ensure that the Parliament could still function. It is the intention of both the Government and Government House that meetings of the Executive Council continue to take place in person. That is very clear. That preference aligns with both the historical norms of meetings of the Executive Council and the nature of the decisions made at those meetings. But when there is a pressing need for the option of teleconference or videoconference, it is really important to have that option available.

We have already heard in previous contributions that there were 26 Executive Council meetings between the 2023 election and 27 September 2023, which was the date on which the temporary measures, which were nearly identical to the provisions of this bill, were repealed. Her Excellency the Governor and Government House have previously supported the availability of virtual meetings of the Executive as a valuable contingency—and I use that word repeatedly—to ensure the continuity of Executive Government. To offer some background, the

Executive Council gives legal authority to matters such as the appointment of persons to statutory offices, the making of regulations and proclamations, the compulsory acquisition of land and other administrative acts such as the allocation of legislation and, importantly, the establishment of government departments.

The Executive Council consists of the Governor and Ministers of the Crown who are appointed as members of the Executive Council. Members of Parliament know what the Executive Council is, but when we use that terminology it is not a familiar phrase to the public at large. Therefore, it is important to put that explanation on record in *Hansard* in any contribution made on this matter. Legislative arrangements allowing meetings of the Executive Council to be held virtually were introduced in response to COVID-19. It took some debate for that to happen, but it was absolutely necessary. Those arrangements were repealed on 27 September 2023.

In closing, I will summarise the content of the bill. The bill proposes an amendment to section 35D of the Constitution Act 1902, which includes provisions relating to meetings of the Executive Council. The amendment inserts two new subsections into section 35D of the Act: section 35D (3A) and (3B). These two new subsections provide that a meeting of the Executive Council may be held in person, as is done now, or by means of teleconference or videoconference, and the provision extends to the Governor or other presiding members. The bill makes permanent arrangements for virtual Executive Council meetings following the successful temporary arrangements that were introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (16:47): In reply: I thank the member for Winston Hills, the member for Campbelltown and the member for Lismore for their contributions to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Executive Council) Bill 2023. I will briefly address some of the matters raised. I thank the member for Winston Hills for his comments in relation to the bill. The Government acknowledges the importance of the Executive Council and it has not taken the decision to amend the Constitution Act lightly. We obviously recognise the importance of ensuring the continuity of Executive Government.

It is clear that it is both the view of the Government and of Government House that the preference is that Executive Council meetings continue to be held in person, but that there also be the practical availability of the opportunity to hold those meetings virtually. It will be a useful way to ensure the continuity of those processes. As I outlined in my second reading speech, the Government does not support the requirements in the foreshadowed Opposition amendment. I also thank the member for Campbelltown and the member for Lismore, who have highlighted the very practical reasons why this bill is a sensible move. The bill not only ensures and recognises the historical importance and function of the Executive Council but also modernises it for practical application. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Mark Taylor.

Consideration in Detail

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): By leave: I will deal with the bill in one group of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (16:49): I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-003B:

No. 1 **Executive council meetings to be held remotely only in exceptional circumstances**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 11—

(3C) For the purposes of subsections (3A)(b) and (3B)(b), a meeting of the Executive Council may be held, or the Governor, Vice-President or senior member presiding may preside at a meeting, by means of a teleconference or video conference only if exceptional circumstances prevent—

(a) the meeting being held in person, or

(b) the Governor, Vice-President or senior member presiding at the meeting in person.

The amendment would confine Executive Council meetings to be held remotely only in exceptional circumstances that prevent the meeting from being held in person. It would provide flexibility for the continuity of Executive Government but only empower Executive Council meetings to be held remotely in exceptional circumstances. As such, it responds well to the needs arising from a situation like the COVID pandemic, while at the same time showing the proper respect to the importance and integrity of the Executive Council, and safeguards against the hypothetical Minister seeking to phone in one of their most solemn duties. It is a sensible amendment that ensures that meetings of the Executive Council are held in person where possible. I commend the amendment to the House.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (16:50): The Government opposes the amendment. The intention of both the Government and Government House is for meetings of the Executive Council to continue to be held in person. That preference aligns with historical norms and the nature of the decisions made at those meetings. However, the Government recognises the need for continuity in the administration of the State, including during an emergency, so meetings will be held by means of teleconference or videoconference only in exceptional circumstances. There were 26 Executive Council meetings between the 2023 election and 27 September 2023, which is the date that the temporary measures, which were near identical to the provisions of the bill, were repealed. All 26 of those meetings, including both scheduled meetings and "special" meetings, were held in person.

Including a subjective "exceptional circumstances" requirement, as the Opposition amendment proposes, would expose matters considered at a virtual Executive Council meeting to unnecessary legal challenge, risk and associated costs. For example, a person who may be aggrieved by a decision made at a virtual Executive Council meeting may challenge that decision on the basis that the requisite "exceptional circumstances" were not apparent, despite the form of the meeting having no impact on the matter decided. Amending the Constitution Act 1902 to expressly allow meetings of the Executive Council to be held virtually provides a useful contingency, ensuring that Government business can continue even when exceptional circumstances prevent in-person meetings. That adaptation balances tradition with preparedness and continuity of government. Importantly, the Governor and Government House are supportive of those arrangements.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): The question is that Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-003B be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes29
Noes49
Majority.....20

AYES

Amon, R	Kean, M	Sloane, K
Anderson, K	Kemp, M	Taylor, M (teller)
Clancy, J	Lane, J	Thompson, T
Cooke, S	Marshall, A	Toole, P
Coure, M	Perrottet, D	Ward, G
Cross, M	Petinos, E	Williams, L
Davies, T	Preston, R	Williams, R
Di Pasqua, S	Provest, G	Williamson, R
Griffin, J	Saunders, D	Wilson, F
Hodges, M	Singh, G (teller)	

NOES

Aitchison, J	Greenwich, A	Piper, G
Atalla, E	Hannan, J	Quinnell, S
Bali, S	Harris, D	Regan, M
Barr, C	Harrison, J	Saffin, J (teller)
Butler, L	Haylen, J	Saliba, D
Butler, R	Holland, M	Scully, P
Car, P	Hornery, S	Shetty, K
Catley, Y	Kaliyanda, C	Smith, T
Chanthivong, A	Kamper, S	Stuart, M
Cotsis, S	Kirby, W	Tesch, L (teller)
Crakanthorp, T	Leong, J	Vo, T
Dalton, H	Li, J	Voltz, L
Davis, D	McGirr, J	Warren, G
Dib, J	McKeown, K	Washington, K
Donato, P	Mehan, D	Whan, S
Doyle, T	Park, R	Wilkinson, K
Finn, J		

PAIRS

Ayyad, T
Crouch, A
Henskens, A
James, T
Roberts, A
Speakman, M
Tuckerman, W

Hagarty, N
Watson, A
Daley, M
Hoenig, R
McDermott, H
Minns, C
O'Neill, M

Amendment negatived.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 agreed to.**Third Reading**

Ms JO HAYLEN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.*Public Interest Debate***BACK TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS**

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (17:03): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the former Liberal-Nationals Government's Back to School voucher program provided families with vital cost-of-living relief in the form of \$150 in vouchers to help with the cost of school supplies, uniforms and technology.
- (2) Notes that New South Wales families are bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis created by State and Federal Labor's economic mismanagement.
- (3) Condemns the Minns Labor Government for cutting the Back to School voucher program to fund a \$9.5 billion union pay deal.
- (4) Condemns the Deputy Premier's comments on 14 January 2024 when she described support for working families as a "cash splash".
- (5) Notes that on 15 January 2024 the Premier said that Back to School vouchers "haven't been changed".
- (6) Calls on the New South Wales Government to honour the Premier's comment and reinstate funding for Back to School vouchers for the 2024 school year.

I would not have thought that it is a particularly controversial concept that people in our communities have relied on Back to School vouchers to help ease the cost of living during what is a very expensive time for families. Countless people across my electorate have written to me in response to the Liberal Party and The Nationals petitions we have been running calling on the community to help us save Back to School vouchers. Person after person has given us examples of why it is important. Martine of Caringbah said:

Thank you for this. The labor govt should know how interest rates have increased and its impacts on families - this was a cruel hit. Sadly I've heard of some families dropping sports also due to finances. Sport and fitness should be key to every child growing up to be aware of their health for the future.

Michelle of Sylvania said:

Would love the back to school voucher to return they help so much with the returning to school expenses.

Lauren of Caringbah said:

PLEASE BRING BACK THE VOUCHERS!! WE HAVE ALL SUFFERED ENOUGH AND NEED SOME BREATHING SPACE WHEN IT COMES TO THINGS LIKE SENDING OUR KIDS BACK TO SCHOOL.

Finally, Jay of Miranda said:

Having these vouchers gave our family a massive financial relief during an extremely stressful start to the year. We definitely feel it this year with now 4 children starting high school and primary school.

It is quite clear that members opposite do not care, and I do not understand why when so many people in their communities have redeemed those important vouchers in the past. Those vouchers ensure that every child is equipped with the essential items they need to succeed in the new school year. Despite that, the Minns Labor

Government has stripped away support for the program in the same way it has stripped away support for every other significant voucher program that our communities have relied on—whether it be Active Kids, Creative Kids or even the First Lap voucher programs. Think of the children. In this Chamber those opposite all talk about the importance of the next generation but, when push comes to shove, they lack the advocacy and the guts to stand up to their Premier to reinstate the vouchers.

Finder.com.au found that, on average, parents paid \$2,547 per primary school child per year and \$4,793 on secondary students when costs like tuition fees, camps, excursions, sporting equipment and transport costs are taken into account. Yet those opposite think it is okay to take away \$150 per child when families are struggling more than ever with the increased cost of living. I will take a moment to highlight the importance and the take-up of these vouchers in some Labor electorates. The member for Parramatta should know that over 118,000 vouchers were redeemed in full in her electorate. The member for Riverstone had over 141,000 vouchers redeemed in his electorate. The member for Liverpool had over 105,000 vouchers—she is shaking her head at me. That shows a clear disregard for the families who have relied on redeeming those vouchers.

The Deputy Premier, when asked about it, described the Back to School voucher program as a "cash splash" and blamed the former Government for it not being included in the budget. But the reality is that those opposite are in government. It is a shame, but they are. That is democracy in action. But they have failed, after a budget round, to put the vouchers in their budget. It was in ours and it is not in theirs. They have had every opportunity to reinstate the vouchers. On 17 January the Premier publicly said, "Back to school vouchers haven't been changed." The Premier says they have not been changed. The Deputy Premier says it is a cash splash. Clearly there is a misalignment between the two. But all that matters for the hardworking people of New South Wales is that they are worse off. They have no back to school vouchers. Most of them have no Active Kids vouchers, no Creative Kids vouchers, and First Lap vouchers have been slashed as well.

All we get from those opposite are cuts, cuts and more cuts. That is all they know how to do. At the end of the day, all they do is find money to give to their union mates to reward them for helping them get into government, and the people who pay the price are the hardworking mums and dads across this State who are struggling to make ends meet. Cost-of-living pressures are at an all-time high. The Government can do little things that help families—\$50 vouchers at a time, \$150 for this program alone—but instead, Chris Minns and Labor simply cut the vouchers, and those opposite cannot even be bothered to speak up to defend it.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:10): I speak in opposition to the motion. I start by clarifying that when the Liberal-Nationals Government's back to school voucher program was announced it was quite clearly stated to be a one-off payment.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Where? How? How was it stated? Where was it stated?

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL: It was in your press release. Therefore, things have not been changed. It was a one-off payment.

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

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL: On this side of the House we are focused on restoring public education to its former glory—before the Coalition Government stripped it dry. We are looking at providing free, quality education for all in our public schools. It is important that people are given a choice. People in my electorate have been affected by a lack of high schools in their area. What has been happening is privatisation by stealth. The former Government did not build the high schools our growing communities needed. People have had no choice but to take their children to the nearest private school because there is no public school to attend within distance. Comments have been made that imply teachers did not deserve their recent pay rise and that they need to earn it.

As a former teacher myself, I think it needs to be made perfectly clear that public schools and public school teachers are providing everything that students need to have a quality education. Parents who cannot afford to buy their child a school uniform can speak to their school and be provided with one. Similarly, they can be provided with a schoolbag, pencils, pens, books, paper and shoes—everything the student needs. Teachers will go out of their way to provide such things. We need to remove the stigma and shame around families saying, "I'm struggling. I need to be able to get that." No teacher that I know would ever deny a student the resources they need for their schooling. In fact, all of the schools I have been associated with have gone out of their way to provide things students needed in order for them to have a proper education.

We need to remove any shame around families asking their school for help, so as to be able to provide a quality education product for their children. Schools do so much more than provide resources for children. They provide mental health support and learning support, which are not covered by the voucher system. We need to fund our public schools and support our teachers so that they are not so exhausted. Teachers are the lifeblood of our schools. The former Coalition Government made so many cuts to education during its time that in one of the

schools in my electorate on one particular Friday in 2021, 75 classes did not have a teacher. There was no teacher available.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Shame, Labor!

Ms Charishma Kaliyanda: Shame on you!

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL: Yes, 100 per cent shame on those opposite, because teachers had walked away and without teachers there is no education.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. This motion is about back to school vouchers; it is not about teachers.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): I am satisfied that the member for Camden is being relevant.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL: The motion we are debating today is insulting to everyone involved in our public school system and to everyone who is trying to provide a quality public education for children in New South Wales. A healthy public school system is the lifeblood of our future.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:16): I thank the member for Miranda for bringing this public interest motion to the House today. It is a special time for students. What an amazing education system we have here in New South Wales. Most of us have come through that system and done pretty well. We all have families and friends who are enjoying our school system. I say a big thanks to our teachers and school staff. What they have done to make these first couple of weeks special for students starting school is phenomenal. I thank everyone involved in making the New South Wales education system so strong and for providing our students the future that we all want them to have.

But it is also a particularly challenging time for families. Families across New South Wales and the country are doing it tough. Yesterday it was announced that further increases in interest rates can be expected if inflation is not kept under control. Families across the board are finding it tough. The average cost of annual school supplies for a primary school student is more than \$650. That is particularly challenging for families. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Camden. I know that she was a music teacher. I thank her for everything she has done for students in her previous career—but maybe not in this one. I thank the member for bringing to our attention the support that families at real risk of poverty can access from schools, and for letting people know that if they are really struggling to afford basic resources that their school will help.

But the bigger challenge at the moment is that it is not only families in poverty who are struggling. Families across the board are struggling. Some can afford most of the school supplies, but not all of them. These families are struggling to meet all of the cost-of-living expenses they are facing. The voucher program relieved some of that financial pressure for them, and more families every day are finding it more and more challenging to meet their expenses. Not every school will have the capacity to meet the needs of every family that is struggling. The vouchers filled some of that void.

In its first budget, the Minns Government has cut the voucher program. As the member for Miranda said, this is not just a one-off cut to support families who are struggling in this cost-of-living crisis; it is compounded by the cuts to the First Lap voucher scheme. Let us remember that that was a scheme brought in to significantly increase the number of three-year-olds and four-year-olds having swimming lessons in a country bound by water, where drowning is a significant risk to small children. Swimming classes can cost about \$200 per term. That is \$800 a year for one child to get them the lifesaving skills and swimming capabilities they need as a New South Welshman to be able to survive the risks of our rivers, our beaches and our backyard pools.

Then they are cutting Active Kids and Creative Kids. We know that the jobs and skills of the future will be about creativity, versatility and problem-solving. Given our huge challenges with childhood obesity, Active Kids is about ensuring that, regardless of financial capabilities, kids can be involved in a sport or athletic club and develop those skills. Once again, it is a decision by a government that does not consider families, the challenges we face in ensuring that kids can access what they need every day or kids' rights to that access.

Every part of Sydney and New South Wales will utilise these types of vouchers very differently. It is a difficult decision. It is a fiscal balancing decision that governments have, that the Opposition had when it was in government and that the new Labor Government has about priorities. The decision that the Labor Government has made is to deprioritise families, children and the things the previous Liberal-Nationals Government said were crucial for children and families. That is its decision. It won the election; it gets to make that choice. But it cannot walk away from that prioritisation and the decision that it made. It needs to own it and be up-front about it.

If it decides that other things are more important than ensuring that kids have financial support to get back to school, or Active Kids or Creative Kids vouchers, or life-saving swimming lessons, it needs to own that and be up-front with our community and the voters in every electorate. It needs to make sure that it lets people know what it is choosing to prioritise instead. If it is cutting all those cost-saving voucher programs for families, what is being funded instead? Where are our taxpayer dollars going to ensure that people get the best bang for their buck from this Government? I say that we are not getting the best bang for our buck from this Government. The Minns Labor Government is not returning the investment the people of New South Wales made in it when it was elected last year. This Government needs to be held to account, and we need to ensure that it does better for our kids and families.

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:21): I listened with interest to the member for Miranda. She has suddenly woken up to the fact that families are doing it tough in New South Wales. Anyone who has spoken to, and been actively involved in, their communities would know that it is an ongoing issue. After being the architects of the running down of the education system, health system and many other public institutions that families and communities across this State rely on, members opposite have the gall to turn up and talk about priorities.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): Members will come to order.

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA: Let me tell them what their priorities were in the previous term of government. They conveniently left this Labor Government with \$188 million worth of debt. Members opposite love to talk about cuts. They love to talk about the fact that it was communities across south-west and north-west Sydney—Labor communities—that they often cut vital resources from. Some members opposite have also conveniently forgotten that this was a one-off commitment. Let me remind them.

Ms Eleni Petinos: Prove it.

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA: I will, because the member for Miranda has obviously forgotten it. On 21 June 2022, then finance Minister Damien Tudehope said "a one-off \$150 back-to-school subsidy for every child undertaking primary or secondary school in 2023". Also, the Leader of the Opposition, on 29 January 2024, refused to commit to bringing them back. Ben Fordham said, "So you're not even promising to return them?" The Leader of the Opposition said, "Well, I'm not going to promise three years out." Members opposite have obviously conveniently forgotten this was a one-off commitment. As they said, it is important for a government to set priorities and direct funding and resources into the areas of the community where they will most make a difference. Let me tell them about the types of priorities that this Government is committing funds towards. We were talking about the important role that teachers have within our community. For 12 years under the Coalition Government, teachers were disrespected.

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

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA: They felt like they did not matter and were leaving, and had left, the profession in droves. Contrast that with last week, when I visited Cecil Hills High School in my electorate with the Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Deputy Premier. A teacher had retired from the profession saying, "I feel disrespected. I do not feel like I can make a contribution to this profession anymore." He was contacted after the change in government and after the new Minister put respect for teachers back at the heart of public education. He said, "I will come back to the profession. I will come back to teaching in public schools." Under this Government, not only are many such teachers returning to the workforce under the teacher retention program but we also have the highest paid graduate teachers in the country. That is an indicator that public education is a central priority for this Government.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): Members will come to order.

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA: Under the Opposition; however, not only did we have disrespect for teachers but we also had a 35 per cent increase in demountables. At schools like Castle Hill High School, there were 19 demountables. At Carlingford West Public School, there were 64 demountables and at Cumberland High School there were 26. In the growing parts of Sydney such as the south-west and north-west, in the regions and in many of the communities that are doing it tough, we inherited a situation where whole suburbs of tens of thousands of families existed without access to free public education.

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

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA: Some of the schools in my community stepped up over the past few years to put more than their fair share back into the communities they support. Soon after I was elected, I spoke

to a deputy principal of a high school in my electorate who told me that they get allocated a discretionary budget. Usually that goes towards funding an extra teaching position. They could not find teachers to fill that position so they put it towards providing students with the necessities such as breakfast and uniforms. Like I said, members opposite forget the priorities they had for 12 years. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:26): You would have to be living under a rock, or be a Labor government, not to realise that we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. Families are facing the double whammy of high inflation and high interest rates. Families are forced to make choices, meaning that children across New South Wales are missing out because of this mean Minns Labor Government. Everywhere I go, I am being approached by parents lamenting the Labor Government's axing of the Back to School, Active Kids, Creative Kids and learn-to-swim vouchers—all of the cost-of-living measures that were helping families across New South Wales.

The data shows that the average cost of school supplies for primary school students is now more than \$650 per child. Like the member for North Shore, my youngest son started kindergarten this week. The cost is even greater for high school students. That is a lot of extra money for families to find in one go. That means that children across New South Wales are missing out. One of the great benefits of the scheme was that, although it did not cover all of the costs associated with going back to school, families on tighter budgets could afford the basics. It meant that students were afforded the dignity of being in the right school uniform or having the right shoes. It was a great leveller.

We have to question the moral compass of a Labor Party that supports cage fighting but guts the cost-of-living measures that helped families with basics like education. But it is nothing new from the Minns Labor Government. After promising to roll over the Active Kids vouchers, it came to power and gutted those as well. Now kids across New South Wales are missing out on sport and physical activity. They are missing out on team work and camaraderie. Someone needs to explain to the Labor Party that when it comes to the health and wellbeing of children in New South Wales, prevention is better than cure. Members opposite have lost interest. They are giggling over their phones now. Children learn so much from sport. It builds character. It builds physical and mental health. Yet they still cut the Active Kids program by 85 per cent.

Ms Trish Doyle: Rubbish!

Mr GURMESH SINGH: Does the member for Blue Mountains dispute that number? Let us have a debate on that at the next sitting as well. In the Coffs Harbour electorate, 36,389 Back to School vouchers were redeemed. Across New South Wales, nearly 3.5 million vouchers were redeemed. For the education Minister, and Minister for Western Sydney, to call the program a "cash splash" is grossly out of touch with the thousands of families in her own electorate and across Western Sydney, especially given almost half of the vouchers were redeemed in Western Sydney. Predictably, tonight we have seen Labor members make the same tired arguments that we have heard for the past 318 days. They again made the baseless claim that this was an unrepeatable voucher system, but they are wrong. All they had to do was put it in the budget that was handed down in September last year.

Labor members seem to forget that they are no longer in opposition. They are supposed to be in control. They are supposed to be making decisions that help the children of New South Wales. Instead, last year's budget papers show a real cut to the Department of Education's expenses of nearly 3 per cent. If members have read the budget papers, they will have seen that. It means a greater workload for teachers. Teachers who already have high workloads will see their workloads increase. Not only did Labor cut family budgets; it also cut the budget of the Department of Education. The Labor Government has not introduced any cost-of-living relief measures for families. The Premier did not even know that the back to school voucher program was not continuing. A few weeks ago he said publicly, "Back to school vouchers haven't changed."

The backbenchers here today, who have been put up to defend the undefendable, now have an opportunity. The pre-budget process begins in a few weeks. The June budget is coming up. They should get in front of their caucus colleagues, talk to the Ministers and reinstate the vouchers. Putting politics aside, it was a good policy. It was a great leveller for children all across New South Wales. It makes no sense not to support that program while supporting cage fighting and other things. Looking at the statistics, in the Camden region there were 73,003 vouchers; in the East Hills area, 73,930 vouchers; and in the Premier's region of Kogarah, 77,908 vouchers. That is a lot. Labor should do the right thing, reinstate the voucher program immediately and support parents and students across the State.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:31): I am delighted to make a brief contribution to this public interest debate. I, too, begin by acknowledging all the teachers, the P&Cs and the mums and dads whose kids started kindergarten this year. I also acknowledge the amazing achievements of our students last year. We saw their results come out. They were absolutely fantastic.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Go North Sydney Boys!

Mr GREG WARREN: I acknowledge the member for North Shore and I commend her for beginning by acknowledging the most important people in our system: the staff, volunteers, teachers and all the people who make it happen. Outside of that, and excluding the member for Sydney, if any of those opposite told me it was raining outside I do not even think I would take my umbrella. They are so confused that I think they are confusing themselves. It is time to put some facts into this story. I have a very interesting press release dated Tuesday 21 June 2022. It states:

Treasurer Matt Kean said the program would run from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023.

That is the press release of those opposite. They must have missed that bit.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): Order! Members will come to order.

Mr GREG WARREN: It was also confirmed on 21 June 2022 that \$193 million was for a one-off \$150 back to school subsidy for every child undertaking primary and secondary school in 2023. It is one thing for those on the Opposition side of the Chamber to now be talking about the virtuous nature and importance of supporting public education, but during the 12 years that they were in government they did nothing. Where did they leave it? Let's go through it. There was a record-high shortage of 3,200 teachers. There were 3,000 merged or cancelled classes across New South Wales. Only 60 per cent of teachers were permanent. The number of demountable classrooms increased by 35 per cent. That is before we look at wages and the wage cap that those opposite put on teachers, which saw the system bleed teachers. We saw university students not even finishing their degree. Why? Why would they? Those opposite oversaw the system. They were the architects and the destructors of the New South Wales public education system. They are the ones that brought it to its knees. If they were fair dinkum about this voucher, why was it not in the forward estimates? Why was it not a commitment during the campaign?

Mr Dugald Saunders: It was!

Mr GREG WARREN: It was not. It was a one-off.

Mr Dugald Saunders: It was enacted during the campaign, you galoot—from 1 January to 30 June.

Mr GREG WARREN: It was not.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Of course it was.

Mr GREG WARREN: I note the member for Dubbo. It was not a commitment by those opposite and it still is not. I refer to the Leader of the Opposition and member for Cronulla, who was recently interviewed on that wonderful station 2GB. Ben Fordham said, "So the vouchers are back if you're in power?" Mr Speakman said, "Well, the vouchers will be back. At the moment, three years down the track, I don't know what the budget is going to look like." I can answer that for him: It is going to be a damn lot better under us than it was after the 12 years of rage that those opposite imposed.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): Order! Members will come to order.

Mr GREG WARREN: Ben Fordham then said to Mr Speakman, "So you're not even promising to return them?" Mr Speakman said, "Well, I'm not going to promise three years out what the Labor budget will look like." Opposition members have absolutely nothing. They bring this public interest debate. If they were half sensible, if they were half fair dinkum about having a public interest debate on education, they would have followed the smart and sensible people, like the member for North Shore, who congratulate our teachers, acknowledge our students and know who makes our system work. We on this side of the House know that what we hear coming from those opposite is unprecedented. The budget situation showed record high deficits into the billions under their watch. Such reckless lack of planning just adds definition and reasoning as to why they are in their rightful place on the opposition benches, where they will remain.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:36): I speak on behalf of The Greens in the public interest debate. I move:

That the motion be amended so it reads:

- (1) Notes that the former Government's Back to School voucher program provided families with vital cost-of-living relief in the form of \$150 in vouchers to help with the cost of school supplies, uniforms and technology.
- (2) Notes that New South Wales families are bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis.
- (3) Notes the Deputy Premier's comments on 14 January 2024 where she described support for working families as a "cash splash".
- (4) Notes that on 15 January 2024 the Premier said that Back to School vouchers "haven't been changed".

- (5) Calls on the Government to honour the Premier's comment and reinstate funding for Back to School vouchers for the 2024 school year.

We hope we can get support for that amendment. There is a false dichotomy here, which is unfortunate, and that is why The Greens seek to amend the motion. It is foolish to connect the back to school vouchers and the Active Kids vouchers—all of those things that our communities are devastated at losing—with the incredibly overdue pay rise for public school teachers in this State and all of the work that needs to be done to restore our public education system to its former glory. The Greens' amendment will take that out of the motion. It is absurd, and I think it was an oversight.

This is about families in our communities. When the Active Kids vouchers were taken away, multiple clubs in my electorate and, I am sure, in other electorates were in real danger of not being able to continue, because they had become reliant on it. I do not give a damn about who said what. Whatever was said, there is time for the Government to address it in this year's budget and we will all forget about it and put it behind us. This is about responding. We have seen it from Federal Labor. The Prime Minister has listened to the community on the stage 3 tax cuts. That is good. We want politicians to read the room and feel the pulse of the community. Now is not the time to rob people of these important things. We know the past year was incredibly hard. One in three parents cannot afford the cost of school supplies.

Schools should be free but, increasingly, with all of the excursions and extracurricular, it is really hard. An analysis suggests parents are forking out an average of nearly \$5,000 for each high school student in public schools this back to school season. Who can find \$5,000 per child? That is a 48 per cent increase from last year. The Greens believe that vouchers ultimately are a short-term fix, but it is the context of the cost-of-living crisis—13 interest rate hikes, rents out of control, supermarkets in inquiries because of their unbelievable price gouging of consumers, and the list goes on—that make this issue about reading the room and listening to our community. It was a fault that teachers are even mentioned in this debate. This debate is not about teachers; it is about families.

Mr Geoff Provest: Hear, hear!

Ms TAMARA SMITH: I hear the member for Tweed. In our area people are doing it tough on the back of the floods. The vouchers are something that clubs and families were counting on. We can provide a pay rise for teachers and cost-of-living support for parents, especially if we tax the big end of town. We can multitask. It is disappointing that Opposition members and the crossbench repeatedly have to raise the issue of vouchers. We have had a huge response from my community with our petition for restoring the vouchers, so in this instance The Greens will support the Liberals and The Nationals. It is disappointing that Labor has got this wrong. It is time to look into this. It is about priorities, and this is absolutely a priority. Next year we may not be in a cost-of-living crisis, but right now families are relying on back to school vouchers. No-one wants to see children without the things that they need. I strongly encourage Labor members to change its way on this.

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (17:41): In reply: I acknowledge the contributions to debate of the member for Camden; the member for North Shore and the member for Coffs Harbour, whose children started school for the first time this year; the member for Liverpool, who misquoted the former finance Minister; the member for Campbelltown; and the member for Ballina, who gave a really well-considered contribution. I resonated with her line, "now is not the time to rob people". I thank the member for Ballina for moving an amendment and I foreshadow that the Opposition will support her amendment. We have had a lot of debate in this place about the importance of vouchers. It seems to be lost on those opposite that we are debating the importance of back to school vouchers because of the cost-of-living crisis that is being experienced throughout the State.

The *Finder* report I mentioned earlier states that 30 per cent of Australian parents, or 1.9 million households, cannot afford to pay back to school expenses, including stationery and uniforms. More than one in 10 families admit that they will have to go into debt to pay for back to school costs, and a further 13 per cent of families say they will have to buy second-hand items, or hand-me-downs to get their child into the classroom. Some 4 per cent of families even said their child will have to go without. Despite that and despite the communities that we represent, those opposite are debating whether these vouchers should exist in the budget. That is a real shame because in my electorate I saw a young boy go to school with his carer and the carer was talking about the transition to high school. She quite clearly had cancer and was very concerned about how this young boy would have access to school shoes, a school backpack and the ability to transition between the two schools. No child should have to be in a school environment like that.

While we talk about the importance of these heartfelt stories, those opposite talk to each other. They lack the compassion to understand what is happening on the ground. They are not standing up for their communities. They are not standing up for everyone who is struggling with cost-of-living pressures. They are clearly more interested in themselves and political tactics than they are in the people of New South Wales. I say to the Labor Government that it is not too late to do its job and fight for the people of the State it claims to love representing

by reinstating the vouchers that make such a difference to people's lives. This is literally young children going without. Members opposite stand in this Chamber and let it happen. Worse than that, members opposite will have the audacity to vote against the amendment and think that people do not know what they truly stand for.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): The member for Miranda has moved a motion, to which the member for Ballina has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes33
Noes45
Majority.....12

AYES

Amon, R
Anderson, K
Clancy, J
Cooke, S
Coure, M
Cross, M
Dalton, H
Davies, T
Di Pasqua, S
Griffin, J
Hodges, M

Kean, M
Kemp, M
Lane, J
Leong, J
Marshall, A
Perrottet, D
Petinos, E
Preston, R
Provest, G
Saunders, D
Shetty, K

Singh, G (teller)
Sloane, K
Smith, T (teller)
Taylor, M
Thompson, T
Toole, P
Ward, G
Williams, L
Williams, R
Williamson, R
Wilson, F

NOES

Aitchison, J
Atalla, E
Bali, S
Barr, C
Butler, L
Butler, R
Car, P
Catley, Y
Chanthivong, A
Cotsis, S
Crakanthorp, T
Davis, D
Dib, J
Donato, P
Doyle, T

Finn, J
Greenwich, A
Hannan, J
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Holland, M
Hornery, S
Kaliyanda, C
Kamper, S
Kirby, W
Li, J
McGirr, J
McKeown, K
Mehan, D

Park, R
Piper, G
Quinnell, S
Regan, M
Saffin, J (teller)
Saliba, D
Scully, P
Stuart, M
Tesch, L (teller)
Vo, T
Voltz, L
Warren, G
Washington, K
Whan, S
Wilkinson, K

PAIRS

Ayyad, T
Crouch, A
Henskens, A
James, T
Roberts, A
Speakman, M
Tuckerman, W

Hagarty, N
Watson, A
Daley, M
Hoenig, R
McDermott, H
Minns, C
O'Neill, M

Amendment negatived.

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

The House divided.

Ayes30
Noes48
Majority.....18

AYES

Amon, R
Anderson, K
Clancy, J
Cooke, S
Coure, M
Cross, M
Dalton, H
Davies, T
Di Pasqua, S
Griffin, J

Hodges, M
Kean, M
Kemp, M
Lane, J
Marshall, A
Perrottet, D
Petinos, E
Preston, R
Provest, G
Saunders, D

Singh, G (teller)
Sloane, K
Taylor, M (teller)
Thompson, T
Toole, P
Ward, G
Williams, L
Williams, R
Williamson, R
Wilson, F

NOES

Aitchison, J
Atalla, E
Bali, S
Barr, C
Butler, L
Butler, R
Car, P
Catley, Y
Chanthivong, A
Cotsis, S
Crakanthorp, T
Davis, D
Dib, J
Donato, P
Doyle, T
Finn, J

Greenwich, A
Hannan, J
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Holland, M
Hornery, S
Kaliyanda, C
Kamper, S
Kirby, W
Leong, J
Li, J
McGirr, J
McKeown, K
Mehan, D
Park, R

Piper, G
Quinnell, S
Regan, M
Saffin, J (teller)
Saliba, D
Scully, P
Shetty, K
Smith, T
Stuart, M
Tesch, L (teller)
Vo, T
Voltz, L
Warren, G
Washington, K
Whan, S
Wilkinson, K

PAIRS

Ayyad, T
Crouch, A
Henskens, A
James, T
Roberts, A
Speakman, M
Tuckerman, W

Hagarty, N
Watson, A
Daley, M
Hoenig, R
McDermott, H
Minns, C
O'Neill, M

Motion negatived.

