

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 13 March 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.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

## *Bills*

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS (CARE AND PROTECTION) AMENDMENT BILL 2024

#### First Reading

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Kate Washington, read a first time and printed.**

#### Second Reading Speech

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (10:18):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill amends the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to clarify the operation of that Act in relation to children and young people who are not present or ordinarily living in New South Wales. The bill signals a clear legislative intention that the functions under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act are intended to apply extraterritorially to such children and young people, insofar as the law-making power of New South Wales allows, provided they have a sufficient connection to New South Wales. I will come to the detail of the bill later.

Before I do, I will explain why the bill is so important and why I urge the House to support it. Basically, it boils down to this one very simple premise: Without the bill, there is a significant risk that the policy objectives of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act cannot be achieved and that the provisions of the Act cannot be complied with or given effect. For the numerous children and young people who are currently the subject of proceedings in the Children's Court, without the bill, there is considerable uncertainty about the Children's Court's capacity to finalise those matters. That is causing significant delays in those matters, which are detrimental to the best interests of the children and young people involved.

The uncertainty about jurisdiction under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act has arisen from a recent New South Wales Court of Appeal decision in the case of *DN v Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice*. The decision considered section 4 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act and held that the New South Wales Children's Court had no jurisdiction to make orders in respect of children and young people who were not present or ordinarily living in New South Wales at the time of making the orders. Prior to the decision, the jurisdiction of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act was interpreted broadly in relation to children and young people who were placed outside of New South Wales during the course of initial proceedings or who moved outside of New South Wales after final orders were made. The Court of Appeal decision in DN took a narrower view of the jurisdiction under the Act.

I will not speak about the case of DN in great detail other than to say that it was a very uncommon and extraordinary case. It involved two Aboriginal children who had been in care since they were very young and who were, for various reasons, living with carers in the United Kingdom at the time the Children's Court made fresh orders about them. I acknowledge the distress it has caused to all involved. I have asked my department to review the circumstances of the matter. I respectfully ask members seeking to make a contribution to debate on the bill to confine any comments they may wish to make on the case to the legal issues that arose from the Court of Appeal

decision. I make this request on the basis that further public commentary about the children themselves and their circumstances is likely to cause further distress.

International placements for children in care are extremely rare. The department has advised me that there are currently only 11 international placements. Most of those placements are in New Zealand, which is a signatory to the Interstate Child Protection Protocol, and all of the children in New Zealand are in family placements. Though international placements are extremely rare, it is not uncommon for children and young people who enter care to be placed in other Australian States and Territories, especially when those placements are with family, kin or community. The Court of Appeal decision has significant implications for these far more common cases of children in placements within Australia.

The current uncertainty in the jurisdiction impacts the primary objectives of the Act, which are to ensure that children and young people are safe and protected, and that their safety, health and wellbeing are promoted above all else. In part, this is intended to be achieved by requiring that active efforts are made to find the child's family, kin and community and, wherever practicable, place children in suitable family and kinship placements. Where a child or young person cannot safely live at home with their parents, research shows that children thrive best when provided with a permanent, safe, nurturing, stable and secure home. Legal proceedings and orders need to support these outcomes, not prevent them.

The Court of Appeal decision creates a situation where it may be impossible to act in the best interest of children and young people or comply with the principles of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act. This includes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Young Person Placement Principles, which preference family placements where restoration to the child's parents is not possible. As a result of the Court of Appeal decision, there is a considerable risk that family placements may not be fully considered if they are interstate and that existing long-term interstate placements may be disrupted, with potentially detrimental impacts to the child or young person involved.

The reality is that families, communities, traditional lands and cultures do not stop at the New South Wales border. The implications of the decision are particularly significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and undermine our commitments to do better for Aboriginal children and families, in partnership with Aboriginal communities. The decision also has significant impacts on all families who live in towns that border with other States and Territories. The bill will resolve that conflict and enable decisions to be made that are consistent with the objects and principles of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act.

As I mentioned earlier, without the bill, there is considerable uncertainty about the capacity of the Children's Court to finalise current matters, which is causing significant delays. It is not clear how long a child may be placed interstate before they are considered to be no longer "ordinarily living" in New South Wales. In practice, this could mean that the New South Wales court could simply lose jurisdiction mid-proceedings, even where the intention may be for the child to be restored to parents in New South Wales. This would clearly not be in the best interests of the child or their family or kin.

Furthermore, interested parties may bring an application, with leave, to vary or rescind a care order pursuant to section 90 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act. This provides an avenue for the child or young person, a parent or other persons with a sufficient interest in the welfare of the child or young person to seek to vary or rescind final care orders where there has been a significant change in relevant circumstances. However, if the Children's Court has lost jurisdiction because the child or young person is no longer present or ordinarily living in New South Wales, the Children's Court would be unable to hear those applications. This would effectively remove that pathway for those parties.

Due to the decision in DN, there is also uncertainty about whether the Children's Court can hear applications to transfer proceedings or orders under chapter 14A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act. That chapter provides a legislative framework for the transfer of proceedings and orders to other Australian jurisdictions and to New Zealand. Such applications are usually only made when the child or young person is already placed or residing in that jurisdiction and there has been collaboration between the Department of Communities and Justice and the other child welfare agency to effect the transfer. Notably, the transfer of proceedings or orders relies on the consent of the receiving jurisdiction, and the New South Wales order must be compatible with the law of the receiving jurisdiction. The Children's Court should be able to vary a final order in appropriate cases, including in these circumstances, to give effect to the intention of chapter 14A.

Most importantly, the Court of Appeal decision risks that family and kinship placements will not be fully considered where they are outside New South Wales. This frustrates the ability to comply with the placement principles under the Act and the related obligation for active efforts to be taken to place children and young people with family, kin and community where they cannot be restored safely to their parents. Those implications are

particularly significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and undermine our commitments to do better for Aboriginal children and families, in partnership with Aboriginal communities. The impact of this one decision, about a very extraordinary case, has reverberated across the whole child protection system. It raises real and significant concerns for hundreds of children and young people who have a connection with New South Wales, even though they may no longer be ordinarily living in New South Wales or present here. That is why the bill is needed urgently.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 [1] to the bill amends current section 4 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to provide that the functions imposed or conferred by the Act or its regulations may be exercised for a child or young person who is not ordinarily living in New South Wales but who is present in New South Wales or has a sufficient connection to the State. Schedule 1 [2] to the bill inserts a new section 4 (2), which expresses a clear legislative intention for the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to apply extraterritorially, insofar as the legislative powers of the State permit, including to children and young people who are not ordinarily living or present in New South Wales but who have a sufficient connection to the State.

To support decision-makers to determine whether a child or young person has a sufficient connection to New South Wales, item [2] to the bill outlines a number of non-exhaustive factors that may be considered. One of these factors is whether the child or young person is the subject of a care order as defined in section 60 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. If a child or young person is subject to an interim or final care order by the New South Wales Children's Court, this may indicate a sufficient connection exists to New South Wales. Other factors concern circumstances where the child or young person may have an ongoing familial or community connection to New South Wales, including whether they spend time in the State, and also include circumstances where a child's permanency plan may be to return to the care of their parents.

Another factor that may be considered is whether the particular matter can be heard by another court in another jurisdiction. This will require decision-makers to turn their minds to whether the matter would be better dealt with in the jurisdiction where the child lives. If the matter before the court is one that should be transferred to another jurisdiction, the court would first need to find jurisdiction in order to hear the application for transfer. This factor allows the court to find sufficient jurisdiction to hear an application under chapter 14A in order to effect a transfer.

Whether or not a child or young person has a sufficient connection with New South Wales will depend on the individual facts and circumstances of the child or young person. The bill balances the ongoing responsibility that New South Wales has to these children, while appreciating that their connection to New South Wales may diminish over time and that it may be more appropriate for the jurisdiction they are currently living in to consider the matter. The bill recognises and expressly acknowledges that, while New South Wales can legislate extraterritorially, it can do so only to the extent that is constitutionally permissible. The bill does not displace or override the operation of the laws of other jurisdictions, nor does it displace the State's international obligations, including under the Child Protection Convention.

Finally, item [3] of schedule 1 to the bill inserts a provision in schedule 3 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act. It provides that functions that were exercised and orders made prior to these amendments are taken to have been validly exercised or made where a child or young person had a sufficient connection to New South Wales. This is intended to remove doubt about the validity of functions exercised or orders made prior to the commencement of these amendments and to avoid placement disruptions for children and young people. To avoid any doubt, I make clear that we have no intention of appealing the decision in DN.

This bill will clarify the operation of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act and ensure that the policy objectives of the Act can be achieved and that the provisions of the Act are complied with and given effect. It puts children and young people at the centre of decision-making. I thank all the stakeholders who made submissions to the targeted consultation on the draft bill. Urgent consultations were undertaken between the Department of Communities and Justice, the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Children's Court of New South Wales, Legal Aid NSW and the Aboriginal Legal Service. All those stakeholders supported the intent of this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **COMBAT SPORTS AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 7 February 2024.**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (10:33):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 for the Opposition and indicate that the Coalition will support the bill. The Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 builds upon the important reforms implemented by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government and first and foremost focuses on enhancing safety measures for combatants. The catalyst for these reforms was the tragic passing of 28-year-old Davey Browne in 2015, three days after he was knocked out in the twelfth round of the International Boxing Federation Pan Pacific super featherweight title fight at Ingleburn RSL Club. Following Mr Browne's death, the deputy coroner found that he had died as a result of a large right acute subdural haematoma from the final blow he sustained in that fight, owing to his impaired condition going into the final round, which "diminished his ability to defend himself or control his head movements", and made a number of recommendations to reform the sector.

The amendments in this bill continue the statutory reforms commenced, but not concluded, by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, and I commend former Ministers Gabrielle Upton and Stuart Ayres, in particular, for their work in this important space. The amendments made in 2018 by then Minister for Sport Stuart Ayres delivered on some recommendations from the Combat Sports Authority and the deputy coroner, but further consultation with industry was required for the remainder, which has since been undertaken. The Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 will acquit all coronial recommendations of the deputy coroner, apart from mandating automatic timing systems, which was not supported by the Combat Sports Authority. The consultation carried out by the Combat Sports Authority included a draft exposure bill, which was well received.

Along with the Office of Sport, the Combat Sports Authority carried out extensive discussions with industry to develop its recommendations to the Government. This included discussions with promoters, peak bodies, officials, medical personnel and combatants. There is general agreement and support across the industry for the proposed reforms, which is a testament to the Combat Sports Authority's ability to engage in a professional and consultative manner. I commend the team at the Combat Sports Authority, particularly Darren Kane, for its efforts to date.

The key amendments contained in the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 include prescribing circumstances when a contest should be stopped or suspended to promote combatants' health and safety; the introduction of mandatory concussion and other serious head injury identification training for industry participants, promoters and combatants, including advanced training for referees and attending medical practitioners; accreditation of attending medical practitioners, including prescribed skills and training; improved emergency management of casualties through the provision of advanced life support training for attending medical practitioners and mandated medical equipment at contests; improved registration and pre- and post-contest medical examinations and medical suspensions; the development of a public register of all registered persons, including combatants, industry participants and promoters; and increasing the maximum term of Combat Sports Authority members to nine years.

A provision has been included allowing the Combat Sports Authority to exempt certain contests from the requirement to suspend a contest for the purposes of conducting a modified head injury assessment. The exemption is to facilitate New South Wales continuing to be a preferred location for major events and ensure we are not faced with more restrictions than other jurisdictions. The provision will ensure the smooth running of contests that have an interstate or overseas referee who would be exempt from the New South Wales concussion training requirements. It is also likely that, without an exemption from this provision, high-profile contests will be held in other States or countries to avoid the requirement. Other health and safety protections will still apply, such as directions and provisions for a duty to stop contests, under sections 63, 64 and 66 to protect combatants.

Combat sports competitors know that their chosen sports are inherently dangerous, but the main purpose of the bill is to minimise combatants' risk of concussion and other serious head injuries and to ensure their safety and wellbeing while modernising the regulation of combat sports. Increasing medical evidence shows that concussions and cumulative sub-concussive blows lead to neurological damage associated with elevated risk of cognitive decline and neurodegenerative disease later in life. Research shows that those exposed to more head trauma face earlier onset and accelerated development of neurodegenerative disorders like chronic traumatic encephalopathy, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. In the short term it can result in severe brain swelling, brain bleeding and elevated intracranial pressure causing respiratory failure, seizures, coma and even death.

In recent years sporting codes such as the NRL and AFL have recognised the inherent risks associated with concussion and implemented reforms to ensure the safety of their players. That is what is happening for combat sports today with this bill. The reforms will ensure that the risk to combatants of concussion and other serious head injuries is minimised, creating a safer competitive environment. In conclusion, I note the work of Minister Kamper and his office and their collaborative approach to ensuring the passing of this legislation. I commend them on the introduction of this legislation. On behalf of the Opposition, I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (10:39):** The Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 amends the Combat Sports Act 2013 and the Combat Sports Regulation 2014 in response to a review of the Act and regulation by the Combat Sports Authority of NSW. The review was undertaken in response to recommendations made by a deputy coroner arising from the 2017 inquest into the death of professional boxer David Browne after a contest. The amendments continue the statutory reforms commenced but not concluded by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. The bill provides important reforms to make combat sports safer for combatants. This Government is committed to promoting the health and safety of combat sports and regulating contests on a harm minimisation basis. I commend Minister Kamper for the work that he has been doing to ensure the health and safety of combatants.

The amendments contained in the bill are necessary improvements to promote the health and safety of combatants in New South Wales. The amendments are in response to recommendations made by the Combat Sports Authority of NSW following its review of the Combat Sports Act and the Combat Sports Regulation. For many people, sport is a significant part of their life. The social, physical health and mental health benefits of participating in sport are well documented. Combat sports, in particular, provide an important diversionary avenue for at-risk youths in addition to the other health and social benefits of participating in sport. Combat sports provide structure and discipline and require a commitment to training and improvement of oneself. New South Wales is a State that is passionate about sport and we have high participation numbers across a variety of sports. Our love of sport has led us to host many international events, bringing countless visitors to our shores.

In recent years, sports across the sector have increasingly recognised the risks of concussion. Combat sports are no different. Therefore, we must continue to adapt and modify our sports to protect participants from concussion and other serious head injuries. The amendments before the House are based on medical advice provided by a medical advisory committee. The committee consists of medical practitioners appointed by the Combat Sports Authority of NSW. One of the key improvements proposed to enhance combatant safety is the provision that requires the suspension of a contest for the purposes of conducting a head injury assessment. The assessment will occur when the referee, attending medical practitioner or the combat sports inspector has observed a category two head injury sign. The purpose of the amendment is to protect combatants from serious injuries.

There are provisions that provide for the enhancement of the referee's duty to stop a contest. The provisions make clearer the referee's duty to stop and end the contest if they observe serious and obvious signs of head injury. The referee must also do that if, in their opinion, there is a likelihood of serious injury to a combatant's health if the contest were to continue. The combat sports inspector and the attending medical practitioner also have the power to direct the referee to stop and end the contest. It is critical that concussion and serious head injuries are identified to appropriately manage the contest and prevent further injury.

There are also provisions to improve the functioning of automatic medical suspensions. The purpose of automatic medical suspensions is to stop a person from engaging in combat sports following a suspected head injury or concussion. An unintended consequence of the way automatic medical suspensions were previously administered was that technical knockouts, even if unrelated to head injury, also triggered a suspension. The reforms clarify that, for the purposes of automatic suspensions, only technical knockouts resulting from a stoppage due to a suspected head injury are considered. This ensures that there is no hesitation from referees to stop a contest early when a combatant is outclassed because it will not result in an automatic suspension.

The industry recognises the need for greater education and objective criteria in the assessment of head injuries and concussions. The bill also includes provisions for the authority to mandate concussion education training for all registered persons. Additional higher level training is required for referees, attending medical practitioners and combat sports inspectors. The training focuses on identifying signs and symptoms of concussion and serious head injury, understanding when a contest should be stopped or suspended and how to conduct a modified head injury assessment. In New South Wales it is a requirement that a medical practitioner attends every combat sport contest covered by the legislation. The practitioners play a critical role in maintaining the safety of the contest. I thank them for the role they play in improving the safety for all participants.