Bills

**CENTENNIAL PARK AND MOORE PARK TRUST AMENDMENT (PUBLIC TRANSPORT) BILL
2023**

Second Reading Speech

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (17:59): On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Amendment (Public Transport) Bill 2023 on behalf of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Paul Scully. The bill was introduced into the Legislative Council by the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, the Hon. Penny Sharpe. I note that the bill passed through without any controversy or any amendments. The bill is vital for the protection and operation of public transport for the people and communities of New South Wales. The bill amends the Centennial and Moore Park Trust Act 1983 [CPMPT Act] to update the description of certain land, being the area to which the Minister for Transport has been conferred a permanent licence. The permanent licence of the land enables the Minister for Transport to use the land for public transport and ancillary purposes.

The bill updates section 20B of the CPMPT Act to accurately reflect all the land that makes up the area permanently licensed to the Minister for Transport, which is used specifically for bus and light rail operations and a public transport corridor. That land is being used for those public transport purposes following the completion of the CBD and South East Light Rail project [CSELR project]. The land is situated in and around Centennial Park, Moore Park and Queens Park, which are collectively known as the Centennial Parklands. The parklands are under the authority of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust [CPMPT] as constituted under the CPMPT Act and the trust is responsible for the day-to-day management and long-term strategic planning of the parklands. The CPMPT Act vests certain land in the CPMPT, including the land under section 20B of the CPMPT Act, which details those lots of land that make up the area licensed to the Minister for Transport for public transport purposes.

The CSELR project runs through Circular Quay to Central station with connections to Moore Park. While the route is mostly along existing road corridors, the project also included the installation of a light rail bridge across the Eastern Distributor and a tunnel under Anzac Parade and Moore Park West, which merged with an off-street section through Moore Park that ran parallel to Anzac Parade. The CSELR project includes the construction of 19 light rail stops. Within the parklands, stops were included to service Moore Park and accommodate special events. An accessible pedestrian footbridge was constructed across Anzac Parade at Moore Park stop to provide connectivity to the Moore Park stop from both the east and west sides of Anzac Parade. Additional works were also negotiated and agreed to with the CPMPT to ensure that the parklands impacted by the project were reinstated. Those works included, amongst others, the construction of Kensington Ponds footbridge for pedestrian accessibility between Alison Road and Centennial Park, public amenities, bus driver changing facilities and the reinstatement of Moore Park West sports fields.

A new interchange has been constructed to the north of the Tramway Oval providing an interchange to the light rail as well as access to Moore Park facilities, including the Sydney Cricket Ground and the Sydney Football Stadium. The new bus interchange was not constructed as part of the CSELR project but did create a significant interface. The licensed area currently set out in the CPMPT Act already includes the land subject to the broader bus corridor. The proposed revised licence area will include the additional bus loop area and an additional busway constructed as a result of the changes that were part of the light rail project. In a nutshell, the areas the subject of the permanent licence are the areas used for the light rail project, busway areas that were rerouted onto the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust land as part of the light rail project, areas that were used for busway prior to the light rail project and are subject to the existing permanent licence, and busway that was constructed as part of the CPMPT Tramway Oval project.

Extensive consultation and stakeholder engagement was undertaken to inform the development and delivery of the light rail project in relation to the light rail route. That engagement included an environmental impact statement for the light rail project, which was completed in 2013. The light rail project obtained planning approval in June 2014. Transport for NSW engaged with multiple stakeholders regarding the route of the light rail project, including the CPMPT, and entered into agreements with key stakeholders to govern the interface between the project and CPMPT properties. The amendments to the CPMPT Act are in alignment with the feedback received during stakeholder consultation. In addition to external stakeholder consultation, Transport for NSW has also positively engaged with the CPMPT. Revised plans for the licensed land have been prepared by a surveyor. Transport for NSW and the CPMPT have agreed to the land being licensed by the Minister for Transport for public transport and ancillary purposes under section 20B of the CPMPT Act. The revised plans have subsequently been registered with the NSW Land Registry Services and are publicly available.

The bill documents the revised licensed area and both Transport for NSW and the CPMPT, as part of the wider Department of Planning and Environment network, have been in consultation with each other to ensure the bill is accurate and fit for purpose. Section 20B of the CPMPT Act also contemplates that terms and conditions may be developed which make provision for or with respect to the functions that may be exercised by the Minister for Transport and by the CPMPT in respect of the licensed land. Transport for NSW and the CPMPT have negotiated an agreement in relation to the light rail project and that will form the relevant terms and conditions contemplated by the CPMPT Act and clarify any ancillary matters.

The bill is intended to commence at a later date by proclamation with the Governor's approval, following execution of that licence agreement. Together, the bill will provide a statutory licence over a revised area to the Minister for Transport to use the land for public transport purposes, and the licence agreement will provide the necessary terms and conditions, setting out the rights and responsibilities of Transport for NSW and the CPMPT in respect of the land. The statutory licence provided by the bill will provide sufficient certainty and protection for the licence and accurately reflect the relevant land.

Turning now to the specific provisions of the bill, clause 2 provides that the bill will commence on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation. This ensures that the licence agreement setting out the details of the terms and conditions between Transport for NSW and the CPMPT is agreed to before the bill commences.

Schedule 1 to the bill amends a reference in section 20B (1) of the CPMPT Act to refer to the proper Minister, being the Minister administering the CPMPT Act. This amendment ensures that the land subject to a licence for public transport purposes is as per any terms and conditions agreed to by the Minister for Transport and the Minister administering the CPMPT Act, as intended. Schedule 1 to the bill also removes section 20B (2) of the CPMPT Act and replaces it with a new section that provides that the land shown as the site of the proposed easement for bus and light rail operations or public transport corridor, as listed in the new schedule 4 to the CPMPT Act, is the land the subject of a permanent licence to the Minister for Transport.

The bill enshrines into statute law a permanent licence in favour of the Minister for Transport to protect that land, which is used for public transport purposes. Together with the licence agreement between Transport for NSW and the CPMPT, the bill accurately reflects the licensed area and benefits the people of Sydney as it relates to the CSELR project, which provides a vital transportation system to connect a part of Sydney to the Sydney CBD. The bill demonstrates that land use and infrastructure planning must be aligned to deliver effective planning, and it is integral to realising our ambitious vision for New South Wales' transport network. I also note that the Legislation Review Committee, as printed in *Legislation Review Digest No. 7/58* on 21 November 2023, investigated the bill. The committee made no comment about the issues set out in section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987. I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (18:11): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Amendment (Public Transport) Bill 2023 and confirm that the Coalition will be supporting the bill. The bill is required due to the construction of the CBD and South East Light Rail and the necessary changes to land and licensing that construction facilitated, and due to the parklands being under the authority of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust and those areas being covered by the Act.

Section 20B of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act confers a permanent licence on the Minister for Transport to use certain land for public transport and ancillary purposes, requires an amendment to add further land and refers to the proper Minister, being the Minister administering the CPMPT Act. The bill proposes to revise the land licensed to the Minister for Transport for the purposes of light rail and bus operations, and the public transport corridor, following the completion of the light rail and associated infrastructure. It is certainly appropriate to transfer the licence for the land around Centennial Park and Moore Park that has been used for the light rail to the Minister for Transport.

Whilst considering the bill, some history of the CBD and South East Light Rail and public transport infrastructure in general is important, as it serves as a good refresher for members of this House about how we build public transport infrastructure in New South Wales. The former Coalition Government built two light rail lines, which have provided an important link between the CBD and the south-east of Sydney, and we have continuously seen the patronage of those light rail lines increase.

In November 2023 a record 1,497,665 trips were taken on the L2 Randwick Line, and 1,349,974 trips were taken on the L3 Kingsford Line. That was an increase of over 688,000 trips on the two lines combined in the 12 months since November 2022. Light rail has proven to be increasingly popular with the travelling public. It was infrastructure that the Coalition Government was trusted to build, and it got on with the job. The opening of the first stage of the Parramatta Light Rail will be wonderful to see in a few months. I thank the Government for bringing the bill to the House and remind all of us to enjoy the Coalition-built CBD and South East Light Rail. Opposition members wish Government members all the best with the ribbon-cutting, as it was us that funded, planned and built those amazing projects. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:14): I speak in debate on the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Amendment (Public Transport) Bill 2023, and I will do my best to put it in really simple terms. As members of Parliament, it is important to look outside of our own little world to other parts of the State where some pretty important things are happening. The important thing that is happening here is that Government members are fixing the mess that those opposite could not have foreseen. They built public transport infrastructure but did not put beside it the necessary space, amenities and interchanges that would be required for the use of that public transport. Who was in the planning room at the time? Not the good member for Manly—I make no aspersions against him because he was not here at the time and was not in the ministry. But it happened time and again: Members of the former Government used to come up with all these projects and ideas, and they were half-baked. They would never have been able to get a soufflé to rise; it just would not have been possible.

Mr James Griffin: Good enough to cut the ribbon on, though.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: We will cut the ribbon on this in the future when it is done properly. When it is cooked properly, we will cut the ribbon. That is what we are here to do, and we have been hearing a lot about that

today. We are here to fix the mess. But in essence this is a pretty simple proposal. The CBD and South East Light Rail is heading out to Moore Park and Centennial Park, and we need space for some ancillary public transport works.

They include interchanges and a whole bunch of footbridges and other infrastructure. There are also some bus loops, busways, tuck-aways and things like that, because public transport needs to be stored somewhere when it is not on the road and moving. It cannot just disappear, so we will allocate some of the space along the route and transfer it permanently to the Minister for Transport so that Transport can have ownership, responsibility and use of that particular space. It is a pretty simple, straightforward bill. That the previous Government could possibly have not foreseen the need for it beggars belief, but the good news is that in March 2023 the wise voters of New South Wales saw fit to change the government to fix the mess and to bring the soufflé to its full height. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:16): I am pleased to speak in support of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Amendment (Public Transport) Bill 2023. As the Minister noted, the bill will revise a statutory licence in favour of the Minister for Transport to use the land for public transport and ancillary purposes. Specifically, the licensed area will be used for bus and light rail operations, and a public transport corridor, which are necessary to meet the transportation needs of Sydneysiders.

Without this legislative amendment to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act 1983—the CPMPT Act—the land the subject of this licence would be reduced to an agreement between Transport for NSW [TfNSW] and the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust. The bill enhances that agreement by providing statutory protection, while the agreement sets out the terms and conditions, including details of the functions to be exercised by TfNSW and the CPMPT. Together, the bill and the agreement provide abundant certainty and clarity around the rights and obligations of both parties while ensuring transport services are provided to the people of Sydney.

The licensed area is accurately reflected through the bill and clearly lists the licensed land used for public transport, including bus and light rail services, following completion of the Sydney CBD and South East Light Rail project. Given that the CPMPT Act already lists some land as licensed to the Minister for Transport, the bill is the best option to clearly list all the land subject to the permanent licence. That option removes uncertainty by ascribing all the relevant land to the licence and protecting it in statute law. That statutory licence will be further enriched by the licence agreement for the land, which will be executed between TfNSW and the CPMPT before the bill's commencement at a later date by proclamation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (18:19): On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Amendment (Public Transport) Bill 2023. In particular I thank the member for Manly, the member for Cessnock and the member for Blue Mountains. The bill, which amends the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act 1983, updates the description of land licensed to the Minister for Transport for public transport and ancillary purposes. This bill will clarify, and protect through a revised statutory licence, the land that is the subject of a permanent licence to the Minister for Transport and that provides a necessary transportation system for people in Sydney.

I thank Transport for NSW, the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust and the wider Department of Planning and Environment network for working together to provide for this revised statutory licence and working towards the execution of a licence agreement between TfNSW and the CPMPT. Together, this bill and the agreement accurately reflect the licensed area and will set out the terms and conditions for both parties in respect of the land. I look forward to the passing of this bill and its eventual proclamation by the Governor in Executive Council following the execution of the licence agreement. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr STEPHEN BALI: On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Community Recognition Statements

OTHMAN BIN AFFAN MOSQUE

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (18:22): I congratulate the Othman Bin Affan Mosque, Cabramatta, on recently hosting a successful community barbecue in Fairfield. The barbecue drew together around 500 local community members, creating a lively atmosphere filled with families, children and parents enjoying the

festivities. A variety of government and community organisations also supported the barbecue, including Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair, Services Australia, MTC Fairfield, Fairfield police, STARTTS and the Lebanese Muslim Association. These gatherings celebrate diversity and contribute significantly to building a stronger, more connected community. I commend the imam of the mosque, Sheikh Mohammed Abdelzaher; the president of the mosque, Salim Allouche; and volunteer Fawaz Allouche; as well as the president of the Lebanese Muslim Association, Hafez Alameddine; vice president Raed Halabi; and all other organisers and committee members for all their work.

ILLAWONG PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (18:23): I congratulate the exceptional student leadership team of Illawong Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by one's peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in the New South Wales Parliament to acknowledge Illawong Public School's student leadership team for 2024—namely, school captains Amilia Zoric and Thomas Vasilareas; vice captains Hayden Gu and Ashley Azzi; and prefects Mikaela Panagiotidis, Mason Foss and Austin Watson-Notley. With the guidance of their incredible principal, Sarah Hillyer, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Illawong Public School's motto of courtesy and citizenship.

CEN AMORES

Ms LYNDa VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:24): Today I recognise an outstanding member of our community, Cen Amores, whose dedication and tireless efforts have significantly shaped the fabric of our local community. Cen's remarkable journey and contributions have not only fostered unity and strength but also earned her well-deserved recognition at both local and national levels. Cen was appointed as one of the 40 People of Australia ambassadors by the Federal Government, which is a testament to her unwavering commitment to championing the benefits of multiculturalism. Her role on the NSW Ministerial Consultative Committee representing the Filipino community has been instrumental in advising the New South Wales Government and ensuring that Filipino voices are heard and acknowledged. Her involvement with the Multicultural Advisory Committee as a producer-broadcaster for the radio Mabuhay Filipino language program and with the Auburn Small Community Organisation Inc highlights her commitment to Greater Western Sydney and her dedication to our rich cultural diversity. I thank Cen for all she does for our community.

NEED FOR FEED HAY RUN

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:25): I am pleased to share the heartwarming acts of kindness I observed on the evening of 26 January 2024. On this occasion I witnessed the Need for Feed 26-truck convoy arriving at the Ardlethan Showgrounds to rest for the night after a strenuous day of transporting hay. It is truly indescribable how proud I felt to learn that all the trucks, their drivers and the hay involved in this annual convoy were generously donated. They are en route to northern New South Wales and southern Queensland, aiming to aid 36 properties recently affected by natural disasters. I extend my gratitude to the volunteers of the Ardlethan Show Society, who provided accommodation and meals for the truck drivers and their families during their overnight stay. I convey my best wishes to everyone associated with this remarkable organisation for a safe journey and eagerly anticipate seeing them all again next year.

ROSEMARY BURKE

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:26): Rosemary Burke has been a diligent member of NSW Health and the Heathcote electorate, having been instrumental in the success of the Sydney Local Health District's COVID-19 vaccination program. The Sutherland resident, who is currently the district director of pharmacy for the Sydney Local Health District, is extremely passionate about medication safety. Rosemary's passion was put to good use during the COVID-19 pandemic when her innovative ideas allowed for a smooth rollout of vaccinations. Rosemary led New South Wales in the development, preparation, management and storage of the vaccines and created processes to ensure that the maximum doses could be obtained from each vial to minimise wastage. She was also engaged in the construction of mobile production pharmacy teams that prepared vaccines in clinics in areas of need. Her innovative ideas assisted in providing those in hotel quarantine with adequate medical support and meeting complex needs outside a hospital environment. For her efforts, she was awarded the Public Service Medal in the Australia Day 2024 Honours list. I wish Rosemary the best and congratulate her.

TRIBUTE TO RAYMOND "DOSSIE" CARR

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (18:27): It is with both sadness and gratitude that I pay tribute today to a great champion of Tumut, Raymond "Dossie" Carr, who sadly passed away last year. His many achievements will live on in memory. His commitment to rugby league and other sports formed a part of Tumut's social fabric. Dossie was also a key member of the Tumut Town Band and was the Snowy Valleys Citizen of the Year in 2022 in recognition of his tireless community work and support for those less fortunate. He was a frequent visitor to my office on his mission to improve his community, and I highly valued his advice, support and friendship. Even in his final months, he was pushing to make the band's Christmas Day Payout as good as it could be. He is survived by his children, Matthew Carr and Nicole Woods, and grandchildren Ruby and Tom Carr and Riley and Isaac Woods. Tumut is the poorer for Dossie's passing, but I know his beloved family and many friends will rejoice in the memory of a great character who made a real and lasting difference to his community.

MADDIE BOTT

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:28): In February 2021 Maddie Bott's life changed in an instant, as it did for all the family and friends of Ethan Hunter and Mark Fenton. Ethan and Mark's lives were tragically cut short at a level crossing crash on a private road at Eurabba Lane near Bribbaree. Maddie launched a petition to drive improved safety at all level crossings. She brought together so many families across Australia in her fight. The petition of over 20,000 signatures was presented in this place in 2021, calling for all level crossings to be made safer, including making warning lights on trains mandatory. Very sadly, there have been a number of level crossing fatalities in recent months in New South Wales and around Australia. There will be a Federal round table on 6 March. Every death at a level crossing is one too many. I thank Maddie for her advocacy. My thoughts and the thoughts of everyone in this Chamber will be with her on 23 February. We will continue to work on this issue.

TRIBUTE TO INSPECTOR KIM SIMPSON

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:29): Tonight I acknowledge the sad passing of Fire and Rescue NSW Northern Zone Commander Inspector Kim Simpson. Throughout his near four-decade career, Kim was described by his friends and colleagues as a dedicated fire, with immeasurable compassion, empathy, good humour, respectfulness and kindness at the forefront of his character. Every day, our local fires put themselves in harm's way to protect our local community—a service that we will never be able to truly thank them for. From the outpouring of grief from fire stations all over the northern zone, it is clear that Kim was a man of great character. I know that a number of my colleagues would have known Kim. I enjoyed getting to know him, and I respect and appreciate all of his contributions to my local fire stations. Those who knew him much better than I did felt better for knowing and working with him. I extend my condolences, and those of my entire community who benefited from his service and contributions, to his family and friends. Vale, Kim Simpson.

MONICA MUDGE

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:30): Monica Mudge of Ulladulla was recently named as a finalist in the NSW Community Hero category at the NSW Women of the Year Awards. Monica is the visionary, founder and president of Treading Lightly Inc, a not-for-profit organisation located on Yuin country that stands at the forefront of environment advocacy. "Community hero" is a great description of Monica, which was evident during and after the Black Summer bushfires, when Monica and other volunteers from Treading Lightly assisted hundreds of people in communities along the South Coast. Monica's love of the environment and ocean has sparked a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship, fostering a sense of hope and grassroots change. Monica is passionate about Take 3 for the Sea and continues to organise tidy campaigns along our beaches every month. Monica has transformed Treading Lightly into a beacon of hope that is dedicated to caring for the earth and connecting community. I wish Monica good luck in the finals. No matter what the outcome is, she will always be the South Coast's community hero.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): Order! Members will take their private conversations outside the Chamber.

WORLD GLIDING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:32): I celebrate the World Gliding Championships, which were held in Narromine in December last year. I had the privilege of opening the championships and was delighted to see 21 teams, including Team Australia, ready to compete alongside participants from right across the world, including Poland, the USA and Ukraine. There was a fantastic atmosphere and, after the opening ceremony, competitors and their supporters joined locals for a chat and enjoyed the great local food provided by the Narromine Lions Club, the Rotary Club of Narromine and the Narromine 25 Club. The competition program spanned two weeks, and Team Australia's James Nugent won the Club Class category. With its fantastic thermals,

there is no doubt that Narromine is among the best gliding centres in the world. It comes as no surprise that it hosted a fantastic event. I give a special mention to Beryl Hartley and the team from the Narromine Aerodrome, who were instrumental in making sure the championships were brought to the region and that Narromine was showcased as the exceptional town that it is. Well done to everyone involved.

SOMASCAN MISSIONS DINNER DANCE

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:33): I recently had the honour of representing the Minister for Multiculturalism at the Somaskan Missions Dinner Dance fundraiser in Liverpool. The Somaskan Fathers have been staunch advocates for those who are transitioning out of our corrections and justice system. They are focused on ensuring that individuals who have been recently released or are experiencing incarceration have the best support, resources and tools to live successful lives in our community. Additionally, through their St Raphael counsel program, the Somaskan Fathers provide free legal services to those in our region who need it most, including those in financial hardship, migrant communities and refugees. Supporting and advocating for some of the most marginalised and stigmatised people in our community demonstrates their commitment to the word and values of Jesus Christ. The event raised \$235,063.40 to continue the fantastic work the Somascans do in my community. I congratulate them.

JIMMY ARTEAGA

Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:34): Tonight I acknowledge Jimmy Arteaga, our fantastic 2024 Citizen of the Year for the northern beaches. Jimmy is the Unit Commander for Marine Rescue Broken Bay. In the past year he has overseen the rescue of many vessels and people in the Pittwater and Broken Bay area, bringing them to safety, along with being responsible for the 90-plus volunteers who belong to the Broken Bay unit. Jimmy's role in saving lives as unit commander on our busy local waterways deserves recognition alone. However, in the past year his drive and dedication has enabled Marine Rescue Broken Bay to have a wonderful new state-of-the-art building, in keeping with the rest of the Marine Rescue facilities in New South Wales. Jimmy proudly commands the unit with great respect from all members and has formed a team of experts, taking care of each watch over weekends, with extra shifts at holiday times. Jimmy has overseen successful assistance at Sydney Harbour on New Year's Eve every year. I say a big thank you to his wife and kids who support him to serve the community in such a way. I love your work, Jimmy.

BANKSTOWN AIRPORT

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (18:35): I proudly acknowledge Bankstown Airport's outstanding achievement as the winner of the Metro Airport of the Year at the prestigious 2023 National Airport Industry Awards. Operated by Aeria Management Group, Bankstown Airport was recognised for its unwavering commitment to excellence in supporting the aviation industry and fostering sustainable growth. That includes crucial services such as emergency response and the pioneering of net zero electric and hydrogen-powered aircraft. The airport has transformed into a vibrant hub, contributing over \$1 billion to the economy and providing employment for 10,000 individuals. Since 2015, when Aware Super acquired the long-term interest in Bankstown Airport, the goal has been to create a thriving precinct that connects aviation, industry and community. This achievement reflects Bankstown Airport's pivotal role as the nation's third busiest airport, showcasing its dedication to excellence and innovation in the aviation sector. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for Bankstown Airport in 2024.

MORTDALE WHOLESALERS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:36): Local businesses are the backbone of my community, and many have been a part of the local area for generations. Today I bid farewell to a small business that is very close to my heart, Mortdale Wholesalers. Opening in 1969, Mortdale Wholesalers has been providing homewares, birthday cards, kitchen appliances and much more for over 55 years. It has been a part of Mortdale for as long as I can remember. I have known the owners, Sue and Greg Young, for many years now. While running a successful small business for so long is no easy feat, they have tackled every challenge head-on. One of my former staffers, Shane Kocass, has been a long-time employee of Mortdale Wholesalers, working there since he was in school. It has always been a pleasure to wander by and stop in for a quick chat. I thank Sue and Greg for their service to our community. We will miss them dearly; however, the impact they have left on Mortdale will be remembered for years to come. I wish them the very best for the next chapter in their lives, whatever that may be.

TRIBUTE TO SHIRLEY ROSS-SHULEY

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:37): Tonight I pay tribute to Shirley Ross-Shuley, who died on 31 December 2023. I acknowledge Shirley and her children, Ben, Adam and Danielle. Dani said:

It is hard to put into words all the stories of mum's life. She was so much to so many people ... One story I remember so clearly was that she was working in a nursing home and if she didn't have someone to watch us during her night shifts she would take us kids in the combi van and reverse it down the bottom where us kids would sleep in the van for the night, I remember that room being so cold, well later on in life she thought it was funny to tell me it was cold because she would reverse the van down into the morgue ...

Shirley was a much-loved wife, mother and nan, and an engaged and committed aged-care nurse and educator. She was a devoted and active union member of the Nurses and Midwives' Association. She was a valued member of the Labor Party and an adored character in our community. I hope she is at peace and dancing up a storm somewhere with her soulmate, Marc. Vale, Shirley Ross-Shuley.

TAREE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (18:38): Tonight I recognise Taree's 2024 Australia Day Awards recipients. The Community Group of the Year Award was presented to two winners: The Club Taree Community Team earned recognition for raising \$850,000 for the community and contributing over 9,000 volunteer hours in the past decade, and Circartus was acknowledged for promoting a sense of belonging and resilience through inclusive circus and creative arts activities. It was my pleasure to present the Services to Sport Award to Matt Zarb, the founder of the Rainbow Warriors FC soccer club, which caters to young individuals with diverse abilities. The Citizen of the Year Award was presented to Colleen Weller, a quiet achiever who works tirelessly for many charities and causes. I congratulate them on their well-deserved recognition and thank them for making such positive and impactful contributions to our community.

PADDLE AUSTRALIA CANOE SLALOM AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:39): It was my pleasure to represent the Premier at the 2024 Paddle Australia Canoe Slalom Australian Open held at Penrith Whitewater Stadium from 2 to 4 February. This follows the Oceania Championships held from 26 to 28 January. This year's event featured close to 20 nations, with past and current Olympic and world champions competing. It was thrilling to see our homegrown local talents, Jess and Noemie Fox, in action in what was a Southern Hemisphere showdown before the Paris Olympics. I note that both these competitions earn International Canoe Federation world ranking points in canoe and kayak and the kayak cross events. Congratulations to all involved for hosting such a successful three-day event at the Penrith Whitewater Stadium. I especially acknowledge Paddle Australia, the International Canoe Federation and Paddle Penrith.

GREAT CYCLE CHALLENGE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (18:40): Marjo Halliwell and her grandsons—Edward, aged 10; Douglas, aged eight; and Hugh, aged six—together as team Awesome Kids4Kids, raised \$13,153 in the Great Cycle Challenge 2023 placing fifteenth of 760 teams in Australia, and an impressive second in the Family Teams category. The funds raised go towards the valuable work of the Children's Medical Research Institute in finding a cure for childhood cancers. Individually, the boys' hard work is recognised in their placing in their age groups, with Edward coming third; Douglas, fifth; and Hugh, sixth. Marjo and her grandsons have already started their impressive fundraising efforts for this year's challenge. They are on track to achieve their goal of raising \$50,000 through Return and Earn bottle collecting, and have only 40,566 bottles to go. Thanks to the efforts, kindness, legs and lungs of bike riders like Wollondilly's Hugh, Douglas, Eddie and Marjo, the institute's vision of a world without cancer where all kids are living life, not fighting for it, is a little bit more of a reality today. I wish them the best of luck.

BILL AND MARGARET HENDERSON

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:41): I offer my congratulations to Bill and Margaret Henderson on the incredible milestone of their seventieth wedding anniversary. As the Temporary Speaker knows, Bill is a stalwart of the Granville and Districts Soccer Football Association. He was a Socceroo and represented Australia 16 times from 1953 onwards, including at the 1956 Olympics. He was a Granville Waratahs junior and played for the Granville Magpies, including as a keeper. He is 94. His father, Andy, was also a Socceroo in the 1920s. Bill and Margaret have an incredible partnership. I had previously not known anyone who had celebrated a seventieth wedding anniversary. It is an incredible milestone. Bill's passion for Granville districts football is still there at 94. He has done so much for our community. Congratulations, Bill and Margaret.

DRIVE TO CONNECT PROGRAM

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:42): I acknowledge the extraordinary partnership between the Border Trust and the Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau, who have created a lifeline program for migrant women on the border whilst giving them an opportunity for independence through the Drive to Connect program. The Drive to Connect program focuses on providing six to eight migrant women living on the border a pathway to independence. Through professional driving lessons, this program guides these women from the basics

of driving to obtaining their driver licence, whilst empowering them with daily tasks, which many of us take for granted. Beyond the practical skills of driving, the program serves as a catalyst for positive change, opening doors to employment opportunities for these women. It not only equips them with a means of transport to reach their workplaces but also grants them the freedom to drive their children to school and shop for essentials like food, reducing their reliance on public transport. I commend the Border Trust and the Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau for their program that uplifts and empowers individuals in our community, whilst helping them rebuild their lives in their new community.

KELVIN TRAN

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (18:43): On 16 December 2023, Kelvin Tran, a constituent of my electorate, competed against 180 competitors and placed second in the State for powerlifting as a junior competitor across all weight classes. In preparation for this competition, Kelvin dedicated up to 15 hours of training each week and meticulously tracked his nutrition and sleep to ensure he was performing at his best. Such a feat does not come without its adversities. The psychological and physical pressure placed on the body poses a risk of injury and mental burnout. However, Kelvin maintained resilience and managed his stressors impressively, which contributed to his remarkable accomplishment. I commend Kelvin for his hard work and effort in attaining this outstanding achievement and will continue to support Kelvin as he represents New South Wales at the national titles.

JACKSON COOK

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (18:44): I recognise Jackson Cook on being named the winner of the Best Contemporary Quilt and awarded third place in the Applique Quilt Section (Professional) for his quilt *Evolution Gone Wild* at the QuiltNSW Exhibition 2023. I congratulate Jackson on his awards, his career in the industry and his commitment to his business, the House of Jackson, in Armidale, where the young man offers both edge-to-edge and custom quilting, which can bring your quilt visions to life. Among his many achievements is attending the Salt Lake City Quilt Festival in the United States in July 2022 to run classes in free motion quilting. Jackson is well respected by his peers and clients, with his passion for quilting clear to all. I commend young Jackson for actively pursuing his dreams and for lending his expertise and time to many in the quilting industry. On behalf of the community, I thank Jackson for his wonderful contribution and his positive impact in Armidale and the surrounding community through his knowledge and passion for quilting, which is absolutely infectious.

TONITTO CAKES

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (18:45): Many small businesses cease operations after about five years, but not Tonitto Cakes in Port Kembla, which recently celebrated 50 years in business. I grew up in Wollongong and there were few special occasions that were not marked with a cake from Tonitto. The loyal following the store has gathered over its five decades of operations was evident when people came in droves to mark the anniversary. On hand were current owners, Wayne and Jane Henderson, along with several generations of the original owners, the Tonitto family. Even the bride who ordered the first wedding cake they ever made turned up with a photo of the cake from her wedding day. Despite many things changing in Port Kembla over the years, Tonitto Cakes has stayed true to providing quality cakes for all occasions. Their commitment to quality has been rewarded with several awards over the years. In fact, apart from the relatively recent change of ownership, the biggest change for Tonittos over 50 years was the move from one side of Wentworth Street to the other side of Wentworth Street to set up the new shop. Tonitto Cakes is a great migrant family business success story. I wish Wayne and Jane every success in the future.

RYDE COMMUNITY HEROES

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (18:46): I acknowledge the exceptional individuals named as the City of Ryde's Community Heroes 2024. To Cameron Last; Aarzu Patnil Terez Bambokian; Anne Doring, OAM; Electra Kollias; Irmen Noravian; Nalyn Sirivivatnanon; Warren Smith; James Tomson; Rob Wilkinson; and Yun Zhen Qin, please accept the warmest congratulations of the Parliament. Their outstanding contributions to our local community embody a spirit of excellence and service. Each of them has excelled in their respective fields, showcasing diverse talents that make our community vibrant and resilient. It is heartening to see individuals like them making a positive impact on the lives of others. The Community Heroes 2024 award recognises hard work, dedication and commitment to community. Their achievements serve as an inspiration to us all and I commend them for their exceptional efforts. As we celebrate these accomplishments, let it also be a marker to others of what they can achieve in our community. I thank them for what they do for Ryde. Congratulations on this well-deserved honour.

BANKSTOWN ELECTORATE LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (18:47): This weekend families across my electorate of Bankstown will gather to celebrate not just a new year, but a time-honoured tradition cherished by millions around the world: Lunar New Year. In Bankstown, Lunar New Year is more than just a date on the calendar; it is a celebration of unity, prosperity and renewal. It is a time when families and friends gather to pay respects to their ancestors, share blessings and look forward to the promise of a bright future. Our community is a beautiful mosaic of cultures, and Lunar New Year gives us the perfect opportunity to showcase and celebrate our diversity. As we usher in the Year of the Dragon, let us reflect on the values of greatness, boldness and success that the dragon symbolises. People born in the Year of the Dragon are often thought to be ambitious, charismatic and innovative. They are believed to possess natural leadership qualities and the ability to achieve their goals. Together, we can build a community where every tradition is honoured, every culture is respected and every dream is within reach. Happy Lunar New Year, especially to the Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean communities across Bankstown. I have it on good authority from the member for Cabramatta that I should say to everyone celebrating this weekend gong xi fa cai as well as kung hei fat choi—happy new year.

MANLY WARRINGAH SEA EAGLES

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (18:48): On 2 March 2024 our beloved Sea Eagles will take on the South Sydney Rabbitohs in a round one double-header in Las Vegas. I applaud this National Rugby League initiative to grow rugby league in North America. On the northern beaches, the Sea Eagles are one of the most successful clubs since the 1970s. Since winning their first title in 1972, Manly has won seven premierships, most recently in 2011. Manly has won a premiership in each of the past five decades. I hope that 2024 is again the year of the Sea Eagles. I wish all the Eagles players the very best for the 2024 season. To captain Daly Cherry-Evans, Tom Turbo Trbojevic, Reuben Garrick, Jason Saab, Lachlan Croker and all the other lads in the squad, go well in Vegas and in 2024. Good luck for the year ahead, and I may or may not see you in Vegas in March.