The bill creates a new class of accreditation for attending medical practitioners. To be accredited, attending medical practitioners are required to complete advanced life support training or have demonstrated a similar competency. The training ensures that the practitioners can provide appropriate care to combatants in emergency situations. This Government, as evidenced by the reforms, is committed to enhancing the health and safety protections for combatants across New South Wales and welcomes the review of the Combat Sports Act 2013 and Combat Sports Regulation 2014 by the Combat Sports Authority of NSW. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (10:46):** I contribute to debate to speak in support of the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024. I thank Minister Kamper for bringing the bill before the House and his staff and the Office of Sport for the work they have done. I am a big Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] fan. I have been to many UFC fights in the United States, the Caribbean and other places. Not many people know, and looking

at me now people would never know, but in my younger years I did a lot of boxing with the PCYC. My mother met my stepfather, who was my boxing coach many years ago, and got married. I have followed boxing for years, and particularly UFC more recently. I am looking forward to the UFC fights later this year in October, I believe, when they come to Sydney.

The reforms in the bill simplify the regulatory framework, improve the match-making process and organisation of contests, and reduce red tape for industry and government. The bill is informed by some important principles. The Government wants to ensure that high standards of safety and integrity are upheld, minimise the complexity of the combat sports regulatory scheme, and reduce red tape and the administrative burden on the combat sports sector in New South Wales. The reforms came about after the Combat Sports Authority of NSW began a review of the Combat Sports Act 2013 and Combat Sports Regulation 2014 following the death of a combatant in 2015 and the subsequent coronial findings. Following extensive consultation with the combat sports industry, the authority made a number of recommendations for reform to the Government.

During consultation on the exposure draft of the bill, the Government received submissions that raised a number of issues from 12 individuals involved in the combat sports sector. Some matters raised will be considered as part of the remaking of the regulation and the rewriting of the authority rules in 2024. The consultation occurred with New South Wales Government agencies including NSW Treasury and the NSW Police Force. During the legislative drafting process the Office of Sport consulted on relevant provisions with the NSW Police Force, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and the Department of Communities and Justice.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner was also consulted regarding amendments to the public register. Supported by the Office of Sport, the authority consulted extensively with the industry to develop its recommendations to the Government. The consultation included discussions with promoters, peak bodies, officials, medical personnel and combatants. During the second phase of the review, the authority conducted surveys, held workshops with stakeholders and completed a survey of other regulators to develop the recommendations proposed to Government, and there was finally general agreement and support across the industry for the proposed reforms. The amendments in the bill result from those recommendations and those discussions.

The Government recognises the importance of combat sports in New South Wales. They are an important contributor to the visitor economy and also play an important role in promoting physical and mental health and as an avenue for youth at risk. For example, the NSW Police Force is an important partner through PCYC centres, and combat sports remain some of the most important activities at those facilities. When I grew up I was at the PCYC regularly—almost daily—and I learned to box. For a lot of my colleagues at the school I went to, none of whom went to university or came from wealthy backgrounds, the PCYC was a key part of our youth and a diversion program. A number of my colleagues from school went to prison or got in trouble with the police, but the PCYC saved a lot of kids.

A range of improvements can be made to modernise the Act and the regulation to reduce the administrative burden on the industry and the authority. Many of the amendments in the bill result directly from industry suggestions. One of the main amendments that will reduce the regulatory burden is the introduction of a public register of registered persons. The amendments will allow the authority to make public the details of all registered persons through a public register, including their name, registration class and registration status. For combatants, that will include a date up to which they are eligible to compete.

That means promoters and match-makers will not need to contact the authority to check the status of a combatant before filling in a fight card. Rather than sending an email and needing to wait, or needing to call during business hours, they will be able to build a fight card at any time. The current method of preparing a fight card is a laborious and time-consuming process for all involved. Making that information easily accessible will be a fundamental change in the lodgement of fight cards and regulation of combat sports. Promoters, match-makers and trainers will be able to quickly see whether combatants have satisfied all registration and medical clearance requirements and are eligible to compete. The register will aid in the match-making process, reduce red tape and streamline the fight card development process.

Other important reforms to simplify the registration system are the reduction of registration classes and simplification of the renewal process. The bill facilitates the reduction of registration classes. There are currently 72 registration classes, and the authority proposes that that be reduced to 38. That significant reduction in red tape allows more cross-code transferability of registration. There will also be changes to promoter and manager classes to allow corporations to be registered in those classes, which is more representative of the operations of many promoters and managers. That will result in the creation of individual and business classes.

The bill will also minimise regulatory impact on interstate and overseas participants to ensure New South Wales continues to be a preferred destination for high-profile contests. I mentioned that the UFC is coming from

overseas later this year. It is true that New South Wales punches above its weight class when it comes to world champions in combat sports. Kostya Tszyu's son Tim Tszyu is the current World Boxing Organization super welterweight world champion, and Alex Volkanovski is the current UFC featherweight world champion. Jai Opetaia is the current International Boxing Federation cruiserweight world champion, and Ebanie Bridges is the current IBF bantamweight world champion. It is quite incredible that so many world champions are from New South Wales. All those athletes have been trained here, some in the PCYC and some in other systems. They are shining examples of great athleticism and great fighters on the world stage.

In order for high-level contests to be held on home soil, the regulatory impact on interstate and overseas participants must be minimised to promote event attraction while maintaining safety standards. Major event attraction is critical to the success of New South Wales and the visitor economy. The reforms will ensure that New South Wales remains at the forefront of event attraction and that mega events such as the current partnership with the UFC will continue to provide social and economic benefits to the State. The Government is committed to minimising the regulatory burden on the combat sports sector. The reforms strike an important balance between the promotion and support of combat sports and ensuring that they are held as safely as possible. Wherever possible, the reforms reduce the regulatory burden. The Government is committed to cutting red tape, easing the regulatory burden and supporting the combat sports sector while maintaining rigorous safety standards. [*Extension of time*]

Will there be future legislative reform? Is it needed? There has been further discussion, and several reforms were suggested by the authority that have not been included in this round of amendments but are supported by the Government. They will be looked at and consulted on further. They include the consideration of match-making guidelines and a tiered, risk-based industry framework. Both those recommendations require further policy development and consultation and will be considered for future amendment. The Combat Sports Regulation 2014 is also due to be revised and perhaps remade. It is anticipated that that will occur in 2025, once the amendments to the regulation have commenced on proclamation following passage of the bill. The combat sports sector and the public will be consulted during the process of remaking the regulation.

I thank the Minister, who has joined me in the Chamber, for this great piece of legislation. I am so excited that we finally have a government in New South Wales that wants to see the combat sports industry and its athletes promoted and put forward so that the New South Wales public can enjoy it. A lot of young champions are emerging in Western Sydney, as we will see in boxing matches and in other combat sports like UFC. I cannot wait to go and watch those absolutely fantastic athletes. I also note that every year NSW Police Legacy conducts large charity boxing matches. Members who have attended those will know they are fantastic. It is not only police versus police; it is also lawyers versus police. When David Elliott was Minister, I always wanted to have a go at boxing against him. It never happened because of COVID, unfortunately.

**Mr Paul Scully:** He was too busy picking on 16-year-olds.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** Yes, he was too busy picking on 16-year-olds—I note that interjection. Anyway, it just shows the broad range of boxing and other combat sports and the key part they play in our community. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (10:58):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024. The bill provides improvements to the regulation of combat sports, including provisions to improve compliance and legislation. I thank the Minister for Sport for bringing the bill to the House. The valuable contribution that combat sports make to New South Wales is undeniable. Combat sports provide numerous benefits to participants who compete, to people who work in the industry and to the New South Wales economy through major event attraction and entertainment.

In the 2022-23 financial year the Combat Sports Authority issued 171 permits to hold combat sports contests. The bill makes amendments relating to the review conducted by the Combat Sports Authority of NSW of the Combat Sports Act 2013 and the Combat Sports Regulation 2014. In relation to the Combat Sports Act 2013, the bill provides clarity to definitions of a range of terms, including sparring and exhibition contests. This change ensures understanding around what does and does not constitute a combat sports contest. The bill will also redefine the way in which amateur and professional combat sports are identified.

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

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to guests in the gallery today. I acknowledge guests of the member for Orange from Parkes Shire Council: Mayor Neil Westcott, Deputy Mayor Margaret Applebee and Mr Kent Boyd. I also welcome guests of the member for Canterbury: Tim Grellman of Hall Payne lawyers and Adam Hall from the Health Services Union. It is standing point to welcome Adam Hall. I welcome guests of the member for Blue Mountains: Lola Devergnies, a work experience student from France, and Judy Murray. I acknowledge a guest of the member for Riverstone, Grace Dao, a work experience student from St John XXIII Catholic College at Stanhope. I also acknowledge a guest of the member for Leppington, Fin Maher.

I welcome guests of the member for Northern Tablelands: Mayor Sam Coupland and Deputy Mayor Todd Redwood from Armidale Regional Council, and Mayor Rob Banham, OAM, and Deputy Mayor Troy Arandale from Glen Innes Severn Council. I welcome guests of the member for Shellharbour from the Australian Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Recovery Alliance. Welcome to Australia's first Parliament. Finally, I acknowledge guests of the member for Lake Macquarie. I thank members for welcoming our guests.

*Members***REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I advise the House that today the Minister for Transport will answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast.

*Question Time***DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:05):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Yesterday the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance announced that New South Wales will be \$1.65 billion worse off next financial year because of a slashing of GST revenue allocated from the Albanese Labor Government. Treasury officials say the cuts could be between \$6 billion and \$10 billion over four years. Will the Minister rule out cuts to domestic violence services and delays to the Core and Cluster rollout to help make up the Government's budget shortfall?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (11:06):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. As he heard yesterday, the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance made an announcement about the impact of the Federal Government's decision in relation to GST on New South Wales. That further impacts the legacy that we inherited, with a \$178 billion deficit.

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

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We will have to make some very methodical decisions. I will not predicate what will happen in the budget. This is not the place.

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

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** This is not the place for us to debate what might or might not be in the budget. But I can certainly say that I—along with, I am sure, every single Minister on this side of the Chamber—will advocate very hard for everything in our portfolios, including needs for the future. As I said, I cannot predicate. I cannot argue about or consider what will occur in the next budget. But let us just go through what this Government has already done in the past 12 months with what we inherited from members opposite.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. The question was specifically in relation to the impact of the GST changes on domestic violence services. I ask that you draw the Minister—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Swansea and Government frontbench members will cease interjecting while I hear from the member for Port Macquarie on a point of order.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** I ask that you bring the Minister back to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister is answering the question directly. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I said, the Government inherited a huge hole in the budget, but it has still managed to extend funding for 12 community-based domestic and family violence programs to the tune of

\$4.2 million. Those opposite were going to cut that funding for last year. The Government has managed to extend funding for specialist workers for accompanied children and young people. That was \$6.5 million that those opposite were going to cut.

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

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Government has managed to provide \$10.5 million for the Sexual Violence Project Fund. [*Time expired.*]

#### STATE BUDGET AND GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:09):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the impact that the Federal Government's changes to GST distribution will have?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:10):** That is an important question for every member of the House. The short answer is that New South Wales is being gouged \$1.6 billion in a single year as a result of the Commonwealth Government's GST distribution, and \$2.5 billion is being sent to Victoria as a result of the GST relativities from the Commonwealth Grants Commission. That is the truth of the matter. That is now on the desk of the Federal Treasurer. This Government urges him not to sign it. We cannot have a situation where Australia's largest State has so much less money coming in for basic services like health and education, as well as for public transport and new infrastructure.

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will come to order or they will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This Government, unlike the previous Government, will have no regard to party affiliations and will put this State first. I remember in Western Australia, when ScoMo signed—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I am sure the Premier was rather enjoying getting a reaction, but I observe it is not that hard to get one. Opposition members will come to order. We need decorum in the Chamber. Such behaviour is not reasonable. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We all remember the ScoMo special deal for Western Australia. Did we hear anything from the Liberal Party when that was signed? Was there any objection to that secret deal that was signed by the former Premier and the former Treasurer? There was not a word. The chickens are coming home to roost. The former Prime Minister's agreement with Western Australia has fundamentally smashed New South Wales's share of GST payments. That is the legacy of the previous Government. We cannot have a situation where GST payments are reduced in Australia's largest State.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It has gone from 92¢ in the dollar—

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** It is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. Instead of delving into ancient history, why has the Premier not picked up the phone and talked to his Labor mate in Canberra? Why has he not picked up the phone?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I am going one better. We would not expect the Leader of the Opposition to take on ScoMo, would we? He got a clean ride.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will come to order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** At the end of the day, the previous Government did absolutely nothing about that horrific deal with Western Australia. It was signed into law by the former member for Cook, Scott Morrison. Who is the member for Cronulla, the overlapping electorate, who did nothing about it? It is the Leader of the Opposition. I am happy to stand corrected, but there is nothing on the public record. When it comes to infrastructure— [*Extension of time*]

New South Wales makes up 31 per cent of Australia's population and takes 37 per cent of inbound immigration as a result of the Commonwealth's immigration policies, yet it is projected that this State will get just 23 per cent of infrastructure co-payments from the Commonwealth Government over the next 10 years.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** At the end of the day, I am raising it in Parliament. This Government is taking on its own political party. What did those opposite do? This Government is calling out the unfairness of the distribution of GST revenue. In recognition of the previous Government, the Federal Government has to deal with the GST agreement signed with Western Australia. That was done in a cynical way by former Prime Minister Scott Morrison. I make it clear that this Government will work with the Commonwealth Government in any way to get its fair share of Commonwealth revenue. The State has a growing population and is dealing with a housing crisis.

Clearly, the GST distribution by the Commonwealth Grants Commission is not working. We cannot have a situation where the dark arts of that commission determine that New South Wales gets \$1.6 billion less and Victoria gets \$2.5 billion more. No-one can explain with a straight face how the commission came to that final calculation. New South Wales taxpayers send enormous amounts of money to the Commonwealth Government; the State deserves its fair share of resources from the Federal Government. We will not rest until we receive it.

### POLICE BUDGET

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (11:15):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister rule out cuts to the police budget as a result of the slashing of GST revenue by the Albanese Labor Government?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:16):** That is another waste of question time by the Opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The Minister is making introductory comments. If the Minister answers the question directly it will assist the Speaker.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** It would be remiss of me not to remind the House that the Government inherited a \$187 billion debt. It is important for members to know that the interest on that debt is \$7 billion. It is of further interest to every member of this House that the police budget and the TAFE budget equal that amount. Those opposite come into this Chamber and tell the Government how and where to spend money. I say to those opposite that the \$7 billion of interest was greater than the police budget and the TAFE budget combined.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Point of order—

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Those opposite come into this Chamber and think that it is okay—

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

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** It is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister was asked very clearly whether she would rule out cutting the police budget.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. The question can be dealt with quite specifically. The Minister has the call.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** We will see that when the budget is delivered. I will not be telling those opposite about it beforehand. But the police do a great job in New South Wales. Members on this side of the Chamber absolutely support the police. Those opposite constantly talk about cutting this and cutting that. They belong to the party of the greatest cuts of all time. Fancy coming into this Chamber and thinking that a debt of \$187 billion is irrelevant to the conversation. Of course it is not irrelevant to the conversation. It is significant. The former Government left us with an interest debt alone that is more than the police budget. Those opposite did not care about the police budget when they were in government. They kept on racking up debt on debt on debt. We were living on credit. The New South Wales police do a great job with the money that they get from the Government, and we back them 100 per cent. I suggest that those opposite support the police and stop bagging them.

### WESTINVEST FUND

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (11:19):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the current Government is making better, fairer choices about funding in Western Sydney and why a change in approach is necessary?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:19):** What a great question from the hardworking member for Cabramatta. The House will remember that a fortnight ago the Auditor-General released her report into the process around the distribution of the WestInvest grants. Before I make a few comments about that, let me say that, as a government, we accept all of her recommendations. It was quite a telling and interesting piece of reading. Just when you think that John Barilaro was the king of the dodgy, the former Treasurer and member for Hornsby says, "Just hold my

beer." The former Government set up a system of grants which—just remember, this was because of the privatisation of the toll road network.

**Mr Paul Scully:** The one that it promised wouldn't happen.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The one it promised would not happen. Exactly. I thank the planning Minister. The former Government set up a system where it basically followed no expert advice about where that money should be spent. Let me sum up the recommendations from the Auditor-General about what the former Government did when it came to these grants: "The design of the WestInvest funding program lacked integrity." Good job guys. That's great!

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That was despite directing Treasury and the Premier's Department to put significant resources into preparing guidelines and advice. What did they do? They just ignored it without any explanation or justification. To quote the Auditor-General again, "In most cases the advice was not followed by the then Treasurer." What is the point of spending public money on advice and then saying, "Don't worry about that advice." The former Government set up a steering committee and then ignored all of the projects that were recommended by it. Despite actually putting in process recommendations for projects, they then say, "Don't worry about this. We will just get political advisers in the Treasurer's office to determine where we're going to deliver grants in Western Sydney."