DR CHRIS BOYLE

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (18:49): This month marks the fortieth anniversary of Dr Chris Boyle serving the community of Raymond Terrace. In 1984 on 16 February, Dr Boyle commenced work at Raymond Terrace Family Practice. That was the very same month that Medicare commenced in Australia. For 40 years, Dr Boyle has provided comprehensive, cradle-to-grave, holistic care to his patients. As a practice principal, he has led the practice through growth and change, including running the Raymond Terrace Respiratory Clinic throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021 the practice was recognised as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Practice of the Year for New South Wales. His training of future GPs has meant he has personally mentored and supervised all of the doctors that work in Raymond Terrace Family Practice, with many returning after their training and now 13 doctors working alongside him at the practice. Twenty-five years ago he helped establish the GP after-hours service, GP Access, which he continues to regularly support. This Parliament recognises and thanks Dr Chris Boyle for his 40 years of dedication to keeping our community healthy and nurturing a health workforce for the future.

JANETTE HYDE, OAM

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:50): I recognise Janette Hyde and congratulate her as a 2024 recipient of a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the Port Macquarie community. I have had the pleasure of knowing Janette for many years and am in awe at her dedication and commitment to creating a strong tourism culture in the beautiful Port Macquarie-Hastings region. Janette has held the role of president of the Greater Port Macquarie Tourism Association since 2012 and has been involved in the association since 1997. That is in addition to Janette's life membership of Business Port Macquarie, where she has been a board member for 16 years. Janette's passion for promoting and supporting our community has been matched with her skills and experience in business and tourism, which has been the perfect foundation for so many of the successes that Janette has been pivotal in. They include being community facilitator for the NSW Touch Football State Cup from 1988 to 2022, helping establish Bravehearts Mid North Coast and co-founding the Port Macquarie Beatles Festival, as well as being an inaugural member of the marketing subcommittee and co-establishing the Volunteer Tourism Ambassador Program. I thank Janette for being such a remarkable community member.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID DROZD

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:51): It is with great sadness that I note the passing of David Drozd. David, who was a former Penrith City Council staff member, and his daughter were tragically killed in a motor vehicle accident near Lithgow between Christmas and New Year. David joined council in 2007 before

being promoted to Traffic Engineering Coordinator in 2014, a position he held until March 2022. He was an industry leader who devoted his career to road safety and obtained significant funding for council, including the annual Black Spot Program and Safer Roads Program, which have brought extensive benefits to our community. His legacy will benefit future generations, not only in the Penrith local government area but across Western Sydney and beyond. We extend our thoughts to his wife, Nicole, and his remaining eight children, along with all the colleagues at Penrith council who mourn his passing.

GEORGIE BECK

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (18:52): I recognise constituent and friend Georgie Beck for her tireless advocacy for awareness of ovarian cancer. Georgie was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer and has recently emerged from a marathon of punishing treatments, including the removal of eight organs. Georgie has what she calls a "fight club" of friends supporting her and a beautiful family. Her strength in this battle, though, comes from within. We are all in awe of her courage, strength and amazing resilience. Georgie is a giver, so it was no surprise when she took on the role of ambassador for the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation. It is a critical role because every year 1,700 women are diagnosed and, sadly, around 1,000 will die from this insidious disease. This month I am wearing a teal ribbon on my lapel in solidarity with all women who have ovarian cancer and for those whose lives ended too soon. I ask members to support Ovarian Cancer Australia. Georgie, we love you and we are so proud of you.

Private Members' Statements

BANKSTOWN HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (18:53): Access to health care is not a privilege but a fundamental right. As our population grows, so too do our healthcare demands. Our obligation as a government is to ensure our healthcare system is fit for purpose, and ready and able to meet the healthcare demands of local communities. I commend the New South Wales Government for committing \$1.3 billion to build a new hospital on Chapel Road, Bankstown. That is a healthcare game changer for the people of Bankstown and Fairfield. The scope for the new Bankstown hospital will be determined through the planning process and is expected to include expanded emergency services, intensive care, surgery and interventional procedures, women and children's health, rehabilitation services, aged health, mental health, cancer services, ambulatory care services and community health services. In addition, the existing Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital on Eldridge Road will also remain open, bolstering our local integrated healthcare network. To the people of Western Sydney, I will do my best to keep you engaged and informed as we build this new hospital.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (18:55): There is a saying that the standard you walk past is the standard that you accept. When I heard the video of the member for Newtown at a Palestinian Justice Movement forum in Bankstown talking about Jews and their tentacles, and when I heard her suggestions that the Jewish community only seeks to help others because they have an ulterior motive, I could not walk past because this is not a standard—

Ms Liza Butler: Point of order—

Ms KELLIE SLOANE: Please, you have to hear my speech in its entirety to—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The member for South Coast rises on a point of order.

Ms Liza Butler: I am not sure which standing order applies, but community recognition statements must be relevant to something in the member's electorate.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE: This is a private member's statement.

Ms Liza Butler: I am sorry. A private member's statement is supposed to be about something that is relevant to a member's electorate.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE: It absolutely is. I really object to the—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): Order! The member for Vaucluse will resume her seat. It is important that when giving a private member's statement, the member references their electorate specifically. The member for Vaucluse has not done so yet, which is why the point of order was taken. The member has the opportunity to rectify that now.

Ms Lynda Voltz: To the point of order: If a member seeks to attack another member in this Chamber, they must do so by way of substantive motion and not through a private member's statement.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The member for Vacluse will focus on her electorate. If the member wishes to make a reflection on another member, she must do so by way of substantive motion.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE: Can we restart the clock?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The Clerk will restart the clock.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE: I represent the electorate of Vacluse, which has one of the largest Jewish populations in the State. About 20 per cent of my constituents are of Jewish faith. I speak on a matter that is of utmost importance to them. It is something that has been of utmost importance over millennia, actually, and that is not walking past antisemitism. So I speak on their behalf tonight when I say that the standard that you walk past is the standard that you accept.

When I heard, in a video in the news media, the member for Newtown talking at a Palestine Justice Movement forum in Bankstown about Jews and their "tentacles", and when I heard her suggestions that the Jewish community only seeks to help others because they have an ulterior motive, I could not walk past, because this is not a standard that anyone should accept. The comments made by member for Newtown are offensive. They have caused hurt and they stoke the fires of division within our community. They are well below the standard that the public expects of a member in this place.

I talk about the Jewish community in my electorate and in Australia. We are stronger for the contributions that they make. We are stronger for the contributions that Jewish Australians make alongside people of all faiths and cultures, from all over the world. As I have said before, diversity is our strength. But the harmony of our great multicultural State is not a given, and it did not happen through sheer luck. That harmony is only kept strong by the respect that we show to one another. That mutual respect should never be selective. We cannot call out hate speech and racism when it is only directed at one group or another. We must call it out whenever it happens. We must work consistently to preserve social cohesion.

Since the 7 October attacks, we have seen a rise in antisemitism in Australia and around the world. It is unacceptable that Jewish Australians feel concern for their safety in a way that they have not in decades. All of us need to condemn antisemitism when it occurs, without qualification and without drawing any equivalency—just as we should for any other hate-based speech, just as we should for any anti-Islamic sentiment. We can agree or disagree on foreign policy. We can disagree with the actions of foreign governments. We can protest peacefully. We can, and we should, acknowledge and sympathise with those in our community whose hearts are breaking for the extraordinary loss of civilian life in Gaza. We can, and we should, also share the horror for the attacks by Hamas on 7 October and feel continuing distress for the hostages and their families. This is a natural human response.

But Ms Leong's comments showed a lack of empathy. They were devoid of any respect for a community that feels under siege in Sydney. As the President of the Jewish Board of Deputies, David Ossip, said, "She has drawn upon one of the oldest and darkest antisemitic tropes by suggesting that there is a sinister or nefarious conspiracy associated with Jews undertaking the most normal of everyday activities—interacting with other Australians." He went on to say, "For the benefit of Leong, Jews do not have tentacles. We are ordinary human beings who have as much right as any other group to go about our daily lives without a dark pall being cast over us. Her comments would not have been out of place in Nazi propaganda and need to be condemned by all decent people." I provide a local example from my electorate. A woman I bumped into yesterday told me that she was afraid. I asked her, "Why are you afraid?" She said, "Because I have a Jewish name on my shopfront." This is Australia in 2024, not 1944.

In the video the member for Newtown told the forum, "We need to call them out and expose them," referring to the Jewish lobby. Her words were "expose them"—in other words, call them out—so I am calling her out. We need to expose her conduct and hold her to account for her slurs, because there is no conspiracy here. There are no tentacles seeking to control. All there is at the moment is discrimination against the Jewish community. The member for Newtown's apology was not a genuine apology in the opinion of many, because it was dripping in propaganda; it was half-baked. I ask her to take the time to reflect on why it is that she can care for so many minority groups, and she does, and she can stand up for the rights of so many, and she does, but there is an absence of empathy when it comes to this group, the Jewish community? The member should apologise without qualification.

TRIBUTE TO ALF RANKIN

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:03): Today I honour the memory of a remarkable individual, Alf Rankin, who recently passed away and whose journey through life was as diverse and impactful as it was inspiring. Born on 2 November 1928 in the inner Melbourne suburb of Coburg, Alf was the second eldest in a bustling family of nine siblings. His upbringing in a household led by his Catholic father, Ted, was filled with the

warmth and challenges that come with a large family. Alf's early life was set against the backdrop of the Great Depression. It was a period that tested the resilience of his family and led them to move to Langwarrin, which at the time was a rural retreat from city life. It was here that Alf's father found work through a sustenance program—a testament to the era's hardships and the family's determination to persevere.

As a young man, Alf embarked on a journey that saw him delve into a myriad of professions. From sheep shearing to cane cutting, from the depths of coal and copper mines to the hazardous environment of asbestos mining in Wittenoom, Alf's working life was a tapestry of experiences that not only shaped his character but also highlighted his resilience and adaptability. His commitment to unionism, regardless of his job, underscored a lifelong dedication to workers' rights and solidarity. Alf's journey eventually led him to Sydney in the 1950s, where he transitioned into the role of a painter and decorator. His involvement in the Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union marked the beginning of an active and influential phase in his advocacy for labour rights. He also joined the Building Workers' Industrial Union in the fight for justice on the job.

It was in this vibrant milieu of activism and camaraderie that Alf met Kathy, the love of his life. Beginning at a political social function, their story is a testament to the power of love to transcend boundaries and unite hearts. Together they made their home in Woolloomooloo, where Alf played a pivotal role in the early green bans, which was a movement that sought to protect heritage and community against unchecked development. Despite the challenges and setbacks during his life, Alf's spirit of resistance and his commitment to social justice never waned. His leadership within the Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union—including later as the secretary of the New South Wales branch—and his involvement in the amalgamation that led to the formation of the CFMEU reflected his strategic vision and unwavering commitment to the cause of workers.

Alf's retirement in 1993 did not diminish his passion for social justice nor his love for the underdog—in particular, his rescue dogs, notably amongst whom was his beloved Cobber. He also never lost his passion for the union movement. His life's work, which was characterised by a deep sense of duty to his fellow workers and a profound love for his family, leaves a legacy that continues to inspire. I am honoured to remember the life of a man who faced adversity with courage, who fought for the rights of others with unwavering conviction, and who, through his actions, demonstrated the profound impact one individual can have on the world around them. Alf Rankin's story is a reminder of the power of resilience, solidarity and love. It is a shining example to those who continue to carry forward the torch of justice and compassion.

HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINES

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (19:07): Today I speak on an issue that is of critical importance to farmers and landholders within the Tamworth electorate. It is of critical importance because it is causing deep concern, deep division and deep distress among those who will be directly impacted by it, which is the proposed high-voltage transmission line and towers through prime agricultural land. It is important to have these discussions in the Parliament because it will send a clear message of the significant impact the race to renewables is having in regional New South Wales. It is important to get the balance right. At present there is an imbalance. The balance is in favour of proponents, and that has to change. There have been protests at Parliament House, Sydney, and Parliament House, Canberra, as well to highlight that renewable energy developments are having a negative impact on lives and livelihoods.

Last Saturday I made my way to Dungowan, where Jan and Ross Hahn live. They were hosting a Landcare field day to look at improving soil quality and pasture health in the Loomberah/Dungowan area. It was fascinating to learn more about the incredible work farmers do to care for their land, to ensure the health of native vegetation and their stock—as well as that of koalas, wallabies and kangaroos that share the land with the sheep and the cattle that feed and clothe the nation. The area is not only productive but visually stunning. I joined Ross on a hill at the top of his property right in the middle of where the transmission towers and high-voltage lines are planned to be built. As part of the route, Ross Hahn has been told that one of his dams has to be moved. No-one can understand that. There has to be a better way and the community is outraged by it. That is why I am backing them in their fight to have the towers and lines moved.

Wherever possible, transmission infrastructure should be placed on public land to limit the impact on our landholders. I am calling on EnergyCo and the Government to listen and act. There is also a public meeting that I will be attending at Limbri. It is not good enough to draw a line on a map—the shortest possible route from A to B—or pick a block of land that happens to be under proposed powerlines, sign off on it and then prosecute the case through very meagre consultation. That is completely back to front and upside down. Renewables and electrical infrastructure projects have got to change their planning methodology if they want to work in regional New South Wales. Crashing through does not work. The electrical infrastructure in this case must be moved from existing farming operations. The project must have social licence, and the message is clear from the community that the project currently does not have that. Social licence is a requirement for the Government to build that

infrastructure. That is my expectation and the expectation of the community, and we will continue our fight to ensure the push for renewable energy is responsible.

SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:10): I am speaking tonight to acknowledge and congratulate some amazing people in my electorate of South Coast who received awards on Australia Day this year. Raymond Dorsett of Mollymook received a Medal of the Order of Australia for his years of service to hockey as a player, coach, umpire, executive committee member and team manager for countless men's, women's and junior teams. Mike Fitze of Mollymook received a Medal of the Order of Australia. Mr Fitze is a Justice of the Peace and has put his hand up for anything and everything—from Clean Up Australia Day and the Red Shield Appeal to Youth Off The Streets and the New South Wales Government's disaster welfare service functional alumni group. Margaret Sheedy of Ulladulla is a living treasure who also received a Medal of the Order of Australia. Margaret has received the award in recognition of her decades of dedication to her community. From star of the stage to hospital fundraiser, Mrs Sheedy is a town icon who has been involved in dozens of organisations over the years and is well known for dressing up in dazzling outfits and handing out fresh flowers from her garden to shoppers and businesses.

Chief Inspector Ray Stynes of Vincentia received an Australian Police Medal. Chief Inspector Stynes joined the NSW Police Force in 1992 and is highly regarded by his peers, his staff and the community. Ray's ability to engage people from all walks of life and his leadership qualities have directly attributed to bridging social and economic issues within the Shoalhaven, reducing crime and investing in youth. More recently Ray was recognised for his commitment, leadership and professionalism as the local emergency operations controller during the 2019-20 South Coast fires. Avril Henry of Mollymook also received a Member of the Order of Australia. Avril is an internationally acclaimed keynote speaker and provocateur who is passionate about transforming leadership models, building diversity capabilities and reforming outdated workplace practices. Avril is recognised for her services to business, project management and the advancement of women in Australia.

We also had some wonderful recipients of the Shoalhaven City Council Australia Day Awards. Julie and Paul Fraser won the award for outstanding contribution to arts and culture. Julie and Paul have been critical to the success of the Albatross Musical Theatre Company and Junior Albatross Musicals, thanks to their tireless passion and ongoing contribution. Aden Spencer won the award for outstanding emerging artist. Aden's life has been dedicated to entertainment and creativity. He has been deeply involved in the arts community and gives back through skilled performance and volunteer work with students. Anne Dynon won the award for outstanding contribution to an inclusive Shoalhaven. Anne has mentored more than 1,000 students as a careers adviser and has since devoted herself to volunteering and fundraising for causes across the Shoalhaven community.

Gregory Thompson won the award for outstanding contribution to the environment. For almost 30 years Greg has been an inspirational role model for the community and the go-to person for everything involving Landcare in the Shoalhaven. Che Stinson Saavedra, who won the award for junior sports person of the year, is a natural leader at home, in the community and while playing and refereeing soccer. Che takes every opportunity to better himself and others around him. Kristin Chick won the award for sportsperson of the year. Kristin established the Mako Paddle Club and, with her coaching and leadership, has propelled Mako to numerous victories, making the club a beacon of success in the region. The young citizen of the year Shoalhaven Medal went to Imogen Clarke. Imogen is deeply committed to local agricultural shows, promoting and encouraging youth involvement in addition to active participation in musical theatre and volunteer work.

And last but not least, the Shoalhaven citizen of the year is Chance Hanlon. Chance makes an outstanding contribution to the community through his volunteer work with Triple U FM. Chance has demonstrated an outstanding dedication to the Shoalhaven community, connecting not only through radio but through events and causes. Chance is renowned for serving the region and is unwavering in his dedication to local causes in the city. His passion for the Shoalhaven is second to none. I would like to sincerely congratulate and thank all the amazing individuals who were nominated and received awards in this year's Australia Day Honours. Their dedication and service to our community is incredible and makes where we live extremely special.

BADGERYS CREEK AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT RESTRICTIONS

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (19:15): The second Sydney airport will create an economic boom and change the landscape of south-west Sydney forever. I cannot really imagine it. The entryway to Australia is soon to be on our doorstep and within metres of my electorate. However, my people, whose front doors are just a 20-minute drive from the runway, are not only forgotten but also treated with contempt. Suddenly, in 2021, the townships of Silverdale, Warragamba, Werombi, Wallacia, Theresa Park and Orangeville had a restriction placed upon them due to their proximity.

I know we need to ensure people build homes to a certain standard and in appropriate areas so that it will not cost future governments or cause noise issues for the home owners. The current guidelines, introduced in 2021, provide in minute detail what is needed to accomplish this, but a larger-than-necessary area was engulfed pending mapping of noise-affected areas. That mapping is now complete, yet the current restrictions continue to apply to blocks outside of the affected area, only allowing a single dwelling to be built on a property, no matter the size. This means additional dwellings like granny flats are not allowed to be built, even with council approval.

Take the Osborn family from Silverdale, for example. Lisa and her son Ryan's 20-acre lot at Silverdale is largely empty acreage that could easily fit a dozen homes, and you would never know the difference from the road. The Osborns want to protect their land and provide for their family. They submitted an application to council for two homes, one large and another smaller, with a few hundred metres between. The Osborns view this land as their forever home and do not want to live together in a single, large, 15-bedroom home. They want a two-bedroom home and a five-bedroom home—not unreasonable. Under this Government, Lisa and Ryan's dream homes may never happen. They sit and wait for the Minister to change the legislation that currently exists under the State environmental planning policy [SEPP].

Minister after Minister stands in this place and says that this State needs housing. We hear time and time again what needs to be done. I have alerted the Minister and the Premier, and I have asked for the restrictions on my electorate to be changed. And still they remain. Why is it that over the river at Luddenham village, under these same restrictions—State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts—Western Parkland City) 2021, which protects the Western Parkland City—there is an allowance for additional dwellings? A village that is much more affected by the airport has fewer restrictions. What is the difference between the two areas? It is not only about the areas. The SEPP goes into two particular blocks of land, one of which is in my area, because it was fought in court. My argument to my community is that it falls on the desk of the previous Government that imposed it and also now on a government that has delayed removing the unnecessary restrictions. Why do political parties make life so difficult for my community?

The Minister needs to help me solve the issue. I am puzzled as to why Government members can stand here and profess to need housing and yet tell the Osborn family that they cannot have two houses on their acreage—their dream houses. It was allowable in 2020, but not since 2021. We are 20 minutes from the airport, but our residents have all of the problems of the airport but none of the opportunities. They have the noise and the pollution but no connectivity to the jobs on offer and unnecessary conditions that prevent them from even building a granny flat on their acreage. Thanks for that! I believe we can do much better, and I intend to do something about it.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:19): I congratulate Maitland's Australia Day award winners. I start with a very humble recipient, Dr Ronald Hacker, OAM, a scientist who dedicated his 50-year career to the management of Australia's vast arid land. His work has taken him across Australia, to Africa and to the United States of America, studying how to best manage the rangelands of Australia, which make up more than 70 per cent of our land mass. I thank *The Maitland Mercury* for showcasing Ronald's achievements. Ronald was quoted as saying:

I've found over the years that trying to understand and manage natural systems is actually much more challenging than trying to manage agricultural systems, where as far as possible you can control all the inputs - in range you control very little.

He is a very wise person. I also recognise Dr Janece McDonald, Maitland's Citizen of the Year for 2023. Dr McDonald is a noted historian with a background in earth sciences. She has lived in Maitland for over 25 years, is the president of the Maitland Regional Museum, has been a member of the Maitland and District Historical Society since 2014 and has played a key role in organising the very popular annual Maitland Heritage Festival. Dr McDonald has been a member of the National Trust and Friends of Grossman House since 2004, and is a member of the Maitland Cultural Hub, Hunter Women's Network, Hunter Education Network, Hunter Innovation and Science Hub and Paterson Historical Society, and has sat on many Maitland City Council committees. I congratulate Dr McDonald on this well-deserved recognition.

I also congratulate Maitland's Young Citizen of the Year for 2023, Lachlan "Lachie" Sheldon. He is an incredible young man. When I first met Lachie, he was surrounded by toys. Lachie has been instrumental in the Susan Roskell Toy and Gift Drive, which has provided toys for children across the Hunter and as far afield as Lismore since its inception in 2016. Inspired by and named in memory of Lachie's grandmother, the toy and gift drive provides Christmas toys for disadvantaged children. Lachie is an active member of Hunter Valley Grammar School and the Hunter Barbarian Rugby Club. Lachie can also be found participating in acts of community service with East Maitland Rotary Club, including Mother's Day flower stalls, which is great to hear.

Morpeth creative Angie Ussher was recognised as Creative Arts Person of the Year for her work in the fields of singing and teaching performing arts for nearly two decades in our community. She began her performing life while still at school in Sydney Opera House events and in the Sydney Olympics and Paralympics opening ceremonies in 2000. She has performed in over 50 musicals and plays, as well as directing and choreographing several others. She currently oversees a performing arts studio that makes music and musical theatre available and accessible to all ages and abilities. The studio adapts existing shows and also creates original works. She has held leadership positions with Maitland Musical Society and Maitland Repertory Theatre, and directed the CONDA Awards in Newcastle. Her passion for knowledge and learning about neurodiversity has strengthened her abilities and her love of teaching.

I also recognise Jack Edwards, Maitland's Sportsperson of the Year. Jack Edwards is a talented sportsperson on the field and court. In his role as a teacher at All Saints' College in Maitland, Jack coaches young athletes in the school's basketball, touch football and rugby league programs. He won the Dylan Hennessey medal as New South Wales Touch Player of the Year in 2023 and scored the winning try for the Australian Emus in the Trans-Tasman Test Series against New Zealand. For the past eight years, Jack has been captain of the Beresfield Men's Open Touch Football team and co-captain of the Hunter Western Hornets. He has also represented New South Wales in its State of Origin squad and the Newcastle Knights, both in touch football. Jack is a longstanding member of the Maitland Mustangs basketball team. He is well deserving of this award.

Finally, I congratulate the City of Maitland Service Award winner, Brian Coffey, and the City of Maitland Medal winner, the Rotary Club of East Maitland. Brian, a former New South Wales police officer, has served the Rotary Club extensively. The club has been a strong advocate in our community and aided in fundraising nearly \$25,000 for local community groups and institutions including Maitland Health Stays, East Maitland Women's Shed, Maitland Family Support, Carrie's Place and local high schools. It regularly aids in the removal of graffiti and has been involved in nearly every single event in Maitland. I congratulate all the award winners and thank them for their service—it is very much appreciated.

COST OF LIVING

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (19:24): I have said time and again in this place that Labor has caused a cost-of-living catastrophe across our State. There is no greater issue for the people of my electorate of Miranda and those living in the Sutherland shire than Labor's cost-of-living crisis. Rent, mortgage payments, the cost of groceries, petrol—you name it, everything has gone up and is continuing to go up under Premier Minns and Labor. There is a long list of New Year's resolutions that the Premier should have made, including at the very least restoring the Active Kids, Creative Kids and Back to School vouchers. Instead, he has decided to continue his mean-spirited attacks on the budgets of New South Wales families by refusing to reinstate these critical programs, leaving vulnerable families worse off in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis.

Amongst the many responsibilities of the State Government is the job of protecting our State's most vulnerable. The former Coalition Government listened to the community and built a strong economy to help us to deliver support to families. In our local communities we saw the benefit of the economic transformation under the former Coalition Government. The Premier must explain how he will deliver much-needed cost-of-living relief to New South Wales families. No-one in New South Wales is immune to cost-of-living pressures, thanks to Labor's financial incompetence. We know that Labor does not care about struggling New South Wales households because it scrapped evidence-based programs like the Active Kids voucher, which helped so many families under the previous Coalition Government. Financial incompetence seems to be one of the hallmarks of this Labor Government, and the Premier should stop his attempts to patch up gaping holes in his budget by blaming everyone but himself and in the process inflicting more pain on New South Wales families.

My community is crying out for cost-of-living relief. Under this Labor Government, local charities are at a tipping point, supporting more people than ever. Incredibly hardworking volunteers at many community support agencies like the Salvation Army have said they are seeing an influx of people they have never seen before. The crisis has got so out of hand that the Salvation Army is now preparing for a major development of its site in Miranda to meet ever-growing demand. This past Christmas, volunteers handed out more hampers than ever before. Without cost-of-living relief, more and more people will be forced to rely on the services offered by community volunteers. But the Premier could roll out significant cost-of-living relief programs to families tomorrow if he wanted to. He could restore the Back to School vouchers, which were redeemed nearly five million times. It was a clear, evidence-based program which not only reduced the pressure on household budgets but also encouraged healthy and active lifestyles for children.

Families throughout the shire have been in contact with me about this unconscionable decision to cancel the Active Kids voucher. Alyce, for example, has told me that with the cost of everything going up she is really struggling to get her kids everything they need. Martine described it as "a cruel hit, where families are forced to drop sports due to the financial pressures". The cancellation of the Back to School vouchers is just one reflection

of Labor's inability to manage this State when families are struggling and essential services are being increasingly stretched. There is simply no urgency by this lazy Government to address the cost-of-living crisis in New South Wales. The Labor Government has not implemented any programs to assist people in this State. In fact, it has cut significant voucher programs. In the Miranda electorate, over 60,000 vouchers were delivered under the former Coalition Government but now families in my community find themselves without this support.

Where are families who are already doing it tough expected to find an extra \$150? Families are living from pay cheque to pay cheque. Energy bills are rising, and the Government has scrapped the Coalition's Energy Bill Saver program, so there is no support on that front. The reality is that all communities across the State are facing increased cost-of-living pressures. The Government is out of touch. Labor does not understand how much families are struggling on its watch and its only interest is in repaying its union mates for their support.

HEATHCOTE ELECTORATE ROADS

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (19:29): They say Rome was not built in a day. Well, there was not a whole lot of road infrastructure built in the Heathcote electorate during the former Government's 12-year tenure. The Heathcote electorate spans more than 40 kilometres from Kirrawee, south to Bulli. There are a number of major roads located throughout the electorate, including the M1 Motorway, the Princes Highway, Heathcote Road and Lawrence Hargrave Drive. Those roads become particularly popular during warmer months when visitors throughout Greater Sydney flock to beaches in the Royal National Park and the Illawarra region. Unfortunately, a lot of the issues on the roads were either neglected or ignored by members opposite, much to the detriment of those in my electorate.

Safety concerns on Heathcote Road have existed for a long time. They did not magically occur a few years ago. The arterial road acts as a major connection for south-west Sydney to the Sutherland shire. Despite the large volume of vehicles that descend on the road every day, the majority of Heathcote Road is still just a single lane road. There have been multiple fatalities due to the unsafe conditions on the road, which is simply no longer fit for purpose. There have also been countless wildlife fatalities due to vehicle strikes. The number of koalas killed or seriously injured is of particular concern.

I am proud that the Minns Government has committed \$5 million in the 2023-24 budget for planning of the duplication of Heathcote Road. Speak to any long-time resident in the shire, or any frequent user of the road, and I am sure they will all agree that the funding is long overdue. Prior to the March 2023 election, I made a commitment to secure an additional \$180 million in funding for the upgrades of Heathcote Road. That is a commitment that will be delivered. Unlike members opposite, when the Minns Government makes a commitment, we honour it. On this side of the House, we would never make \$7 billion in unfunded commitments in an effort to buy an election.

I have lived in the electorate for more than 50 years, so I am acutely aware of the issues with Heathcote Road. Every time I hear a siren heading towards Heathcote Road, my heart skips a beat. I note that work on Garie Road and McKell Avenue is underway. Both roads in the Royal National Park were significantly damaged by heavy downfalls early in 2022. Garie Road is the only road that provides access to Garie Beach. Since it was closed in early 2022, the Garie Surf Life Saving Club has been unable to patrol the beach. However, major works are now occurring on the road and are expected to be complete mid this year, just in time for the surf lifesaving club to be back on Garie Beach for the 2024-25 surf lifesaving season.

McKell Avenue, one of the major roads that winds through the Royal National Park, has also not been fully accessible since the rainfall in early 2022. However, major repair work is now underway, which is also expected to be complete by mid-2024. Both projects are great news for not only locals but also the thousands of people who visit the second oldest national park in the world each year. I am also buoyed by the \$20 million that will be spent on a scoping study for the Memorial Drive-Bulli Pass extension. To date, investigations have been limited to desktop studies. The scoping study, however, will provide an in-depth analysis of the possibilities and barriers in extending the road. Those conducting the study will go on site to evaluate, investigate and survey the area. That is fantastic news for those in the northern Illawarra who are all too familiar with the constant traffic congestion on Lawrence Hargrave Drive and the Princes Highway.

We are a government that wants to connect communities, not divide them, and we are achieving that vision by embarking on projects like the Memorial Drive-Bulli Pass extension feasibility study. The Minister for Roads has done an incredible job in a short time by getting these projects throughout the Heathcote electorate off the ground. I am proud to be a part of a government that is acknowledging and resolving roads issues throughout the electorate of Heathcote. Our aim as a government should be to ensure that motorists spend less time on the road and more time with their families and friends. These projects will certainly help to achieve that goal.

TWEED ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (19:34): As many members have heard me say before, the Tweed is lucky to be home to a wonderful array of remarkable people. On 25 January I joined 31 new Australian citizens to celebrate a collection of inspiring and deserving individuals and groups at the Tweed Shire Australia Day Awards. The Tweed Citizen of the Year was awarded to Kingscliff Fire Station deputy captain and disability support worker Julie Lowe. Julie has been a firefighter for the past 17 years and in the past three years has also founded her own disability support service—Full Circle Support. Julie is a most worthy recipient of the award for her dedication and commitment to the Tweed community. I congratulate Julie.

Kate McKenzie was named the 2023 Volunteer of the Year—Individual, recognising her significant contribution to the Fingal community. Kate co-founded Fingal Head Coastcare in 1986 and has been a volunteer ever since, helping to re-establish 32 hectares of native vegetation at Fingal Head. The 2023 Volunteer of the Year—Group was awarded to the Chinderah Community Hub. I can personally attest to the impact that volunteer organisation had following the devastating floods of 2022. The hub became not only a place of support with food and clothing but also an emotional and mental support for many locals. The Sporting Achievement of the Year for 2023 went to the Centaur Primary School netball team. What an amazing achievement for a talented group of young girls from year 4 to year 6 to receive that acknowledgement. The group competed at the 2023 NSW Primary Schools Sports Association Netball Knockout in Wollongong where they secured second place out of more than 800 public schools. Late in the year they were also very successful in the 2023 NSW Netball All Schools Netball Competition, where they were declared Far North Coast Champions and ultimately won the championship grand final at Sydney Olympic Park. I congratulate the dedicated young athletes and their coach Olivia Attenborough-Doyle.

There were joint winners in the 2023 Sporting Achievement—Individual category. One was Brendon Moore, a professional tennis player who runs his own tennis academy in Terranora. Brendon has dedicated much of his life to teaching elite juniors, who travel from across Australia for his expertise. Early in 2023 Brendon travelled to Turkey for the ITF Masters Tour World Championships, where he represented Australia in the teams event and went on to win the singles event, becoming the world champion and world number one in the 35-plus category. The second winner in the 2023 Sporting Achievement—Individual category was Damien Delgado. Damien is a member of the Bowls Australia Jackaroos Para Squad and was recognised for his outstanding achievements and commitment to the sport. Damien has a raft of medals hanging in his house after representing Australia and taking home the silver medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games for Men's Para Pairs. He was then selected for the World Bowls Championships on the Gold Coast in 2023, seeing him take home the first ever world championship gold medal for Men's Para Pairs lawn bowls.

There was also an honourable mention in the 2023 Sporting Achievement—Individual category given to Kingscliff's Liam Gregoraci, who was recognised for his outstanding contribution and achievements in the sporting community. Liam is an outstanding soccer player and has been selected to go to Germany this year as part of the Rale Rasic Joey's All Star Soccer Team. Liam is also a champion in swimming, football, cross country and athletics. The 2023 Young Achiever in Community Service went to Tomas Bowie. A former school captain at Kingscliff High School, Tomas was recognised for his leadership, work ethic and community service. Tomas joined the Australian Army Cadets in 2017 and was awarded 2023 Cadet of the Year and Brigade Regimental Sergeant Major of the Year for New South Wales. Tomas has actively fundraised for prominent community organisations, including the Kokoda Youth Foundation and the National Servicemen's Association. For his leadership and community contributions, he was recognised with the Youth Community Service Award for New South Wales by the Governor in Sydney last year.

An honourable mention in the 2023 Young Achiever in Community Service category went to seven-year-old Chilli Mae Powell. Chilli was recognised for her unwavering commitment to wildlife conservation, in particular the Tweed's endangered bush stone-curlew population at Pottsville. With this commitment at such a young age, I think our bush stone-curlew are in great hands. It was amazing to be there and see those young people and senior people receive awards for their outstanding commitment. As I said, many have done it over a lengthy time. That is what makes our community really strong. They are like the fabric in the cloth over the community. The stronger they are, the stronger we are. It is an honour to represent them.

GAZA CONFLICT REFUGEES

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:39): I speak about an important and emotional issue for many in my community. Many of my constituents in Liverpool have contacted me to express their despair and distress. Over the past 18 weeks, we have watched the conflict rage in Gaza. The death toll in Gaza has now surpassed 27,500. Many of the survivors are without a family, or a home, or basic amenities. The conflict has filled hospitals with patients classified by a new acronym, WCNSF—meaning "wounded child, no surviving family". This devastating term did not exist prior to this conflict and was coined by doctors in response to the

awful reality that is now so prevalent for children in Gaza. Many have fled for their lives and safety. Many others, sadly, have not been able to leave.

In my electorate of Liverpool, I have heard harrowing stories from many Palestinian Australians who have family or friends in Gaza. I know many of my colleagues in electorates across western and south-western Sydney have heard similar stories in their communities. They are some of the most difficult conversations I have had to have as a local member. As of late November, the Australian Government had approved more than 800 visas for Palestinians with connections in Australia. In December, 143 of those successful visa applicants arrived, including at least 10 families in my electorate of Liverpool. It is a slow trickle, given the unpredictability of being able to cross the Rafah border into Egypt. Those who arrive in Australia must be attached to a sponsor. They must be a family member and an Australian citizen. The visa holders from Gaza have no work rights or access to Federal Government assistance. The pressure is on communities like mine to support those fleeing this conflict.

In the face of this, many across western and south-western Sydney have stepped up. One of those is Western Sydney dentist Fadi Hajaj, who is sponsoring his cousin but also directly supporting 29 people across seven families. He works to support them by getting them legal counsel and vouchers for food, and even providing the children with some fun activities—a welcome reprieve from the crisis they fled. Local charities have also sprung into action. On 21 January this year, with my colleagues the member for Leppington and the member for Granville, I attended the Love and Peace fete at The FC Social in Rydalmere. This event, organised by the Australian Palestinian Club and Palestinian Christians in Australia, saw the community come together to raise vital funds for Gazans arriving in Australia. Despite being one of the hottest days of the summer, the fete featured people of all ages and cultural backgrounds who were compelled to act.

In all of this tragedy, it has been heartening to see the community in south-west Sydney show up to support those arriving in Australia. Charities have been inundated with offers of support from the public, including local grocers offering free wares, with other community members offering food, whitegoods and televisions. Local children have donated their toys. Those in healthcare or legal fields have been generous and offered their expertise and time. Some community members have been selfless and have opened up their homes so that arriving families have a roof over their heads. The President of Palestinian Christians in Australia, Susan Wahhab, became so inundated with goods that she ran out of space in her home garage to store donations. She has had to source a large warehouse, which is abuzz most days with volunteers sorting all kinds of donations.

I know there is much goodwill in communities like mine, but some are not quite sure where to go to provide help. Palestinian Christians in Australia, amongst other charity organisations and places of worship, such as mosques, churches and temples, are actively driving for donations of funds, toiletries, clothing, food, manchester and kids' items to support new arrivals in Australia. Furthermore, volunteers are helping to provide logistical support for the families, such as paying for Opal cards so that they can access public transport to navigate our city. These are the things that we often forget about when we try to imagine the impact of war and conflict on people. I am proud of the many good-hearted people in the Liverpool community who have stepped up to support the vulnerable during a time of extreme need. I encourage everyone who wants to and is able to show support to do the same.

SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL RATES

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (19:44): I take this opportunity to commend the residents of the City of Shoalhaven who turned out in their hundreds last week to attend a meeting of Shoalhaven City Council, which was considering the imposition of a whopping 44 per cent rate increase on its citizens. It was literally standing room only in the council chambers. In all my years in politics, I have never seen a meeting like it. Let us hope we do not need to see one like it again. The proposal for a 44 per cent rate increase amidst a cost-of-living crisis was the brainchild of the Labor-Greens coalition on the council that decided to kick this proposal out to the community just before Christmas—just mean! When people are doing it tougher than ever, a 44 per cent rate increase would hurt workers, people on fixed incomes, families, businesses and also renters because landlords would simply pass on the increase straight to them. For a mayor who said she wanted to do something about the homeless, this rate increase would have pushed people already facing housing stress to breaking point and would have put more people on the streets.

I acknowledge the outgoing CEO, Stephen Dunshea, for extending the period of community consultation on the rate rise plan that carried the slightly Orwellian nomenclature of the "Shoalhaven community education and engagement project". You can call it whatever you want, but this proposal was nothing short of an absolute outrage. The petition I started gained more than 4,000 signatures. I also acknowledge the magnificent Denise Joy, who spearheaded the community campaign and collected a petition that was signed by more than 7,000 people. This comes on top of thousands of submissions that were received by council from locals who were not only angry but also fearful of what this rate rise would mean for them. People understand that costs do go up—but not by 44 per cent.

I acknowledge the councillors who stood firm against this proposal from the very beginning. Councillors Ell, Copley, Kitchener, White, Wells and Watson opposed this madness right from the very start. The day after submissions closed, Labor members Fiona Philips and the member for South Coast issued a statement opposing the rate increase. They were nowhere to be seen when their Labor lapdogs on the council were voting to support the proposed 44 per cent rate hike. But, like the arsonist running into the fire, the day after the submissions closed Labor attempted to look like it was coming to the rescue after its members had signed off on the proposal. The reality is that people power defeated this rate increase. Philips and the member for South Coast had about as much to do with knocking this thing off as I did inventing the internet.

Shoalhaven City Council is in huge financial difficulties because of years of Greens-Labor mismanagement and tonight I call on the Minister for Local Government to issue performance improvement orders under section 438A of the Local Government Act in order to get the council back on track. This is currently and appropriately the case with Kiama council, and this approach is just as needed in Shoalhaven. Here is why. Since 2015, rates have gone up 60 per cent but staffing expenses have blown out by 83 per cent. This equates to an additional \$140 million being spent on municipal bureaucracy in less than 10 years. Over the same period, general fund debt has risen from \$39.4 million in 2015 to \$118.1 million in 2023, which equates to more than \$2,000 of debt for every single ratepayer.

In 2015, around a quarter of rates revenue went to cover the cost of roads. Despite a special rate increase in 2017-18, only 9.3 per cent of rates revenue is spent on roads today—and doesn't it show! Since 2017, council employee numbers have increased from 792 to more than 1,200 staff. Whilst I know that many council staff work hard, we need more people pushing wheelbarrows and less middle management, bureaucracy and red tape. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Shoalhaven financial professionals Mark Crowther and Peter Dunn for crunching these numbers. The New South Wales Auditor-General has also expressed concerns about council's accounts, with the Auditor-General identifying that council had to correct errors in its 30 June 2022 financial statements of greater than \$50 million. In its report, the Auditor-General said:

Management had not reflected the updated revaluation impacts on all infrastructure property, plant and equipment asset classes within its financial statements. Council subsequently corrected these revaluation adjustments for various asset classes within infrastructure, property, plant and equipment amounting to \$288.6 million.

The Auditor-General went on to make high-risk findings about council, and said:

Quality and timeliness of financial statements and supporting work papers needs improvement. The financial statements required amendment to correct misstatements and disclosure deficiencies, and working papers did not satisfactorily reconcile to the financial statements.

When I was on council, I established a budget committee to fix the financial mess. This council needs improvement performance audits—and it needs them today.

PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:49): It is safe to say that the secret of Port Stephens is well and truly out. From all accounts, this holiday season saw bumper crowds. Our beaches were busier than ever before whilst locals practised breathing techniques to go about their daily business. It is little wonder, with Jimmys Beach recently claiming the top Australian spot for the beach with the calmest waters in a worldwide list of serene shorelines. But, just quietly, the real secret to Port Stephens is its people. We are a community where local people give back in so many ways.

It is always good to kick off the year recognising some of our secret gems—something that we do each year across the electorate on Australia Day. Tonight I recognise in this place some of them and their efforts. I will start with our youngest award recipients. I congratulate Abby Keeley, who is the recipient of the Port Stephens Young Citizen of the Year Award. Abby is an impressive young woman. She is a year 12 student and a current captain at Irrawang High School who is involved in countless community endeavours, including Medowie Girl Guides with whom she recently travelled to India. Abby also was awarded a Youth Community Service Award by the New South Wales Governor and the Order of Australia Association.

The Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Young Citizen of the Year was awarded by the Tea Gardens Lions Club to 18-year-old Reef Mirisch for his dedication to his local surf club. Reef has been volunteering with the Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Surf Club since 2021 and has since been on the beach for a total of more than 130 hours. Alice Mitchell was awarded Port Stephens Sportsperson of the Year for the significant impact she has had on the world of touch footy and netball. In her spare time, Alice runs coaching squads for young people in touch football where she promotes a healthy lifestyle of physical fitness, confidence and mental resilience.

Right across Port Stephens there are people deeply committed to the arts and cultural endeavours—from our art galleries to muralists and talented musicians. The Port Stephens Cultural Endeavour Award was presented to a wonderful young man, Jacob Ridgeway, who is a talented singer, songwriter and performer. He shares his

Worimi and Gamilaroi culture with the world around him. Many locals also share my love of our environment and we all do our own bit in our own ways but some people step up so much more, like the recipients of the Port Stephens Environmental Award. I thank the dedicated volunteers from the Nelson Bay Civic Pride group whose blood, sweat and no doubt some tears have put the heart and a lot of colour back into the CBD of Nelson Bay.

The Port Stephens Medal is a special award granted to people or organisations that make a difference to the lives of many. This year, the Port Stephens Medal was awarded to the caring team at Nelson Bay Cancer Patient Transport Group, who transport locals suffering from cancer to their many appointments many miles from home. This group of committed volunteers do not just provide transport but also offer emotional support and friendship to the people they assist—supporting health and wellbeing, one journey at a time.

The final awards were to recognise the outstanding contributions to community of inspiring individuals as Citizens of the Year. The Port Stephens Citizen of the Year was awarded to someone whose contribution to our community has made it kinder, more compassionate and more caring. For anyone whose families have been touched by dementia, they know the difference that these qualities make in a community. Thank you and congratulations to the Port Stephens Citizen of the Year, Meagan Ambrose, for her inspirational career in health care, which includes establishing a local dementia service for families and their loved ones to get the support and care they need, alongside countless other community and health care contributions she has made to the people of Port Stephens. The Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Citizen of the Year was awarded to another amazing volunteer—someone who first joined the local surf lifesaving club in 1996. I think Debbie Booth has held almost every role at the club—from president to training officer and everything in between. She has been mentoring other members for decades and has been an integral part of a club that works so hard to keep locals and visitors safe on beautiful Bennetts Beach.

Many people other than those who won awards on the day give a great deal of their time and energy to making our community so special. Some of those were nominated for awards and are equally worthy of recognition here: Jacqui Stokes, for her tireless efforts for her community through her love of Lego; Matthew Morris for his selfless volunteer work with Medowie Football Club; Cassandra Schmitzer for her dedication to the community as a volunteer firefighter; Diana Souter for her passionate community work in music; Fran Corner for her tireless commitment to many and varied endeavours, particularly her love of all things Landcare; Ruth Diemar for her 36 years of service as a director of Birubi Point Community Preschool; Sharon Egan for her dedication to preserving koalas at the Port Stephens Koala Sanctuary; Meryl Miller for her commitment to improving youth mental health and her leadership of the Port Stephens arts centres; and Sonny Woolley, who is a most talented softball player with a very bright future. I am a very proud representative of our beautiful and caring Port Stephens community. I thank and congratulate all those wonderful community members for all they do to make Port Stephens so special.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:54): Lunar New Year in my electorate across the St George area and throughout New South Wales is truly one of my favourite times of the year. This is because time and time again, New South Wales has demonstrated that we do it the best. It is always such a pleasure to gather with our Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean communities and many others in celebration. It is an occasion I look forward to each and every year, but not just because of the beautiful lights and lanterns, the red envelopes and, of course, the food. Whilst these are all fantastic things, I truly believe that the most important thing about Lunar New Year is celebrating with family, friends and loved ones.

It represents a time of joy for so many in our local communities across New South Wales. It is a time to share in good wishes as we usher in another year of happiness, prosperity, luck and good health. We are truly blessed to have some of the largest Lunar New Year events in the world outside of Asia. This year we celebrate the Year of the Dragon and, because in Chinese culture the dragon is significant as a symbol of nobility, honour and success, it will be a very lucky year ahead indeed! Those born in the Year of the Dragon are said to be full of energy, intelligence and natural courage. We know of course that this year will bring about opportunities and change for many of us—and we welcome this with open arms. Right across New South Wales we will see, and have already started to see, street parties, live entertainment, lion dances, dragon boat racing, light and art installations and much more. There are opportunities for all of us to get involved and to celebrate our diversity.

Lunar New Year is a time to come together and participate in traditions that have been ongoing for thousands of years—not just in my electorate of Oatley but right throughout New South Wales. In Sydney, in particular, celebrations can date back for over 85 years with iconic lion dances taking place as early as 1937. This legacy illustrates the timelessness of these traditions here in New South Wales. Lunar New Year has been uniting communities in New South Wales for longer than many of us have been alive. Of course, it is important that we pay homage to this heritage in our own unique way. That is why in January the Coalition called on the Minns

Labor Government to continue the tradition of lighting up the iconic sails of the Sydney Opera House in red to celebrate this special occasion.

Rooted in ancient beliefs, the colour red is thought to have protective qualities of warding off evil spirits and ushering in positive energy, good fortune and happiness. This is something that has been done for many years and we need to continue to show our support and respect for our diverse communities across the State. We must continue the traditions that have made Lunar New Year what it has become here in New South Wales. I was pleased to hear and to witness that the Government answered our calls: Yesterday, the Sydney Opera House was lit up. I was beyond excited once again to be able to witness this spectacular event and join the community—not just from my electorate but from right across Sydney—in celebration. Lunar New Year events would not be possible without the support of the people of New South Wales and our diverse communities living and working here. As the shadow Minister for Multiculturalism and a former Minister for Multiculturalism, I know that events like these provide us with the opportunity to learn from each other, to celebrate our success, and to celebrate our diversity. I have said time and time again in this place, here in New South Wales our diversity is our strength.

The fabric of our nation has been shaped by the cultures, histories and stories of countless individuals. I extend my gratitude to the people of New South Wales for their continued support and enthusiasm, which has ensured that Lunar New Year remains a treasured event in our calendar. Our State is stronger with the contributions of people from all walks of life. Lunar New Year gives us an opportunity to recognise and celebrate this. Once again I wish everyone a very happy Lunar New Year for 2024. I hope that this year brings great hope, prosperity and peace to everyone who celebrates.

WENTWORTH POINT DEVELOPMENT

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (19:59): I speak against the proposal to amend the Homebush Bay West Development Control Plan, Amendment 2, which will impact one of the last undeveloped sites of Wentworth Point: Block H. In a prime location overlooking the Homebush Bay foreshore, this site presents an exciting possibility to bring myriad benefits to the suburb and provide something residents on the east and north side of the harbour take for granted: design that highlights its enviable position, a leafy, green, sunny foreshore, with building heights slowly rising up further from the shore.

Wentworth Point is on a peninsula. Hill Road is the only road in and out. Wentworth Point is Australia's most densely populated suburb, with 22,134.5 people per square kilometre on one side of Hill Road and an additional 2,300 dwellings the other side. There is no train station and no metro station. The suburb has more density than Zetland and Pyrmont, and it has almost 14 times the density of Wahroonga, which is part of the electorate of Wahroonga, which has a train station as well as 13 times more land. One thing we know is that Wentworth Point's residents are not nimbys. They live in Wentworth Point because they love apartment living and the benefits that high-density living brings. They are not afraid of density; they bought or rent in a suburb comprised solely of apartments. But, as one resident told me, this pint-sized 0.6-square-kilometre peninsula has been flexing its muscles as Sydney's residential weightlifter.

If done well and in line with robust planning principles that have been clearly articulated both in former Department of Planning studies and in a thorough urban design review of the site in July 2022 by City of Parramatta planning specialists, the project has the potential to lead to a better lived experience for the residents of Wentworth Point. A sympathetic design that highlights and restores, rather than dominates, the foreshore areas, in line with design principles that have been common practice around the Sydney Harbour foreshore for decades, has the potential to open up the waterfront area of the peninsula and make it an important gathering place for a suburb that throughout its growth has missed opportunities to provide the basic public amenity required to support high-density living.

Block H forms part of what was a larger site. Gross floor area was taken from Block H and placed on an adjacent site, and now the developer has come back for a second bite at the cherry and is seeking to increase the number of dwellings from 350 to a whopping 997. Approving this will add unimaginable pressure to Hill Road and place further strain on existing public infrastructure. Two 40-storey towers that are a mere 18 metres apart will almost double the permissible height of the current development control plan. No other tower in the area is within 100 metres of Homebush Bay, but, if allowed, these 40-storey towers will stand 30 metres from the foreshore, block views of the sky, dominate the waterfront, the primary school and the planned park, overshadow the foreshore and nearby apartments, reduce the privacy of the primary school and allow nearly three times the density permitted under the current development controls.

A young Wentworth Point family told me that reasonable, sensible and sustainable density is what it wants. As its State member, I stand with my community to find the balance between cool, green cities and smart density. Listening to current development controls will give us the balance between density done well and delivering homes for our younger generations in a suburb that lives up to its calling and highlights its enviable position on

Homebush Bay. I am incredibly proud of the Labor Government's commitment to expanding schools and transport links—things that will help with liveability. But it is clear that this amount of density is well beyond the capacity of a suburb that is still playing catch-up after decades of neglect from the Liberal-Nationals Government. The growth of Wentworth Point, Melrose Park, Carter Street, Church Street North and Sydney Olympic Park proves that Parramatta is delivering sustainable, appropriate housing and that it is not unreasonable to say no to this amendment and retain development controls that will give my community what it deserves now and in the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Before I call the member for Upper Hunter, I thank him. We just watched an excellent movie called *The Promise*, about mental health and suicide prevention. It is certainly worth viewing, particularly by men. This affects us all, but men in particular will relate. I am sure the member for Cessnock would agree. I call the member for Upper Hunter.

GLOUCESTER COMMUNITY

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (20:05): Tonight I talk about the beautiful town of Gloucester. Many times in this place I have heard that the New South Wales Government will help coal communities and coal workers as the industry winds down, now and into the future. However, in the town of Gloucester, that future is now, and we need help now. We need investment in industry to make sure that we have good jobs as our coal industry comes to an end. Gloucester, a town of 3,000 people, is 145 kilometres north of Newcastle, at the base of the Barrington Tops, with a wonderful view of the Bucketts Mountains. It has long been a place for the timber, dairy and beef industries, but mining has lately been the major industry.

Stratford mine, with 120 employees and some contractors on top of that, is scheduled to close this year. Duralie mine, with 140 workers, stopped in December 2021, and Rocky Hill mine was rejected a number of years ago, based on a controversial judicial decision that included scope 3 emissions. The days of mining have come to an end in the Gloucester valley. When the mining stops, a number of employees will continue at the mine for about four years, closing down the operations, and decommissioning and removing infrastructure. Ongoing monitoring and maintenance of rehabilitated areas will go on for another 10 to 15 years. Yancoal, the owner of the mine, has a great renewable energy future planned on the site. A solar farm with pumped hydro is progressing through a feasibility study. Yancoal has an extensive operation in the Hunter Valley, generally near Singleton. Many of the workers are being looked after and moved to the mines in Singleton or may take up an option to retire and buy a caravan. I know that is quite popular.

Yancoal has put a lot of effort into its transition plans for operations and has carefully planned how each part of its operations will come to an end. But the key here is for the town of Gloucester. What do we do about that loss of high-paying jobs in the local economy? I am concerned about what that means. Industry in Gloucester is important, and we need to boost that industry and support new industry, which means improving economic diversity by building capacity. Everyone has a different opinion on what is needed going forward. There are plenty of ideas out there: investment in industrial parks, upgrades to Bucketts Way, a better interchange with the Pacific Highway, investment in the caravan park for tourism, and ecotourism ventures like the Barrington bike park. Many ideas and many opinions are on the table—of that we can be sure.

That is why in recent years the former Coalition Government developed the Royalties for Rejuvenation program, which was supported by both sides of this House. The program developed an expert panel of locals who could listen to all the stakeholders. It was well resourced, with a legislated \$25 million allocated each year from coal royalties. To date, the expert panel has been formed and we have almost \$75 million in the bank ready to go. However, the new Government has failed to continue the work that has already been done. It was designed to be bipartisan but the inaction by the Labor team has meant that the ball has been dropped on this important issue. Not a dollar of that has been spent and we are falling further behind.

The problem is that the Minister responsible for regional development and the required legislation are completely missing. We need to make sure that we are focused on the mining communities as they come to an end. It is absolutely clear that if we cannot get it right for the town and for the region of Gloucester as its mining industry comes to an end, we will not get it right for the rest of the Hunter Valley. My appeal is simple: I call on Premier Minns to step in and sort out the mess. There is a key lack of urgency to make inroads into the problem by the Minister responsible for regional development. Gloucester needs help now; it cannot wait.

CESSNOCK ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (20:10): It is my great pleasure to speak about three outstanding individuals in the electorate of Cessnock who were recognised with an Australia Day award. First, I speak about Ellena Morris, OAM. I have known Ellena for the best part of 40 years—her sons and I went to school together. She is an absolute champion and always has been. Quite frankly she could have received an OAM 20 years ago for the work she has already done. It is well deserved. Ellena has been recognised for her service to swimming in

general and at large but, in particular, for her swimming commitment to people with disabilities. She has taught thousands of people with disabilities how to swim. I see her at the local Cessnock pool on a Saturday morning still teaching free of charge—as she always has done—some of the most difficult and complex kids with real challenges and needs. Her patience is just amazing but she makes it happen.

Not only does Ellena make it happen at the local pool but she takes athletes from their local pool right across the Hunter through to State and national qualifications, and then to the Special Olympics. For 33 years she has supported Special Olympics Australia athletes. She has been the head aquatics coach for the Australian Special Olympics team since 2000, the head of delegation since 2004 and a national swimming classifier since 1994. Ellena has been the founding coach and secretary of the Coalfields United Amateur Swimming Club since 1994 and a swimming teacher for at least 50 years. She has received multiple awards and recognition for her long-term dedication and, I can tell you, she does it all free of charge. She had to start collecting a gold coin donation when the Cessnock council started charging her to use the pool lane at the Cessnock public swimming pool to teach people free of charge. I will leave others to judge that.

The next recipient is John "Jay" Tulloch, OAM. The Tulloch name, of course, means wine. John was recognised for his service to the wine industry. He is a third-generation vigneron. He has been producing wine since 1962 in his role as the third generation of the Tulloch family. Tulloch Wines have been operating for over 125 years—it is four generations now because the children of the Tullochs are now taking over the business. Jay has been president of the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association for years and a committee member for 20-plus years. He was awarded a living legend award—imagine having that title beside your name; it is better than being a dead legend—at the Hunter Valley Legends and Wine Industry Awards in 2009. Jay Tulloch is a legend of the industry. Congratulations, Jay Tulloch, OAM.

A special mention to Simon Geraghty, who received a public service medal. Simon has committed his life to public service. Is there a higher calling than public service? He received the medal for outstanding public service in the development of technology platforms providing vital services and access to government services. He was integral in establishing the technology platform that supported the centralised child protection helpline. He is an alumnus of Newcastle university and is a brother alumni. Congratulations. The greatest people on planet earth come from the University of Newcastle. Recently Simon developed the telephony infrastructure system for Service NSW, which receives more than 221,000 phone calls each week. Mr Geraghty and his team established and maintain that system. His life dedication to public service—the greatest calling in life—is congratulated with the public service medal. Ellena, Jay and Simon, you are most deserved of your Australia Day recognition. Congratulations to the three of you.

ORANGE ELECTORATE PASSENGER RAIL SERVICES

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (20:14): The petitions that we, as members of Parliament, debate in this place each week are the result of a substantial number of community members unifying to support an issue they deem of importance and seek to have the Parliament address. Obtaining 10,000 or more handwritten signatures to succeed in a debate is not an easy accomplishment for any country community. During my time as the member for Orange, I have only tabled two from my electorate. Of those two 10,000-signature petitions, one was successfully achieved by the Orange Rail Action Group, whose members relentlessly pursued improved passenger rail services for the community of Orange and the broader Central West of New South Wales. That petition was debated in this place five years ago and, in spite of the number of petitioners representing a number roughly half the adult population of Orange, the debate was—as I have often described petition debates—a bit of an anticlimax. The issue was debated following years of work but was followed by a discouraging absence of real action from the previous Government.

Orange Rail Action Group and the petitioner sought assistance to improve passenger rail services and to provide the local community increased connectivity between the regions to enhance connectivity and reduce road traffic congestion, to boost tourism and further economic prosperity, and to improve health, education and employment community opportunities. To achieve those outcomes, and to deliver on the express wants and needs of the community, the Orange Rail Action Group have sought to extend the existing *Bathurst Bullet* daily return passenger train service, which currently services the nearby city of Bathurst and connects passengers with Sydney. To verify passenger rail being an issue of priority for the Orange community, shortly after the receipt of the petition I undertook an electorate-wide survey. The survey respondents identified improved passenger service as a high priority. That confirmation supports an already firm case for further investment in improved passenger rail services to cater for the needs of those living and visiting the Orange electorate and the greater Central West.

Given the importance of the issue to my electorate, I have delivered a number of contributions about this in this Chamber over the past five years. I have outlined the benefits of the service and I reinforce them now. The first benefit is economic prosperity. Improving our rail connections will catalyse economic growth in our region. It will reduce the logistical hurdles faced by businesses and allow them to reach major markets in Sydney more

efficiently. That, in turn, will spur investment, create jobs and contribute to the wellbeing of Orange and its neighbouring areas, enhancing connectivity. An improved passenger rail service will strengthen the bonds between regional communities and our State's capital. It will substantially reduce travel times and make it easier for our residents to access health care, educational institutions and a wider range of services in Sydney. It is not just a convenience; it is about ensuring equal access to opportunities for all.

The second benefit is reduction in traffic congestion and secure connectivity. As the population grows, so does the traffic congestion on our roads. Investing in better rail services will incentivise more people to choose public transportation. It will reduce the number of cars on our roads and subsequently decrease traffic congestion. That dynamic not only benefits communities but also contributes to a more sustainable future, while contributing to road safety and a reduction in fatalities, which tragically are presently trending upwards. Additionally rail provides further security in city-country connectivity as we continue to confront major weather-related events, which impact road serviceability.

The third benefit is a boost in tourism. Our region is blessed with stunning landscapes, a rich historical heritage and a vibrant cultural scene. Improved rail connectivity will attract more tourists to explore our area, bringing their patronage to local businesses, hotels, restaurants and attractions. That boost in tourism is a direct path to a stronger local economy. The fourth benefit is health and opportunities. Many locals require specialist health services, which are often based in Sydney. Improved rail services will make the journey to those services increasingly accessible and affordable, and ensure that people can access the health care they need. Improved rail services will help close the city-country health service divide and reduce the life expectancy gap between country and city dwellers.

A key to unlocking the potential for the growth and prosperity of regional New South Wales is the transport services provided for residents to access metropolitan centres. The establishment and stabiling of a daily bullet train service in Orange would deliver my community with a safe and reliable transport service that would be well used. I foresee Orange becoming a key regional hub—a place where a seamless rail service stops daily. Connecting to our State capital will not only attract investment but also create jobs, drive innovation and put our region firmly on the map. The Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and her team have enthusiastically engaged with me and my team, as well as members of the Orange Rail Action Group. Minister Aitchison advised that our request for the stabiling of the bullet passenger train at Orange providing a daily service to Sydney and return is actively being considered. That is an encouraging development and I am optimistic the service will be realised in the near future. For me the service remains high on my list of priorities for the Orange electorate.

SWANSEA CHANNEL DREDGING

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (20:19): Hearing me talk about the Swansea dredge is not foreign to this House, and I am back again tonight with some amazing, fantastic news. I advise the House that, after 12 years of inaction from the former Liberal Government, the Swansea dredge has happened and it is now navigable. The New South Wales Government has delivered on its priority election commitment to dredge the channel. Since I was elected as the member for Swansea in 2015, I have consistently campaigned for a long-term dredging solution to ensure that the channel is navigable and Lake Macquarie is safe for boaties. I wrote to former lands Ministers, water and property Ministers, and transport Ministers, and each and every time it fell on deaf ears. The Liberals simply had no interest in ensuring that the channel was navigable and safe.

The reality of the shoaling of the channel is that it hurts our region financially as vessels are unable to exit and enter to attend local events. One example of that is the Royal Motor Yacht Club at Toronto. Its annual Heaven Can Wait regatta, which raises money for the Hunter branch of Cancer Council NSW, has seen declining participation over the years, year on year. The shoaling of the channel also places strain on the volunteers of Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie, the busiest marine rescue service in this State. Its volunteers are called upon to tow and rescue vessels that get stuck when attempting to sail the channel, not only placing additional pressure on their resources but also putting their safety at risk.

The Minns Labor Government promised that it would make the dredging of Swansea Channel a priority, and I am so pleased to say that that is exactly what it has done. I acknowledge the Minister for Transport, who has taken the issue very seriously and worked hard to deliver that result. Last year I stood alongside the Minister for Transport to announce that the New South Wales Government would invest \$1.5 million to dredge 30,000 cubic metres of sand via two dredging campaigns. That dredging would provide a 30-metre-wide channel to the depth of minus 3.5 Australian height datum and would allow for vessels with a draught of up to 2.5 metres to travel through the channel safely.

I am pleased to say that the first round of dredging is complete and saw almost 17,000 cubic metres of sand removed from three areas to create a 30-metre-wide channel extending from the dogleg south-east of Elizabeth

Island up to the drop-over north-west of Swan Bay entrance—very local yokel, but everyone at home will know what I am talking about. It is a great result for the people of Swansea and the broader community of Lake Macquarie. We promised to deliver the project as a priority, and that is exactly what the New South Wales Government has done.

The feedback that I am hearing from boaties who have seen this project take shape and people on vessels coming through is that it is nothing but a fabulous success. The dredging works have been welcomed by not only the local community but also boaties around the State. Swansea Channel and Lake Macquarie comprise one of the premier waterways in Australia, and for too long it has been inaccessible. With those works, we are opening up the waterway for everybody to enjoy once again. We are open for business. It does not stop there, though, with a second round of dredging to take place in mid-2024 and work continuing on the long-term dredging solution. A smart government will deliver that. The dredging of Swansea Channel is a clear signal that, under Labor, we have a government that will once again invest in the Hunter region and deliver for local communities.

HARRINGTON AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:23): I acknowledge the Harrington Australia Day Award nominees and recipients who were honoured for their extraordinary achievements and exemplary service to the community. Australia Day on 26 January is a day when we reflect, respect and celebrate being Australian. That means we reflect on the past, respect each other's stories and celebrate the natural beauty of the free and democratic country we all call home. I acknowledge that not everyone agrees that our official national day should coincide with the 1788 landing of the First Fleet and the raising of the Union Jack flag at Sydney Cove. Although the national debate on that issue will no doubt continue for many years to come, and people from all different backgrounds will share their views, it is important we listen and engage with each other and our communities and respect their various viewpoints—because we should always strive to maintain inclusion, ensuring that Australia remains a place where we all feel safe.

When I spoke at the Australia Day event in Harrington, I urged everyone present to make sure our future and the road to reconciliation is much smoother by acknowledging and respecting the views of others. Before I recognise our local Australia Day award recipients, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land in the southern part of the Port Macquarie electorate and pay my respects to Elders past and present. Always was and always will be Aboriginal land. The story of an extraordinary nation of people begins 65,000 years ago, comprising a rich and diverse culture and a deep spiritual connection to the lands and waterways. I extend my immense gratitude for their custodianship and willingness to work together towards a common goal of friendship and fairness for all.

This year I was invited to attend the Australia Day awards in Harrington to congratulate and celebrate our local leaders and heroes who volunteer their time to build and strengthen our communities. I thank the Harrington and Surrounds Business and Community Association and the local Lions club for delivering another outstanding awards ceremony to celebrate our nominees and recipients. The Citizen of the Year category attracted four nominations—Diane Gibson, Megan Saunders, Scott Saunders and Kym Stanley—and the winner of the Citizen of the Year was Kym Stanley. She has been commended for her integral work as editor for the local newsletter, the *Tell Everybody* magazine. Kym also inspired the creation of Harrington Heritage Riverwalk in 2020 and the naming of the Alexander Newton and Dhunggaarr reserves, volunteering at the Harrington parkrun and chairing the organising committee for the Harrington Festival and Fireworks. In her spare time, Kym presides over the Harrington and Surrounds Business and Community Association as president. Wow—what a woman she is!

Youth of the Year nominations were open to 12- to 18-year-olds, and the award was jointly given to Lilyanna Wade and Lily Wells. Lilyanna was recognised for her leadership amongst her student peers and for demonstrating a high level of maturity and initiative at Harrington Public School. Lilyanna's academic excellence is due to her dedication and commitment towards her studies. Lily mirrors Lilyanna's attributes in her diligence at school and leadership qualities as school captain, setting an exemplary standard. Described as enthusiastic in all school sports, Lily was successful at the recent Hunter regional athletics carnival, claiming first in the 100 metres heat against a crop of talented junior athletes.

Sports Person of the Year was awarded to Lee Benson, an active and inspirational member of the Harrington Women's Bowling Club. Lee was selected to attend the National Bowls Championship for the New South Wales team in Perth in October 2023, taking home a silver medal. Club Harrington described Lee as "a wonderful ambassador, portraying leadership, professionalism and encouragement towards the membership". Youth Sports Person of the Year, for eligible 12- to 18-year-olds, received four nominations from some extremely talented young women: Lily Wells, Mikayla Potter, Bronte Eady and Dakota Leach.

Joint winners were Bronte Eady and Dakota Leach. Bronte is an all-rounder, with tremendous results in rowing, netball, water polo and surf lifesaving, making a contribution to the Crowdy Head Surf Lifesaving Club.