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They say to the people of Western Sydney, through some phony Have Your Say—people love those Have Your Says because, as you know, a Have Your Say is absolutely no way for people to have their say. The Government put up the Have Your Say and then ignored all of the feedback from the community. The Auditor-General even admitted that they basically binned the process from Have Your Say. *[Extension of time]*

Now we have no business cases. We have no analysis, no consultation. Just the Treasurer's office and the young Liberals working in the Treasurer's office deciding what goes into Western Sydney.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is not about—

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** We are now 3½ minutes into the answer and we are yet to hear anything about what the Government is doing in Western Sydney. The Deputy Premier is reflecting on what the former Government did. No mention of the Government's Local Small Commitments Allocation grants or their lack of process.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I think the member for Dubbo is a bit confused. This was a Government question to me about the WestInvest grants. This is not about the projects—

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will come to order or they will be removed from the Chamber.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The truth is that, when Opposition members are not targeting female Ministers, when female Ministers get up to answer questions they just interject. They continually prove to the people of New South Wales that they cannot deal with women in politics.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Point of order—

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

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** If the Deputy Premier has any respect for the office she holds and for this place, I ask her to withdraw that comment. She is deliberately inciting debate, impugning the character of every member of Parliament and degrading women. How dare you degrade the women in this place. Shame on you!

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Miranda will resume her seat. I will not entertain her expressing offence in that manner. Will the Deputy Premier withdraw the comment?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** No, I shall not. The truth is painful. At the end of the day we have a situation where there was no process followed. They put our triple-A credit rating at risk so young political operatives in the then Treasurer's office could make decisions—

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Matt Kean:** The Deputy Premier is misleading the House. Every decision the Liberal-Nationals took was with regard to the triple-A credit rating, and that remains the case. That rating is at risk because of the lack of decisions this Government is making.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hornsby will resume his seat. That is his opinion. It is not for me to adjudicate whether that is what the Deputy Premier has done.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The truth is that those are findings by the Auditor-General, and that cannot be escaped. It was a trend under the previous Government and it is one of the reasons Coalition members are in opposition now—bushfire grants, sports grants and WestInvest grants.

### PARKES HOSPITAL MATERNITY AND OBSTETRIC SERVICES

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (11:26):** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House and my guests in the gallery here today on the progress his Government has made to restore maternity and obstetric services to the Parkes Hospital, services critical to the health and wellbeing of mothers and their newborn babies in that community?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:26):** I thank the member for his question, and I welcome his guests to the gallery. The truth is that we have a long way to go when it comes to obstetric and maternity services at Parkes Hospital. Members may not know that the decision was made by the previous Government to take that service out of Parkes Hospital, and there has been a persistent campaign by the member for Orange to return it. At the moment maternity services are being offered at Orange and, like a lot of problems across the State's health system, particularly in regional communities, we need staffing. It really comes down to employing and recruiting obstetricians, nurses and allied healthcare workers right across regional New South Wales.

Since February, it is my understanding, NSW Health has recruited one extra nurse for maternity services at the Parkes Hospital. We have a long way to go. I am pleased to announce that the Government has brought a range of initiatives particularly for health care in the State—firstly, a study subsidy to encourage people to take on nursing as a profession in New South Wales; and, secondly, we have doubled the incentive for regional communities to encourage people, particularly from Sydney, to relocate to regional communities. That subsidy has lifted from \$10,000 to \$20,000. The New South Wales Government has abolished the wages cap in this State so we can genuinely negotiate with the workforce. Employees of NSW Health can have confidence in the knowledge that both wages and conditions can be genuinely negotiated for the first time in this State in 12 years.

I make this point to the member for Orange and his guests. The Government has had to deal with a situation where, in a cynical attempt to obstruct the public's understanding of the health system, the previous Treasurer cut 1,200 nurses from NSW Health—sorry, 1,112 not 1,200 nurses. No funding was allocated. This is important because it was repeatedly articulated by the previous Government that that surge workforce would be permanent, but no money was allocated to it. As a result of that change, we have provided the funding so the member for Orange, regional MPs and those who rely on the health system in this State—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —can have confidence that those nurses will work full time on behalf of the taxpayers of this State.

### LGBTIQ+ CONVERSION PRACTICES BAN

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (11:29):** My question is addressed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General update the House on the New South Wales Government's election commitment to ban LGBTIQ+ conversion practices?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:29):** I thank the member for Blue Mountains for her question and for her long advocacy in supporting a ban on LGBTQ+ conversion practices. I stand here today as a very proud Attorney General who will, immediately after question time concludes, introduce in this place a bill to ban conversion practices in New South Wales. This is stuff of the heart for the Labor Party, and I am sure that all members in this place—and if not all, the overwhelming majority of members—

would agree that conversion practices that proceed upon the basis that people in the LGBTQ+ community are broken and need fixing are unfounded and are not welcome in New South Wales in any way, shape or form. Conversion practices are dangerous and damaging and, as I said, we will be introducing a bill shortly to ban them.

We have gone through an exhaustive process in relation to the bill. We believe we have the balance right. It will work and it is in a form that we believe everyone can support. The bill defines what a conversion practice is, and it also provides examples of what a conversion practice is not. It is not the intention of the New South Wales Government to ban the teachings of a religious leader or expressions of religious belief through sermon. The bill reflects that strongly. The bill excludes certain conduct, including the expression of a religious belief or principle that is not directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity.

I want to be clear on this point to allay any doubt whatsoever. The Government's conversion practices ban will not apply to stating what relevant religious teachings are or what a religion says about a specific topic; general requirements in relation to religious orders or membership of a religious community; or private prayer, including personal prayer and reflection. The Government's ban will exclude certain conduct from the definition of a conversion practice. This includes providing genuine acceptance, support or understanding, or genuinely facilitating an individual's coping skills or identity exploration. Both of these kinds of conduct reflect parental rights to support children and meet their needs when exploring their identity and values.

We are also mindful that, as part of this exploration, young people may turn to their parents. The Government is very clear in providing an exclusion for parental discussions about sexual orientation or gender identity. This reflects the fact that the law has an important role to play in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children. For instance, the law sets standards through the child protection framework, which will also continue to apply. Additionally, the Government is not seeking to intervene in the ethical or professional codes and standards set by existing regulation. [*Extension of time*]

Moreover, the ban on conversion practices is not intended to outlaw necessary ethical medical practices that occur in accordance with established regulatory codes and guidelines. The bill is a graduated response to LGBTQ+ conversion practices. First, it will be educative. The foundation of the reform, and where we hope the greatest impact will be felt, is in the message that it sends. The Government's ban will set out carefully considered definitions and exclusions. Secondly, it provides for a non-criminal response, creating a civil complaints scheme that aligns with the architecture in place for complaints of discrimination and vilification. Thirdly, the Government will provide a targeted criminal law response for the most serious conversion practices, where people have suffered substantial harm.

In developing the form of prohibition on conversion, the Government has proceeded respectfully and methodically, and has consulted widely. A working group was formed under the auspices of the Department of Communities and Justice involving representatives from the NSW Ministry of Health, the Cabinet Office, the Department of Education, Multicultural NSW and Anti-Discrimination NSW. Beginning in August 2023, the consultation was led by a taskforce. It consulted over 150 stakeholders with not just a range but a polarity of views. That discussion proceeded most respectfully and in good faith. I thank the member for Sydney for the role that he has played in this consultation. It was not easy, but we have come up with a bill—with a new law—that we believe everyone in this place and in the other place can accept as being struck in good faith, following consultation that was wide and genuine. Shortly, I will commend the bill to the House, and I hope that we receive universal support for it. The community deserves nothing less.

#### STATE BUDGET AND GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (11:35):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister rule out any cuts or delays to the rollout of the Sydney Metro West as a result of the slashing of GST revenue from the Albanese Labor Government?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** How did the strategy meeting go this morning? One thought.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Cessnock will cease his disorderly conduct. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:35):** It is interesting that, yet again, those opposite, while they are unable to preselect any women, are only able to ask questions of female Ministers. I am more than happy to answer the member's question, because we are not planning any cuts. We are going to work methodically and calmly through the decision that we have before us. As the Premier has made very clear, we will not be treating this in a partisan way. We will be fighting for the services that we need to deliver for the people of New South Wales. Our approach will not be partisan in taking it up to the Commonwealth and making sure that we get the money we need, and we will not be discriminatory in taking the advice, and indeed the commentary, provided by those opposite in the past.

In fact, the former Treasurer and the former Premier made it very clear that the dark, magical mystery around Commonwealth grants decisions is broken. It does not work, and the fact is that our State is the economic powerhouse of our country. We need to deliver essential services for the people of New South Wales, and we will continue to do that. We need to make sure that our frontline workers and our passengers have the services that they need—

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Point of order—

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** —and we will not be making cuts to projects like Metro West.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hawkesbury rises on a point of order.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hawkesbury will resume her seat. The member cited Standing Order 129 so I can rule on the point of order. I listened very carefully to the Minister, and she met the relevance threshold very early in her answer.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Mr Speaker, there are two parts to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** A question may not contain two parts. The member for Hawkesbury will resume her seat.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** The first part was delays—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hawkesbury will resume her seat or she will be directed to leave the Chamber. I have made my ruling. The Minister met the relevance bar under Standing Order 129 very early in her answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** We will not be asking our frontline workers or our passengers to suffer because of a decision by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Not only will we be continuing with projects that are critical to delivering essential services across our city and across our State, but also we are building projects that those opposite could not. We are building projects like the south-west metro, that they were going to cancel. We will be delivering Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2, because we will not build half a railway, and we will make sure that there are buses when planes land at the Western Sydney airport, delivering services that people need.

#### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (11:38):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister please update the House on the action the New South Wales Government is taking to tackle the housing crisis in our State?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:39):** I thank the member for Heathcote for her question. She has been in my ear about the need to make sure that young families in and around the northern Illawarra and Sutherland areas have access to homes long into the future. She does not want to lose good people from that part of the world—people who are providing services, keeping the economy running and making sure that kids who grew up in the area can stay in the area. It is a simple but important goal. We have announced major reforms to drive the delivery of more well-located, well-designed and well-built homes across Greater Sydney and all of New South Wales.

In that context, I draw the attention of the House to a statement that was made as recently as yesterday afternoon. The member for Wairoonga said, "We want more housing and we want more affordable housing. Like many of us, I've got two kids in their twenties who are renters and we all want to help their generation get a home." It is a bit of an about-face from the usual, isn't it? Usually, he does not like anyone getting a home, except him. That was on the back of the Leader of the Opposition saying, "Absolutely we want to see more houses built in New South Wales, and more apartments as well." That is what we are doing. I am glad the Opposition is getting on board with our steps to confront the housing crisis, because this Government is getting on with the job of delivering and making sure that the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and relatives of every person in this Chamber has access to affordable housing.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** We are working with councils to make sure that that happens. Those opposite have been fixated on a myth that there has been no consultation.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I have met with dozens of mayors. There have been 40-odd meetings between the department secretary and councils, and we are already seeing positive signs that our other reforms to the planning system are starting to deliver more affordable housing. It is housing that the likes of Adam Hall's members in the Health Services Union need to make sure that our hospitals have cleaners, physiotherapists and allied health services. In less than three months, we have had requests for 15 different projects to utilise the affordable housing bonuses and provide affordable housing where there otherwise would have been none. We already have those requests in the system, and it is all because of the affordable housing bonus scheme that we put in place on 15 December last year. I am happy to say that if those projects are approved—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Oatley will come to order. The member should be careful about calling out in a vacuum; we all hear him. The member for Kiama will come to order.

**Ms Maryanne Stuart:** Mr Speaker, I seek additional information.

**The SPEAKER:** A two-minute extension is granted. The member for Murray will come to order. The member for Oatley will come to order.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I note the member for Oatley flip-flops all over the place when it comes to housing.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** He's the Nadia Comăneci of the housing debate. He has been on all sides and been on none and tangled himself up on the way through. Of the 15 projects for which we have already issued secretary's environmental assessment requirements, I am pleased to report that they will deliver more than 900 new affordable homes in addition to the around 3,000 new homes that will be delivered to the market. That means more homes in places like Crows Nest, Rhodes, Macquarie Park and Dapto, which the member for Shellharbour will appreciate.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** We want to see more homes delivered in New South Wales. It is a simple prospect. We want to make sure that there are more diverse housing types. Because if we have more homes and more diverse housing types, then the downward pressure on prices and rents continues to push them down. That is what people want. We are not making this up; it is not just us saying it. Economists from the Grattan Institute said, "If we had been allowed to build more houses where people really want to live and work, that would have led to lower prices and rents."

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** My favourite comment in this debate was from 6 August 2014, when one member reported to this place, "The relevant intellectuals—the economists—will tell you that the way you increase housing affordability is not to artificially inflate demand but to increase supply, and that is what this Government's policies aim to do." Who said that? It was none other than the Leader of the Opposition—the man vying with the member for Wahroonga and the member for Hornsby for New South Wales nimby-in-chief—backing in housing supply and exactly the sorts of policies that this Government is introducing, which will deliver more affordable homes, more diverse homes and more homes for young people.

#### BAIL LAWS

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (11:44):** My question is directed to the Attorney General. Will the new bail laws cover a 17-year-old accused of sexual assault while on bail for another sexual assault charge?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:45):** I am probably entitled to assume from that question that the Opposition is not going to support the bail laws. A former Attorney General is sitting opposite, as well as the shadow Attorney General, who is a senior counsel. They already know the answer to that question. The answer to the question is in the bill. Look at them all feigning excitement on that side of the House. I have never seen such faux interest in a matter.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 74. The Minister is being very quarrelsome. He should direct his remarks through the Chair in a more reasonable manner. It is a very simple question.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I am more than happy to repeat what I said yesterday in this place when I gave the second reading speech on the bill. Members opposite are pretending to have selective amnesia, which they are cloaking in politics. The answer is that the bill applies to two crimes that are in the Act and to no others. The

provisions in relation to bail apply to, as they know, relevant offences. They are defined as a motor theft offence and a serious break-and-enter offence.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** They are the crimes that are dealt with. The Leader of the Opposition can smile all he wants. On this question, he is under more challenge than anyone in this House because former Minister Marshall will make sure that the Opposition is not off the hook on this legislation. If Opposition members want to pretend that this is a new issue, then I will take them to an article from 4 September 2014, which states, "NSW's new crime capital: Moree". Country towns in New South Wales are in the midst of a 'tsunami' of crime and have been left behind in the unprecedented drop in all major offences". Don't you dare pretend that this is a new phenomenon. You did nothing about this for 12 years and we have now moved to clean up your mess.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will come to order. The member for Wahroonga will come to order. I call the member for Myall Lakes to order for the first time.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** This legislation is not perfect.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** The answer is no, and you should be ashamed.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Don't you put words in my mouth, my friend. I dare the National Party to vote against this legislation.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie will resume her seat. I direct the member for Dubbo to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of 10 minutes.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Dubbo left the Chamber at 11:48.]

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** If you want to leave the tranche of pastoral care that we are going to send to Moree and regional New South Wales, go on, make my day. Vote against this bill.

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

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:48):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister outline what the Government is doing to make our train services more reliable and to increase patronage on the network?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:49):** I thank the member for Parramatta for her advocacy for better reliable public transport for her residents and for her interest across the board. This Government cares about not only public transport but also making it reliable, to bring people back to it, because we know that that is how we will make our city work more efficiently, help families with the cost of living, remove emissions from our environment and be a more productive community and economy. That is what we want to achieve. We have taken a really serious and methodical approach to improving the reliability and resilience of our rail network. Our review provided us with a range of recommendations, which we are delivering on methodically, and we are seeing really good progress. On-time running is better. The average on-time running on Sydney trains has been at 90 per cent over the past six months. In September it was 93 per cent; October, 91; November, 90; December, 91; and January, 93. Contrast that to the six-month average before the change of government: It was 85 per cent.

We have made good progress, but there is always more to do. We all know that this is a big, complex, old system. It carries over a million passengers each and every day. There will always be events beyond our control, such as medical emergencies and severe weather events, but we are taking action to address the things within our control. Our system carried hundreds of thousands of people during the Taylor Swift concerts. It was a great success. In fact, 196,000 people jumped on trains and 43,000 on special-event buses. That is an extra 554 train services and an extra 720 major bus services—a phenomenal achievement by our transport teams. I congratulate them.