Bronte won the club's female competitors award and was nominated for Junior Surf Life Saver of the Year. Dakota Leach is a sporting sensation in Harrington Little Athletics, soccer, swimming and surf lifesaving. Dakota has represented at zone and regional championships. In her spare time Dakota raises funds for John Gollan fireworks and delivers the *Tell Everybody* magazine. Junior Sports Person of the Year was presented to Jessie Potter for her high level of participation and success at various sports carnivals and zone carnivals in 2023. Jessie was the 11 years swimming, athletics and cross-country champion, and the Harrington Waters Golf Club junior club champion.

The Volunteer of the Year was jointly claimed by Pam and Graeme Jarman. An inspirational duo, Pam and Graeme coordinated the restoration of the Pilot Hill Cemetery, with the support of the Harrington Lions Club and Men's Shed. Graeme is an office holder for Harrington-Crowdy Head RSL Sub-Branch and Manning Valley National Servicemen's Association Sub-Branch, while Pam also supports both organisations, along with volunteering for the Pelican Piecers sewing and quilting group. The other nominees for Volunteer of the Year were Tracey Alsford and Tammy Tunstall.

Last but by no means least, the Group of the Year honours were awarded to the Harrington Waters Golf Club. The club is owned and operated by a team of volunteers, coordinating the maintenance and overseeing ongoing renovations to a high standard. The golf club was a finalist in 2023 for the Country Club of the Year awards—a worthy accomplishment—thanks to the diligent commitment of time and energy by members, who take enormous pride in that wonderful community asset in Harrington. Once again I congratulate all of those who were nominated across the various award categories and extend my gratitude to the local Australia Day committee for proudly showcasing that much-loved event in the community. The well-attended event held at the Harrington Community Centre demonstrates clearly that we are all part of the Australian story.

MEDLOW BATH ROADWORKS

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:28): There is a village in my electorate called Medlow Bath. It is, for the most part, a sleepy little hamlet with a close-knit community who care deeply about the place they call home. In December 2022 the former New South Wales Government decided, in its infinite wisdom, to sign contracts as part of the Great Western Highway upgrade program to expedite unnecessary works through Medlow Bath. There are several reasons why that move needs to be highlighted but, most significantly, it points to the ill-conceived, politically motivated agenda of the former Government, which displayed a complete lack of understanding and care for the specific needs of the residents of Medlow Bath.

There is some background to this story that is important to know. The former New South Wales Government dangled a carrot in front of the communities of Blackheath and Mount Victoria, promising a tunnel that it said, if built, would solve all their traffic congestion issues. There are three main problems with that promise. Firstly, there was no business case to support that grand plan. Secondly, there continue to be justifiable concerns relating to the environmental impacts of such a major infrastructure project on our World Heritage national park. Thirdly, the funding needed to bring that multibillion-dollar vision to fruition did not exist. It is pertinent to make reference to these aspects of the former Government's tactics because it brought us to where we are today. There are two townships feeling angered, frustrated and dismayed because what was sold to them as a silver bullet is not able, in the foreseeable future, to be realised. They now bear the bruises that are the direct result of an irresponsible pledge and an unfunded assurance that a solution was at hand, when it was not.

Let me now swing back to Medlow Bath and the situation that exists for residents there today. I mentioned the signing of contracts a few months out from a State election by a government that had no idea if it was going to be re-elected for another term. In fact, I would go so far as to say that some members of the former Government felt pretty confident that their winning streak was up. The works in Medlow, and indeed through the Hartley Valley—make no mistake—were designed as preparatory works for the elusive Great Western Highway tunnel. I am not certain if the signing of those contracts was a strategy to win a few more votes, a last-ditch attempt to convince those with a vested interest that, come hell or high water, that tunnel was going to be built, or if it was a move based solely on spite, knowing that any incoming government would essentially be wedged into continuing works that many locals believe are not needed and, even more so, should not be taking priority—not when the former Government left an eye-watering budget black hole to repair, and not when there are communities across the State that need the money more.

Interestingly, the member for Bathurst piped up in an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* towards the end of last year, saying that a road to nowhere is being built. Why then did he push for the signing of contracts to commence roadworks designed to support an unfunded tunnel? The piecemeal approach by the former Government has been a problem with the Katoomba to Lithgow upgrades from the start, and I am tired of the blame being piled onto the current State and Federal governments when, in fact, it rests squarely on the shoulders of those that came before. The National Party's political fortunes are built on lies. Every election it promises a version of this fantasy expressway and tunnel that it never plans to deliver.

I acknowledge the Medlow Bath community for their incredible advocacy and their commitment to demanding better outcomes for their village. Over the past few years I have been fortunate enough to get to know members of the Medlow Bath Residents Association: Deb and Russell Brown, Jen Tierney, Andrew Ford, Stephen Caswell, Shane Porteous and Carlene Martin. They epitomise the very meaning of community spirit, and the love they feel for their home of Medlow Bath is evidenced by their unwavering activism. I also mention Noël and Warwick Smith, Kathleen Wansey, Tara Schmidt, Matthew Stokes, Steve Purdy and Jodie Hummerston, who I recently met with to hear the airing of substantial concerns. I know the situation in Medlow is torturous for many residents. Driving through there right now is confronting. It looks barren and it is difficult to imagine how that beautiful little hamlet will recover. Some would argue that this is the by-product of progress, but for others—I guess they just do not see the need to spend all that money on things that were not broken in the first place.

There have been some positive changes amidst all the challenges faced by Medlow residents in terms of processes and communication with the department overseeing the project. I do not mean for one moment to suggest that those changes nullify the myriad concerns raised and the impacts felt by the community, but I am relieved that at least now, under the instructions of a new Minister, we have a direct line of communication to the department and, as a consequence, a far more compassionate and proactive response. Right now, Medlow residents are living with inescapable, seemingly omnipresent noise, dust and disruption. I know that what they are experiencing can be profoundly upsetting and unsettling. I have the utmost respect and admiration for the residents of Medlow Bath and for the resilience they continue to show through an incredibly tough time. I will continue to support them and the reasonable expectations they hold that their wellbeing, homes, local culture and the history and amenity of their village are the priority as the project unfolds.

MINI KITTY COMMUNE

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (20:34): Growing up, my family owned dogs—not just any dogs, but whippets. They are a special breed that I thought would lock me in as a dog person for life. That was until my partner, Natalie, and I came to own Oscar, a ragdoll cat who we rehomed almost a year ago. Oscar is a bit like a dog. He is playful, chatty and extremely easygoing. From time to time we take him on walks, much to the delight of passing locals and, I know, to the disgust of some of my colleagues in this place. They just don't get it. My foray into cat ownership made me realise that the old dog-versus-cat divide is absolutely reconcilable. Perhaps there is even hope for all of us in this place.

I raise that because on 18 January a very scared, underweight stray turned up at the home of my relatives. At first we did not know whether it was actually a stray or just a lost kitten, and we started asking around in local lost pet groups. People thought she was very cute, but nobody came forward as the owner. It was late, and local vets were closed, so Natalie and I decided to take her home for the night so she could be fed and kept safe until we figured out what to do. At this point we realised that our Oscar was highly territorial and, despite his own tumultuous past, appeared not to have much sympathy. He was pulling the ladder up from another cat in need.

The next morning, the wonderful team at the West Ryde vet practice informed us that, unfortunately, there was no microchip and that we had accidentally misgendered the cat. It was a boy, and so we gave him the name Henry. Henry was not injured but, being so underweight, he needed proper care. Natalie and I seriously considered whether we could take him on, but with both she and I working full time and living in relatively small confines, we worried that we would not have the time to socialise him properly with Oscar, who was a much bigger, stronger and now fairly angry cat. This is where the Mini Kitty Commune comes in, or MKC for short. After being told by up to a dozen vets that they were at capacity or did not have the facilities to take on a stray, and us not being willing to drop him off at the pound, MKC came to the rescue.

MKC works to reduce the homeless cat population through rescuing and rehoming. It is highly focused on the health of cats, works closely with local vets and has established a network of foster homes—people who temporarily look after lost or stray cats until a permanent home can be found and the cats can be adopted. It is an extraordinary service, and the team were so diligent and forthcoming with information. When a foster carer was found, we dropped Henry to the Gladesville vet, expecting never to see him again. To our great delight, MKC sent us a series of update photos, including many of Henry with a very full belly, which was part of his fattening up before being adopted. A couple of weeks later, my family told me of their suspicion that there were more cats to be found, likely the rest of Henry's litter. One had sadly been hit by a car. Another has since been caught and sent to MKC for adoption. The last is still out there—potentially the mother or an older, stronger sibling.

The experience has made me think a lot about how we manage stray cats in this State. In Henry's case, he was one of the lucky ones, even within his own litter. Anecdotally, I have heard and observed an increase in the number of stray cats in the local community, especially within high-density suburbs. The cost of living is driving some to abandon their pets, and some people are unable to take them when they move home. I hear environmental groups talk about the damage that cats do to the local environment when allowed to roam outdoors, and

I emphasise that Oscar is strictly an indoor cat. I concur with those concerns, and I think we can do something about them, although I do not believe a blanket ban on outdoor cats will work.

Not everybody is able or willing to keep their cat indoors at all times, especially when they are at work during the day. However, a curfew that keeps cats off the street during dawn and dusk—the times when they are most active and likely to cause environmental damage—would be a logical first step. Those are times when people are more likely to be home, making compliance less onerous and the benefit more impactful. I also believe we can do more to support organisations like MKC and those who offer neutering and spaying services. For every stray that is desexed, there is one less litter of homeless kittens. That is not only a humane thing to do; it will have a marked impact on local environments, bushland and other wildlife.

Finally, I use this opportunity to encourage people to become a foster carer or to adopt a stray cat, or even donate to an organisation like MKC. Not only will it enrich your life, but it will have a far greater impact than you can probably appreciate. I am a good example. If I had been asked a few years ago, I would never have dreamed of owning a cat. However, as the cat distribution system worked its magic, I became one of the happy new owners that are accidentally made each and every day. It would be nice if we could use the power and resources of this place to push that along. I urge members to think about those issues, and I will be doing what I can to advocate for what I believe is a growing but solvable issue in many metropolitan suburbs like Ryde.

DR ADRIAN SHEEN, OAM

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:39): I congratulate one of our local family doctors, Dr Adrian Sheen, OAM, on his Medal of the Order of Australia, which was awarded on Australia Day this year. Dr Adrian Sheen was born in the United Kingdom and qualified at Middlesex Hospital in London. He became a house surgeon at Waikato Hospital in New Zealand and, later, was a resident at Nepean Hospital in Western Sydney. However, private medical practice was his calling. Dr Sheen has said that since he was a young child it was always his dream to become a doctor—specifically, a family doctor. He was quoted in my local paper as saying:

Ever since I was four, I always wanted to be a family doctor, and I've been blessed to not only think that, but also do it.

Medicine has changed drastically over the 43 years that Dr Sheen has been practising. There have been many technological advancements over the course of his career, and he says he feels fortunate to have been practising throughout this time. He said:

I don't think there will ever be such advances in the next 50 years ... but when you think about what treatment investigation was available in the 1970s compared with what we have now, and what medications we have now, it's amazing.

Dr Sheen maintains that at the heart of his success is building a respectful relationship with his patients. Over the years he has been practising, he is now treating a second generation of patients, whose parents he delivered. The intrinsic benefits of that continuity of medical care and knowledge of family history are invaluable. Having such a committed family doctor provides peace of mind. When a person knows there is someone they can trust to provide comprehensive and coordinated care, it can give them confidence in managing their health not only immediately but also into the future.

Dr Sheen not only serves my local community but was instrumental in creating the Western Sydney general practitioner support group Doctors Action. Dr Sheen has established, promoted and supported a public charity, Vatu Health Inc., to deliver quality primary health care in Fiji. He regularly leads medical expeditions to Fiji to treat patients who would otherwise continue to suffer from preventable and curable conditions. Dr Sheen has served as branch councillor of the Australian Medical Association (NSW), executive director of a division of general practice, vice-president of the Australian Medical Association (NSW), clinical associate of two universities, university lecturer in general practice, committee member of the Australian Doctors Federation, as well as chairman and organiser of the Nepean Medical Association and musician in the Australian Doctors Orchestra. In October last year I had the pleasure of launching Dr Sheen's invention, the Widdleometer—an early warning system for prostate and bladder health for men. The device was 10 years in the making. At the time, I was quoted as saying:

If you have something which is simply accessible, it will take away the stigma that sometimes is around men's health, make men feel comfortable in using this product, and also early detection. If it saves one life, then it's been worthwhile already.

Dr Sheen hopes that the impact will only increase when the device soon goes global, although he emphasised he is first focused on getting it distributed Australia-wide. Dr Adrian Sheen's outstanding contribution to the independence of Australian medicine is well recognised in the wider Penrith area, and it was also recognised within the fraternity when he was presented with a Bruce Shepherd Medal, and now with the fitting recognition of a Medal of the Order of Australia. Again, I congratulate Dr Sheen. He is indeed an exemplar of his profession.

DENVER J. BEVEN

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (20:44): I acknowledge a wonderful member of the Manly electorate, Mr Denver J. Beven, who was the recipient of the Outstanding Community Service Award at the recent Australia Day Awards on the northern beaches. Denver has lived in the electorate for many years with his partner. In receiving the award, he was acknowledged for a variety of initiatives that have not only made our local community a better place to live but helped people right around Australia. At a local level, Denver has played an instrumental role in driving the transformation and conservation of the Irene Crump Reserve in Freshwater. He championed the regeneration of the reserve, which had previously succumbed to invasive species of plants that were threatening the unique biodiversity of our beautiful local environment. Thanks to the hard work of Denver and the many other volunteers involved in the project, the Irene Crump Reserve is now a gorgeous and thriving native vegetation showpiece. The beautiful reserve is now looking as proud as it should, given its spectacular location.

Denver was also the co-founder of highly regarded cancer research charity Tour de Cure. To help support the aims of the organisation, Denver lent his thinking to fundraising—and create something special, he certainly did. For 16 years in a row, the Manly Inflatable Boat Race was an unmissable event on the Sydney calendar. The iconic charity event pitched participants against each other in the surf, dressed in colourful costumes on board even brighter inflatable rafts. They would enter the water at Shelly Beach and paddle, float or swim one kilometre around the corner to Manly. Over 16 years, the race raised more than \$220,000 in funds for charity. Unfortunately, like many other events and community institutions around the country, COVID stopped the event, and it had its last race in 2022. In Denver's own words:

This event is such a highlight on the Sydney calendar because it's just so much fun. Racegoers have a blast battling through the waves all dressed up in their crazy, colourful inflatables and spectators love the excitement, vibrancy and mayhem ... It really is a great, fun day at the beach for young and old.

At its last event in 2020, more than 800 people participated in the Manly Inflatable Boat Race. Denver and I were discussing his award after the presentation ceremony and reflecting on the boat race. I mentioned to Denver that our new Manly Adolescent and Young Adult Hospice, one of the first of its kind in the country, was on the lookout for fundraising and community partners. Without missing a beat, Denver said, "Yes, let's have a chat about bringing back the Manly Inflatable Boat Race for the benefit of the adolescent hospice." Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, after 16 years of fun, hundreds of thousands of dollars raised for charity and some great scenes on the water, it is time to bring back the Manly Inflatable Boat Race. And if anyone can do it, Denver can.

*Bills***ANIMAL RESEARCH AMENDMENT (PROHIBITION OF FORCED SWIM TESTS AND FORCED SMOKE INHALATION EXPERIMENTS) BILL 2023****First Reading**

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

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I advise the House that I have received a written authority from the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, advising that the member for Sydney will have carriage of the bill in the Legislative Assembly. I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later time.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:47 until
Thursday 8 February 2024 at 10:00.**

Written Community Recognition Statements

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

JENSON WADE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate seven year old Jenson Wade on being named the Sutherland Shire Young Citizen of the Year on Australia Day. Council's citation states: "During COVID he became particularly interested in waste in our local waterways and started a social media campaign to encourage people to pick up their rubbish and prevent pollution. Jenson organised a clean-up in partnership with So Shire of an area of the Woollooware Shared pathway overflowing with rubbish. He enlisted friends, local businesses and promoted the event on Facebook. This led to 30 volunteers collecting 162kg of rubbish from the area. The first seven-year-old to speak at a council meeting, Jenson was successful in persuading the council to manufacture and install new bins by the end of the year. He is already working on his 2024 plan." 56 per cent by weight of the material collected along Woollooware Bay consisted of thousands of lightweight items including food packaging and polystyrene insulation that were single use litter from in situ litter (users of the pathway, businesses and road)

and washed-in debris. I thank Jenson for his passion for our local waterways and congratulate him on making a difference.

BLAKEY JOHNSTON

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate Blakey Johnston on being named 2024 Sutherland Shire Citizen of the Year on Australia Day. Blakey is an inspirational surfer and local who broke the record for the World's Longest Surf Session in March 2023, whilst paying tribute to his late father Wayne. Blakey surfed for 40 hours 7 minutes, catching over 700 waves, to raise awareness and funds for youth mental health initiatives as well as suicide prevention. The event was covered by media outlets in over 30 countries, and more than 20 000 people visited North Cronulla Beach to watch Blakey's epic surf and to support the cause. Blakey partnered with the Chumpy Pullin Foundation (an NGO dedicated to breaking down barriers and providing support and inspiration for every Australian to participate and grow through sport and life) to raise over \$400 000. Blakey is also the owner of the Cronulla Surfing Academy, where he has nurtured many locals with their passion for the sport. He has also set some personal challenges, including 100-mile runs, which reflects his athleticism and commitment. Blakey's award citation states: "Blakey's commitment in the realm of youth mental health and surfing is unwavering and makes him an exemplary local hero".

LATE JOHN (WES) OWSNETT OAM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I highlight the contribution of John "Wes" Owsnett formerly of Burraneer, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Australia Day 2024 Honours List "for service to the community through a range of roles". John, who passed away in 2021, was well-known for his volunteer leadership, generosity as a philanthropist and success as a small business operator. As a fundraiser and philanthropist, John supported a long list of causes, including hospitals and medical charities, schools, sporting clubs and overseas aid. He was a foundation member of the Lions Club of Lugarno and with the organisation for 47 years, including two years as president. He was awarded the prestigious Melvin Jones Award by Lions Club International for his substantial fundraising. John was highly regarded in business for establishing and operating a successful real estate agency in Padstow for more than 40 years. John served the local business community in volunteer leadership role as Chairman/President of the Padstow Chamber of Commerce for 20 years. This national honour is a fitting tribute to a hard-working community-minded man, of whom his widow Joy and family should be proud.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS SES VOLUNTEERS RECOGNISED

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—The members of the Southern Highlands SES Cluster do more than just voluntarily contribute their time and efforts - they represent the very community spirit which has seen our region not only survive when struck by adversity, but to thrive and come out the other side stronger. It was my honour to attend the SES Southern Highlands Cluster Season's Greetings event in December 2023, held to end the year on a high note by recognising and celebrating the hard work of the dedicated volunteers from Wingecarribee and Wollondilly units, as well as Moss Vale in the neighbouring electorate. In 2023, the NSW Southern Highlands Cluster has met the challenge of over 680 requests for assistance, including storm damage, flooding, rescues and providing support to partner agencies. What this means in real time is 17,000 hours of volunteer commitments, sacrificing time with family and friends, to turn up for a stranger in need. I hope that I will never need to call on the SES, but if I do I am confident that I am in capable and caring hands. These volunteers are an asset to our community and deserve our wholehearted thanks and appreciation.

WOLLONDILLY AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS NOMINEES

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—The Wollondilly and Wingecarribee Shire Councils Australia Day Awards have once again shone a light on the people in our Community doing great things, and I congratulate the following winners for their well-deserved accolades. For their contributions as educators, and extensive volunteering in retirement, couple Uta and Dennis Purcell have been named the 2024 Citizens of the Year by Wingecarribee Shire Council. They have contributed their time and efforts to Meals on Wheels, The Southern Highlands Concert Band, as Justices of the Peace, and Dennis as an umpire for the NSW Blind Cricket Association. The inspirational Mackenzie Isedale has been named as the 2024 Young Citizen of the Year, recognising her exceptional fundraising and awareness campaigning following her own cancer diagnosis at a young age. The Wollondilly Citizen of the Year winner Rosemary MacAllister, is a deserving recipient for her contribution to the Wollondilly Pony Club, and 35 years of service to Wollondilly Riding for the Disabled. Rosemary has touched the lives of many through her work with riders with diverse disabilities. And congratulations to the Wollondilly Young Citizen of the Year, 2023 Picton High School Captain Rheyra Mason. On behalf of Wollondilly, thank you.

CHRISTMAS CARD WINNERS

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—What a delight it was to receive all the entries to my Christmas Card Competition late last year. It was a joy to end the year sending cards out to constituents of Wollondilly, members of State and Federal Parliament, notable people in the community, and many agencies and organisations that I have worked with and received support from, those that have contacted the Wollondilly Electorate Office in 2023. There was a positive response to my Christmas Cards, which highlighted the artistic talent of the youth of Wollondilly. I thought they were all fantastic, but a winner had to be chosen, and Harmony Hollis' artwork really captured the Christmas Spirit with its bright colours and bold design of a smiling Rudolph. Thank you Harmony, of Tahmoor Public School, for taking the time to share your creativity and drawing skills with us. In each age category there was a standout entry also. Sienna Whelan was the winner of age group 0-5 years. Theodore Mason was the winner of age Group 6-9 years. I can't wait to see the entries to this year's Christmas Card Competition, and thank you again to all the children who entered in 2023.

CASTLE HILL POLICE AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—I was honoured to attend The Hills Police Area Command (PAC) Awards Ceremony held at the Rebellion Room, Castle Hill Cultural Centre on Tuesday, 12 December 2023. The Ceremony was hosted by The Hills Police Area Commander, Superintendent Darrin Batchelor. I was joined by Assistant Commissioner Leanne McCusker APM, Reverend Geoff Deutscher, NSW Police Chaplain, and The Mayor of The Hills Shire Council, Dr. Peter Gangemi. The members of our Police Force walk out of their homes, they leave their families each day placing themselves in the line of fire to protect and keep our community safe. The Award Ceremony recognises and pays a fitting tribute to the courageous and long-standing service of the local heroes who serve our local community. I was fortunate to be able to present award to members of The Hills Police Area Command who have served our community. I extend my congratulations to all award recipients for service to the local community. I particularly recognise and acknowledge Superintendent Darrin Batchelor for professionalism and leadership of the police within our community.

KERRY KATZ, PREMIER'S RECOGNITION AWARD

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—On 21 December 2023, I had the honour to present the NSW Government Community Service Award to Kerry Katz. Kerry is the Club Secretary and Head Junior Coach of the Budokan Judo Club, Castle Hill. This award is in recognition of Kerry's inspirational leadership and dedicated level of service to the Hills community for over 20 years. Kerry spends countless hours supporting, motivating, and encouraging athletes irrespective of their skill level, age, fitness or ability from those undertaking their first class as nervous toddlers under 5 years of age, to National Champions and National Team members, providing an immense benefit to the local and broader communities. Kerry, along with her husband Rob lead a team of sixteen coaches who offer up to twelve training sessions per week for two hundred athletes. Kerry also created the "Dino Kids" pre-school pre-Judo program for pre-school 4- and 5-year-olds. The program commenced in April 2017 and under Kerry's lead, has been a great success as an introduction to Judo principles and discipline whilst creating challenges in a safe environment. I recognise and congratulate Kerry for service to the sport of Judo over many years.

KITE FLYING FESTIVAL, 28 JANUARY 2024

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—The Castle Hill Showground is historic and much-loved community asset, and it's wonderful to see it being used for events that bring community members together. The kite-flying held each year brings many thousands of our community to the showground to enjoy a day of kite flying, music, dance, and food. This year the kite flying festival was held on Sunday, 28 January 2024. The Kite Flying Festival coincided with a number of Indian festivals that celebrate the arrival of Spring and the harvest including Makar Sankranti, Lohri and Pongal. 'Makar Sankranti' means transition from Sun to Capricorn. The Indian Cultural Association headed by Kaushal Parikh and Jay Trivedi have been instrumental in bringing this celebration to Castle Hill for the last 5 years. The day includes kite flying, food and desserts, all day music, mechanical rides and jumping castles for the kids. I recognise and acknowledge the Indian Cultural Association for bringing the wonderful Makar Sankranti festival once again to the Castle Hill Showground.

HENRY KROSS

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I would like to congratulate Parkes teenager Henry Kross on his steady progression up squash's elite ranks, ending 2023 with a win on the international scene. During 2023 and at just 13 years of age, Henry gave notice of his potential when he finished third in the 15s age division of the Australian Junior Championships played in Queensland. But the best was yet to come, with Henry winning the gold medal in the 15s division at the Oceania Junior Championships, played in Tauranga, New Zealand in December. Number one seed Henry dominated his NZ rival, the tournament's second seed, by dropping just

13 points during their gold medal match. It also enabled Henry to claim back-to-back titles at the Oceania tournament. Henry, who attends Parkes High School, earned a Western Region Sporting Association Blue for his efforts in his chosen sport. A young man with a bright future, I congratulate Henry on his successes of 2023 and look forward to seeing what he can do on the squash court in 2024.

CALARE PUBLIC SCHOOL SOFTBALL

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I would like to offer my congratulations to Calare Public School on its outstanding effort in NSW Primary Schools Sports Association's 2023 softball tournaments. Calare's boys' side, most of which were softball rookies, are now NSW champions while the girls placed top four. Playing at the Blacktown International Sports Park in December, the Calare lads saved their best until last, trouncing Lake Albert 10-1 in the final. To make the title-decider they won their six round fixtures, along the way annexing the Western region title. The girls also won the Western title before going down to the strong Narranga Public School in the state semi-final. Mr Speaker, the area covered by Western is the largest in our state meaning the players have travel over long distances as a rival before they step onto the respective sporting fields. It's believed to be the first time Calare had both its softball outfits make the final four of the state tournament, which is also a great achievement. I congratulate the softballers at Calare Public School and their coaches Mat Sommerlad and Haley Keed and look forward to following their progress in 2024.

EUGOWRA HISTORICAL MUSEUM AND BUSHRANGER CENTRE

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Eugowra continues to pass significant milestones on the road to recovery from the devastating floods of November 2022. This time it's the volunteers involved with the Historical Museum and Bushranger Centre further illustrating the township's resilience and sense of community. Led by chairperson Ray Agustin, the volunteers saved the bulk of the museum's collection, the majority of which was covered in mud during the floods. Their efforts have earned two highly-commended gongs in the Museums and Galleries of NSW IMAGinE 2023 awards, in the category of projects with a budget of \$10,000, innovation and resilience. Following the flooding, a team of volunteers, some from out of town, and museum staff from nearby Orange and further afield, ventured into the mud and debris, spending two weeks finding, cleaning and packing items for safe storage. Mr Agustin was also recognised for his dedication during the flood, doing all he could to protect the museum and then coordinating its recovery, ensuring the safety of the collection and its survival. While reopening is some way off, the museum's future looks positive. I thank Ray and the volunteers for their diligence in preserving Eugowra's history.

EMMA TUCKER

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to congratulate Emma Tucker from Krambach for her victory in the Forster Tri Club's Girls Only Triathlon at Forster Keys. Despite challenging conditions, including 30+ degree heat, with little to no breeze - Emma secured third place among 33 participants in a gruelling 300m swim, 12km bike ride, and 3km run. Remarkably, Emma's journey to this achievement began just two years ago when she set a personal goal to lose weight and improve her fitness. Not only did Emma compete and place in her first triathlon, but she has also shed an impressive 80kg over the past two years – what an inspiration! Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition Emma, I wish you continued success for future triathlons and the upcoming Ironman 70.3 race!

PETER SCHOUTEN AM FRSN

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to acknowledge Mr. Peter Schouten AM FRSN, who was named Taree's 2024 Australia Day ambassador. Mr. Schouten, a Bobin resident, is a world-renowned wildlife and palaeontology illustrator with an impressive record of awards and honours. His recent accolade includes the 2023 Whitley Medal for "Prehistoric Australasia," recognised as the best book on the natural history of Australian animals. Notably, he received a Whitley Award in 1997 for "Tree Kangaroos: A Curious Natural History." In 2015, Mr. Schouten was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to the visual arts. His artistic impact extends to scientific recognition, with a marsupial lion named after him in 2017. Apart from his artistic achievements, Mr. Schouten actively contributes to his local community. As president of the Bobin School of Arts Hall, he supervised a mural project for bushfire recovery. His volunteerism includes service with the Wingham SES unit, weather reporting for the Bureau of Meteorology in Bobin, and participation in the Manning River Turtle Group. Congratulations Mr. Peter Schouten for your contributions, dedication to preserving Australia's natural history, and service to the community.

PATRICK GOLDEN

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I am proud to recognise the resilience and strength shown by a Cootamundra family, the Goldens. In 2022, Patrick Golden decided he wanted to grow his hair, have it shaved and made into a wig. Gathering the support of his parents Sonya and Craig he started growing his hair, which was

later donated to 'Variety-Hair With Heart'. Unfortunately, Patrick then experienced a tragedy, including the adverse and devastating impact this had on his own mental health, and that of others around him. Courageously, Patrick decided he wanted to raise funds and awareness for the Black Dog Institute and so began 'A Shave to Remember'. Initially, Patrick's target was to raise \$2,000, further incentivised by his mother, Sonya, who confirmed if he reached \$4,000 that she too, would participate by getting her hair cut and donated. The mother-and-son duo then convinced Craig to partake in the event, should the amount be tripled. In the end, the Goldens raised a staggering \$7,019. In good spirits, Craig mustered up the courage and was waxed at the Central Hotel in Cootamundra on the day of the shave. Patrick's actions are exemplary, and I commend him for his efforts.

CHONTELLE PERRIN - PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I am delighted to congratulate Young based photographer Chontelle Perrin, who was recently awarded the coveted National Photography Business of the Year award when she attended the 2023 Find A Photographer Pro Business Awards. Additionally, Chontelle has also been awarded the NSW Photography Business of the Year award consecutively in 2022 and 2023. Winning these awards is about more than just spectacular imagery, importantly it is also about people. I know Chontelle has an amazing client base which she has continually developed over more than a decade. Prior to starting her business, Chontelle had already spent several years perfecting her craft behind the scenes. In recent years, Chontelle has begun sharing her knowledge with others who are eager to learn and develop their own skills behind the camera, such as high school students. I have known Chontelle for many years, and I can't think of a more capable, humble, and deserving winner of these prestigious awards. I can't wait to see what the years ahead hold for Chontelle and her business, as she continues to go from strength to strength. Congratulations Chontelle, your achievements are simply incredible.

JUNEE CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I was delighted to participate in the inaugural Christmas Toy Drive orchestrated by the exceptional team at the Junee Community Centre. A few days prior to Christmas, I joined Santa and numerous volunteers from our local emergency services in the fire truck, delivering these gifts to households. With nearly 60 children on Santa's list, there was a considerable amount of work ahead. However, this posed no difficulty for the Junee Community Centre team under the leadership of Jacqui Stevens, sorting gifts into age-appropriate categories. The community generously contributed hundreds of toys and gifts, collected two weeks before Christmas by dedicated volunteers from Junee Fire and Rescue NSW, Junee SES Unit, Junee Rural Fire Service, Junee Community Centre, and Junee Shire Council staff. Congratulations to everyone involved; you truly brought the magic of Christmas to life for numerous individuals.

FATHER VICTOR VINCENT

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—I would like to recognise the extraordinary impact that Father Victor Vincent has had on the local Camden Community. Father Victor was ordained in 2017 and has been a warm presence throughout the Wollongong diocese ever since. Father Victor joined St Paul's in 2021 and has a profound impact ever since. Fr Victor has worked tirelessly throughout the parish since the day he joined, conducting sick calls, baptisms, weddings, funerals, all while conducting mass every other day. From all accounts Fr Victor is very generous with his time and very dedicated to the parish community. Father Victor will be leaving St Paul's Camden, transferring to Vincentia on the South Coast. I know that he will be a fantastic addition to their community, and I wish him all the best for his next endeavours.

GARRY CLARKE

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—I would like to acknowledge Garry Clarke, the recipient of the Camden Sports Achievement Award at the recent Camden Australia Day Ceremony. Garry holds a pivotal role as the club treasurer on the Eventing Equestriad Committee, contributing significantly to the success of events hosted at the Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park. His unwavering dedication and hard work are evident as he tirelessly volunteers countless hours. Garry is passionate for watching riders compete and enjoy using the park. Garry's selflessness in promoting equestrian sport in Camden truly deserves recognition, and this award of highlights his exceptional contributions. Garry stands as a truly deserving winner of the Camden Sports Achievement Award.

JACK CASTLES JUNIOR LIFESAVER OF THE YEAR

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)—I would like to congratulate Jack Castles from Bondi Bathers Surf Life Saving Club on winning the Sydney Branch Junior Surf Lifesaver of the year. This award is assessed on a wide range of skills and achievements at Nippers and in the wider community. Each candidate is interviewed and assessed on their knowledge of SLS, their active involvement within their own surf club and extended community,

their leadership skills, communication and presentation skills, and their plans for their own future role within Surf Lifesaving. Congratulations Jack.

PARTERRE FIRST PLACE WOOLLAHRA CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)—I would like to congratulate Parterre on winning First Prize in 2023 Queen Street and West Woollahra Association Christmas Window Display Competition. With over 40 entries this year competition was fierce and created a major attraction for Queen Street in Woollahra. The Christmas lights and reindeer created an enchanting display in Parterre's window. Held annually, this competition lights up our community with some truly spectacular displays. Congratulations Parterre!

AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY JUNIOR BASKETBALL CUP 2024

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—Our community proudly hosted the Australian Country Junior Basketball Cup 2024, with the competition celebrating its 36th anniversary this year. From modest beginnings in 1985, this sporting event has become a significant landmark on the border's sporting calendar. The event this year featured over 60 teams, bringing 700 players, their families and coaches together. The participants travelled from Tasmania, New Zealand and for the first time in over a decade the competition welcomed a team from the Australian Capital Territory. The competition spans across U14, U16 and U18 categories, showcasing the diverse talents and skills of our younger basketball stars of the future. In extending a special mention, I acknowledge the heart and soul behind this remarkable event – Paul & Dorothy Gooding – who have for the past 38 years devoted their time and energy to country basketball, being champions off the court.