But we are talking about much more than the Tay Tay express here. More and more people are getting back on our rail network. In a vote of confidence in public transport under the Minns Labor Government, patronage in February was up 15 per cent. That does not even count the people going to Taylor Swift. That is a vote of confidence because our investment in that gradual improvement is seeing more trains turn up on time more often. Our Rail Repair Plan is expected to reach its target of fixing 1,916 high-priority defects three months ahead of schedule. [Extension of time]

It is having a really positive impact on reliability. Passengers are losing less time on the train network. They are waiting less due to fewer delays: Lost time for passengers is down 48 per cent compared to last financial year. There are fewer infrastructure faults and failures on the network. They are down 32 per cent compared to last financial year. That means fewer delays for passengers across our network. Why do we have to invest in our network? We have to because the former Government, in particular under former transport Minister Andrew Constance in 2017, let our network run ragged. Things that should have been renewed, fixed or replaced just were not. Workers could not get onto our tracks to do the needed maintenance.

Only last week the shadow Minister for Transport made herself unintentionally clear. What was her point of reference for the current state of the network? It was reference to the worst on-time running since the pandemic. That was the former Government's management of the rail network. Those opposite do not even know the low-water mark that passengers were experiencing under their management. It demonstrates how little they know and how little they care about public transport. On this side of the House, we are delivering more reliable services, more often. We know that this will take time but that it is an investment the people of New South Wales need. We are getting on with the job of fixing it because ultimately we all benefit when people can use public transport more often.

**The SPEAKER:** I note the decorum being displayed in the Chamber. That is how question time should be. I am sure it will continue after the question from the member for Wahroonga.

### BAIL LAWS

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (11:53):** My question is directed to the Attorney General. If a 16-year-old breaks into a pensioner's house and a 17-year-old friend stands outside the property, films the break and enter, and posts it on social media, will either of them be committing an offence under the Attorney General's new performance crime laws?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: The question is out of order. It infringes Standing Order 128 (3). It asks for the expression of an opinion from the Attorney General, which is prohibited under the standing orders.

**The SPEAKER:** I need to give the matter some thought. It involves a hypothetical situation. I will not rule the question out of order but consider the point of order and defer my ruling until after the next question.

### CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (11:55):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Families and Communities. Will the Minister update the House on action taken by the Government to get vulnerable children in the child protection system out of hotels and motels?

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (11:56):** I thank the mighty member for Wallsend for her question on this important issue, about some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our State. When we came to government, I was genuinely shocked to find a child protection system that had in many ways normalised the placement of vulnerable children and young people in crisis accommodation, like hotels, motels and caravan parks. They were being supervised 24/7 by shiftworkers, instead of being placed in loving homes with foster carers. I am talking about children and young people who have been found to be in need of the care of the State, who are likely to have experienced significant trauma, abuse or neglect in their own homes, who are ending up in hotel rooms with unknown shiftworkers, sometimes for longer than a year. At its peak, 506 children, some as young as one year old, were in these scenarios. Unfortunately, that is the system we inherited.

I cannot remember a single time in my nine years in this place when the former Government updated the House on this horrific situation—never in this place. As I told the House last year, when it comes to the challenges facing the child protection system in our State, I will be open and honest with the public, shed light on these appalling situations and try to do everything I can to turn the situation around. I am pleased to report to the House today that this Government is already making a difference, but there is still a long way to go. Since November last year, we have moved 71 children out of high-cost emergency arrangements and into more appropriate, supportive, caring environments. In four months, we have seen a 42 per cent reduction in the worst type of emergency arrangements—alternative care arrangements—where the workers need only a Working with Children Check and a large majority of the providers are for-profit companies. To be clear, they are companies profiting from vulnerable children in terrible situations.

Safely placing 71 children elsewhere is an early, promising result, but we know that so much more needs to be done. Right now 430 children are still in high-cost emergency arrangements across the State. I have made clear to the department and to the sector that high-cost emergency arrangements are not appropriate, and the New South Wales Government will be doing everything it can to find stable, loving homes for these children.

I have met with young people who have been placed in these arrangements, and the stories are shocking. They speak of the isolation, the rotating shiftworkers, where the children have no idea of who will be looking after them the next day, and the length of time they can be stuck in these arrangements, while a for-profit company is being paid millions of dollars for their so-called care. [*Extension of time*]

Shockingly, the State has spent more than half a billion dollars on those arrangements in the past two years alone. It is causing the child protection system to spiral out of control. The arrangements were never meant to be part of our child protection system yet they became entrenched under the former Government. I am pleased that the Children's Guardian is currently looking into the arrangements. I am pleased that the Advocate for Children and Young People is conducting a special inquiry. For the first time in a long time, this Government is shining a light on those children and I welcome the scrutiny that has been lacking for so long.

Another reason the Government is committed to significant structural reform of the child protection system, including out-of-home care, is that the current system is not working. It is driving vulnerable children into hotels and motels instead of safe and loving homes. We have to do things differently and this Government is already doing that. I acknowledge the incredible work of the dedicated caseworkers who have been driving the change since November last year. It has been an enormous task and there is a long road ahead, but this Government is changing lives already. I recognise all the district staff and caseworkers in Community Service Centres across the State who have helped to start turning the situation around.

This Government values our frontline essential workers like child protection caseworkers because their work is some of the most complex and difficult work I have ever seen. Ultimately, they are the ones keeping children safe and keeping families safely together. That is our goal as a government and we are committed to getting those vulnerable children out of hotels and motels and into safe and loving homes.

### BAIL LAWS

**The SPEAKER:** I intend to return to the question asked earlier by the member for Wahroonga, but first I call the Leader of the House.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Mr Speaker, before you rule on my earlier point of order, I draw your attention to rulings of Speaker Ellis and Speaker Torbay on the matter. On 23 August 1967, Speaker Ellis ruled on then Standing Order 137, which is in a similar form to current Standing Order 128. He said:

A question should not be a hypothetical one or ask for confirmation of rumours or of press reports and a Minister should not be asked for an expression of opinion or for a legal opinion.

On 2 April 2009 Speaker Torbay referred to Standing Order 128, and explicitly stated:

... questions should not contain argument, inference, imputation, epithets, ironical expressions, expressions of opinion, or hypothetical matter.

He then reminded all members that:

... standing order 128 also states that questions cannot be debated and, therefore, should not be framed so as to provoke debate, which happens, for example, when an opinion or a provocative statement is offered up in the text of a question

It is clear from those previous rulings that the question is out of order and cannot be asked in the form in which the member for Wahroonga asked it. He is more than capable of rephrasing the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order while I rule on the point of order taken by the Leader of the House. Speakers Ellis and Torbay were very considered Speakers and I hope that I am viewed in the same way when people reflect on my rulings. I concur with the position that was expressed by the Leader of the House. I had arrived at the same conclusion, but it is good to hear further argument with substance. I have spoken to the Manager of Opposition Business about my decision, and I believe he has re-crafted his question to comply with the standing order.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:03):** My question is directed to the Attorney General. Is it his intention that the new performance crime laws will make it an offence for a 17-year-old to stand outside a pensioner's home and film and post on social media a 16-year-old breaking into the house?

**The SPEAKER:** The question is in order.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:04):** My intention is embodied in the legislation. I answer the question directly by saying that a person, the offender, commits a performance crime offence against the section if:

- (a) the person's act or omission constitutes a motor theft offence or breaking and entering offence, and
- (b) the person disseminates material to advertise the person's involvement in the offence, or the act or omission constituting the offence.

That is the direct answer. The Opposition has now decided to defy a way of operating in this place that this Government laid down in opposition in respect of serious law and order matters. As shadow Attorney General, I decided—as did the former member for Liverpool, Paul Lynch, before me—that on serious community safety issues we would work with the Government. What we saw was groundbreaking legislation such as consent laws and coercive control laws. We worked with former Attorney General Speakman to make sure the legislation that was brought to the House was in the best shape it could be, notwithstanding that people in various groups across the State were in opposition to it. Today the tactics committee of the Opposition has looked not at what the bill is and what it brings to the people of Moree and western and regional New South Wales but at what the bill is not. I say to the former Attorney General, and now Leader of the Opposition, that the same experts that served you so well, my friend—the very same advisers—

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I am sorry, Mr Speaker, I addressed the member directly.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney General will resume his seat.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I refer to standing orders 74 and 129. The Attorney General is being directly quarrelsome and pointing across the Chamber. He is also not answering the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wahroonga will resume his seat. The Attorney General will continue his answer. There is no point of order.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I ask the member for Wahroonga to seek additional information, please. Come on, you squib, get me some more time. Go on, do it.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney General cannot conduct debate or solicit in that manner. The Attorney General will resume his seat. I do not grant an extension of time.

[*Interruption*]

Order! Members will come to order. The member for Port Macquarie will come to order.

#### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (12:08):** My question is directed to the Premier. In Saturday's edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald* the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces said that Labor's housing reforms are needed because Sydney is one of the least affordable cities on the planet. The article also noted that, on account of the reforms, a property developer is offering some home owners in Glebe a "significant premium to the current market value" should they wish to sell. How much does the Government expect property prices will decrease by as a result of the reforms?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:08):** I thank the member for Balmain for her question. I cannot give an exact number because there are many inputs into the price of housing. It is the biggest private market in the entire country. But we can look at other jurisdictions around the world such as Auckland. Housing stock there was increased by 26,000 dwellings, which is the equivalent of 100,000 houses for Sydney that we are attempting to do over a five-year period and increase particularly in mid-range housing. It resulted in rents being 14 per cent to 35 per cent lower than they would have ordinarily been for Auckland, which used to be the most expensive jurisdiction in New Zealand. It was overtaken by Wellington. The vast bulk of academic literature in relation to housing supply and demand makes it very clear that housing supply is directly related to the costs of both the purchase price and the rent paid by consumers in the private market. But do not take my word for it. Former Reserve Bank of Australia economist Peter Tulip stated:

There is overwhelming evidence that the balance between supply and demand drives housing costs.

Assertions to the contrary are as credible as climate-deniers, anti-vaxxers and tobacco companies.

Stephen Kennedy from the Commonwealth Treasury said:

... if supply is constrained by unnecessary and/or complex regulation, the cost of this will be higher house prices. Higher house prices reduce the capacity of some households to purchase other goods ...

The NSW Productivity Commission stated:

New South Wales' low rate of housing construction goes a long way to explaining why renting or buying a home costs more here than in the rest of the country.

Justin Wolfers, a professor of economics at the University of Michigan, stated:

People seem to understand how the forces of supply and demand operate, except when it comes to housing.

The Grattan Institute, the NSW Treasury, the Commonwealth Reserve Bank, the Productivity Commission—every reputable economist and land economist in Australia recognises the correlation between housing supply and eventual price. In fairness to the member for Balmain, there is an exception to that rule, and that is the member for Wahroonga. He stated:

... by bulldozing houses to create expensive apartments, our local housing supply will decrease making house prices even higher.

[*Extension of time*]

The member for Wahroonga says that we need a housing policy that puts neighbourhoods and communities before property developers. All he needs is a second last name and a ponytail and he can join The Greens. He is wearing sandals in the Parliament today. What happened to the party of free enterprise? He has been bashing the planning Minister for meeting with builders and developers in New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** When we were in opposition, members opposite would say, "Look at the cranes in the sky". Now, any member who meets with a property developer or a builder has a dirtiness associated with them in some way. Members can look to the vast majority of economists and academics in New South Wales, who clearly and repeatedly recognise the connection between supply and price, or they can follow the member for Wahroonga. They cannot do both. But there is another expert whom I know the member for Balmain has been quoting. His name is Dr Cameron Murray and he agrees with the member for Wahroonga. He has written a paper called *The Great Housing Hijack*.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He says that we have to end immigration—wind it all the way down to zero—and that somehow supply affects prices, but he also tweeted:

When will the herd turn on vaccine risks?

I predict that by Christmas the mainstream view on vaccines will be quite different ...

**Ms Kobi Shetty:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** To the point of order: It is directly relevant.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** On one hand is an academic who is also an anti-vaxxer, as well as the member for Wahroonga; on the other hand are the Reserve Bank, the Productivity Commission, the Grattan Institute and every reputable economist in this country, who support the idea of supply. The evidence is in.

#### NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE GRAND FINAL

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (12:13):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Sport. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government has secured the NRL grand final much earlier than the former Government did in previous years?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:14):** I thank the member for Prospect for his question. He is a big fan of sport and a mad Parramatta supporter, from what I understand.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** He was leaping out of his chair when he heard the fantastic news. In fact, I heard he was so excited that he nearly pulled a hamstring.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I am sure, like many in the House, he was not expecting an announcement so soon. The former Government tended to drag its feet on those kinds of issues. To borrow some words from the great Niki Savva, members opposite allowed a problem to become a crisis before mishandling it. They did it with housing, health and education, and then they did it with the NRL grand final, but we have got things back on track. John Graham and I make a great team—no mucking around, no jogging on the spot. We have already lifted the Liberal Party's cap on concerts in Sydney, generating up to \$210 million in revenue for Venues NSW.

**The SPEAKER:** The time for questions has expired.

*Documents***OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS****Reports**

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** In accordance with section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, I table the report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled *Bus Safety Investigation Report: Bus Fire MO9994 – Green Valley, 8 August 2022*, dated March 2024.

*Business of the House***BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 general business order of the day (for bills) No. 1, Minerals Legislation Amendment (Offshore Drilling and Associated Infrastructure Prohibition) Bill 2023, will lapse tomorrow.

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

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the moving forthwith of a motion, of which notice has not been given, amending the resolution of the House dated 28 November 2023 concerning the Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQ+) Bill 2023.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***EQUALITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (LGBTIQ+) BILL 2023****Referral**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:18):** I move:

That the resolution of the House of 28 November 2023 concerning the Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQ+) Bill 2023 be amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraphs (2) to (4) and inserting instead:
  - (2) Extend the lapsing date for the Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQ+) Bill 2023 until 16 August 2024.
  - (3) Refer the Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTIQ+) Bill 2023 forthwith to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services for consideration and report, for the purpose of inquiring into:
    - (a) the provisions of the bill;
    - (b) operational issues for government agencies raised by the bill; and
    - (c) additional ways of improving the safety and wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community.
  - (4) The committee to report by 3 June 2024.
  - (5) The resumption of the debate on the second reading of the bill be restored to its current position on the *Business Paper* on the tabling of the committee report.

The Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services has portfolio responsibility for Education and Early Learning; Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education; Families and Communities; Health; Mental Health; Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; Youth; Customer Services and Digital Government; and Women. My proposed bill amends legislation relating to, and deals with, all those portfolios. The community services committee is the appropriate committee to deal with this matter.

In addition to looking at the provisions of the bill, the referral also asks the committee to look at additional ways of improving the safety and wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community. I am sure all members would be aware of the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes and also the recent alleged tragic murders of Jesse Baird and Luke Davies. Surely we need to do better to make our State safer for the LGBTIQ+ community, and this referral would empower the community services committee to deal with recommendations in that regard. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Personal Explanation***AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (12:20):** By leave: I give a personal explanation in response to the Deputy Premier's Dixer. I inform the House that I have written to the Auditor-General calling out her flawed process, asking that her faulty report be withdrawn and seeking that my letter be published on the Audit Office website. I also trust that the Auditor-General will prove the shocking revelations that the new Government has been breaching the funding rules. I await a response from the Auditor-General as to how she considers she has discharged her responsibility to provide procedural fairness, how she will correct the many inaccuracies in her report and how she will investigate the Minns Government's breach of the funding rules.

*Business of the House***SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: BILLS**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the moving forthwith of a motion, of which notice has not been given, amending the resolution of the House dated 22 November 2023 concerning the Environment and Planning Minerals Legislation Amendment (Offshore Drilling and Associated Infrastructure Prohibition) Bill.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That the resolution of the House of 22 November 2023 concerning the Environment and Planning Minerals Legislation Amendment (Offshore Drilling and Associated Infrastructure Prohibition) Bill 2023 be amended by omitting paragraph (2) and inserting instead:

(2) At 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday 13 March 2024, permit the resumption of the adjourned second reading debate on the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023.'

**Motion agreed to.**

**CONVERSION PRACTICES BAN BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I welcome to the public gallery Anthony Venn-Brown, a long-term advocate for the prohibition on conversion practices, whose birthday is today. I also welcome Jeremy Smith, Anna Brown and Ghassan Kassisieh from Equality Australia.

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:24):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I also acknowledge the presence in the gallery of victim-survivors and their advocates. This is an historic day. The Government is pleased to introduce the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. Prior to the election, the New South Wales Government promised to ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices. This bill gives effect to that commitment. Conversion practices, which can include so-called "conversion therapy" and suppression practices, are founded on the idea that LGBTQ+ people are broken or wrong and in need of fixing. There is nothing wrong with LGBTQ+ people. They do not need to be fixed. Conversion practices are dangerous and damaging and there is no room for them in New South Wales.