R2SERVE GRADUATES 13 DECEMBER 2023

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to extend my congratulations to the individuals who successfully completed the 20-week cadetship program R2Serve, administered by the Murray River Police District, in collaboration with valued partners: NSW Ambulance, VRA Fire and Rescue NSW, Rural Fire Service, Australia Defence, and the Department of Education. I commend the dedication and success of the following graduates: Milani Mooring; Hope Martin; Laura Smout; Jack Clancy; Kaleb Delaney; Brodie Bryceson; Mason Lahm; Dakota McAndrews; Deklan Brown; Oliver Wood; Ashleigh Moss; Lachlan Fahy; Toby Coyle. This commendable achievement is a collaborative effort of the entire community, through the support provided by NSW Police, NSW Fire & Rescue, VRA NSW Rescue, NSW Ambulance, Australian Defence Force personnel and NSW RFS. Youth Officer Pat Skinner and Senior Constable Tanya Thompson were instrumental in this program. Graduates have now been equipped with the essential skills and knowledge needed to serve the wellbeing of our community and to pave the way for a promising future within the Emergency and Defence Services. Congratulations, may this achievement inspire others to follow in your footsteps, fostering a spirit of community, service, and excellence.

CAREVAN CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to acknowledge the founder of Carevan Albury Wodonga, John Brabant, team members, Leanne Johnson and Christie Krause, Pastor Jason Mannering of Gateway Life Church, Ushindi Faida from GLC Community Leaders, and volunteers, for their vision and generous contribution to feed 120 people for lunch on Christmas Day. This collective lunch sets out to promote community togetherness, in particular for those who are doing it tough, who are feeling alone, or who do not have any family or friends with them over this season. This heart-warming 'Christmas Lunch', now in its second year, is a testament to the collective generosity and care present in our community. May this festive lunch serve as a beacon of connection, compassion and share joy in our community. It is through actions that we show our care for each other, setting aside our own challenges and this year's cost of living pressures and stresses and simply enjoy each other's company around the table, creating positive memories which remind us that indeed, we are a community bound together by empathy and goodwill.

DIHN TRAN

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Dihn Tran for taking over the Dapto Highway Convenience Store on the corner of the Princes Highway and Mount Brown Road, Dapto. In the weeks since taking the keys, Dapto residents and those passing by may have seen the iconic pink paint job make way for a sandy yellow alternative, but inside the store retains much of what made it an essential mini supermarket for the community. Not just selling everyday items and groceries, the store also served up hot food including fish and chips. But when Mr Tran put a sandwich board outside his shop indicating something new had been added to the takeaway menu, shoppers immediately started asking for the special item. Mr Train has added a Vietnamese pork roll stand to the hot food section of the store. The store will continue to offer fish and chips and hot pies in addition to grocery and pantry staples, and Mr Tran said he plans to expand the range of fresh produce on offer. On behalf

of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Mr Tran and hopes his new business venture in Dapto is successful.

INDY BRADLEY

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Indy Bradley, from Mount Brown Public School, for being awarded the Sid Hayes trophy at the 2023 South Coast Schools Sports Association Awards Ceremony at Illawarra Turf Club on Wednesday 6 December, 2023, for being the most outstanding representative in primary school sport. Indy is a dual athlete, showing great promise in both basketball and netball. She advised that she really likes netball, but loves basketball as well. She'd love to play for either the Diamonds or Opals one day. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Indy on her amazing achievements and wish her well in her future sporting endeavours.

MADDIX BURKE

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Maddix Burke, from the Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Club who was selected in the NSW team to compete at the interstate NSW's Surf Life Saving Championships which were held at Maroubra beach on January 11. The event was held in conjunction with the Nutri-Grain Ironman Series. Burke was the only competitor to represent NSW in his age group, under 15s, from the Illawarra and South Coast. The Warilla High School student has had a sensational year, taking out the Sydney Water Series for his age group and finishing on the podium in Coolangatta. The 14-year-old capped these feats off by taking out the Ironman event at the Wanda Summer Surf Series and also achieved outstanding results at the recent Interbranch carnival held at Fingal Bay. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Maddix on his amazing achievements and wish him well in his future sporting endeavours.

2023 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE HONOURS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I wish to extend my congratulations to all the Class of 2023 across my Summer Hill electorate. The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is not an easy year but there is no better reward than when it is complete! In particular I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of three local students who came first in the state in their courses: Nicole Joanna Tapang from Casimir Catholic College - 1st in Filipino Continuers; Christian Ciarroni from Trinity Grammar School - 1st in Mathematics Advanced; Ana Julia Farias Borba Paiva from Marrickville High School - 1st in Portuguese Continuers. What a wonderful recognition of the countless hours of hard work that you no doubt put in across many years to achieve these results. Congratulations and thanks also to your wonderful teachers and family and friends who have guided and supported you along the way. Congratulations Nicole, Christian and Ana and all the Class of 2023!

STEPPING STONE HOUSE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I wish to recognise the invaluable work of Stepping Stone House in supporting vulnerable youth in my Summer Hill electorate. Stepping Stone House provides a safe place for children and young people at risk or experiencing homelessness so they can begin to heal, build resilience, create connections and become the very best they can be. Many of the young people that they support have experienced domestic violence, sexual and emotional abuse, alcoholism and drug addiction. Around 30% have been forced to leave home because of their sexuality. To support young people facing these difficult situations, long-term shelter and support programs are critical and that is why the work of Stepping Stone House is so important. Operating out of two homes in Dulwich Hill, Stepping Stone House has assisted hundreds of vulnerable youth to build stable, independent lives and maximise their individual potential. Congratulations and thank you to Chief Executive Jason Juretic and all the team at Stepping Stone!

INNER WEST COUNCIL - LEWIS HERMAN RESERVE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I was fortunate to join Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Mayor Darcy Byrne, members of Lewis Herman's family and many locals at the opening of the newly upgraded Lewis Herman Reserve in Ashfield on 4 December 2023. The upgrade has been designed specifically as a new 'multi-generational' park, with facilities that support all ages and to reflect the diverse background of the community. Located near Ashfield Baptist Homes and Cardinal Freeman Retirement Village, the park includes many accessibility features; a sensory garden, accessible tables and benches and pathways into a familiar environment for visitors. It is the Inner West's first dementia friendly park. The space also provides a modern and fun space for children to play. Congratulations to the many community members who contributed to the design of the upgrade and to the Inner West Council for leading a highly successful community consultation process and delivering such a great park for our community. It is a wonderful testament to the memory of Lewis Herman, Ashfield's longest serving Mayor. I look forward to enjoying this vibrant new space where connections can flourish, and lasting memories will be created.

DR BRIAN PATRICK PEZZUTTI AM HONOURED IN THE NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Although we sit on the opposite sides of the political fence, I have always valued my professional ties and friendship with The Honourable Dr Brian Patrick Pezzutti AM CSC RFD, now retired and living in Lennox Head. I was thrilled to hear that Dr Pezzutti had been made a Member of the Order of Australia (OAM) for significant service to the Parliament of NSW as a Liberal MLC from 1988 to 2003, and to community health, most notably as a former Board Chair with the Northern NSW Local Health District. An anaesthetist, his distinguished service to the Australian Defence Force was also recognised. Having served with Brian Pezzutti in the NSW Upper House, I can attest that he was a true champion of the North Coast region and regional and rural areas of New South Wales. Others to be recognised with OAMs were social welfare campaigner and Lismore Soup Kitchen volunteer Rhonda Ansiewicz, of Federal, and The Reverend Dr John Langton Tyman, of Murwillumbah, for service to cultural and religious education. I congratulate Dr Pezzutti, Ms Ansiewicz and Dr Tyman on national recognition for their lifetimes of community service.

TIMOR VETERAN TO BECOME UN BLUE BERET DEPUTY CHIEF

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I was thrilled to learn that Australia's current Deputy Chief of Army, Major General Cheryl Pearce, will become the United Nations' new deputy military adviser for peacekeeping operations. Having an abiding connection with Timor Leste, I remember Major General Pearce's deployment as part of the United Nations in East Timor in 2002. During that tumultuous time, she was awarded a Chief of Defence Force Commendation for Bravery. Major General Pearce also served with distinction as Commander Task Group Afghanistan in 2016, receiving a Commendation for Distinguished Service. She has held a range of senior leadership positions with the Australian Defence Forces, recognised by being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia. No stranger to the United Nations, Major General Pearce was Force Commander of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus from 2019 to 2021. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced Major General Pearce's appointment to the top echelons of the Blue Berets, which draws its troops from nations around the globe. UN Peacekeeping operations currently are active in Western Sahara, Golan, India and Pakistan, Cyprus, Kosovo, Lebanon, Sudan, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

KYOGLE'S FERRIS FAMILY AND MILITARY SERVICE

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—The Ferris family, of Lynchs Creek, via Kyogle, are known as forestry and beef cattle pioneers but their proud record of serving Australia during times of war would be hard to rival. Jim Ferris, 73, popped into my Electorate Office with a newspaper clipping detailing three generations of military service. Mr Ferris's grandfather Lieutenant Alexander Frederick Ferris trained Lighthorsemen during World War One from 1916 until 1918. His father Second Lieutenant Albert Leo Ferris was a Rat of Tobruk and Kokoda veteran during World War Two. Tragically, Albert Ferris and another son Peter were killed in separate accidents while working in the timber industry. Jim Ferris just missed out on the Vietnam War but two of his children went on to join the Australian Defence Forces. Now based in Canberra, daughter Lieutenant Colonel Jessica Mary Ferris had tours of duty in Kuwait and Afghanistan (2011 and 2013). Son Ben Albert Ferris was an infantryman for a decade before becoming an ironman, raising money for charity. Jim Ferris says every Anzac Day has special meaning for him as he honours the memory of Alexander and Albert Ferris and thanks Jessica Ferris for her continued service.

KEN DOOLAN

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I would like to recognise the efforts of one of Lake Macquarie's quiet achievers Ken Doolan from Marmong Point. Ken has spent countless hours over the past 14 years developing, managing and maintaining the database for Lake Macquarie U3A, in addition to providing support to Newcastle U3A. U3A or University of the Third Age is a wonderful organisation run by teams of dedicated volunteers. It offers a varied and stimulating range of short education courses, aimed at retirees and older adults. U3A provides opportunities for lifelong learning and social connections, enhancing the quality of life of our senior community members. There are 600 members in Lake Macquarie U3A and 750 in Newcastle U3A, so maintaining these databases, on a volunteer basis would be a monumental task. I note that Ken has now set himself up with another big job, and that is to implement an entirely new database system called Azure for both Lake Macquarie and Newcastle U3A. I would like to thank Ken for his unwavering dedication and the huge effort he has put in at a grassroots level to help our local U3A branches be able to operate smoothly.

ORAN PARK GREGORY HILLS CHARGERS JRLFC

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I congratulate Oran Park Gregory Hills Chargers Junior Rugby League Football Club for charging into what is their 10th anniversary as a club. This milestone season will also see the inclusion of the first girl's tackle teams. I commend all staff, players and parents who have volunteered

their time and effort into developing the club into the vibrant and active club that it is today. In an area which continues to grow, it's wonderful to see this sporting club that is open to all junior age groups and both boys and girls become an important part of the community fabric. I'm excited to see what lays ahead in the coming years for this expanding club and I'm sure that this 10th anniversary season will see them receive many trophies which they will defend in the years ahead. I congratulate all involved with the Club and wish them the very best.

GLENMORE PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I commend the students, staff and parents of Glenmore Park Public School on raising \$372 through a Mufti Day to support the WestCare Christmas appeal. They truly wore their hearts on their sleeves in what was an outstanding contribution for such an important cause. The Christmas appeal provided struggling local families with some Christmas cheer through hampers, gift packs and toys. The fundraiser was also a fitting way for the school to celebrate World Kindness Day. I take the opportunity to also extend my appreciation to WestCare and all volunteers, community members and local organisations who contributed to the WestCare Christmas appeal. The generosity of all who took part in this important initiative is reflective of the community spirit in our region, and they should feel so proud that their assistance brightened up the Christmas experience of other families.

ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I congratulate all the Year 6 students in my electorate who were chosen by their schools to receive the prestigious Badgerys Creek Encouragement Award, as the 2023 year drew to a close. Whilst the reasons for the award were wide and varied, they generally reflected strong commitment and dedication towards their schooling and peers. It was a pleasure to have attended many of the schools' award ceremonies to present the award, whilst also witnessing and celebrating the other unique awards that the schools bestowed upon the students. To see the pride and applause from the award recipients' peers conveyed the level of respect the students have across their respective schools. I congratulate all award recipients, their educators and parents for such outstanding achievements. I encourage all students to put in the hard-work and commit to their learning so that each student obtains their best possible result. To all students who graduated in 2023, I wish them success for their future endeavours.

CORAL READ

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join with me in extending its condolences to the family of Coral Read, who sadly passed away on Australia Day, 2024. Coral was a beloved and active member of our community. Her daily walks around the East Ryde estate were a familiar sight, with many locals having the privilege of engaging in delightful conversations over the years. Coral's love for sport, particularly soccer, and her lifelong dedication as a coach resonated with all who knew her. Her advocacy for Ryde saw her successfully advocate to reduce aircraft noise, and preserve the beloved North Ryde Common, showcased her unwavering commitment to our shared home. She proudly flew the Australian flag outside her house, and as a member of the Marsden Branch of the Liberal Party, actively shaped our local political landscape—she joined the Party later in life, but made up time with her keen enthusiasm. As we bid farewell to Coral, we remember a remarkable woman who made a lasting impact. She will be dearly missed, however her legacy will endure through the positive changes she brought to our community. Farewell, Coral, and thank you for being an inspiring presence among us. Vale

ANDREW CARAMANIS

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I draw the attention of the House to Andrew Caramanis, who has achieved a significant accolade reflecting both his dedication to language studies and his creative abilities. In November 2023, Andrew participated in a competition organised by the University of Sydney, showcasing skills in Modern Greek. His entry required the creation of a digital audiobook centred around the theme "What does learning Greek mean to you?" This challenge was not only a linguistic one but also a test of his capacity to convey personal connection and cultural understanding through digital media. Andrew's work was met with considerable acclaim, earning him first place in the prestigious 2023 Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education (SICLE) Language Competition. The judgement on the day came from esteemed members of the Greek community, including the Secretariat General for Greece Abroad and Public Diplomacy, and the Consulate General of Greece in Sydney. This triumph was against a backdrop of numerous schools across New South Wales, highlighting the significance of his achievement. I want to congratulate Andrew on this wonderful achievement and acknowledge all of his hard work. This Parliament wishes him every success in his future endeavours.

VALE ROB SENIOR

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join with me in extending its condolences on the passing of Robert Senior, the revered "King of West Ryde, on 13/12/2023. Rob's impact on our community was evident

through his dedication to volunteer work. As a stalwart member of the Meadowbank - West Ryde Progress Association, Secretary of the West Ryde Chamber of Commerce, and community representative of the Northern Districts Planning Panel, he exemplified unwavering commitment to Ryde. Beyond official roles, Rob volunteered generously with the Chai Time Community Group, Good Life Chorus, and as a bus driver for CCA NSW. His green thumb endeared him to many as a volunteer gardener at Addington House, Ryde. A decorated military veteran, Rob's contributions extended to consultancy, providing invaluable services to NSW Local and State Governments, multinational logistic support companies in Afghanistan, and the UN. The City of Ryde recognised Rob's exceptional volunteerism at the 2021 Australia Day Ceremony and Volunteer Recognition Awards. His legacy lives on through surviving family members – son Ben, daughter Ellen, grandson Kai, and sister Karen. In this sombre moment, let us remember and celebrate the life of a man dedicated to serving others. Vale Robert Senior.

OUTSTANDING LOCAL HERO, PETER BURGESS

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Today I congratulate Peter Burgess for taking out the Outstanding Local Hero Award for his exceptional contributions to education, Macleay Valley community involvement, and amateur beekeeping. Peter's unwavering efforts have fuelled the knowledge and confidence of local beekeepers for over ten years, especially during the varroa mite crisis over the past two years. His steadfast assistance during the management and eradication stages was vital in equipping the local beekeepers to face the challenges posed by the varroa threat. Peter has impacted many students' lives as a committed beekeeping educator at Kempsey, Nambucca, and Macksville TAFE. His classes provide a forum for friendship and personal development in addition to teaching vital beekeeping skills. Beyond instruction, Peter's founding of the Macleay Valley Amateur Beekeeping Association, Inc., brought enthusiasts together and served as a centre for learning, cooperation, and socialisation. As the biosecurity officer, he makes sure that the beekeepers in the area are vigilant and compliant. Peter Burgess is essentially an unsung hero and being recognised at the Kempsey Shire Council Australia Day Awards Ceremony is well deserved.

OUTSTANDING LOCAL HERO GREG STEELE

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—I stand today to highlight a wonderful local legend, Greg Steele, whose community achievements dubbed him an Outstanding Local Hero Award at the Kempsey Shire Council Australia Day Ceremony. Greg is a retired public servant, who has long been involved in various community initiatives, including the SES and the Hat Head Life Saving Club. Greg goes above and beyond his scope of duty by coaching and mentoring members of these groups, fostering a supportive environment. His commitment goes so far as the Macleay Options Management Board to assist our vulnerable community members. Greg's influence extends beyond his hometown. He offers his expertise and knowledge to support SES in other communities during natural disasters. Greg is a faithful friend, a loving husband, and a family man who offers support and direction through good and bad times. Having worked for the SES for more than 45 years, his commitment to the welfare of the community has never wavered. Greg's passionate volunteerism demonstrates a strong dedication to making sure that everyone in the community benefits, having an influence that is forever lasting. Thank you, Greg for your service.

NORTH COASTAL CRICKET SHINES AT BRADMAN CUP

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—I am proud today to congratulate Kempsey bowler Riley Mitchell on his outstanding performance that pushed the North Coastal Cricket to victory in the under-16 Bradman Country Cup. This tournament is an important opportunity for young cricketers to demonstrate their abilities for selection and advance further to elite cricket levels. The Bradman Cup featured seven matches in Kempsey and Wollongong, with North Coastal winning six of them. Riley Mitchell was the only under-16 male chosen to play for this side from the Mid North Coast Representative zone, which is an incredible achievement for Riley. As a skilled bowler, Riley played a key role in restricting the opposing team's score. He should be proud of the dedication and tenacity displayed throughout the tournament. Riley has his entire career ahead of him, I can't wait to see where he goes with his determination and that golden arm of his. Well done to Riley and the whole of the North Coastal team. Winning the Bradman Cup is a great achievement and a memory you will keep for a lifetime.

BARBARA WHITCHER OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to Barbara Whitcher, a tireless community advocate who has been recognised with the Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2024 Australia Day Honours. After a fruitful career as a teacher, Barbara retired as principal at Kotara High School to become community service powerhouse, volunteering with St Vincent De Paul Society, Cancer Council, Probus, the Hunter Valley Graduate Women's Association, and the Stockton Catholic Parish Council. Barbara is a proud Stockton resident and is a strong activist on the issues that afflict her neighbourhood. One of Barbara's biggest causes is saving Stockton Beach from coastal erosion and is a great community representative on the Stockton Beach Taskforce.

It has been an absolute pleasure to have worked with Barbara and fought alongside her to get the first 130,000 cubic metres of sand on the beach and to have committed a further \$21 million to long term sand nourishment. Barbara's spirit and dynamism must be seen to be believed and I am very proud of her receiving this well-deserved recognition.

JENNIFER BARNES OAM AND RODNEY BARNES OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to one of Newcastle's greatest musical couples, Jennifer and Rodney Barnes, for both being awarded Medals of the Order of Australia for their service to music, the performing arts, and the community. Dr Barnes is a trained opera singer and tertiary voice trainer and examiner at the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music. She is also an examiner at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the Avondale College, and AMEB, and was the conductor of the University of Newcastle Choir for four years. Mr Barnes has been a passionate piano tutor for decades, teaching many of my constituents the art of music. Together, Dr and Mr Barnes continue to share their love of music with the local community through their involvement with Adamstown Uniting Church. Mr Barnes leads the church band, of whose members include Dr and Mr Barnes' children. Well done to both Dr and Mr Barnes, your service to the Newcastle community is invaluable.

MARGARET COVI OAM

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to Margaret Covi on being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia at the 2024 Australia Day Awards for her service to bushwalking. Ms Covi leads the Watagan Wanderers, a bushwalking group who explore the natural landscape of the Hunter Region. While they regularly explore their namesake location of the Watagans, this group go on bushwalks of all difficulties across the region and surrounds, from the Hawkesbury area to the Barrington Tops, and on occasion stretch further a field across NSW and interstate. Ms Covi is also a longstanding member for the Bushwalking NSW Committee, her current roles being Public Officer and Risk Management Officer. Prior to that, Ms Covi was the President of the Committee from 2003-2007, the Secretary from 2009-2015, and the Vice President from 2019-2021. Thank you Margaret for your passion for all things in the great outdoors and your service to the bushwalking community.

NORMA WILSON

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—Congratulations to Norma Wilson of Emu Plains on her 100th Birthday on 7 February 2024. I called in to see Norma on Monday with a bunch of flowers and a certificate to celebrate her very special occasion. She invited me in for a chat and to show off her book of special congratulations which included letters from the Prime Minister, Premier and she was anticipating something from the King. While going through her collection of photos she spoke fondly of growing up in Concord with her 3 sisters. Norma also explained that she served in the Army from 1940 until 1945 contributing to the war effort, of which she was especially proud. Norma Wilson is one of the many quiet achievers in our community and we again congratulate her on reaching this momentous milestone.

PENRITH CITIZENSHIP 1

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—It is with great pleasure that I congratulate all those new Australians who became citizens at our 2 Penrith ceremonies on Australia Day 2024. The Penrith community are richer for the diversity of culture you all bring to the city. Jimmy Ramanlal Chauhan, Elanie Valentin Cruz, Kim Lorraine Forestal, Shari Andrea Grey, Thi Hien Dieu Ho, Lorie Jane Valdez Jimenez, Steven Mark Keesing-Goldsmith, Priyanka Kumar, Sameer Vishwa Singh, Seham Mirza, Jefferson Joshua Ofosu Mensah, Kellyanne Ngehupo Gray Husnara, Vi Merrie Suinan Johnston, Lealafale Magele, Abraham Aseem Alfred, Sandesh Bajgain, Fatemeh Doroudian, Qibin Fang, Haixia Huang, Mst Maksuda Mozahedi, Nguyen Bao Duy Le, Thi Kim Phuong Nguyen, Madhu Shahi, Matilda Forkuo-Dwomoh, William Nketsia, David Whitten Kweku Nyamekye Nketsia, Shannon Yaa Nketsia, Michelle Eleana Afia Nketsia, William Kwaku Nketsia. I wish them all the best for their futures.

PENRITH CITIZENSHIP 2

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—It is with great pleasure that I congratulate all those new Australians who became citizens at our 2 Penrith ceremonies on Australia Day 2024. The Penrith community are richer for the diversity of culture you all bring to the city. Angela Poasa, Peta Chelsea Poasa, Molieci Eapeisi Poasa, Simeona Cameron Sua, Sourabh Chugh, Alaya Chugh, Ashima Chugh, Dina Sami Rizkallah Saba, Michael Gary Andrew Salusalu, Vanessa Laite Singh, Rana Som, Afifa Farah Tasnim, Frank Tsibu-Darko, Ann Praveen, Steve Austin Praveen, Xavier Praveen, Tabassom Mokhtar, Leonard Stanley Sigle, Leenat Marjorie Nansen, Shaelyn Titus David Brian Togiatau-Nansen, Evelyn Ivapene Ally-Rose Nansen, Brooklyn Natalie Jenahl Nansen, Jerome Dale Nansen, Mi Jung Ha, Laongrut Junthong, Serera Kim Morgan, Joy Komaljit Mukhia, Siwen Yi, Wimalsha Nishali Dissanayake Mudiyansele, Indunil Priyankara Jayalath Morawak Koralage, Jantzen Jaye Magpali, Jay Anthony Condez Magpali. I wish them all the best for their futures.

BILGOLA SLSC OCEAN SWIM

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—Congratulations to the Bilgola Surf Lifesaving Club on another successful Blackmores Billy Swim. The second event of the iconic Pittwater Ocean Swim Series for 2024, and one of the more challenging swims in the series, the Billy Swim attracted hundreds of swimmers. The day could not have gone better and thank you to the volunteers who whisked the last few swimmers to shore following a shark sighting at the end of the last swim! It was an awesome morning that would not have been possible without the support of the surf club, local organisations and businesses like Blackmores, and countless dedicated volunteers. Thank you to Nikki Curtin- swim coordinator, Peter Fenley - Club President and Ian Mac who was an outstanding MC. Thank you also to David Madew who is coordinating the entire Pittwater Ocean Swim series. Pittwater is home to the greatest beaches in the world, and I am always proud to see so many locals and visitors enjoying our magnificent Bilgola Beach. Congratulations to those who placed across the 500 and 1500m events: Lexi Harrison, Zannah Dixon, Kate Shedden, George Abbott, Lachlan Foley and Hayden Smith, Jane Hinton and Peter Thiel.

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN FERGUSON

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I pay tribute to the late Brian Ferguson of Mona Vale. Brian was an active member of the Sydney sporting community, having played first grade rugby with the Manly Rugby Club, and volunteering with both West Harbour and Warringah for many years. Brian will be remembered for his significant contributions as a long serving member of the NSW Cricket Umpires and Scorers Association (NSWCUSA) and respected figure among the Sydney Cricket Association (SCA). Brian joined NSWCUSA in October 1997, serving in various roles over the years including the Examination Board, Social Committee and as Board Director. Over his career, Brian was an umpire standing in 409 SCA matches, 34 matches in the Shires competition and was a regular umpire in the AW Green Shield competition. Brian was always willing to share his knowledge and help less experienced umpires improve, and he loved to encourage young players as they developed their skills. Brian lived a full life, impacting many in our community and inspiring so many cricketers and umpires. Our thoughts and prayers are with Brian's wife Sandra, his two children and their families. Brian, you will be missed. Vale, Brian Ferguson, 1943-2023.

THE BIG SWIM: PALM TO WHALE BEACH - 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—Congratulations to the Whale Beach Lifesaving Club on the 50th Big Swim. Held on the last Sunday in January, the Big Swim is the largest fixture in Pittwater Ocean Swim Series. The morning would not have been possible without the support of the surf club, and surf lifesavers from across Pittwater's many clubs, local organisations and businesses, major sponsor Macquarie Bank, and countless dedicated volunteers. Thank you to Kieran Gallagher - Club President, Jack Lamrock - Club Captain, Ian Sheppard – Race Day emcee, and Richard Stewart OAM - Race Director. With over 1,500 competitors across the Little Big Swim and the Big Swim, we saw thousands of swimmers and supporters from across Sydney, including international visitors, flock to Whale Beach and Palm Beach. It is always a privilege to share our slice of heaven. We even saw five of the original race participants dive in to swim the race 50 years on. Congratulations to those who placed across the 1km and 2.8km events: Stephen Ford, Petar Trbojevic, Joshua Halpin, Bec Sheppherd, Laura Pettigrew, Liz Swinburn, Angus Jarolimek, Mitchell Green, Logan Kaye, Jeanette Brits, Lexi Harrison and Lisa O'Donnell.

FORESTVILLE RSL SUB-BRANCH - REMEMBRANCE DAY EDUCATION GRANTS

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—I recognise and commend the Forestville RSL sub-Branch for its ongoing initiative in recognising the achievements of primary school students in Northern Beaches schools, through its Remembrance Day Education Grants program. Six Year 6 students were recognised in 2023 at an Awards Presentation held at the Forestville RSL clubrooms on 6 December 2023. The following students made a presentation of a family member who was a veteran: Caitlin Downey-Price from Wakehurst Public School, Henry Johnstone and Jordan Thompson from Mimosa Public School, Daniel Clegg from Belrose Public School, Campbell Walker from Terrey Hills Public School, and Luke Hinchey from Our Lady of Good Counsel Forestville. They each proudly received Remembrance Day Education Grant certificates together with a \$2,000 contribution towards school costs as they enter high school. I congratulate all the student award recipients for their efforts and I recognise President Bob Lunnon, John Balfour OAM together with the Forestville RSL sub-Branch committee for their ongoing commitment to our community.

2024 KU-RING-GAI LOCAL CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—The Ku-ring-gai Australia Day Awards recognises individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to our local community. The Citizen of the Year is Michele Bell, the Chief Executive Officer for KNC (Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre), a wonderful home care provider that

helps with personal care, daily chores, transport and more. The Young Citizen of the Year is Kevin Hau who co-founded Youth 4 Difference, a student-led group whose aim is to increase youth participation in volunteering. The Environmental Citizen of the Year is Shed Eleven's Jemma Wlasichuk who recycles furniture to keep it from landfill and holds workshops in creative reuse, as well as supporting the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter. Finally, the Mayor's Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Community Group is Ku-ring-gai Men's Kitchen in Lindfield, who help older men to learn better cooking skills through its regular group cooking sessions. I recognise and commend Michele, Kevin, Jemma, and the Men's Kitchen, together with all the community members and groups who participated. I am proud to represent them all in the Parliament of NSW.

NORTH SHORE RUN CLUB

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Thursday 18 January 2024, I joined a group of enthusiastic runners at the North Shore Run Club at Warrimoo Oval for a much-needed post-Christmas run around the bush trails of St Ives Chase. North Shore Run Club is a community focused, free running group based in the Davidson electorate. Commencing several years ago the club embraces runners of all shapes, sizes and abilities every Thursday at 6pm. Organised by Andrea Doney, who bills herself as the slow coach; and Simon Finch, the club's power coach. They form a wonderful and inclusive team leading their weekly runs around St Ives Chase. I thank Andrea and Simon for their vision in creating the North Shore Run Club and their infectious enthusiasm in providing a cost and pressure free environment for all to get and stay fit through running at their own pace. The Davidson electorate has many beautiful walking and running trails. The runners are fully utilising our natural beauty for both fitness and fun. I look forward to many runs in the future on Thursday at 6pm.

ANGUS OLSEN

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to congratulate former Dubbo and Yeoval local Angus Olsen on being named the 2024 NSW Local Hero in the Australian of the Year Awards. Angus' daughter Jane was only two years old when she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. While sitting at her bedside for weeks whilst she was receiving chemotherapy, Angus decided to begin drawing about her procedures to make sense of them. The former Disney artist now creates artworks and books in a simple manner to help kids understand their cancer treatments. He's produced more than 20 books, which have been translated into 24 languages, and have been accessed by people in 102 countries. Angus has teamed with several charities to create resources and raise funds for childhood cancer research. He makes no profit from his illustrations, and I really encourage everyone to have a look at his images at idrawchildhoodcancer.com or on his social media pages. Keep up the good work Angus, you truly are making a remarkable impact for young children and their families.

MAX MCANENEY AND ELLA PENMAN

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to recognise the outstanding achievements of two young Dubbo athletes, Max McAneney and Ella Penman, at the Australian All Schools Athletics Championships in Perth. Max won Silver in the 400m final, and Ella collected Silver in both the 400 and 800m finals, with the pair also running personal best times in their races, a testament to their dedication and hard work. Ella's exceptional performance earned her a spot inside the qualifying mark for the World Athletics Under 20 Championships in Peru. A remarkable achievement that reflects her talent and determination in the sport. The camaraderie of being alongside a club-mate at such an important event was special for the pair as they were both chosen to run for NSW in the mixed 4 x 400m relay. The team went on to win Gold, something that made their time in Perth truly unforgettable. Reaching this heightened level of your chosen sport takes an incredible amount of commitment, with these two rising stars, spending most of their time training and honing their skills at Dubbo's Barden Park. Congratulations Max and Ella, and best wishes for continued success and growth in your athletic pursuits!

ROSIE GIBBS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to acknowledge the tremendous dedication to early childhood education by Mudgee local Rosie Gibbs. After more than 30 years working at the Mudgee Preschool, and the last 15 as Director, Rosie has helped her fair share of the town's young people through the earliest stages of their education. Rosie started working at Mudgee preschool in the 90's after immigrating to Australia from South Africa in 1988. Rosie looked back at her time at the Preschool saying that it really is like a community. She also recognises the enormous trust parents put in her and the team everyday to make sure their kids are happy and safe. What's been really important to Rosie in this position, is that she's helped create a safe space for children and staff to teach and learn, centred around a play space that feels one with nature. Rosie isn't sure what the next steps are after she retires but spending more time with her family and travelling is definitely on the cards. Thank you, Rosie. All the best for your well-deserved retirement.

2024 ALBION PARK SHOW

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Albion Park Show Society. The 2024 Albion Park Show was held on Saturday 20th January 2024 at the Albion Park Showground. I acknowledge the Albion Park Show Society Committee including the President Glenn McParland, Secretary Alison Edwards and Treasurer Miss Tracey Goodwin, who all worked tirelessly. Diane McParland also received a Royal Agricultural Society of NSW – Agricultural Show Award. 2024 Albion Park Show Rural Ambassadors included Sarah Evans, Kate Bourke and Bec Weir. The four Young Rural Ambassadors for 2024 included Tahlia Bonnano, Mia Thompson, Emma Jones and Reyner Ball. These talented women were volunteering, stewarding and competing in events at the 2024 Albion Park Show. The 2024 Albion Park Show Rural Ambassador Program is a terrific initiative to build leadership skills for rural women. During the 2024 Albion Park Show, following lunch in the hall I was extremely pleased to join the official renaming of the Pavilion to the Douglas and Daphne Blow Pavilion. I acknowledge the Mayor of Shellharbour Chris Homer and Shellharbour Councillor Kellie Marsh who attended. Congratulations to the Albion Park Show Society for putting together another successful show.