Conversion practices may take a number of forms and can occur in a variety of settings, including in religious and other community settings. They can include practices directed to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, such as through (a) behavioural and "talking therapies"; (b) some religious-based practices, including conferences, spiritual deliverance practices or exorcisms; and (c) aversion therapies, such as electroshock therapy, pharmaceuticals used to induce nausea or even the use of physical violence. However, the shared foundation of all of these practices is the view that LGBTQ+ identities are undesirable, and that people can and should change or suppress such identities to conform with heterosexuality and the gender that corresponds with their sex designated at birth.

The research and evidence paint a clear picture of the harms that conversion practices can cause. Victim-survivors of conversion practices have been found to have poor mental health, including depression,

anxiety, poor self-esteem, heightened suicidal ideation and a higher number of suicide attempts in comparison with other LGBTQ+ people. In particular, people with lived experience have highlighted how pervasive and insidious these underlying beliefs can be. In many cases, the pressures to conform and internalising the view that they are wrong or broken creates ongoing trauma and suffering.

The Government recognised from the outset that this is complex and delicate law reform. It is important to balance prohibiting these harmful and objectionable practices while also respecting civil liberties such as the freedom of expression and the freedom of religious belief. That is why a part of the election commitment was the establishment of a joint working group, led by the Department of Communities and Justice and the NSW Ministry of Health, to develop these laws. That working group was also charged with undertaking consultation with survivors and other stakeholders.

A targeted, confidential consultation was undertaken in August 2023. Almost 150 organisations were engaged, with 134 submissions received and eight targeted stakeholder sector round tables held. Stakeholders engaged included people with lived experience of conversion practices; LGBTQ+ advocacy groups; faith-based organisations; parental rights groups; academics and researchers; gender advocacy organisations; and legal, government, education and health stakeholders. The confidentiality of the process sought to facilitate frank discussion and contributions from stakeholders to inform the Government's development of legislation. Since then, we have undergone a detailed and iterative process in the development of the drafting of the legislation, consulting further with key stakeholders on the core elements of the bill that we have brought forward.

I take this opportunity to thank all those who engaged with this consultation and shared their views, insights and expertise. I especially thank people with lived experience of conversion practices for their bravery and courage in sharing their stories and experiences. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to meet with some of those individuals and to hear from them directly. I also recognise the significant contribution of the member for Sydney, Mr Alex Greenwich, who has been a tireless and strong advocate for the LGBTQ+ community and, in particular, for people with lived experience of conversion practices. I thank the member for Sydney for his ongoing, collaborative and valued engagement with the Government on this important bill.

The consultation process made it clear that there are strong, polarised views about the scope and nature of this reform. In many cases, these views or positions were diametrically opposed. This bill represents a carefully balanced approach, which takes into account those views. The Government has been further assisted in drafting the bill by analysing the drafting and operation of legislation in place in other jurisdictions, namely Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and New Zealand. The bill introduced by the member for Sydney was also considered in this process.

It is important to note that the bill does not replicate any one existing model in another jurisdiction. It is a New South Wales Government bill, and it is fit for purpose for New South Wales. It takes from those other models what the Government considers to be the most appropriate elements for New South Wales and, in some cases, it charts a different path altogether. The end result is a bill that provides for a graduated response to LGBTQ+ conversion practices. Firstly, it is educative. The foundation of this reform, and where we hope the greatest impact will be felt, is in the message that it sends—that LGBTQ+ people do not need to change or suppress their identities and that conversion practices are unacceptable. Part 2 of the bill sets out carefully considered definitions and exclusions, which go to the practices that will be captured by the legislative prohibition.

Secondly, it provides for a non-criminal response. The bill creates a civil complaints scheme in part 4, which aligns with the architecture in place for complaints of discrimination and vilification. This pathway allows victims of conversion practices to make complaints to the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board for conciliation. In certain circumstances, complaints may also progress to determination by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Finally, part 3 of the bill provides a targeted criminal law response for the most serious conversion practices where people have suffered substantial harm. This bill is an opportunity for all members in this place to send a clear message that LGBTQ+ people are not broken. They do not need fixing, because there is nothing wrong with them. LGBTQ+ people deserve to be protected from the kinds of practices that seek to change or suppress a core part of their personal identity.

I turn to the detail of the bill. Clause 1 sets out the name of the Act, and clause 2 provides that the bill commences 12 months after assent. The bill has a delayed commencement period because this is a complex reform and time is needed for implementation. This includes time for training and education of relevant agencies and for community awareness-raising. This approach reflects what we heard in consultation. We cannot rush the implementation of this reform, and we need time to do the work to make it operational. But we also need to ensure that there is no undue delay. A fixed 12-month delayed commencement period provides certainty and is a sign of the Government's commitment that this reform will not be delayed any more than is necessary to enable successful implementation.

Clause 3 (1) of the bill sets out the definition of conversion practices. This definition has three limbs. The first limb is that the conduct must be a practice, treatment or sustained effort. These three terms are intended to take on their ordinary meaning. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines "practice" as a "habitual or customary performance". This suggests acts or omissions with some degree of formality or with an established form. It can apply to one-off instances of conduct. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines "treatment" as "the application of medicines, surgery, psychotherapy et cetera to a patient to cure a disease or condition". This term can apply to single instances of conduct and specifically highlights the purported therapeutic function of some conversion practices.

"Sustained effort", in this context, means actions or omissions that are kept up or kept going over time, drawing on the *Macquarie Dictionary* meaning of "sustained". This term captures more informal conduct that might not be a practice but occurs over time in a linked or continuous fashion. The conduct in question only needs to fall within one of these categories, acknowledging that, depending on the facts of the case, the conduct in question may satisfy multiple categories. People with lived experience of conversion practices describe being exposed to a plethora of practices as part of the efforts to have them change or suppress their LGBTQ+ identity. These includes faith-based practices, such as exorcisms and spiritual deliverance practices, and non-faith-specific practices, such as talking or behavioural therapies.

The first limb of the definition is sufficiently flexible to cover the range of practices that may be involved. The second limb is that the practice, treatment or sustained effort must be directed to a person on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These terms are defined in the dictionary in schedule 2. "Sexual orientation" is defined as a person's sexual orientation towards individuals of the same sex, of a different sex or of both. It captures a person's capacity for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction. It is drawn from existing legislation, including section 93Z of the Crimes Act 1900 and section 4 of the Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984. The definition also notes that "sexual orientation" includes having a lack of sexual attraction to any individual of any sex. This definition recognises that sexual orientation is on a spectrum, and it includes heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality and asexuality. This statutory definition is intended to be inclusive of this range of sexual orientations.

"Gender identity" is defined as the gender-related identity of an individual, which may or may not correspond with sex designated at birth. As with sexual orientation, the definition of gender identity recognises that gender identities may occur on a spectrum. This second limb means that the relevant conduct needs to be targeted to a person because they have, or are thought to have, a particular sexual orientation or gender identity. Simply directing conduct towards an LGBTQ+ person does not satisfy this limb. The specific fact that the person has, or is thought to have, an LGBTQ+ identity must be the reason for why the conduct is directed to the person. General rules that apply to all people would not be able to satisfy this limb of the definition and could not be considered conversion practices. For example, school rules that apply to all students would not meet this element of the definition, while a direction made to an individual student because of their sexual orientation or gender identity would satisfy this element.

Further, clause 3 (2) clarifies that conduct that incorrectly assumes a person's sexual orientation or gender identity is still covered. This provision will prevent a technical loophole. Just because the person engaging in a conversion practice does not know the other person's specific sexual orientation or gender identity, or gets it wrong, does not mean they will not be captured. The third limb is that the practice, treatment or sustained effort must be directed to change or suppress that person's sexual orientation or gender identity. This limb means that simply making general statements or comments, even if those statements are not affirming of a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, would not be captured as conversion practices. The conduct in question must have the goal to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity. The key element of this third limb is, therefore, contained in the terms "change" and "suppress". It is important to note that this bill covers both.

Historically, many conversion practices sought to have LGBTQ+ people change their sexual orientation to being straight, or to change their gender identity to correspond with the sex designated at birth. However, evidence shows that modern conversion practices have also adapted messaging that acknowledges that changing sexual orientation or gender identity may not be possible and, instead, suggests that LGBTQ+ people should suppress their identity by never expressing it. The Government has been clear from the start that both change and suppression practices will also be banned in New South Wales. This is in line with most existing bans in Australia and in New Zealand, which cover both change and suppression practices. Both "change" and "suppress" are intended to take on their ordinary meanings. Change is defined in the *Macquarie Dictionary* as "to make different; alter in condition, appearance et cetera". Suppress is defined in the *Macquarie Dictionary* as "to keep in or repress" something or "put an end to activities". Ultimately, whether something is a conversion practice as defined under clause 3 (1) requires all three limbs that I have outlined to be satisfied. That is a question of fact, and it will depend on the particular circumstances.

In addition to the three limbs of the definition, the bill also provides three exclusions at clause 3 (3). Those set out circumstances where, even when all three limbs of the definition apply, the relevant conduct would not be considered a conversion practice. The exclusions are not intended to be mutually exclusive, meaning a person could rely on one or more of the exclusions, depending on the circumstances. Clause 3 (3) (a) outlines the first exclusion, which provides that a health service or treatment provided by a registered health practitioner that the practitioner has assessed as clinically appropriate in their reasonable professional judgement and that complies with relevant professional, legal and ethical requirements, is not a conversion practice. The New South Wales Government is not seeking to interfere in the ethical or professional codes and standards set out in existing health regulation and by relevant health professional organisations. The exclusion gives effect to that intention.

Health practitioners registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW), such as medical practitioners and psychologists, have existing obligations to act ethically and in accordance with professional codes and standards. The exclusion is also based on health services or treatments being clinically appropriate. That reflects the views put to the Government by health professional organisations and makes sure there is no barrier to LGBTQ+ people receiving safe, inclusive and affirming health care. The exclusion is supported by a non-exhaustive list of examples of health services or treatments which would not fall within the definition of a conversion practice if assessed by a registered health practitioner as clinically appropriate and where the practitioner was delivering the health service or treatment in a way that complies with their legal, professional and ethical requirements.

The examples include providing genuine assistance to an individual who is exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity or is receiving care and treatment related to their gender identity and providing genuine advice about the impacts of gender-affirming medical treatment. It is important to note that health exclusion does not provide an absolute exemption for registered health practitioners to deliver conversion practices under the guise of providing a health service or treatment. A health practitioner will not fall within the exemption if they engage in conduct which is not clinically appropriate or they fail to abide by applicable legal, ethical or professional codes and standards. That is very important to understand. For example, a psychologist who provides psychotherapy to a person based on the ideology that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity is wrong, with the aim of changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, would not be providing clinically appropriate health care or treatment and, therefore, would not fall within the scope of that exemption.

For the avoidance of doubt, I clarify that is not the only exclusion that health practitioners would be able to rely on in the bill. For example, a psychologist who provides therapeutic services to support a person to affirm their gender identity or sexual orientation could fall within the health practitioner exclusion under clause 3 (3) (a) of the bill or the exclusion relating to coping skills, development or identity exploration under clause 3 (3) (b) of the bill. Clause 3 (3) (b) outlines the second exclusion for genuinely facilitating a person's coping skills, development or identity exploration to meet their needs, including by providing acceptance, support or understanding to the individual. That exclusion is intended to clarify that conversion practices do not include conduct that is supportive or accepting or assists in the development of a person's identity. That might include conduct which affirms a person's gender identity or sexual orientation, such as supporting social affirmation.

That exclusion would also capture affirming health care provided by non-registered health practitioners, for instance, a speech pathologist who provides voice training to support a person to affirm and express their gender identity. It would also include practices that are not explicitly affirming, such as neutral or non-directive conduct to better understand a person's self-identified gender identity or sexual orientation, or non-directive actions to explore and develop that identity. For instance, that might be parental conversations about sexual orientation or gender identity and the risks or benefits of certain actions, or peer support groups where people discuss and share experiences relating to their sexual orientation, gender identity or living in accordance with religious beliefs or principles. It could also include a counsellor providing non-directive and non-judgmental therapeutic services to an LGBTQI+ individual to help them to explore their identity in a way that is patient-centred and meets the individual's needs.

It is important to note that exclusion only applies to genuine conduct. "Genuine" is intended to take on its ordinary meaning. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines it as "being truly such; real; authentic". That aligns with our commitments made before the election: that people would not be prevented from seeking out health, allied health or other advice and assistance about their individual circumstances. That qualifier is to ensure that change or suppression practices will continue to be caught by the legislation even if they claim to be about providing support or understanding. That includes structured programs or services which have as a predetermined outcome that a person ought to suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Clause 3 (3) (c) sets out the third exclusion, which covers two matters relating to freedom of expression and belief. First, subparagraph (i) covers the expression of a belief or principle. That includes but is not limited to

the expression of a religious belief or principle, and the legislation specifically recognises expressions through prayer. Second, subparagraph (ii) covers the expression of an opinion or idea that a belief or principle ought to be followed or applied. In both cases, the exclusion applies only if the expression is not part of a practice, treatment or sustained effort directed to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. That is the critical question as to whether the exclusion applies—whether it is directed to change or suppress. That exclusion makes clear that the ban does not prohibit general expressions of religious beliefs, principles or teachings.

We have heard clearly that, especially with religious beliefs or principles, part of that expression can also include expressing that such beliefs should be applied to one's life. The exclusion has been carefully drafted to preserve the ability for people to express their views and their beliefs. That includes the expression of a belief or principle about specific matters such as through a sermon or one-on-one conversations. For instance, explaining that a religious text states homosexuality is a sin would not be a conversion practice. That exclusion also confirms that private prayer, including personal prayer and reflection, will not be a conversion practice. Ahead of the consultation, the New South Wales Government was clear that neither taking offence at the teachings of a religious leader nor expressing a religious belief through sermon will be banned. It will also not be illegal for an individual, of their own consent, to seek guidance through prayer. That exclusion is consistent with those positions. The bill does not impact a person's ability, of their own consent, to seek counsel or guidance from within their faith. Counsel and guidance can still be given, provided they are not directed to change or suppress.

Before I move on from the exclusions to some illustrative examples in the legislation, I come back to the scope of that exclusion. It is limited to expressions of beliefs, principles or ideas. It does not automatically excuse any conduct in which beliefs, principles or ideas are invoked. So far, I have spoken of the statutory definition and the exclusions from that definition. One of the key things we heard in the consultation process was that as much clarity as possible in the legislation would be welcomed. In clause 3 (4) the bill responds to that feedback by providing a non-exhaustive list of examples of conduct that will not be a conversion practice. I will briefly touch on each.

Paragraph (a) confirms that stating relevant religious teachings or what a religion says about a specific topic will not be a conversion practice. This again confirms, right on the face of the legislation, that this ban does not prevent religious teaching or expression of a religious principle. This example is intended to cover cases where a person is providing information about the relevant belief or principles, such as what the relevant holy text might say on the particular matter. Paragraph (b) confirms that general requirements in relation to religious orders or membership or leadership of a religious community will not be considered conversion practices. Some stakeholders queried whether certain requirements, such as for seminarians to be celibate, would be considered a suppression practice. Such rules are of a general nature, and they are not directed to an individual on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and so would not be a conversion practice.

Paragraph (c) confirms that general rules in educational institutions will not be considered conversion practices. For example, this might be general requirements in relation to school uniforms. Much like rules for religious office, these are requirements of a general nature not targeted to a person on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Such practices are not conversion practices. Paragraph (d) confirms that parents discussing matters related to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion with their children will not be a conversion practice. This ban was never intended to stop parents from having discussions, even challenging discussions, with their children about these matters. This example makes that intent very clear.

This is a list of some examples, and it is an open list. It is not exhaustive, nor should it be. It is not possible, nor even advisable, to attempt to set out every hypothetical scenario in legislation. What these examples provide is an indication of the key areas of stakeholder concern where the legislation does not apply, but ultimately every case will turn on its facts and merits. That is very important to note. In combination, the definition of conversion practices and the accompanying exclusions have been carefully considered and developed to ensure that the bill strikes an appropriate balance between prohibiting LGBTQ+ conversion practices, respecting freedom of belief and expression, and providing scope for ethical and appropriate professional conduct.

I turn now to how that definition is used in the bill's provisions, which set out both criminal and civil responses to conversion practices. Part 3 of the bill sets out the criminal law response. As I mentioned earlier, the criminal law response is reserved for the most serious cases and we sincerely hope that, moving forward, these are offences that are rarely used because conversion practices no longer occur. The principal criminal offence is set out at clause 5 (1) of the bill. It contains three elements. First, a person must provide or deliver a conversion practice, as defined in the bill, to an individual. For this offence, clause 5 (5) provides that "person" does not include an individual who is under 18 years of age. This means that a person under the age of 18 will not be able to commit the criminal offence of delivering a conversion practice, although they could be the victim of the conduct.

This reflects that the stage of development of children and young people may not be sufficient to support the persistent and intentional behaviours that warrant the intervention of the criminal law and application of criminal offences, which carry the most serious penalties under this bill. The civil response, which I will speak about in due course, would remain available and does not have the same age limitation. There is no minimum age requirement for the victim; the 18-and-over threshold only applies to offenders. We know that conversion practices may be imposed upon people who are children or teenagers, and the criminal response will protect those people.

Second, under subclause (1) (a) the person who provides or delivers the conversion practice must have the intention of changing or suppressing the other person's sexual orientation or gender identity. This is the mental element of the offence and it goes to the subjective state of mind of the offender. Importantly, the mental element of the offence does not turn on harm. This is a deliberate drafting choice. Many conversion practices providers do not think they are engaging in harmful practices. Many operate with the misguided view that they in fact may be helping. A mental element limited to cases where people intend to cause harm, or where they actually foresee harm and proceed anyway—which is recklessness in New South Wales law—would fail to properly capture conversion practices. The mental element of the bill instead addresses a key characteristic of conversion practices. While the ultimate impact may be substantial harm, the driver behind those practices is the desire or belief that one can and should cause change or suppression of another's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Third, under subclause (1) (b) the individual to whom the conversion practice is delivered must experience physical or mental harm that either endangers life or is substantial. This means, for the offence to be proved, evidence that the victim has experienced harm from the conversion practices must be proven beyond reasonable doubt. This element is not about the intention of the person in question who delivers or performs the conversion practice; it is solely a question of fact as to whether the harm has or has not occurred. The relevant harm must either endanger the victim's life or be "substantial" to satisfy the offence. Substantial harm has been held in case law to mean harm that is more than trivial or inconsequential. It must be more than taking offence, hurt feelings or shame and humiliation.

Clause 5 (2) confirms, for the avoidance of doubt, that the harm caused may be the result of a combination of conversion practices, and that the harm should be assessed in the totality of those practices. This is a provision tailored to the definition of conversion practices, which is largely focused on a course of conduct that may involve multiple incidents. The criminal law carries the heaviest sanctions that can be imposed in a justice response, namely the deprivation of liberty through imprisonment. Criminal sanction is appropriately reserved for very serious conduct. Containing the offence to cases where the harm has endangered life, or where substantial or protracted harm has occurred, aligns with those principles. Further, this is a threshold that reflects and incorporates the views of the majority of stakeholders in the consultation process. It also aligns with the graduated approach that underpins the overall structure of the bill and our legislative response.

The offence will not apply unless all three of these elements are proven beyond reasonable doubt. If proven, the offence carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and will be an indictable offence. This demonstrates that the offence is serious. The maximum penalty is aligned to offences such as stalking and intimidation or assault occasioning actual bodily harm. Schedule 3.3 [1] amends the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to make this a table 1 offence. This means that the offence will be tried summarily in the Local Court, unless it is elected to be tried on indictment by either the prosecutor or the defendant. If it is tried summarily, the jurisdictional limits of the Local Court will apply. This means that the maximum penalty which can be imposed will be two years imprisonment.

Clause 5 (3) of the bill gives this offence a partial extraterritorial application. As I have mentioned before, we know that conversion practices can occur over an extended period. The effect of this provision is that, as long as part of the conversion practice occurs within New South Wales, the whole of the conversion practice can be taken into account for the purposes of the criminal offence. This approach is consistent with other course of conduct offences, such as the offence for coercive control introduced in the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Act 2022. Importantly, this provision does not up-end the general principles about extraterritorial application of the criminal law. The criminal conduct must still partly occur within New South Wales for the offence to apply.

Clause 5 (4) provides, for the avoidance of doubt, that the consent of the person is not relevant to proving the criminal offence. Let me be very clear that this provision is only relevant where it has been proved that a conversion practice, as defined under clause 3 of the bill, has occurred beyond reasonable doubt. It will not impact a person's ability to consent to other practices. As I have mentioned, the definition has been carefully crafted to ensure that it does not cover the expression of religious belief, including in prayer, if not directed to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity. Such prayer can be consented to, and the legislation does not impact that.

In addition to the main criminal offence, the bill also provides for two ancillary, supporting offences in clause 6. Clause 6 (1) (a) makes it an offence for a person to take a person from New South Wales, or arrange for a person to be taken from New South Wales, for the purposes of providing or delivering a conversion practice. Removal from jurisdiction offences are also found in the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. This offence reflects the evidence that victims are sometimes sent overseas for conversion practices to be performed. Clause 6 (2) (b) makes it an offence for a person to engage another person outside of New South Wales to deliver a conversion practice remotely. This offence is similar in character to removing a person from New South Wales, but it reflects the modern reality that conversion practices may also be delivered online.

For both those offences, the conduct being criminalised seeks to circumvent and undermine the primary legislative prohibition by engaging providers of conversion practices from outside New South Wales where our prohibitions do not apply. Both offences carry a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment or 100 penalty units—in dollar terms, \$11,000—or both. Schedule 3.3 [2] makes these offences table 2 offences under the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. This means they will be tried summarily in the Local Court, unless the prosecution elects to have them tried on indictment in a higher court. When tried summarily, the jurisdiction limits of the Local Court—namely a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment—will apply.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** It being 1.00 p.m., 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*

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Reports**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question is that the House take note of the report.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:02):** As Chair: It is with great pleasure that I again address the House as the Chair of the Legislation Review Committee. The committee tabled *Legislation Review Digest No. 10/58* yesterday, its tenth digest of this Parliament. The committee examined eight bills and reviewed 21 regulations and statutory instruments, commenting on six. As members are aware—and I will remind them again—the committee has the important role of reviewing all bills introduced and all statutory instruments tabled in 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 the attention of members to some of the key issues raised in the digest. The Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 would amend the Combat Sports Act 2013 and the Combat Sports Regulation 2014 to implement recommendations arising from the review of the Act by the Combat Sports Authority of NSW. The bill proposes a significant number of amendments recommended by the review, particularly around injury protection, including creating several new absolute liability offences. The committee acknowledged that absolute liability offences are not uncommon in regulatory frameworks to encourage compliance and that the intention of the amendments is to protect the health and safety of combat sports contestants. The committee noted that most of the proposed offences carried a monetary penalty and made no further comment about the creation of absolute liability offences generally. However, the committee noted that the offence for referees who fail to suspend or inappropriately resume matches under proposed section 66A also carries a custodial penalty of up to 12 months imprisonment. Due to the significant impact of custodial sentences on an individual's rights to liberty and freedom of movement, the committee referred this provision to Parliament for consideration.

Turning to private members' bills, the committee also reported on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2023. The bill seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to specify the grounds on which residential tenancy agreements may be terminated. The amendments would allow other grounds for termination to be prescribed by regulations. The committee acknowledged that the delegation to regulations may be intended to build more flexibility into the regulatory framework. However, the committee noted that what amounts to a ground for termination may impact a person's freedom of contract, property rights and their potential compensation or criminal liability. Generally, substantive matters that may impact on individual's rights, liberties or obligations under law should be clearly specified in primary legislation. This is to ensure that individuals can clearly ascertain their rights and obligations and that there is appropriate parliamentary scrutiny over these matters. For those reasons, the committee referred the issue to Parliament for its consideration.

In considering delegated instruments, the committee reported on the Lifetime Care and Support Guidelines that were issued under the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006. The guidelines set out the provisions for the administration of the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme. Together with the Act, the guidelines empower and, at times, require insurers to apply for an injured person to become a participant in the scheme

without the injured person's consent. Because of this, the committee noted that the guidelines may impact an injured person's right to personal autonomy by permitting serious decisions about their ongoing care to be made without their consent.

The committee acknowledges that the guidelines do not go further than the Act, which permits applications to be made for injured persons without their consent. However, the guidelines do not provide any additional guidance on the rights of injured persons who are participants or the subject of applications to the scheme without consent. Both the legislative framework and the guidelines do not clarify whether or how an injured person can withdraw an application to participate or revoke their participation, once accepted, in the scheme. As a result, the committee referred this issue to Parliament for further consideration. That concludes my remarks on the tenth digest of this Parliament. I again encourage all members 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, importantly, the secretariat for all their hard work. I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:06):** I update the House on the ongoing work of the Legislative Review Committee. I thank the Chair for her tremendous work and, of course, the committee members involved in the analysis. But let's face it: The greatest thanks go to the secretariat, who do an amazing amount of work behind the scenes to make us all look good. We thank them all for that. Under this legislative review, the tenth report of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament, eight bills and six sets of regulations were considered. Two of those bills were identified as having no issues: the Electoral Funding Amendment (Local Government Electoral Expenditure Caps) Bill 2024 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill 2023.

Six bills did raise issues and two of those bills were assessed as unlikely to have any practical issues that engage with section 8A or section 9 of the Legislation Review Act 1987. Those bills were the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Sea Bed Mining and Exploration) Bill 2024 and the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. The committee makes no further comment on those bills. The four remaining bills raised potential issues. The first is the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024. I may come back to that one at the end. The Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024 raised issues about absolute liability offences and executive liability offences. The Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2024 raised issues about the non-reviewable decision to disclose or communicate information. Lastly, the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2023 raised issues regarding freedom of contract, retrospectivity and matters deferring to regulations.

Two regulations were assessed as unlikely to have practical issues. The four remaining regulations did raise some issues. Those regulations are the Biosecurity Order (Permitted Activities) Amendment Order (No 2) 2023, the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund Regulation 2023, the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Regulation 2023 and the Lifetime Care and Support Guidelines under the Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006.

I come back to the Combat Sports Amendment Bill. Key concerns raised go to the right to the presumption of innocence and the Combat Sports Authority's ability to take disciplinary action against an attending medical practitioner, whether or not the practitioner has been convicted of an offence against the Act, regulations or any other law. It is inferred that the bill may impact on an individual's right to the presumption of innocence. The review also touched on the privacy and property rights. The bill provides broad powers for an authorised officer to enter and search premises and seize items, without the occupier's consent. Finally, the lack of clarity around public interest certainly needs further discussion and we ask the Minister to look further into how the definition of "public interest" is applied. I ask members to take a moment to read the report and I thank everyone involved in its delivery.

**Report noted.**

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

*Bills*

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

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 23 November 2023.**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (14:32):** I am pleased to support the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023. I acknowledge the Speaker, Mr Greg Piper, for his unwavering advocacy in relation to

this important legislation. It follows a number of consultations and engagements of the Speaker with the team at St Vincent's Hospital, which does the vast majority of transplants in New South Wales, and the Speaker's work with NSW Health over the past few months. I acknowledge that work and thank him for his interest in organ and tissue donation, which is near and dear to the hearts of many in this Chamber.

I also acknowledge Melanie Haskew from my personal staff for her outstanding job on this complex and challenging bill and her efforts, over many months, to progress it. She is supported by my deputy chief of staff, Jenelle Rimmer, and my chief of staff, Matthew McLean. I thank them for the support they have provided to Mel over the months. I also thank NSW Health and the team from the ministry, Hugh Percival and Sophie Tyner, for their support and advice along the way. I also acknowledge the shadow Minister for Health, the Opposition and the crossbench for their engagement. It is not so much challenging in nature as complex, given the subject matter of the bill. I acknowledge that and the spirit in which they engaged with the Government.

Just one organ donor can save the lives of as many as seven people, and many more people can be helped through tissue and eye donation. In 2023, in our most recent dataset, there were 142 deceased organ donors, 392 transplant recipients in New South Wales and more than 47,000 people registered on the Australian Organ Donor Register to become donors in New South Wales. I encourage the community to take that up and encourage members in this place to advocate that in their communities. The New South Wales Government is committed to increasing organ and tissue donation rates, as was the former Government. The Government is focused on delivering best clinical practice in hospitals and on encouraging people to register to become an organ and tissue donor on the Australian Organ Donor Register and, importantly, to let their family know that they want to be a donor. It is an important but timely conversation that needs to take place in family groups.

The bill builds on current clinical best practice by seeking to make amendments to the Human Tissue Act 1983. The amendments establish a process for the authorisation of carrying out ante-mortem procedures for the purpose of organ and tissue transplantation when a potential donor lacks capacity. Ante-mortem procedures are used to maintain or improve the viability of organ and tissue for the purposes of donation. Examples include the administration of medication, the removal of blood for testing and medical imaging. A key organ donation impacted by the legislation is liver donation. The ability to provide anti-clotting agents and medication is crucial to successful liver transfer and transplantation in a needy recipient. Ante-mortem procedures assist in reducing or preventing damage to organs and tissues and can also minimise post-transplant infection risk.

The Government is trying to give the best chance for that organ to be in its best state when that important transplant takes place. That is the focus of the bill. Members can imagine the great anxiety and the concern of parents, family members and other loved ones of a patient who is potentially receiving a transplant. The Government's hope is that by expanding how ante-mortem interventions can be authorised a greater number of potential transplant recipients will receive the organs they need to transform their lives. The bill balances that benefit with the interests of the potential donor. Finding that balance was important. A number of stakeholders were consulted to ensure that the bill got the balance right, and that took time. The Government is not apologetic for the time that it took to engage with the Opposition and with stakeholders, as we should, to make sure that the bill was drafted in the right spirit.

The stakeholders included the Medical Services Advisory Committee; the Australian Medical Association (NSW); the Health Ethics Advisory Panel; the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society; the Royal Australasian College of Physicians; the Department of Communities and Justice, including the State Coroner and the NSW Trustee and Guardian; Intensive Care NSW; and the Emergency Care Institute. All of those fine organisations are strong advocates within their own spheres. It was important that they were engaged in the consultation, given the role they play in this area of medicine and health care.

The bill assists by ensuring ante-mortem procedures can be undertaken when there is consent from the patient's senior available next of kin, or SANOK, in cases where the patient is unable to provide consent. In instances where the patient does not have a senior available next of kin, a designated officer may authorise ante-mortem procedures. In that case the independent practitioner must be satisfied that the patient has previously consented to becoming an organ donor and has not expressed an objection to receiving ante-mortem procedures. In all cases the ante-mortem procedures cannot be authorised unless a prescribed practitioner who is a designated specialist—or an experienced medical practitioner if a designated specialist is not available—is satisfied that the patient's death is expected and the procedures will not hasten death or cause any more than minimal harm to the patient—issues that were raised and dealt with during the consultation phase. Importantly, the prescribed practitioner must not be involved in transplantation services, the care of the patient or the care of an organ recipient, which is a critically important safeguard.

The Government believes that there is a need to provide certainty and clarity around the range of procedures that are considered ante-mortem procedures. That clarity will ensure that only procedures that support organ donation will be authorised as a result of the amendments proposed. Such certainty can be achieved either by

listing the permitted procedures in the legislation or by enabling the procedures to be included in the Human Tissue Regulation 2020 through a prescribing power. The Government has considered both options and understands the Opposition will move amendments to codify the list of procedures in the Act.

The advice we have received from clinicians is that the list is sufficient to enable critical ante-mortem procedures. The list will enable the administration of medication, the removal of blood and tissue for testing, medical imaging and other diagnostic procedures, and blood transfusions. In the interests of bipartisanship and in the spirit in which the bill has been discussed, negotiated and debated by all parties—including the crossbench parties, the Opposition, the Government and, of course, Mr Speaker—we will support the proposed amendment.

The objective of the bill is to improve organ and tissue transplantation outcomes, affirming the Government's commitment to the objectives of our national approach to saving and improving the lives of more Australians through optimising potential organ and tissue donation for transplantation. The changes will further support current Government initiatives such as DonateLife Week, which last year included a collaboration between NSW Health, Service NSW and the Australian Organ and Tissue Authority. That project included a two-week campaign to prominently promote a tile in the Service NSW app that directed people to the Australian Organ Donor Register, as well as an email to over five million Service NSW users.

NSW Health will also continue to collaborate with the NSW Multicultural Health Communications Service—which does a fantastic job—to deliver evidence-based programs supporting culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The bill will complement current NSW Health programs while responding to the wishes of potential donors and supporting New South Wales patients to continue receiving a high quality of health care. I foreshadow a number of amendments that we will work through after the conclusion of the second reading debate.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (14:43):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023, and I join the Minister in thanking Mr Speaker for his efforts in bringing it to the Chamber and the work he has done to address this important issue. I acknowledge the way that the Minister and his excellent team have handled this very sensitive area of public policy, and particularly the Minister's chief of staff, Matt McLean. He is a great credit to the Minister.