2024 BERRY SHOW

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Berry Show Society. Berry Show Society hosted the 2024 Berry Show "The Greatest Show in Town" on Friday 2nd February and Saturday 3rd February 2024. I acknowledge the Berry Show Society Committee who worked tirelessly including the President John Miller, Vice President Paul Andersen, Honorary Secretary Catherine Mason, Treasurer Paul McLean Williams, Junior Vice President Terry Fahl, Assistant Secretary Therese Evert and Electronic Judging Stewards Keith Pepper, Lynette Burt, Fred Bussing and Jo Bussing. I also attended the President's official opening event on Friday 2nd February 2024. The Berry Show is always a fantastic community celebration of what our local agricultural sector, farmers and dairy sector has to offer. Families and visitors experienced 'Country Berry' over two days. Some of the attractions included: Lachie Cossor's Outback Stockman's Show, Berry Buck Off, Rodeo and cowboy skills that drew in the evening audiences, Ron McKinnon's Bullocks and the Marlie Draught Horse Display, Angora Goats, Hawkesbury Working Sheep Dogs Demonstration, show jumping, dairy cattle, a reptile show, the Young Farmer Challenge and Beaut Utes. Congratulations to Berry Show Society Committee, sponsors and volunteers on putting together a tremendous 136th Berry Show.

2024 KIAMA SHOW

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Kiama Show Society. The Kiama Show Society recently hosted the 2024 Kiama Show on Friday 26th January and Saturday 27th January 2024. I acknowledge the Kiama Show Society Committee who worked tirelessly around the clock to put together the 2024 176th Kiama Show including the President Guy Stearn, Secretary Jen Hampshire and Treasurer Carolyn Perry. I was also delighted to be on the gate for a few hours selling tickets. The Kiama Show is always a fantastic community celebration of what our local agricultural sector, farmers and dairy sector has to offer. Kiama Show is also Kiama's longest running community event. From side show alley to woodchopping and dairy displays and fireworks, Kiama Show always has something on offer for everybody and many of our local families to enjoy! Congratulations and well done to the Kiama Show Society Committee members and volunteers on putting together another successful Kiama Show.

COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF THE NAMOI - CEF NAMOI

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Country Education Foundation of the Namoi has recently celebrated its 20-year anniversary. CEF Namoi was established in Narrabri in 2003 by a small group of locals who wanted to help local school leavers to pursue their dream to further their education or to assist with starting a trade locally. The foundation helps with costs such as accommodation, fuel, or even text books. All these costs can be challenging for young school leavers in rural areas. The foundation has supported 223 local students so far, with all money being raised locally, totalling \$364,945. Congratulations to the Country Education Foundation of the Namoi for reaching their 20-year milestone. There are many challenges faced in small country communities and with the help of the foundation, it is allowing school leavers to follow their dream career without the full financial burden.

COLLEEN BOUCHER

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Colleen Boucher of Cobar NSW was named the Citizen of the Year at the Australia Day award ceremony at the local Memorial Swimming Pool on Australia day. Colleen is highly involved in the Cobar community and donates a lot of her time volunteering. She is the secretary of the Cobar CWA, treasurer of the RSL Subbranch and Brennan Centre committees and the leader of Cobar Cadets. Not only does Colleen spend most of her time volunteering, but she also has her own shop "Needles and Pins" where she

provides all alteration services to the town. I would like to congratulate Colleen on receiving this award and thank her for dedicating time volunteering in the community.

JAN DAWKINS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Local volunteers are truly the backbones of our community. Volunteers recognise the value in sharing their time, skills and passions for the benefit of others. That's why I was honoured to recognise their hard work at the 2023 St George Community Awards, which I have been running for over 13 years now. One such individual I would like to give a special mention to today is Jan Dawkins, who has been a family friend of mine for over 40 years. Jan received an Individual Volunteer Achievement Award. Jan has been volunteering at the IRT Peakhurst aged care centre for several years now and plays a significant role in supporting IRT's writing group, which is called the Village Writers. This group brings together an enthusiastic bunch of more than 10 writers, who meet to share ideas and inspire each other. On the night of the awards, she dedicated her award to all the writers' group members, both past and present. A hearty congratulation to Jan Dawkins for all her hard work. I wish her all the very best with her volunteering efforts and look forward to hearing more about the IRT writers' group.

JIMMY CHEW

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I believe my community is home to some of the hardest-working volunteers, not only in all of New South Wales but the whole of Australia. That is why it is my absolute privilege to host the St George Community Awards each and every year. For the last 13 years, I have been lucky enough to put the spotlight on hundreds and hundreds of individuals, community groups, and businesses within my community. Local churches, in particular, have always been an essential cornerstone of the St George area. Many local volunteers work tirelessly, week in and week out, to provide for their parish and the local community. That's why I would like to recognise Jimmy Chew, a Welcoming Team Leader at St George's Hurstville Anglican Church. Serving on the parish council and having been previously appointed as the acting warden of the church, Jimmy has contributed a great deal of time and effort to support his community. Once again, I would like to thank Jimmy for all his efforts over the years. I know he will continue to serve his church community well into the future.

LION DANCE KIDS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I thank and congratulate Johnny and Kwan Leung, founders of Lion Dance Kids. As a local business, Lion Dance Kids teaches children about the concepts of Kung Fu, Lion and Dragon dancing. Lunar New Year is always an exciting time throughout New South Wales. We are blessed to have some of the biggest Lunar New Year events in the world outside of Asia. The Dragon Dance plays a major role in these festivities. It is said that the bright colours and loud noises associated with the dragon scare away evil and brings prosperity. For Johnny and Kwan, performing at the Hurstville Lunar New Year Celebrations has been a tradition for many years. The brothers carry on this tradition from their grandfather, Kung Fu Grandmaster Leung Cheung, who founded the Lion Dance troupe back in 1978. I'd like to thank Johnny and Kwan Leung once again for upholding this age-old tradition. I wish them all the very best, as they ensure that Chinese cultural heritage remains vibrant and alive within our community.

MARY IMMACULATE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL BOSSLEY PARK - 2023 END OF YEAR AWARD PRESENTATION DAY

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—I had the great pleasure of attending the End of Year Award Presentation Day of Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School Bossley Park on 14th December 2023. Established in 1985 with only 79 students, today Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School Bossley Park has about 650 students. This school has played an integral role in fostering Catholic values through a holistic education for students in my Electorate, particularly in the suburb of Bossley Park and surrounding suburbs. I was delighted to personally present my Tri Vo MP Leadership Awards to students from K-6 recognising their outstanding leadership abilities and contributions to the school community and beyond. The Award went to Katie Ly, Leon Kudadi, Stella Tran, Leo Bakos, Skylar Bugeni, James Ristovski, Stella Volpato, Leonardo Al-Hermiz, Maryam Franso, Michael Galluzzo, Sofia Rose Portela, Xavier Von, Norma Yousif and Zachariah Hanna. I congratulate all the award recipients, students, teachers, staff, parents, and local communities on their well-deserved accomplishments. I extend my gratitude to the Principal Ms Bev Coffey and the Support Officer Ms Rita Rossi for the kind invitation and wonderful support of the Awards.

OUR LADY OF MT CARMEL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL MT PRITCHARD - 2023 END OF YEAR AWARD PRESENTATION DAY

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—On 12 December 2023, hundreds of students from a diverse range of cultural heritages gathered in a large and well-equipped hall in Our Lady of Mt Carmel Catholic Primary School in Mt

Pritchard. Their faces were filled with excitement and joy, waiting for the end-of-school presentation to begin. I was struck by the harmony in the room presented by those culturally diverse students. This reflects the rich multicultural nature of my Electorate, which I am proud to represent. I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the kind invitation and warm welcome of the Principal Ms Michelle McKinnon and the Administration Assistant Mrs Lisa Bolger. It was a great pleasure to be part of the school to celebrate the wonderful accomplishments of the school year. I was delighted to personally present my Tri Vo MP Leadership Awards to Thuy Phan, Liam Khorn, Charlie Vu, and Dominic Kulper to recognise their outstanding leadership qualities and contributions to the school. I congratulate all the award recipients, all the students, teachers, and parents for their commitment to education.

CANLEY VALE PUBLIC SCHOOL - 2023 END OF YEAR PRESENTATION DAY

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—I had the privilege of attending Canley Vale Public School's presentation day on 5th December 2023. Canley Vale Public School offers an extensive array of subjects and extracurriculars, fostering an enriching environment for student development. I am pleased to discover Canley Vale Public School's exceptional compassion and accommodation for its students through the myriad of available support systems and services. I am reassured knowing that the students at this school have access to various support that will develop them into exemplary adolescents with desirable skills and talents. I had the honour of awarding Zakaria So, Jayden Nguyen, Bailey Nguyen Lam, Charlotte Whiting-Solomon, Ethan Ton, Victoria Watson and Andrew Nguyen with my 2023 Tri Vo Leadership Awards. These sincere, enthusiastic and innovative students embody the success of a school providing exceptional resources. I am confident these students have a promising future ahead. I would like to thank Principal Ms Margaret Creagh and Deputy Principal Ms Suzie Goodall for their kind invitation. I also like to express my appreciation to the students, parents and community for granting me the privilege of being part of a significant day.

UPPER HUNTER SHIRE 2024 AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—Congratulations to Upper Hunter Shire's recipients of the 2024 Australia Day Awards. Jim Callinan named Citizen of the Year and the Hunter McLoughlin Scone Citizen of the Year. The honours recognise Jim's 41-years as a broadcaster, including ground announcer and commentator for horse sport events and rodeos to being master of ceremonies at charity fundraisers, such as for the Hunter Region's Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. Young Citizen of the Year and Aberdeen Young Citizen of the Year is Charlie Milton. Charlie is described as 'a beacon of youthful leadership', elected Scone High School Captain for this year, she is also making her mark earning accolades from sports academies. Scone's Young Citizens of the Year are Nicholas Wilson and Renzy Perez with Local Champion bestowed on Margaret Wicks. Aberdeen's Citizen of the Year is Brian Harshman with Tamara Donnelly crowned the Local Champion. Sharee Witney is Merriwa Citizen of the Year, Roy Lawler named Young Citizen of the Year and Can Assist acknowledged as the Local Champion. Murrurundi's Citizen of the Year is Gilliane Avar-Ng, Ayann Hussain recognised as Young Citizen of the Year and Warren Bramley named as the Local Champion.

AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS - UPPER HUNTER 2024

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—I want to congratulate the Upper Hunter Electorate recipients of the 2024 Australia Day Honours. De-Anne Douglas of Muswellbrook, Kylie Anne Facer of McCullys Gap and John 'Jay' Tulloch of Pokolbin, were all awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division. De-Anne Douglas for her service to the community as a Muswellbrook Shire Councillor and coordinator of the local Christmas Food and Toy Appeal since 2000. Kylie Facer is a co-founder of Little Stroke Warriors, a support group for families and survivors of paediatric stroke, which received the Stroke Foundation 2022 President's Achievement Award. 'Jay' Tulloch was previously recognised by his peers as a 'Living Legend' of Hunter Valley wine – his service to the industry now rewarded with this acknowledgement by the nation. It is fitting that Australia Day Honours also reward and thank emergency service personnel. People like Merriwa's Michael Gilder, a 45 year veteran of the NSW Rural Fire Service, recognised with Australian Fire Service Medal. And, Superintendent Joanne Schultz recipient of the Australian Police Medal for her work as the Hunter Valley Police District Local Emergency Operations Controller during the 2022 Singleton floods.

NIGEL BALL

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Nigel Ball of the Avoca Beach Surf Life Saving Club on receiving a National Medal for 15 years of service. National Medals are a prestigious award, part of the Australian honours system, recognising long and diligent service by members who risk their lives or safety to protect or assist the community in times of emergency. The Surf Life Saving movement is full of such dedicated volunteers such as Nigel and this award recognises contributions to Australian communities which are priceless. Congratulations Nigel on receiving this prestigious national honour and thank you for your ongoing service over many years for our community.

CATHY COLE OAM

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—On Australia Day, eight outstanding Coasties, one posthumously, received recognition for their positive contribution to community life as part of the annual Australia Day Awards. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Cathy Cole, for her service to Surf Life Saving and the Community. With over 30 years as a member of the Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club, Cathy who is a Life Member of the Club has held many positions such as Board Member, Coach, Official, Age Manager and Patrol Captain. Cathy has been an official and judge at the Australian Championships since 2005, judge at state and federal levels and has been an official and referee at competition carnivals since 2001. Cathy has received numerous awards and recognition over the years including been named Club Person of the Year in 2017 and NSW Surf Life Saving Volunteer of the Year in 2018. Cathy has also been recognised for her involvement in the Parents and Citizens Association. In 2005 she was awarded the Federation's Distinguished Service Award. Congratulations and thank you Cathy for your ongoing contribution and service to our community.

HAPPY DAYS

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Monday 16 October 2023, it was wonderful to join Cumberland City Council Mayor Lisa Lake on a visit to Happy Days Kindergarten in Wentworthville. Happy Days Kindergarten has been providing excellent care to children in our community since 1952. A not-for-profit preschool, Happy Days offers an affordable and accessible childcare to families in our community. With a unique structure, the Parent Management Committee leads the Kindergarten. Comprised of dedicated families who attend the Kindergarten, the Committee ensures the service provides optimal care that wholly considers the needs of our community. Happy Days offers a play-based learning program within the National Quality Standards and Early Years Learning Frameworks to offer high calibre education and care. A dedicated team of female staff go above and beyond to create engaging first learning experiences. An inclusive and dynamic environment, Happy Days Kindergarten is giving our children a head start to reach their full potential. Thank you to Director Jodie Griffiths and the entire team at Happy Days Kindergarten for your continued efforts to nurture our young students, and support our wider community. This wonderful organisation is a true example of how our community cares for one another.

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL - RED MASS

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Monday 29 January, I attended the Red Mass, at St Mary's Cathedral to mark the opening of the 2024 Legal Year. The Red Mass is an important tradition in the Catholic Church that has been celebrated since the 12th century. Now an annual tradition, the Red Mass gathers judges, lawyers, barristers, solicitors and members of the legal community to reflect upon the significance of law and justice in our democratic society. Celebrated at St Mary's Cathedral since 1931, the Red Mass is a time to request Gifts of the Holy Spirit, like wisdom, understanding and fortitude to guide our legal practitioners. We give thanks to members of our profession who serve the community, whilst also recognising the responsibility we all hold. We follow in the path of St Thomas More, who set the standard of conduct for legal professionals to always act in the pursuit of truth, justice and the good of all. I thank Bishop Anthony Fisher OP Archbishop of Sydney, Richard Perrignon President of the St Thomas More Society, Giles Tabuteau Coordinator of the Red Mass and members of the St Thomas More Society for organising this meaningful ceremony.

ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL - RED MASS

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Monday 5 February, I joined the Red Mass, at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta to mark the opening of the 2024 Legal Year. Dating back to 1245, the Red Mass once marked the official opening for most European courts and coincided with the Sacred Roman Rota, the Catholic Church's supreme judicial body. Today, the Red Mass is an annual service involving judges, lawyers, barristers, solicitors and members of the legal fraternity. The Mass reflected on the significance of law and justice to a fair and democratic society. It emphasised the responsibility of lawmakers, and invited us to publicly reaffirm our commitment to act in Christ's image to ensure that law is not simply an exercise of will, but also, of reason. During the Mass, Bishop Vincent Long encouraged those of us in the legal profession to carry out our vocation equally and justly, to ensure laws in NSW strive for the common good. I wish to thank Bishop Vincent Long OFM, the Diocese of Parramatta and the St Thomas More Society for organising this meaningful ceremony. I look forward to a great year ahead, working with my colleagues to serve our community.

ROTARY CLUB OF NORTH SYDNEY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—After more than ninety-five years of distinguished service to the community, the Rotary Club of North Sydney has merged with the Rotary Club of North Sydney Sunrise. Since its founding on 16 August 1928, the Club has faithfully lived out that noble Rotary motto of 'Service above Self'. In its long history, the Club boasts an impressive catalogue of achievements including fundraising drives for

numerous local charities, humanitarian aid efforts for natural disaster relief, the sponsorship of multiple education, health, and humanitarian initiatives in developing countries, the provision of specialist equipment for people living with a disability, and a whole host of charitable initiatives to help our less fortunate. The Club has organised the vibrant community focused monthly Crows Nest markets of which I have been delighted to have a stall on many occasions. I heartily thank the Rotary Club of North Sydney well led by Toni Field OAM for all it has contributed to our community, and I know that the service ethos and humanitarian ideals of the Club will continue for generations to come.

AUSTRALIA DAY CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—There is no better day on which to welcome our new Australians than Australia Day. On our national day, I was honoured to join Mayor Tanya Taylor of Willoughby and distinguished guests to congratulate one hundred locals who became Australian citizens. The excitement, pride and gratitude of these new Australians was palpable, and I thank them for choosing to make Australia their home. I was delighted to say a few words and declare to the crowd that our national day is a time to come together, to celebrate, and to look ahead in this country. It is our country together to make even greater still for our future. At a time when some councils are sadly abandoning the Australia Day tradition of citizenship ceremonies, I sincerely thank Willoughby City Council and its many staff who worked on the day for hosting this great annual tradition once again in Chatswood at The Concourse. Originating from all corners of the earth, our newest Australians are a tremendous asset and I have no doubt they will make our great country even greater.

PETER COMINO

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—In December last year, I was proud to attend the Chatswood RSL Sub-Branch Christmas Lunch where I sat with Mr Peter Comino, a 97-year-old gentleman who is one of our last surviving WWII veterans. Born in Guyra NSW, Peter joined his local air training corps during his high school years and volunteered to join the RAAF on his eighteenth birthday. After training in Cootamundra, Melbourne and Adelaide, Peter was posted to the No 79 Spitfire Squadron on the Indonesian Island of Morotai. For six months during WWII, he helped protect an Allied Spitfire base from Japanese attacks. Peter survived the War, yet it was in the midst of his war service that as he told me he learned the meaning of the word 'fear'. I honour Peter for his 'fearless' service of defending our country and all he sacrificed to keep Australia free. It was such a pleasure to see Peter Comino again in person and be inspired by his bravery and acts of service. Lest we forget.

MIRCO OLIVIERI

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I'd like to commend Mirco Olivieri for standing up against LGBTIQ+ discrimination and for his selfless calling out of homophobia despite the risk to his own safety. Last year, Mirco was walking along Oxford Street when he saw two large men harassing a young gay man. Mirco intervened to support the victim and the incident became physical. Mirco called the police who arrested him and the two men, charging all three with affray. Mirco was convicted in the Local Court and subject to a two-year community corrections order, while one of the other men received no conviction and a two-year conditional release order. Mirco appealed the decision and his conviction was overturned. He's now looking for ways to support others who stand up against homophobic abuse. I congratulate and thank Mirco for his efforts to challenge prejudice against members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

STEVE OSTROW

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I would like to put on record the passing of Steve Ostrow. While he had a creative and activist involvement in the USA especially New York and Stonewall campaigns before coming to Australia, many in the LGBTIQ+ community will know of Steve as the founder and driving force behind Mature Age Gays or MAG. I understand that Steve established MAG 31 years ago, focussed on providing peer support and social activities for isolated gay men. This has been especially important for those whose families rejected them, unable to accept their sexuality. The group has maintained regular activities and events throughout that time, including connecting with new members at the MAG Fair Day and the MAG bus in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade each year. MAG remains a legacy of Steve's commitment to community and taking care of each other. I know many will continue to remember his contribution and seek to continue this important legacy. Vale Steve Ostrow.

REG NICHOLS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Maitland Grossmann High School's Reg Nichols whose talent and skills were honoured at The Hunter Sports Awards in Williamstown in December. Reg Nichols, a star of the Maitland Redbacks received his award for his outstanding work in Touch Football. Reg also plays for the Hunter Hornets and has recently been selected into the NSW emerging Blues program. The program saw players come from across the state for a camp at the NSW

Rugby League's Centre of Excellence in November last year. Like in rugby league, the touch emerging camp is a program designed to introduce young players to a high performance setup in the hope they will represent NSW in the State of Origin series, which began back in 1995. Reg won selection after playing at the National Youth Championships on the Sunshine Coast last September playing for NSW Combined High Schools, who finished 2nd to Queensland. Congratulations Reg on your award.

LOUISE OSTROWSKI

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—I would like to congratulate the recently graduated, Maitland Grossmann High School student Louise Ostrowski on the upcoming exhibition of her HSC visual arts body of work which will feature in the state-wide ARTEXPRESS exhibition in 2024. Louise's HSC body of work includes, an oil painting and three pencil drawings that were inspired by her love of the rural lifestyle. Louise has been a lover of drawing for as long as she can remember and says her artworks represent a simple life. Louise has grown up around horses and had always envisioned drawing them for her body of work. As part of the ARTEXPRESS exhibition, the artworks exhibit in different art galleries across NSW. Louise is the only student from her year 12 cohort at Maitland Grossmann to be nominated for the ARTEXPRESS exhibition and even though she said her nomination was totally unexpected, her CAPA teacher Mr Focic recognised Louise's natural talent and was not surprised. Louise says drawing is definitely her strongest medium and I wish her well with the exhibition as well as in her studies at Tocal College this year.

SAMI BAYLY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Sami Bayly is an author and illustrator of all things weird and wonderful and for such a young woman has a long list of achievements. Sami graduated from the University of Newcastle in 2018 with a Bachelor of Natural History Illustration (Honours), winning the Dr Tan Chin Nam and Colleen Innovation Award for her honours thesis. This inspired her first award winning book, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ugly Animals, with its delightful tag line 'It's time for ugly animals to shine!' Sami has a passion for teaching children about evolution and celebrates the beauty of our world's biodiversity. Her subsequent books covered dangerous animals, peculiar pairs, and surprising sea creatures. Sami's latest book, her fifth in five years, Creatures of Camouflage and Mimicry examines why creatures benefit from camouflage and mimicry, a widespread phenomenon used in the animal kingdom. Despite common belief, the traits are not always a defence tactic, but you can read more about that in her book! You will also see Sami's artist talents on display as the poster art for this year's NSW Premier's Reading Challenge which encourages a love of reading for leisure and pleasure in students across the state. Congratulations Sami!

WALLSEND LADIES PROBUS CLUB

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Probus Clubs are for retirees who meet monthly to enjoy a range of interesting and engaging activities – in the spirit of friendship, fellowship and fun. In 1987, Wallsend Rotary Club President, Norm Beckett, approached Marcia Fairleigh about starting a ladies-only Probus club in Wallsend. With a few friends, Marcia started the club in November 1987, and Wallsend Ladies Probus Club was registered in March 1988. Marcia, at 93, remains the only Foundation Member in the club which meets monthly at St Luke's Anglican Church Hall, Wallsend. Activities include pub or club lunches, cinema mornings, and trips on public transport – or by coach further away - to museums, lunches and picnics. Current President is Trish O'Hearn, Vice President and Membership officer Jan Tredinnick, Secretary Toni Somerville, Assistant Secretary, Diana Newell, Treasurer Helen Smith, Assistant Treasurer Vicki Holliday, Activities Lead Maggie Grimwood and Catering by Elva Osborne. Today, there are 70 members aged 65 - 94. Members also receive printed bi-monthly newsletters and get-well cards are sent to those who are not feeling chipper. After almost 37 wonderful years, thank you for the important role you play in our community.

REG CLARKE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Reg Clarke grew up in Fairfield before moving to Newcastle in 1970 as Sales Manager for Dunlop Australia. Starting from his home office at Speers Point in 1977, he eventually took over the Bishop and Sons Real Estate office in Wallsend in 1980, which is where he remained at Reg Clarke Real Estate until he retired in 2008. A trusted and passionate businessman in the Wallsend community, Reg sponsored local sporting teams including the Wallsend Tigers. He was also Vice Chairman of The Estate Agents Co-operative and co-founded the Newcastle Star Newspaper. Reg passed away on 17 January 2024, aged 84. Reg's sage advice and guidance were sought after by industry professionals, regularly featuring in the Newcastle Herald. He believed in people's potential, giving many employees their first job in real estate, but insisting that team members provide the highest ethical service. The business later expanded to include offices in Maryland and Jesmond and Reg's wife Camilla, daughter Penny and grandson Jamie, joined to create a true family business. Reg always had the best interests of people and the community at heart. Wallsend has lost a true local legend.

JOHN HUNTER HOSPITAL SITE CLEANERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Volunteering can be very satisfying and rewarding for everyone concerned – especially with the United Hospital Auxiliary. They engage with the enormous task of raising funds to supply hospitals and health service facilities with equipment for patient comfort and care, helping to increase general interest in healthcare by forming groups of volunteer workers to raise funds. John Hunter Hospital Site Carers volunteers were celebrated at the United Hospital Auxiliary of NSW 90th Annual State Conference on 18-19 October 2023 at Newcastle Exhibition and Convention Centre. Since 1933, the United Hospital Auxiliary of NSW, through local member branches, have been responding to the needs of NSW community health facilities. Fundraising activities include bingo, book fairs, trolley services, fetes, cafes, gift shops, kiosks, raffles and street stalls. The Branch was awarded the Lillian B Dart Memorial Trophy for the most money raised net by a country Auxiliary (\$429,573.39) and the Sir Norman Nock Rose Bowl for the most money raised net per member by a country Auxiliary (\$9,990.08). Many thanks to the John Hunter Hospital Site Carers. You should all be very proud of your community efforts!

VALE LADIES

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—I acknowledge and extend congratulations to a group of extraordinary Ladies who have been acknowledged for their outstanding contribution and service to the Lithgow Community through the Lithgow City Council's Service to the Community Award. The Vale Ladies are indeed champions of the community and have selflessly provided support and contribution to Lithgow for over 80 years. Most recently these incredible ladies have undertaken a fundraising project which resulted in over \$35,000 being raised for two dedicated palliative care rooms at Lithgow Hospital. Over the years of services provided many organisations have benefited from the dedication and commitment of these ladies and their support and endeavours are readily acknowledged and respected across all levels of the community which is testament of their success. The Vale Ladies recently announced their retirement, but they leave a legacy of determining the highest level of standards in caring for their community. Such worthy recipients and I am delighted to acknowledge the tireless efforts and support given by the Vale Ladies for over eight decades to the Lithgow community and thank them for their immeasurable commitment and dedication.

RYDAL SHOW

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Congratulations to the Rydal Show Society on being awarded the Outstanding Event of the Year Award by Lithgow City Council at the recent Australia Day Celebrations. The staging of the 100th Show was brought together by a dedicated group of volunteers who are the backbone of the show society. Without them this wonderful milestone would not have been achieved and members give of their time each year and work tirelessly to put on an event to be proud of. Rydal is only a small community, and the show is a major event which injects considerable funds into the local economy. The 100th Show attracted more than 2,500 people and highlighted what the local area has to offer. It is wonderful to recognise an outstanding event which makes a significant contribution to our region – congratulations to the 100th Rydal show the "Biggest Little Show in the West".

FOTY LOUPOS

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—As part of the Lithgow City Council's Australia Day Celebrations is the announcement of The New Resident Award and I congratulate Foty Loupos on being this year's recipient. Foty Loupos is the Principal of Lithgow High School and has implemented significant changes to the school and along with many new initiatives have improved the school's assets and curriculum. As a result, the Lithgow High School is truly the educational centre of the Lithgow community and delivers a diverse range of pathways for students. I congratulate Foty Loupos on his commitment and dedication to education and his endeavours to make a difference and to enhance opportunities for the young people of Lithgow.

GRANVILLE TRAIN DISASTER 47TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—On 18 January 2024 we remembered the 83 lives lost in Australia's worst rail tragedy. The 1977 derailment left an indelible mark on the Granville community, and its scars are still felt today – along with the survivors, families of the victims and the first responders. 47 years ago local heroes from Granville rushed to help, embodying the human spirit's resilience. At the commemoration I expressed our collective gratitude to the tireless heroes who keep the memory alive, the selfless emergency personnel, and the unwavering support of the community. We remember those lost, not as nameless victims, but as neighbours, families, friends and emergency services workers. The memorial wall stands as a beacon, ensuring their stories live on. The rebuilt bridge symbolizes progress, while the memories serve as a reminder of life's fragility and human strength. To the survivors and families who carry the weight of loss, we offer our deepest respect. Your

quiet strength inspires us all. Thank you to the tireless heroes of the Granville Train Disaster Association - Meredith Knight, Gary Raymond, Barry Gobbe, Tina Morgan, and so many others – for keeping the memory alive.

SYDNEY MURUGAN TEMPLE RE-CONSECRATION CEREMONY

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all devotees on the auspicious occasion of the Grand Re-Consecration of the Sydney Murugan Temple in Mays Hill in my electorate on 22 January 2024. It was truly a momentous event that marks a renewed commitment to the spiritual and cultural values that the temple represents. I appreciate first-hand devotees' dedication to providing a forum for worship, prayer, teaching, and other religious and philosophical activities. The focus on Saivism and the Tamil language is not only a testament to the rich cultural heritage but also a crucial step in preserving and enhancing the spiritual essence of your community. Undertaking the provision, operation, and maintenance of a place of worship with Lord Murugan as the presiding Deity is a noble endeavour. The Grand Re-Consecration reaffirms the sanctity of the temple and its significance in providing a sacred space for devotees to connect with the divine. May the Sydney Murugan Temple continue to flourish as a beacon of spirituality, cultural heritage, and community harmony. Congratulations to the entire community involved in this significant milestone and thank you for the invitation to attend. May the blessings of Lord Murugan be with you all.

PONGAL FESTIVAL 2024

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I was delighted to represent Premier Chris Minns at the Pongal Festival on 21 January at Pendle Hill. Pongal, a harvest festival marking the new year, resonates with gratitude for nature and hope for prosperity. Its growing presence in Australia reflects the vibrant Tamil community enriching our nation. From Bhogi's cleansing to Kaanum Pongal's joyful gatherings, each day holds significance. Pongal reminds us of our connection to nature, the importance of family, and the strength of community. I commend the 60 Tamil organisations and businesses who contributed to the vibrancy of the celebration. They promote cultural understanding, friendship, and integration, connecting Australians with Tamil heritage. The gathering, made possible by dedicated volunteers, embodies the spirit of Pongal – gratitude, joy, and togetherness. As someone who has enjoyed years of celebrating with local communities, I am always inspired by this beautiful display of community. I wish you all a joyous Pongal filled with blessings and prosperity. May the new year bring good fortune and happiness to all.

LIVERPOOL MENS SHED CHRISTMAS PARTY

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—The Liverpool Mens Shed Annual Christmas Party, held at their workshop in Liverpool, was a highlight of the festive season! The event was marked by an excellent lunch, which brought together numerous different community members and stakeholders. We were treated to a fabulous BBQ spread, as well as homemade pavlova courtesy of the Shed's resident chef. Following its founding nearly a decade ago, the Liverpool Mens shed has grown into an active and invaluable community organisation, outgrowing its original site in response to widespread community interest and project requests. Projects like the Santa Sled for Hoxton Park Bunnings! Beyond the tangible outcomes of their projects, the organisation seeks to enhance the wellbeing and health of men, promote social inclusion, and foster a potent sense of community. The success of the Christmas celebration is a testament to the high esteem the Liverpool community holds them in. I extend my sincere thanks to the Mens Shed for their generous invitation, and I look forward to seeing more of their projects come to life in our community.

NICHOLAS MAGRIPILIS

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—I congratulate longtime local educator Nicholas Magripilis on his recognition in the 2024 Australia Day Honours. Mr Magripilis – who is in fact my former Year 9 English teacher – received a Public Service Medal for his support for schools, staff and students in the Liverpool and Fairfield Local Government Areas, during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, my community experienced some of the strictest stay-at-home orders and tightest learning from home directions in the state. Many households did not have adequate access to digital infrastructure, making online schooling measures extremely difficult. Mr Magripilis worked tirelessly both during and after the pandemic to support fractured families and communities. As part of this, Mr Magripilis initiated interagency support for struggling families experiencing financial stress, and used local schools as centres for triaging vital family support. My community still feels the effects of the pandemic today, and it is because of the tireless advocacy and efforts of community leaders like Mr Magripilis, that we are able to steadily rebuild community stability after extensive lockdown periods. Mr Magripilis is well-regarded and respected by his peers and community, and I wish him well.

PETER MOORE OAM

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—It is my great pleasure to acknowledge and congratulate Peter Moore, who was recently awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services to local cricket. Peter is the

longest serving President of the Fairfield Liverpool Cricket Association, and was previously the longest serving secretary of the FLCA. This is particularly special as the FLCA recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. Having worked with Peter over a number of years, I can attest to his passion for mentoring our region's budding young cricketers, as well as the fervent advocacy and extensive support he provides to many of our local clubs. I note the numerous recent upgrades to local pitches, nets and facilities, as well as the increased number of women and girls participating in local cricket, which has been brought about under Peter's tenure at the helm of the Association. I don't think I would be remiss in saying that generations of local cricketers to come will thank Peter for his efforts. I extend my best wishes to Peter and his supportive family, and I look forward to FLCA's future initiatives.

WILLIAM WILLIS OAM

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—The 2024 Australia Day Honours List celebrated 1,042 recipients across Australia, and I would like to congratulate William Willis of Tingira Heights for being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of service to the community of Newcastle. Now in his nineties, Mr Willis has done so much to support our local communities, having served as secretary for the Newcastle chapter of Meals on Wheels, president of the Newcastle City Mission, and president of the Newcastle District Cricket Umpires Association. He has also been a member of Warners Bay Uniting Church and a Lay Preacher in the Methodist and Uniting Churches since 1952, contributing to the church's works in the Newcastle-Lake Macquarie area. Mr Willis' long association with cricket in the local area has been acknowledged by Cricket NSW, with CEO Lee Germon calling Mr Willis a pillar of the community who has contributed greatly to the game of cricket. In 2004, he was honoured with life membership of the Newcastle District Cricket Umpires Association in 2004. Congratulations, Mr Willis!