This important bill will have a very real impact on the lives of some of the many Australians who are currently on the organ donation waitlist. For those with a serious illness, the effects of an organ or tissue transplant can be life-altering or even life-saving. Successful organ and tissue transplants can restore health, mobility and quality of life for the recipients. The generosity of one organ donor can save the lives of up to seven people and help many more through eye and tissue donation. The first 10 years of the national organ donation program saw a 122 per cent increase in deceased donation rates, resulting in an 81 per cent increase in people receiving an organ transplant. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of donors and people who received a transplant dropped significantly. Thankfully, those numbers are headed back towards pre-pandemic levels, with an increase of almost 8 per cent from 2021-22 and a further 13 per cent from 2022-23.

Last year in New South Wales there were 142 deceased organ donors and 392 transplant recipients. That is 392 lives changed thanks to the generosity of organ donors and the hard work of healthcare professionals in New South Wales. In 2023 there were approximately 1,800 people on the waitlist for transplants in Australia and an additional 14,000 people on dialysis, a significant number of whom could benefit from a kidney transplant. While four in five Australians support organ donation, only one in three—36 per cent—are registered to be a donor on the Australian Organ Donor Register.

In Australia, families of potential donors are always asked to consent to their family member becoming a donor in hospital. Registering as an organ donor has a significant impact on consent, with 80 per cent of families agreeing to organ donation when the family member has registered for organ donation, 62 per cent agreeing when they were not registered but expressed that they wanted to donate, and only 43 per cent agreeing if they were not aware of their family member's intentions. Last year in New South Wales there were 47,132 new registrations to the Australian Organ Donor Register. I encourage everyone over the age of 16 who is willing to become an organ donor to do so by registering online through [donatelife.gov.au](https://donatelife.gov.au).

With so many people on the organ donation waitlist, it is important that members of Parliament consult with medical experts and support legislation that can help increase the rate of organ donation in New South Wales and across the country, and I am confident that the bill seeks to do that. The Coalition supports the intent of the bill but will move some amendments to provide further safeguards to ensure that we maintain high community confidence and support for organ and tissue donation across our community. This incredibly important area of public policy traverses some very sensitive ethical issues.

The starting point for the Coalition on this issue is respect for the individual. Respect for every person, even as they die, ought to be as robust at that stage of life as it is at any other, if not more so. That is in line with the Hippocratic principle to "First, do no harm", or non-maleficence, and never to treat a person as a mere means. Some will argue that once the withdrawal of life-sustaining procedures has been decided upon then it is legitimate to take a liberal attitude to what we do to the potential donor for the sake of the potential recipient. In my view, that is not in line with the Hippocratic principle or with respect for each and every individual.

A number of the ante-mortem procedures listed in Mr Speaker's second reading speech are uncontroversial. The Coalition supports medical imaging, administering medications or undertaking blood tests to determine, maintain or improve the viability of tissue for organ donation after death, where appropriate consent has been received. However, a number of emerging areas of medicine relating to organ transplants violate the ethical principles underlying organ procurement. The most topical at the moment is normothermic regional perfusion [NRP], which appears to violate the ethical principles underlying organ procurement. Normothermic regional perfusion uses extracorporeal technologies such as cardiopulmonary bypass and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation. The doctor can tell me whether I got that right.

**Dr Michael Holland:** That is correct.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The technique preserves organs, particularly hearts, for transplantation. Notably, it is done by restarting the circulation of the donor's own warm blood after irreversible circulatory death has been declared. The "dead donor rule", a fundamental norm that governs organ procurement, states that organ procurement cannot cause death and that a patient's death cannot be caused by organ procurement. Based in ethical principles of respect and non-maleficence, it remains foundational to maintaining trust in voluntary organ donation. It assures patients and families of medicine's commitment to not harming patients and to not using one patient merely to serve the needs and goals of another. To that end, the Coalition is seeking to ensure that we maintain patient and public trust in organ and tissue donation. As such, we are seeking to make it clear that normothermic regional perfusion is excluded from these procedures.

In addition, we are seeking to clearly define what is an ante-mortem procedure. The current drafting of the legislation is dangerously wide. It would permit procedures other than the three uncontroversial procedures mentioned: the administration of medication, the removal of blood for testing, and medical imaging. We have agreed to suggestions through negotiations with the member for Lake Macquarie and the Government to include blood transfusions in that but, again, it will be limited to blood transfusions for the purpose of increasing the viability of tissues and organs, explicitly excluding normothermic regional perfusion. Normothermic regional perfusion is currently under fierce ethical debate in the United States. As drafted, the bill would arguably permit NRP. According to some, NRP neither "hastens death" nor "causes any more than minimal harm to the potential tissue donor".

I make it very clear that the Coalition excludes NRP in its amendments. In the Coalition's view, the bill should legalise only the procedures mentioned. If doctors wish to instigate other ante-mortem procedures, then they can come back to the Parliament. Maintaining public confidence in organ and tissue donation requires transparency around which ante-mortem procedures are contemplated in this bill. If medicine advances and there are scientific developments, then it is appropriate that those be considered and debated transparently in this House. We are not closed to considering those and debating them, but we think that the process of the Parliament is best placed to give confidence and safeguard what is actually being done, rather than leaving intact the ability of a bureaucrat to change what procedures could be included through regulation.

We have absolute confidence in the bureaucracy. There are many fine people in the bureaucracy, including Dr Kerry Chant. But we think that this is so sensitive that it is the Parliament that should decide which procedures are appropriate. That is why the Coalition is moving to codify the ante-mortem procedures. The last thing that anyone wants is to see community trust in transplantation put at risk. In addition, the Coalition supports limitations on the designated officer's ability to authorise ante-mortem procedures. The Minister has just set out that he will move amendments to section 27C (3) (b) (ii). The first part is reasonable: that the ante-mortem procedure will not hasten death. The second is unsatisfactory, and we appreciate the Minister moving to tighten that up: that the ante-mortem procedure will not cause any more than minimal harm to the potential tissue donor.

The problem is that, as a society, there is no substantive agreement on the objective meaning of "harm", let alone "minimal harm", which could provide a rational basis for assessing a proposed new ante-mortem procedure. New procedures, such as NRP, are always being proposed in the transplant literature. One way around that, as we will suggest in our amendments, might be to say that the ante-mortem procedure will not cause "undue risk", and then define "undue risk" as "the sort of risk of a proposed medical treatment". That is all set out in the Opposition amendments. This legislation is an important step forward to increase the number of organ transplants that could occur in New South Wales, which is a good thing. But, in making these changes, we must ensure that we bring the community with us. The Government's proposed amendments and the adjustments that the

Opposition is proposing will provide appropriate safeguards to ensure that we maintain public confidence in this very important area of public policy. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (14:53):** I speak in favour of the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023 and thank the member for Lake Macquarie for bringing it forward. It is an important bill, and one that we all must consider. Quite simply, it will save lives. It seeks to not only increase the number of organs that are donated but also increase the quality of those organs, which is very important in organ or tissue donation. Ante-mortem interventions—or interventions undertaken before a person has been declared deceased—can enhance the quality of organs used in organ transplant. Such interventions may ensure higher levels of function and increased survival rates for recipients. One example is giving a potential donor who is on life support a medication that is protective of organs, therefore increasing the chances that those precious organs can help to save someone on the organ donor waitlist. Medications such as blood-thinning agents can prevent excessive blood clotting, which can render organs such as hearts and livers unusable.

That is such a tragedy in circumstances where a donor and their family are keen to donate such an organ to give life to a recipient. Such interventions will not only increase the chances of organs being usable but also improve the quality of organs and increase the chances of a successful transplant. Blood clots in organs can cause problems for up to 12 months, making life difficult for organ recipients during their recovery period. In certain circumstances, recipients will need to be given a new organ, increasing their pain and suffering due to a failed transplant. As someone who is committed to donating my organs when my time comes, it is sad to think that they may not be usable because of a legislative roadblock that prevents my treating doctors and family from taking the necessary actions to preserve my organs so that they can be donated. The bill ensures that any interventions will not hasten a donor's death, and that is a fantastic safeguard for all donors.

Another of the fantastic initiatives included in the proposed legislation is that testing for transplant suitability can commence prior to death. For some willing donors, their organs—through no fault of their own—may unfortunately not be suitable for donation. Medical imaging tests such as a coronary angiogram on potential heart donors would be able to identify if a heart is indeed suitable, improving outcomes for the recipients and medical teams involved with retrieving organs. The bill proposes sensible and much-needed changes to legislation that will rectify current restrictions around medical consent. Those current restrictions prevent ante-mortem interventions and therefore make organ donation more difficult than it needs to be for those willing donors and their families. The bill will no doubt save many lives. I again thank the member for Lake Macquarie for this private member's bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (14:57):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023. I begin by acknowledging the work of the Speaker, the member for Lake Macquarie, and congratulate him on bringing this bill to the House. As has been observed by other speakers, this is important legislation to increase the opportunity to save lives by improving the process of organ donation. I also thank, acknowledge and pay tribute to the families and loved ones who go through the process of organ donation on behalf of a loved one. As an emergency physician, I came into contact with people who went onto life support, and as a medical administrator, I was involved in approving the process of organ donation. That experience was deeply moving for me, recognising what the families and loved ones of patients went through in making that decision. It is an incredibly distressing period of their lives, and to make that decision shows great courage.

We talk blithely about how everyone should register for organ donation. I think many people in this place would do so—I have certainly registered. But it belies the difficulty of the moment when the decision has to be made by the family. It raises an important point. I acknowledge that the bill will significantly improve the process of organ donation and the recovery of organs that will save lives, but New South Wales still lags behind the rest of the country in rates of organ donation and lags behind best practice internationally.

We focus a lot on the need for people to register as organ donors. Indeed, the Minister and the shadow Minister spoke about that. I certainly support campaigns to make sure that as many people as possible register. Nevertheless, the rates of people who register and then have their family's consent to organ donation remains stubbornly low. Less than 50 per cent of those who register end up in a situation where their organs are able to be harvested. That should give us pause to consider, because that figure has not moved for some time and New South Wales continues to lag behind other jurisdictions in that regard.

The bill is an important measure in addressing that gap, because it will improve the number of organs that will be available for transplant, particularly with the measures that are associated with limited harm. It has been pointed out that those measures are not harmful but, with those measures, we will improve the number of organs available for harvesting. That is a callous word, but those organs are available to save lives. It is an important step in improving our performance, but we still need to do other things. There have been campaigns about improving the concept of registering and licences, but we are neglecting an important area: the resources at the hospital level,

and the skills and training for people directly involved in intensive care units to be able to communicate to the family. It is not easy to do.

There are procedures where the consent and approvals are separate, and that is quite right. But the discussions in those intensive care units are heartfelt. All of the staff are affected by them. The ability to communicate compassionately and carefully with families is critical to enabling families to make the right decisions on behalf of their loved one. I get the sense that we should focus on that area. I understand that is the focus of the so-called Spanish model, which has been successful. The bill addresses the issue of what is done at the hospital level, but we could do more at the hospital level, particularly in terms of skilling and supporting staff to have those difficult discussions. We need to do more to improve the rates of organ donation in this State.

In that sense, I acknowledge the work done on the bill. I also acknowledge the comments of the Minister for Health, the support from the Opposition and the sensible discussions about amendments. It is an excellent process for legislation. The courage and foresight of the Speaker should be commended. Let us not say that the job is now finished; let us recognise that more must be done. We owe it to the people who have consented that our units have the skills and the support to have the difficult discussions that will enable people to themselves have the courage to approve the process of donation, which will lead to the saving of lives. The bill is an excellent start on that journey. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (15:03):** I am pleased to support the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023. I thank the Speaker for his interest in organ and tissue donation. I acknowledge the Minister for Health, my colleague Mr Ryan Park, who has worked closely with the Speaker on this important piece of legislation. I also acknowledge the contributions of the shadow Minister for Health and my colleague Dr Joe McGirr. Currently, there are more than 54,500 people in New South Wales who are registered on the Australian Organ Donor Register to become donors. Some of those figures have been repeated. In 2022 there were 122 organ donors and 319 transplant recipients. That primarily refers to solid organ donations, such as kidney, liver, intestines, heart, lung and pancreas. As a government, we are determined to do everything we can to increase organ and tissue donation so that we can increase the number of people who receive a life-saving organ donation.

The bill sets out a process for the provision of an ante-mortem intervention. That is an intervention that is used to maintain or improve the viability of organs for the purpose of donation. It refers to medical treatments or procedures performed on a potential organ donor before they are declared dead, with the intention of preserving organ function and improving the success rates of organ transplants. Those interventions can be considered controversial, but they are increasingly considered within ethical and legal frameworks to address the shortage of viable organs for transplantation. With no reference to the legislation, but in general principles, I reference the key aspects and principles of ante-mortem interventions in organ donation. The primary purpose is to ensure that organs remain viable for transplantation. Those interventions may include administering medications to maintain blood pressure or prevent thrombosis, blood transfusions, medical imaging, adjusting ventilation settings to ensure adequate oxygenation, or even more invasive procedures like inserting catheters for coronary artery angiograms or, in some cases, performing surgery to stabilise potential donation organs.

There are significant ethical considerations, including ensuring that the potential donor's rights are respected, that informed consent is obtained either from the donor before incapacitation or from next of kin, and that the interventions do not cause harm or discomfort to the donor. The medical principle of beneficence, or doing good, as referred to by the shadow Minister for Health, must be balanced with non-maleficence, or not doing harm, as well as autonomy and justice. Internationally, laws vary by country and, sometimes, within regions of a country. Generally, legal frameworks aim to ensure that ante-mortem interventions are performed in a manner that respects the donor's wishes, as expressed in advance directives or through family consent, and is ethically justifiable.

Informed consent is a critical aspect of ante-mortem interventions. Donors, or their legal representatives, must be fully informed of the nature and purpose of proposed interventions, potential risks and benefits, and any possible impact on the quality or duration of the donor's life. That consent process is essential for respecting donor autonomy. There may, as a consequence, be an impact on organ donation rates by improving the condition of organs prior to donation. Ante-mortem interventions can increase the number of organs available for transplant, enhance the quality of donated organs and, potentially, improve outcomes for recipients. That can be a significant factor in addressing the organ shortage crisis. How the interventions are managed and communicated to the public can affect trust in the organ donation system. Transparency, ethical conduct and respect for donor and family wishes are crucial to maintaining public support for organ donation programs.

Research indicates that the interventions can improve transplant outcomes by reducing the time that organs are without blood flow, known as ischemia, and improving their function before transplantation. That can lead to better recipient survival rates and longer graft survival. Ante-mortem interventions represent a complex interplay

of medical, ethical and legal considerations. Their use must be carefully managed to ensure that they contribute positively to organ donation and transplantation outcomes, while respecting the rights and dignity of donors. We are hoping to allow a greater number of potential transplant recipients to receive the organs that they need to, quite literally, save their lives.

The bill, along with the Government amendments, will set out clear procedures for consent from the patient's senior available next of kin where the patient is unable to provide consent themselves. In instances where the patient does not have a senior next of kin, an independent practitioner may authorise ante-mortem procedures. With the Government amendments, that practitioner must not be involved in the treatment of a potential recipient. We believe that provides an important safeguard in the decision-making process.

Organ and tissue donations save many lives every year, but, with this bill, I hope that we can see more lives saved. Everyone over the age of 16 can register to donate their organs and tissues on the Australian Organ Donor Register. Medical and nursing staff work incredibly hard to save lives. One organ donor can save the lives of up to seven people and help many more through eye and tissue donation. It is vitally important that people make their wishes clear to their loved ones. It is harder for families to decide when they do not know what their family member wanted. For that reason, I strongly encourage everyone to have the conversation with their loved ones, make their wishes known and prepare their families so that they are comfortable with being part of the process.

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (15:10):** I contribute to the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023 debate. The bill amends the Human Tissue Act 1983 to make small and uncontroversial changes to the accessibility of ante-mortem interventions in New South Wales, which would ultimately boost the supply of viable organs for donation. Ante-mortem procedures or interventions are medical procedures undertaken before a patient's death. They are used to determine, maintain or improve the viability of tissue for organ donation after death. The interventions on the potential tissue donor include the administration of medication, the removal of blood for testing, and medical imaging. Whilst the procedures may not have any medical benefit for the patient, it is clear they will benefit the potential recipients.