WINSOME LAMBKIN OAM

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—The 2024 Australia Day Honours List celebrated 1,042 recipients across Australia, and I would like to congratulate Winsome Lambkin of Eleebana for being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of service to conservation and the environment. For more than twenty years, Winsome has worked tirelessly to rehabilitate the natural environment of Lake Macquarie, with thousands of hours spend organising and working alongside her fellow volunteers. Winsome is a retired schoolteacher, and she puts the beginning of her journey with Landcare down to her enrolment in bush regeneration courses at TAFE. Since that start has been involved in a range of projects at local sites including the Floraville Rainforest Gully, Cold Tea Creek and Eleebana. Armed with the skills she learnt at TAFE, as well as skills she has picked up from engaging with fellow volunteers skilled in fields as diverse as ornithology, hydrology, mycology, botany and horticulture, Winsome has made an extraordinary difference to the natural environment of Lake Macquarie and her OAM is very well-deserved indeed. Congratulations, Winsome!

TORRIE LEWIS

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—At the ACT Under 20 & Open Championships on Saturday 27 January, Gateshead-raised, Glendale-trained Torrie Lewis officially became the fastest woman in Australian history. The nineteen-year-old achieved an extraordinary time of 11.10 seconds in the 100 metres, shaving one hundredth of a second off the previous record, set by Melissa Breen nearly a decade ago. Torrie smashed the previous U20 record of 11.20 seconds, set in 1968 by Raelene Boyle. Coming off the back of two gold medals at the World Championships in Budapest, Torrie is looking towards the Paris Olympics later this year. The next steps on the path to Paris are the Adelaide Invitational this Saturday, 10 February, and the Maurie Plant Meet in Melbourne on Thursday 15 February, where Torrie—who is now based in Brisbane—will try to best her own record. Congratulations to Torrie on her achievements so far, and I cannot wait to see what comes next for this extraordinary athlete. Go Torrie!

MARINE RESCUE NSW VOLUNTEER ROLLS UP SLEEVE

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—We know that donating blood saves lives. When we roll up our sleeves we are ensuring that life saving operations can proceed. For some the thought of giving blood makes them weak at the knees, but for others such as Chris Allen it has been routine since her first donated blood as a university student in 1971. Chris is a long serving Marine Rescue NSW State Communications Centre and Middle Harbour member who has been rolling up his sleeves to donate blood for the last fifty years. Last year Chris reached the incredible milestone of donating blood more than three-hundred and sixty times. Just as his work with Marine Rescue NSW helps saves lives on the water, Chris' gift of blood has also been saving lives. Chris will also marked another milestone in December where he marked twenty years of volunteering with Marine Rescue NSW

and Coastal Patrol. Known as the 'rope man' Chris still enjoys his time as part of the boat crew at Middle Harbour teaching the rest of the volunteers about knots and simple splicing. Congratulations Chris on your commitment to saving lives on and off the water.

NOVEL APPROACH FROM SHORE BOYS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Six budding authors from SHORE school in my electorate of North Shore have had their first books published after a year of writing, research and development. I congratulate the following year six boys Henry Grieve, Will McCowan, Rupert Bransgrove, Louis Williams, and Conal Robertson. These students were selected for their interest in writing and consistently performing in all their studies. Under the mentorship of best selling Tim Harris the students gained first hand exposure to explore their creativity and develop their writing skills. Having Tim work with these students also gave them a real-world insight into the world of publishing and the need to ensure that perseverance and resilience are traits that are utilised while navigating this process. The books are being sold with one-hundred percent of the proceeds going to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, which is a national charity working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remote communities across Australia. Congratulations once again to Henry, Will, Rupert, Louis, and Conal on this outstanding effort.

SALLY ANNE ROGERS

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to congratulate Clarence Valley Council Local Hero of the Year 2024, Ms Sally Anne Rogers. Ms Rogers is the founder of Happy Paws Haven, which was established in 2006, a not-for-profit rehoming sanctuary for companion animals which also provides opportunities for the community to gain work experience and volunteer. Ms Rogers welcomes and provides school kids, college students, NDIS, people who are interested in a career with companion animals and the wider community, to learn about the importance of responsible pet ownership. Ms Rogers continues to build a pathway for the future based on the needs of the animals and the community, continually upgrading skills and resources, so new programs can be put in place. Happy Paws Haven is open seven days a week for animal adoptions and Ms Rogers is the backbone of this facility and its success. I thank Ms Rogers for her invaluable contribution to our community.

THE WESTPAC HELICOPTER SUPPORT GROUP - GRAFTON VOLUNTEER SUPPORT GROUP

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to congratulate Clarence Valley Council 2024 Community Achievement Award Winner - Westpac Rescue Helicopter Support Group - Grafton Volunteer Support Group. The Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service - Grafton Volunteer Support Group has been hosting events and raising funds for the helicopter service since 2012. The Group actively fundraise each year and give their gift of time, passion and support to the service to help save lives. In that time the support group has raised over \$134,000 through an annual Helicopter High Tea, Barefoot Bowls Days and Bunnings Barbecues. As well as this, the group has assisted other organisations raising funds for the Rescue Helicopter such as the Grafton Sporting Car Club. The group comprises around 15 active members. Some of the Support Group members have been volunteering for the Helicopter Service for 26 years and most have volunteered for over 10 years. I thank all of the volunteers for their invaluable and simply amazing contribution made to our community.

ANTHONY MCATEER

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to congratulate Richmond Valley Council Sportsperson of the Year, Anthony McAteer. Tony has been an instrumental part in the Casino Cricket Club, as a player and as a mentor to fellow players and newer generations. Tony has over 30 years' service, running fundraising events for cricket, including Calcuttas, raffles and training days. Tony organises team events, ensuring there are enough players for the weekend teams and organises the preparation of the pitches. He presents prizes at the end of the year presentations which are welcomed by the club members. Tony has spent his January weekends taking part in a youth carnival in Lismore and Casino, he is living proof that you are never too old to keep moving, regardless of the aches and pains. Tony is an inspiration to the younger members of the club and will always turn up on short notice to fill in when a team is short. Tony's many years in the game contribute to his knowledge and he is a valued member of the local sporting club as an approachable mentor to younger players. I thank Tony for his invaluable contribution to our community.

NATIONAL ONE FOOT FORWARD CAMPAIGN

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise Luke Woods and a dedicated group of supporters who have raised over \$22,500.00, as part of the One Foot Forward Campaign for the Black Dog Institute. Through their walk they aimed to raise awareness and to support those suffering from mental health issues and to remember those who have lost their lives to suicide. The walk was approximately 30km starting at Moree Rugby Union Club and moved eastward to Pallamallawa. I congratulate the organisers of this event, participants, supporters, and volunteers for contributing to the wonderful success of the day. As a community it is

inspiring to recognise the need for this event to continue to evolve and raise awareness of how mental health issues impact our lives. I commend all involved from the youngest at 13 to the eldest at 83 years of age on your wonderful efforts, for funds and awareness raised through your voluntary walk. The Moree community and district thanks you.

NEW ENGLAND GARDEN FESTIVAL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of the New England Garden Festival Committee for staging a terrific celebration in Armidale recently. Whilst promoting the enjoyment of gardening, friendship and a healthy lifestyle, this event showcases Armidale and the New England Region, with funds raised going to support a local charity Can Assist. I congratulate all those involved in the festivities, including volunteers, visitors, garden competitors and sponsors. During the festival there were many garden stalls, workshops, guest speakers, presentations, competitions, and open gardens, along with music and art. I commend all those involved in the successful week of celebrations, with special thanks to the committee members: Lou Forsythe, Susie Coventry, Terry Rolfe, Nellie Hayes, Ian Lloyd and Lesley Nies. Events such as this in regional towns cannot function without the ongoing support and commitment their volunteers give.

RECOGNITION OF NSW RUGBY LEAGUE VOLUNTEERS

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise volunteers Candita Collins and Billy Hamilton from the NSW Northern Region for accolades they received at the recent NSW Rugby League Community Awards. I congratulate Candita Collins of the Narwan Eels committee for being awarded the Indigenous Volunteer of the Year. Candita has been recognised for providing youths with a safe and supportive environment, promoting the club's motto of family-community-football and for assisting with the club hitting record participation numbers over the 2023 season. Congratulations also to Group 19 Rugby League President Billy Hamilton, for being awarded the Northern Region's Volunteer of the Year. Billy has volunteered for more than 20 years, particularly in Inverell and surrounds and is recognised for his tireless effort to enable kids to play football. I commend all NSW Junior Rugby volunteers on their hard work, time and effort put into our young people, it is appreciated by the entire community.

FUNDRAISING AT PICNIC POINT HIGH SCHOOL

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—I would like to acknowledge Picnic Point High School, which has exemplified the true spirit of giving, both to the local community and beyond. Both staff and students participated in Movember to raise an impressive \$2,250 for men's health through creative initiatives like cupcake sales and Mo-Cones Snow Cones. The school also donated 17 blankets and numerous squares to the Wrap with Love project, which donates these items to those doing it tough over Christmas and in other times of need. Picnic Point High School has also been actively supporting Keith's Closet Shoebox Appeal. A total of 40 thoughtfully filled shoeboxes, containing essentials and heartfelt well wishes, were delivered to those hospitalized with mental health challenges. This collective effort epitomises the school's commitment to community welfare, fostering a sense of care and responsibility. I commend Picnic Point High School and all the students who participated for their outstanding contributions. The school should be very proud for showcasing the true spirit of giving and making a positive impact on both the local and wider community.

EAST HILLS BOYS ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary achievements of Year 8 students from the Gifted and Talented class at East Hills Boys High School, who emerged as the top performers in Australia at the 2023 Universal Robotics Challenge. Under the guidance of teachers John Watson and Walid El Chiekh, these students showcased their ingenuity with a unique 'warehouse' robot, claiming victory in a points and time challenge. The competition required the robots to skilfully pick up packages of various shapes, delivering them to a designated drop zone with additional points awarded for the highest stacked packages. I commend the students' development of crucial skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, creativity, collaboration, evaluation, and persistence in preparation for the competition. Recognition is extended to EduTech Australia for their consistent support through the Education4ALL Equity Program. The students' achievements are highlighted by their awards in the National High Schools Division, with first, second, and third places, and a remarkable second place in the World Senior Division. Their successes mean that East Hills Boys High School now qualifies for the international competition in Japan next year. Congratulations East Hills Boys High School.

POINT CLARE PUBLIC SCHOOL CANTEEN

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—Having healthy food is one of the most critical parts for students to maximize their potential at school. It is my joy to acknowledge Point Clare Public School Canteen for keeping the Healthy School Canteen status for over a decade. The Canteen is proudly run by Point Clare Public School

P&C, led by a dedicated convenor Janaki Selvarajan, a talented manager Anwyn Jeannot, and a group of passionate parents and community members. Battling continuous social changes which resulted in the significantly low number of volunteers, the Canteen is still open every day and has an impressive list of choices that reinforces healthy eating habit amongst an average of 500 students every year. It's a beautiful sight when you visit the Canteen in action, where you might bump into a grandma who is rolling out dozens of freshly made pizza dough for the week or a parent who comes in for a quick 30-minute break to prepare some toasties for the day. The Point Clare Canteen is the village that we truthfully need to support our local families. I wholeheartedly applaud the Canteen team, and its fabulous volunteers for keeping our children healthy and happy at school.

SYDNEY OYSTER FARM TOURS

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—With great excitement, I want to congratulate Sydney Oyster Farm Tours and its wonderful Managing Director, Ms Sheridan Beaumont for winning the Central Coast 2023 Business of the Year Award, and the Excellence in Sustainability Award. Owned by the Sheridan family, the wonderful Sydney Oysters Farm Tours is based in the tranquil and picturesque Mooney Mooney on the Central Coast. The Sheridan family's oyster farm offers various unique experiences for visitors, such as learning how to open oysters on the boat, in-water oyster tasting, guided oyster farm tours, gourmet seafood lunches by the beach and so much more. It's incredible to learn about the obstacles that you have overcome, from Norwalk virus to COVID-19, and yet Sydney Oyster Farm Tours continues to thrive. Your success story is inspirational, and an inspiration to other business owners to keep fighting. I wish the Sheridan family, and the team behind Sydney Oyster Farm Tours all the best in your future endeavours and encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the beauty of our Central Coast oyster industry.

GOSFORD NIGHT MARKETS

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—Congratulations and thank you so much to everyone involved in organising the fantastic Gosford Night Markets which are held on the first Friday of the month at the Gosford Showgrounds. I often hear how much fun the markets are, with the rides and stalls offering great entertainment to visitors from near and far. It is a feast for all senses, from being delighted by the most delicious food vendors and tantalising our tastebuds with some of the best desserts in town. The kids are well looked after with plenty of entertainment to keep them amused including rides, jumping castles and carnival games for kids of all ages. For the adults who are ready to kick off their shoes and let their busy work week melt away, there's live music to sit back and enjoy. It's a delight to see markets like this showcasing the fantastic local businesses and produce of the Coast, while also providing a place for the community to come together and have fun.

CAMPBELLTOWN BANGLA SCHOOL - FEBRUARY 2024

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)—Campbelltown Bangla School in Minto plays a pivotal role in teaching Bangla language to a new generation and sharing the cultural heritage of Bangladesh. My long association with the Campbelltown Bangla School and the Bangla community is something that I greatly value. Each year, the Campbelltown Bangla School joins in International Mother Language Day celebrations. Recognised around the world on 21 February, the day raises awareness of language, cultural diversity and multilingualism around the world. Many languages around the world are at risk of extinction. It is predicted a language will disappear every fortnight. International Mother Language Day marks an important cultural and historical day for Australians of Bengali descent. In Bangladesh, 21st February is the anniversary of the day when Bangladeshis fought for recognition of the Bangla language. I acknowledge the wonderful work of the Campbelltown Bangla School in promoting linguistic and cultural diversity in our local community. I trust that International Mother Language Day celebrations continue to be a huge success.

INTERNATIONAL CHEERLEADING UNION WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I am excited to share with Members that a cohort of Port Macquarie's very own talented cheerleaders will soon compete at the International Cheerleading Union (ICU) World Championships in Florida, USA. Representing your country is an incredible honour and demonstrates the hard work and dedication contributed to achieving selection. It also signifies the level of talent and skill required to compete against the world's best and brightest. The ICU World Championship will kickstart in Orlando from 24th-26th April and will see Port Macquarie's Jett and Scout Hodgson, Loghan Sculthorpe, Anabelle Hicks, Bonnie Russell and Ruby Revell represent Australia. Our six superstars were selected in early December at the Cheerleading Nationals in Sydney from a field of Australian athletes representing NSW, SA, VIC, QLD and WA with all being shortlisted through a rigorous national selection process. The outcome saw Jett, Scout, Loghan, Anabelle, Bonnie and Ruby receive the news of a lifetime to compete on an international stage against the elite in

the cheerleading world. I congratulate our local team for securing selection to represent Australia in junior cheerleading and I wish them all the success for the championships.

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—On 26 November 2023 Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church in Harrington marked a significant milestone, celebrating 70 years since being established in the community. Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church was opened on 27th December 1953, built out of the original floorboards and beams from The Holy Angels Catholic Church in Coopersnook. An enthusiastic crowd of some 120 people attended the celebrations including representatives from each of the local churches, community groups and those with connections to the Catholic ministry. Presiding over the event was Father Kevin Corrigan. The morning program included a Mass at the church followed by a celebratory meal at the Memorial Hall. Special guests included Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle, Michael Kennedy, Harrington resident Pam Jarman and students and staff from Harrington Public School. The local Church is well-known and respected for its contribution to our homeless and those doing it tough, through the regular collection of food and fundraising initiatives to support the Taree Community Kitchen. To acknowledge the history of worship and service a special booklet was prepared titled "A Story of Faith and Connectivity". Congratulations to everyone involved in the celebrations.

CHAR BAR CATERING

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I congratulate Stefan and Liz Hostettler, owners of Char Bar Catering on being recognised as a top ten wedding caterer in Australia. The announcement was made at The Australian Wedding Awards on January 10th at The Star, Gold Coast. It is incredibly impressive to see the acknowledgement of Char Bar at this level in a national competition. The Australian Wedding Awards are dedicated to recognising, supporting and rewarding wedding businesses that operate across regional Australia. For a Port Macquarie business to be selected in the top 10 providers is testament to the exceptional quality of food and service being offered by the Hostettler's and their team. This award comes on top of several successes that Stefan and Liz have received in the food and hospitality industry. They own and run Char Bar catering as well as The Chip Shop in Port Macquarie. In 2023, Char Bar won the Food Production & Catering section in the Port Macquarie Business Awards. In the same year, Stefan produced the winning dish at the World Food Championships Australia in the burger category. Thank you for bringing such acknowledgement to our area with your outstanding success.

DARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to recognise the Darlington Public School Student Leaders and their contribution to the school community. The 2023 Student Leadership Council includes Henry Beeston, Helena Korb, Soodjai Lyttleton, Finlay McCormack, Harper Smith, Sadie Leigh-Young, and Amiera Simon - Year 6 students who have been leading their school community in 2023. These students were elected by their peers and the school community after a series of leadership workshops and presentations, and are students who have consistently demonstrated the ability to lead, inspire, and effectively represent their peers. Their responsibilities include leading weekly school assemblies and other special assemblies and events, running fundraisers, representing the school, and mentoring younger students. Recently, they spoke to prospective parents and promoted the school at the Kindy 2024 Information Evening. In this role the student leaders have developed valuable skills including communication, decision-making, teamwork, and problem-solving. They play a vital role in shaping the school by advocating for student interests, promoting positive change, and organising school activities. I acknowledge the Darlington Public School Student Leadership Council, and thank them for their contributions to the school and their community.

KAREELA PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the exceptional student leadership team of Kareela Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge Kareela Public School's student leadership team for 2024, namely School Captains Charlotte Brunero and Lachlan Stirling, and Vice Captains Molly Murr, Rian Wentworth, Amelia Wood and Miles Howarth. With the guidance of their incredible Principal Nicole Arnold, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Kareela Public School's motto of 'knowledge, pride, success'.

SYLVANIA HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the exceptional student leadership team of Sylvania Heights Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion to acknowledge Sylvania Heights Public School's student leadership team for 2024, namely School Captains Chloe McLintock and Billy Herb, Vice Captains Josephine Davis and Lewis Gordon, and Prefects Ellie Hughes, Michaela Constantopedos, Bella Hasham, Maya Pallister, Jed Feltham, Nicholas Marneros, James Roupell and Finley Stephen-Messer. With the guidance of their hard-working relieving Principal Susan Oliveri, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Sylvania Heights Public School's motto of 'strive to achieve'.

GYMEA NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the incoming student leadership team of GyMEA North Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the student leadership team for 2024, namely School Captains Piper Wilken and Lincoln Reynolds and Vice Captains Jasmine Murray and Vinuka Laksiri. With the guidance of their incredible Principal, Kirsty Sharman, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify GyMEA North Public School's motto of 'service and loyalty'.

SHONA YU

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to commend and celebrate Beverley Hills High School teacher, Ms Shona Yu for her outstanding career as an educator in mathematics. A prodigy with an exceptional natural ability, Shona graduated from high school at only 10 years old. At 15, she went on to pursue a PhD in algebra from the University of Sydney becoming the youngest student to do so. During her prolific career in academia, she gradually realised her passion for educating young minds, prompting a career change to high school teaching. Today Shona can be found teaching maths as well as enrichment and STEM programs at Beverley Hills High where her passionate and accessible approach to teaching serves as an inspiration to her students daily. Beverley Hills High Principal Maria Iemma says that Shona has, 'helped bring maths out of the cupboard and bring the subject alive. She makes maths so meaningful and gives students the tools to apply it in their daily lives and across multiple subjects. 'I would like to thank Ms Yu for her incredible contribution to the classroom. Her drive to make an impact in education for the next generation in numeracy is an inspiration to us all.

AKSHARA REDDY YADEM

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to commend and congratulate Akshara Reddy Yadem who has recently graduated from St George Girls High School in 2023 with an absolutely outstanding HSC result. Akshara has achieved first in New South Wales for Ancient History, one of only 128 students to achieve first or equal first in a 2023 HSC course from across the state. She is also on the Distinguished Achievers list for Biology, English Advanced and English Extension, having received Band 6s and an E4 respectively in those courses. These outstanding results are reflective of Akshara's immense talent, hard work, time, and energy she has put into her studies. I also want to pay tribute to the efforts of her family and community who supported Akshara in achieving her best. Moreover, it is important to recognise the tireless hard work and support of Akshara's teachers during both her HSC journey and throughout her entire schooling experience. Akshara's immense dedication to her studies and work ethic is an inspiration to us all. I have no doubt Akshara will go on to achieve amazing things at university and her career beyond high school and wish her all the success in the future.

KURT CHENG

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I commend and acknowledge University of Technology Sydney (UTS) student, Kurt Cheng for being awarded the law student of the year in the 2023 Australian Law Awards. Kurt has been studying a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Communication in the Honours Program since 2019. During that time, dedicating himself to his campus' community by taking on various roles on boards, committees, advisory groups, clubs and societies throughout the university. Kurt has also innovated many projects

to benefit his community. He developed the #RacismNotWelcome campaign with Addison Rd Community Centre. He was integral in introducing the first Indigenous student position on UTS's Academic Board. Moreover, he successfully negotiated UTS's first student partnership agreement between the student community and university. Kurt has received many awards including the UTS Accomplish Platinum Award; the UTS Brennan Justice & Leadership Award for social justice advocacy and leadership; and the UTS Law Tom Sylva Award for work in community law, human rights, and social justice. These monumental achievements are a testament to Kurt's diligence, passion and talent for innovation. His professionalism and enthusiasm have served him well during his academic endeavours, and I wish him all the best in his future career.

ST EUPHEMIA COLLEGE SICLE GREEK LANGUAGE COMPETITION - VICTORIA VAROUTSOS

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Victoria Varoutsos from St Euphemia College, for achieving 1st place in the Stage 1 category at the 2023 SICLE Greek Language Competition 'Greek and Me'. The SICLE Greek Language Competition celebrates the Greek language and its cultural significance, providing a platform for participants to showcase their proficiency in Greek language skills through various competitions and activities. This competition provides a valuable opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the Greek language, gain confidence in their language abilities and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Greek language and culture. Victoria's dedication and hard work are an inspiration to others and the Bankstown community is immensely proud. This incredible achievement is a testament to her exceptional language skills and her passion for Greek culture and heritage. As a community, we celebrate your achievement and recognise the importance of language learning and cultural preservation. Your accomplishment not only brings honour to yourself, your family, and your school, but it also contributes to the richness and diversity of our community. Congratulations once again Victoria on this outstanding achievement.

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS - 2024 MASO CUP

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—I would like to congratulate Bankstown City Lions on their recent win at the Maso Cup. The Maso Cup is a yearly friendly for the Australian-Macedonian footballing community. Teams from across Australia travelled to Macedonia Park, Berkeley, to enjoy cevapi, Macedonian music and watch the teams play it out for the cup. After 12 years, I am proud to say that the Maso Cup trophy is again in the hands of the Bankstown City Lions players as they won the tournament by defeating Wollongong United in the final. The amazing sportsmanship and teamwork of the players cannot go without praise. The atmosphere, organisation and fields epitomised what it is to be an Australian-Macedonian club playing football with pride. Next year, I am looking forward to cheering on the Bankstown Lions as they will be hosting the 2025 Maso Cup at Jensen Park. I appreciate the efforts of Rob Mileski and the board members in building Bankstown City Lions into the successful community-based team it is today. Once again congratulations on this successful win and good luck with all your future endeavours.

GABY KOBROSSI - CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN COUNCIL'S 2024 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—On Thursday 24 January, I joined our community in celebrating the 2024 Canterbury Bankstown Australia Day Awards at the Bryan Brown Theatre in Bankstown. Congratulations to Gaby Kobrossi, the distinguished recipient of the 2024 Community Citizen of the Year award. In a community filled with extraordinary individuals, Gaby stands out as a beacon of generosity, leadership, and unwavering commitment to the well-being of the Bankstown community. Gaby is known for his selfless dedication to the community. He volunteers extensively and serves as a minister at Bankstown District Uniting Church. His remarkable traits lie in his consistent commitment to going above and beyond in every endeavour, inspiring others to follow. In addition to his tangible contributions, Gaby embodies the values of inclusivity, empathy, and collaboration. His ability to bring people together, regardless of background or circumstance, fosters a sense of belonging that strengthens the bonds of our community. Congratulations Gaby on receiving Canterbury Bankstown's 2024 Community Citizen of the Year. On behalf of the community, I want to thank you for all the amazing work you do to make it a better place.

SIENNA LAWLER

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to acknowledge Sienna Lawler from Hallidays Point, a seven-year-old talent representing the Taree Great Lakes Physical Culture Club. Up against 80 of the country's best competitors in her age division -Sienna's recent fourth-place finish at the Junior National Finals in Sydney's Olympic Park complex showcases her determination and skill in the sport. Sienna, a five-year veteran, finished first in both of her inter-club and local zone competitions, capping off a successful year. I thank Sienna's

coach, Lyn Creek and the Taree Great Lakes Physical Culture Club for promoting community, fitness, and confidence through this sport. Congratulations Sienna, you're an inspiration and I wish you all the best with your future performances.

DAVID PRICE

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Today I recognise a passionate volunteer and leader of the Manly community, Mr David Price of Balgowlah Heights, who was recently honoured for his Outstanding Community Service at this year's Australia Day Awards. A long-standing member of Freshwater Surf Life Saving Club, David bravely volunteered his services in assisting with evacuation efforts during the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires and again during the NSW floods of 2020, 2021 and 2022. Whether it be out in the surf or responding to national emergencies, David's willingness to act and his selfless commitment to serving those who are most in need should be commended, and I pass on my sincere gratitude and thanks to David for all that he continues to do to for our local community.

SYDNEY FESTIVAL IN PARRAMATTA

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—Since 1977, Sydney Festival has become a beacon of culture and creativity, bringing talent, vibrancy and an air of excitement to the Greater Sydney Area through the summer months. During January Parramatta hosted a variety of events for the 'Fest in the West' including the hilarious and acclaimed comedy musical BANANALAND, the wonderful and unique cultural experience of A'amar, and the "roarsome", fun for the family experience of Dinosaur World Live. These events, in venues such as Riverside Theatres and Parramatta Park, showcased to attendees what we in Parramatta have already known for years: that Parramatta can be and is a modern cultural hub at the beating heart of Greater Sydney. I thank the Sydney Festival, their board of directors chaired by David Kirk MBE, festival director Olivia Ansell, festival patron Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley, Create NSW, the City of Parramatta Council, Riverside Theatres and Parramatta Park, and all the wonderful creatives for showcasing Parramatta's status as a vibrant city that embraces and is proud of its cultural credentials.

SYMPHONY UNDER THE STARS

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—On 20 November, Parramatta was treated to a world class display of Musical talent with Sydney Symphony Under the Stars: Pictures in the Sky. It was an honour to be immersed in the original work of the extraordinary William Barton, Auntie Delmae Barton, with Veronique Serret, As well as to be transported by Anoushka Shankar with her mastery of the Sitar. This was all in consort with the spectacular Sydney Symphony Orchestra under the direction of guest conductor Benjamin Northey. I am committed to do all I can to support and grow the creative arts in NSW. The breadth, diversity and brilliance of Western Sydney musicians, artists and cultural leaders need to be a larger part of the story of NSW, our economy and our sense of who we are. That vision is closer to realisation with performances like Symphony under the Stars set in the midst of beautiful Parramatta park, with world class local artists performing side by side. My congratulations and thanks to all involved and to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for the introduction of this wonderful program.

PARRAMATTA ATHLETICS CHAMPIONS

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—In Parramatta we have such a diversity of exceptional talent and dedication whether it be academic, arts or in the sporting arena. Today we celebrate three extraordinary athletes. Eleanor Patterson, Madison De Rozario and Rheed McCracken all reside in Parramatta and recently competed at the 2023 World Athletics Championships and World Para Athletics Championships. Eleanor, already a two-time Olympian, claimed silver in the women's high jump, her fourth consecutive medal in 2 years. Paralympic champion Madison donned the hallowed green and gold for her sixth consecutive World Parra Athletics Championships team. Lastly Three-time Paralympian Rheed progressed through to the finals of the 100m, 400m, and 800m T34 in his eighth Australian team appearance. Along with natural ability and talent the other quality these three athletes all have in common is unwavering commitment to their sport. In thinking of the success of these three I'm reminded of the Gary Player adage, after sinking an exceptional putt a fellow golfer remarked, "now that was some luck". To which Player replied its funny the more I practice, the luckier I get. You should all be proud of your remarkable achievements as I and the residents of Paramatta celebrate your success.

CLONTARF ACADEMIES

Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—It was an honour to meet the young men of the Koorungal Clontarf Foundation at their inaugural presentation night last year. Attended by the Clontarf founder, Gerard Neesham, the evening celebrated the achievements of 50 Aboriginal boys who are overcoming challenges and building bright futures. This group – the first cohort to participate in the Koorungal campus of the program – undertook some amazing leadership and learning activities along a journey of self-improvement, and the proud faces of their families in the audience illustrated just how much progress each young man has made. Special mention should

also go to mentors Nathan Rose and Ben Thompson for their extraordinary work. I would also like to acknowledge Nick Skinner, Kyle McCarthy, Luke Gladman-Pitts and Sean Amoamo at the Mount Austin High School Clontarf which is this year celebrating its tenth year, with more than 100 boys in the current program. My appreciation also goes to Mat Chapman and Leon Douglas at the Tumut High School Clontarf, which this year has a record 47 boys in the program. Congratulations to all on a great program that is making a real difference in the lives of its young men.

SNOWY VALLEYS AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—Congratulations to Snowy Valleys Australia Day awards recipients, among them, Tumut's Citizen of the Year David Wren for his tireless community contribution over many years. Congratulations also to Sportsperson of the Year, Khobi Bousfield, who has enjoyed remarkable success, locally, regionally and nationally. Talbingo's Local Legend and Community Hero Noel Barry is recognised for a life of community service, including more than 20 years with the RFS. Talbingo's Young Citizen of the Year, Joshua Smith, raised \$15,000 for a little-known degenerative medical condition while completing his HSC. Talbingo citizen of the year Mike Measday has given years of service to the Talbingo Country Club Golf course and the Church of Saint Paul. At Batlow, Anthony Williams and Kevin Stokes are joint Citizens of the Year, Anthony recognised for decades of service to volunteer groups, and Kevin for his support of First Nations people. Young Citizen Riley Gould has been recognised for athletics, Senior Citizen Ron Smith for his contribution to parklands and the cemetery, and Sportsperson of the Year John Melrose for representing Batlow at golf and bowls. Thank you to and well done to all recipients for doing so much for their communities.

LEX BITTAR

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—I would like to acknowledge Alexander "Lex" Bittar, who passed away last year after a lifetime of service to Wagga Wagga. A lifelong Wagga resident, Mr Bittar attended South Wagga Public School and Wagga High, later returning to both schools as principal and deputy principal. In a 41-year-career, he also taught at Tarcutta and Leeton before working in departmental roles. Thousands of students benefited from Lex's passion for education, but he also improved lives in activities outside of work. He dedicated 18 years to Meals on Wheels, was chair and co-founder of the Wagga Education Centre and was a charter member of the Central Wagga Lions Club. During all of this, he found time to be active in the sporting community. In recognition of his immense services to Wagga Wagga, Mr Bittar received an Order of Australia medal in 2014. He was the devoted husband of the late Doreen Bittar, proud father of Jenni and Paul, and grandfather of Will. Lex's dedication to his community continued even after he left it, with donations to Meals on Wheels accepted in lieu of flowers at his funeral in December 2023. Vale, Lex Bittar – a true servant of our community.

ALEXIA PAGLIA

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I wish to acknowledge Ms Alexia Paglia, who was recently been announced as the 2023 City of Canada Bay Council's Young Citizen of the Year. Alexia is a medical student with a passion for facilitating easy access to health education for youth. Of her many achievements, she has recently authored a children's book called *My Strong Heart* teaching young children about heart health. She also runs free lessons about the topic at the Sydney Childrens Hospital School, teaching and inspiring young minds about healthy habits that will unlock a lifetime of better health. With heart disease being the leading cause of death in Australia, Alexia is aiming to educate more Australians about heart health in a positive and informative way. As a Concord local, our community celebrates Alexia's enthusiasm and achievements. I commend Alexia for her important work and congratulate Alexia on this well-deserved recognition. I wish you her the very best.

DECLAN RUANE

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I take the opportunity to acknowledge Mr Declan Ruane, who was recently recognised as the City of Canada Bay Council's 2023 Sports Citizen of the Year. Mr Ruane is a local community leader who has established himself as a core member of three local clubs and organisations, the DSA Dragon Boat Club, Rhodes Parkrun, and Rhodes Runners. At the DSA Dragon Boat Club, Declan quickly progressed from Division Captain to Club Captain. As Club Captain, his role has been to mentor and inspire others to be their best. He is also a long-standing member of Rhodes Parkrun and, in the last few years, has stepped up to become a Run Director. More recently, Declan founded the local running club, Rhodes Runners, where members of the community get together on a Wednesday night to run through Rhodes and Sydney Olympic Park. Declan's commitment to our community is on full display with his dedication and passion for encouraging and supporting people to lead an active lifestyle. Our community is a better place because of contributions from volunteers like Declan. I sincerely congratulate and thank Declan, and wish him all the very best.

ADELE MITCHELL

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I take the opportunity to recognise Adele Mitchell, City of Canada Bay Council's 2023 Arts & Culture Citizen of the Year. Adele moved to Drummoyne as a young mother in 1978. While her family was growing, she became involved with community groups that went on to establish the well-known Drummoyne Community and Occasional Child Care Centre. Following a successful career in her small business within the legal and financial sectors, retirement offered Adele the opportunity to complete more community work. She became President of the Drummoyne Community Centre for a second time and volunteered at the Wednesday Hub at St Bede's in Drummoyne, a community space offering health sessions and social events to locals. She was pivotal in establishing the Drummoyne Markets and co-founded the Drummoyne Art Trail, helping local artisans showcase and share their work with the community. Adele has served our community passionately for over 40 years and should be commended for her dedication and contributions. I sincerely congratulate Adele, a very worthy recipient and I wish her all the very best.