Currently in New South Wales, if a patient does not directly consent to an ante-mortem intervention, even if they are on the Organ Donor Register, the Guardianship Act 1987 does not permit a person responsible to consent to their use. That is because the Guardianship Act stipulates that a person responsible can only consent to procedures or treatment that promote or maintain the health or wellbeing of the individual. As a result, ante-mortem interventions cannot be consented to as they do not directly improve the health of a patient. New section 27C of the Act would permit a senior available next of kin to consent to an ante-mortem intervention if the potential tissue donor lacks the capacity to provide consent. New section 27C also provides for a designated officer within a hospital, if a senior next of kin is not available, to make reasonable inquiries to find out whether the potential donor has, during their lifetime, provided consent in writing to the removal of tissue for a relevant purpose, has not expressed an objection to the carrying out of an ante-mortem procedure, and has not revoked any form of consent.

New section 27D ensures that also applies to the senior available next of kin, who can only provide consent if they are satisfied that there is no reason to believe the potential tissue donor has expressed an objection to the ante-mortem procedure. There are also safeguards within new section 27C (3) to prevent premature authorisations to ante-mortem procedures, including the requirements that a prescribed practitioner be reasonably satisfied that the death of a potential tissue donor is imminent and the ante-mortem procedure on the potential tissue donor will not hasten death or cause any more than minimal harm. That, on top of the fact that discussion surrounding organ donation never occurs until after a decision about removing life support is made, will ensure minimal pressure is placed on the senior available next of kin to make a decision. New section 27F provides that where a treatment by a person responsible is consented to but is not compatible with an ante-mortem procedure the authority for the ante-mortem procedure has no effect.

Those changes to the Human Tissue Act will undoubtedly assist with taking pressure off our struggling public health system. It will reduce the instances of unnecessary organ retrieval operations of unviable organs. It will also reduce the waiting time for viable organs as more organs will be readily available, which would mean less time waiting on a dialysis or heart-lung machine in a hospital bed. As someone who has a very personal experience with organ donation, I fully understand the feeling of dread and anxiety when waiting to see whether a viable organ will be available in time to save a loved one. The bill has the ability to remove any unnecessary angst and distress in cases where there is a potential donor match but the organ is found to be unviable after the retrieval process, which happens quite often.

Early detection plays a crucial role in optimising outcomes for patients in many medical interventions. It is no different in the world of organ donation. According to the Australian Organ and Tissue Authority, there are currently over 1,800 Australians on the waitlist for an organ transplant and an additional 14,000 people on dialysis.

One organ donor can save the lives of up to seven people. Whilst organ donation is at the highest rates in Australia since the COVID-19 pandemic, there is so much more we can do as parliamentarians and policymakers to improve those numbers. However, consent rates have plateaued after falling from 60 per cent to 56 per cent between 2019 and 2023. If the bill is passed, it will no doubt improve the chances of consent being given, as there is the opportunity for the senior available next of kin to provide it. To give some perspective, in 2020 Victoria enacted legislation similar to the bill, and its current consent rate is at 54 per cent. New South Wales has the lowest rate in the nation at 50 per cent.

There is so much more to do, but the bill will make life a little easier for hundreds of families in our hospital waiting rooms right now hoping for a viable organ to become available. It is a commonsense change. It may make no difference to the life of the potential donor, but it can change the world for up to seven other human beings. In my faith there is a saying that if you save one life it is as though you have saved all of humanity. This compassionate act will get us a step closer to that. The bill will offer choice to families and will not restrict or impede anyone else's rights. I conclude by acknowledging a few people along the journey. To my friend the member for Lake Macquarie and his team, I thank you for introducing the bill and doing the hard yards to get us to this point. I remember the late sitting night last year when the member for Lake Macquarie mentioned he would be introducing a bill regarding ante-mortem procedures. I was ecstatic and I am so grateful to him and his team for taking me on the journey and hearing out all of my concerns and questions. We in this House should support non-controversial commonsense changes like the one presented to us today, and that is why I am glad to have the opportunity to support the bill. I thank the House.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (15:17):** On behalf of The Greens, I indicate that The Greens will support the important Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023. The bill amends the Human Tissue Act 1983, aiming to improve the viability of donated organs by introducing a process for consent to ante-mortem procedures—things like administering blood-thinning medication through a drip so that blood does not clot in organs that are to be donated and imaging to determine the viability of potentially donated organs prior to costly and potentially unnecessary organ retrieval operations. Currently, if a person has consented to organ donation but is unable to provide consent to the ante-mortem procedure because, for example, they are unconscious, those procedures cannot be legally carried out. That is because the provisions of the Guardianship Act 1987 restrict a guardian or next of kin from consenting to treatment that is carried out for a purpose other than that of promoting or maintaining the health or wellbeing of the patient. That means some organs that could be donated for life-saving procedures are unable to be utilised, and the bill seeks to address that.

Critically, the bill sets out that the ante-mortem interventions must not hasten death or cause more than minimal harm to the potential donor. The terminology of "minimal harm" here refers to procedures such as breaking skin to insert a cannula. The bill sets out clear definitions and consent processes that are to be followed and excludes interventions for the purpose of posthumous reproduction. I understand that a number of key stakeholders have been consulted throughout the drafting of the bill and that it is well supported. They include the Medical Services Advisory Committee; the Australian Medical Association; the Health Ethics Advisory Panel; the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society; the Royal Australian College of Physicians; the Department of Communities and Justice, including the State Coroner and the NSW Trustee and Guardian; Intensive Care NSW; and the Emergency Care Institute.

I must note that people with disability and disability advocacy groups should have been consulted earlier in the process. I thank my Greens colleague Ms Abigail Boyd for prompting that incredibly important consultation, and I thank the member for Lake Macquarie and the Government for acting on the recommendation. I understand that the Opposition will be moving some amendments to the bill in response to concerns that have been raised by faith-based groups, in particular. These concerns go to some of the detail of the bill, such that certain elements that are best dealt with in regulation would be inserted into the legislation. It is The Greens' view that this would be inappropriate, as the nature of medical intervention is necessarily driven by frequent advancements in technology and improvements to procedure. To lock matters away in legislation would not allow the law to remain modern or to keep pace with such developments. The Greens will not support those amendments.

But we should be clear. Genuine concerns always arise when a bill of this nature, which deals with such difficult and sensitive issues, comes before Parliament. They are issues for which many people will have deeply held personal views. We need to acknowledge that we are dealing with issues that give rise to a range of heartfelt responses and we need to respect the concerns that are raised. The bill, in its drafting, takes a carefully considered approach to many of the issues that might give rise to concern. It acknowledges a fear that doctors might simply let people die just to harvest their organs by requiring a second doctor who is not involved in the care of the donor to verify that death is expected and that ante-mortem interventions will not hasten death.

Critically, the second doctor—the "prescribed practitioner"—can be accessed remotely. This is an important safeguard for rural and regional hospitals where there is unlikely to be a second, experienced medical

practitioner who is not involved in the care of the donor. The bill also ensures that ante-mortem interventions cannot be done if they conflict with the clinical care required for the donor or if they would interfere with a coronial process. I note that protections are needed to ensure that if a decision has been made under the provisions of the Guardianship Act to deny consent for the particular procedure, for example, through supported decision-making for a person with cognitive disability, the provisions in the bill will not override that decision. The Government has assured us that this will happen through Health protocols, and we look forward to seeing them follow through on this commitment.

I acknowledge the work of my upper House colleague Dr Amanda Cohn, who, as The Greens spokesperson on Health, has been engaged with the Government and the Opposition on the details of the bill. Dr Cohn will have more to say on the bill when it is considered in the other place. I also acknowledge the work of the member for Lake Macquarie in preparing and introducing this bill with the Government's support. This shows the value of a strong crossbench working collaboratively with government towards progressive reform, bringing our legislature into the twenty-first century. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:21):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023. I acknowledge those members who have contributed to the debate this afternoon. We have all repeated the same numbers, but it is important that they are on the record. I am very pleased to co-chair the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Organ and Tissue Donation with my parliamentary colleague the member for The Entrance. We have heard firsthand from people who have benefited from organ and tissue donation how it saves and changes lives. I acknowledge the good work that has been done by the member for Lake Macquarie in bringing this bill to the House. Good legislation is worked on in a bipartisan way. It has been a pleasure listening to both the health Minister and the shadow Minister for Health speak on this issue today. It is very clear that we are on a unity ticket here. It is about doing more to ensure that more lives are saved by responsible tissue and organ harvesting.

I note the excellent contribution by the member for Wagga Wagga. It is important to understand the role played by our health professionals when they are talking to families at the most difficult times. I agree with the member for Wagga Wagga that providing more support and training for frontline workers in how to conduct those discussions with people's loved ones would be an excellent move forward. It is important because they are at the coalface of those conversations, which can happen at incredibly emotional times. We know that organ and tissue transplants can significantly improve and save lives. We have heard the numbers before—donations from one donor can save up to seven lives but can help so many more through tissue donation as well.

The first 10 years of the national organ donation program saw a 122 per cent increase in deceased donation rates and an 81 per cent increase in transplant recipients. That speaks to the Australian psyche—we always want to help a mate, a friend or a loved one. Those numbers illustrate how much Australians want to help others in any way they can. Obviously, through the COVID-19 pandemic we saw a drop in donors and transplants. Pleasingly, those numbers are starting to recover, with an increase from 8 per cent in 2021-22 to 13 per cent in 2022-23. Last year there were 142 deceased organ donors and 392 transplant recipients in New South Wales. Organ donors are often referred to as heroes, and they are, because they are providing life and opportunity for so many other people whom they have never met, will never meet and will never know.

Approximately 1,800 people in Australia are still on the waitlist for transplants, with an additional 14,000 on dialysis, many of whom could benefit from a life-saving and life-altering kidney transplant. While 80 per cent of Australians support organ and tissue donation, only 36 per cent are registered donors on the Australian Organ Donor Register. I echo the words of the member for Holsworthy: As legislators and local representatives in our communities, we need to do more to get the message out that organ and tissue donations save lives. It is up to us to carry that baton forward and keep highlighting the importance of donations. Family consent rates for organ donation are at 80 per cent when the donor is registered, 62 per cent when it is known that the donor wanted to donate but is not registered, and 43 per cent if the family is unaware of the donor's wishes. These are discussions that loved ones and families should be having but, sadly, that is not always the case.

It is important that legislation is in place to make sure that anti-mortem procedures are set out in a responsible way, and this bill goes a long way to doing that. I note that both sides of the House have foreshadowed amendments to the bill. I acknowledge the willingness of the member for Lake Macquarie to work with all sides of Parliament on this legislation. It is important that, as legislators, we are able to allay any concerns outlined by our communities, our healthcare workers, our faith groups—whoever it might be—and that we take everybody's opinions into account when we are dealing with these sorts of sensitive issues. There were 47,132 new registrations on the Australian Organ Donor Registry in New South Wales last year. That is pleasing. We want to see those numbers increasing. I am also pleased that, since the inception of the Central Coast Local Health District's organ donation service in 2009, 71 people have become organ donors. Each of those 71 people has positively impacted the lives of seven more through their incredible generosity.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge some of the incredible advocates for organ and tissue donation. The Parliamentary Friends of Organ and Tissue Donation have met some incredible people from right across New South Wales who have highlighted to us the importance of organ donation and its delivery. They say that the people who have donated organs and tissue are heroes—and that is exactly what they are. They have made a conscious effort to help somebody they have never met. That is really important. One of those advocates for organ and tissue donation is Rob Manning from the Central Coast. He motivated us to set up the Parliamentary Friends of Organ and Tissue Donation. Rob was a recipient of a life-saving transplant. The surgery was conducted over a couple of days, on 30 and 31 December 2021. He calls himself the luckiest man alive for receiving the donation and has advocated tirelessly for increased awareness of the importance of donations ever since.

Full credit goes to Rob and the many other people who have received donations and shared their story. His advocacy is paying off. He is now liaising with the Government, the New South Wales Attorney General and other governments around Australia about the importance of organ and tissue donation legislation. It is up to us, as members of Parliament, to drive the necessary changes. The Speaker and member for Lake Macquarie was present at the first meeting of the Parliamentary Friends of Organ and Tissue Donation here at Parliament House. It was great to see so many people from across the Parliament take part because, again, this is something that can affect anybody, at any time and anywhere. As legislators, it is up to us to make sure we do everything we can to represent the wishes of our constituents—those individuals whom we see all the time—and to have such advocacy groups as part of our parliamentary environment. That is really important. I congratulate all of those people.

I am looking forward to catching up with Rob in the next month to discuss his updates and what is next for him. He is a very passionate recipient of his life-saving donation. It is interesting to see how people who have received life-saving organ and tissue donations go on to be the greatest advocates for them. Not one day goes past when they are not thankful for the contribution of somebody else. I acknowledge all the contributions to debate made in this House. I also acknowledge the bipartisan way in which the health Minister and the shadow health Minister have worked together in drafting amendments, working with the member for Lake Macquarie. That is the way good legislation gets drafted and delivered to the people of New South Wales. The more we can do to help raise awareness of the life-saving properties of organ and tissue donation, the better so many people in New South Wales will be.

I am really proud to be part of an opposition that is happy to work with cross-party groups to deliver this sort of legislation to the broader community. I thank all of those who take part in these discussions because, again, that is how good legislation is delivered. Again, I acknowledge the great work done by the member for Lake Macquarie in bringing the legislation to the Chamber, because it was time that we had honest and frank discussions, especially with the advances in technology regarding health, ante-mortem procedures and the harvesting of tissue and organs. I also highlight what was said by the member for Wagga Wagga: It is so important that we bring along health practitioners and frontline workers because they are the ones having frank and full discussions with families. When they can do that in a way in which the families understand the benefits of organ donation and tissue harvesting, the better the outcomes are. It also means that we are providing them with the best tools to deliver that message to families at an appropriate time. Again, I acknowledge the member for Lake Macquarie in bringing this excellent piece of legislation. I commend the bill with the amendments to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:31):** I commend the member for Lake Macquarie, and Speaker, for his leadership in working on the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill. In this place we all hope that when we pass legislation, it improves the lives of our constituents. But it is very rare that we deal with legislation that we know will directly save the lives of our constituents. We know this bill will transform and save lives across New South Wales. As has been said previously, a single organ and tissue donor can save the lives of up to seven people. About 1,057 people in Australia are on the waitlist for a new organ, plus an additional 30,000 people on dialysis who may need a donor kidney in the future.

While the national consent rate for organ donation is just above 50 per cent, only 2 per cent of Australians die in a way that makes it possible for them to donate an organ. To donate an organ, a person needs to die in hospital, either in intensive care or in the emergency department, so their organs are preserved while working well. The situation is made even more difficult under laws that prevent ante-mortem procedures from occurring when a patient cannot consent. Ante-mortem procedures might be needed to determine whether an organ is viable for donation or could help maintain or improve an organ for donation. Because such procedures provide no medical benefit to the patient, a next of kin has no power to approve them, even if the person is on the donor register or their family has consented to a donation. The result can be erosion of an organ, making it unfit for donation, or the late discovery that an organ was not fit for donation, causing disappointment for recipients and their families.

For someone who is seriously ill, an organ transplant can keep them alive, give them new health or enable them to be active. People receiving transplants include young children and people with dependants. We need more

donors, but we also need to treat every donor as precious. The bill will ensure that a senior available next of kin can approve an ante-mortem procedure if they have no reason to believe the patient would have objected. Where the senior available next of kin cannot be located, a designated officer can approve ante-mortem procedures if the patient has provided written consent to organ donation. The bill does not impinge on anyone's right to bodily autonomy but rather ensures that the wishes of people and their families to donate tissues and organs to those in need are not obstructed by unnecessary bureaucratic barriers. The bill will increase the number of donations available to those needing a transplant, saving more lives.

Again, I commend my friend the Speaker, and member for Lake Macquarie, and acknowledge his amazing staff, including Roisin Moir, who has worked tirelessly on this legislation. I acknowledge the multi-partisan collaboration that the member for Lake Macquarie has achieved. This will be a historic bill for the Fifty-Eighth Parliament. It will be the first non-Government bill to pass the Legislative Assembly. It is supported unanimously across the Parliament, and will directly save lives. I commend my friend the member for Lake Macquarie. Today is a very proud day for him, for this Parliament and, indeed, for the people of New South Wales.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:35):** In reply: I truly thank everybody who has participated in debate on the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023, including my friends the Minister for Health, the shadow Minister for Health and the member for Shellharbour. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga, Dr Joe McGirr, and the member for Sydney. I also thank the member for Bega—whose support I am so pleased to have—the member for Balmain and the member for Terrigal. I take special note of the member for Holsworthy. I remember listening to her inaugural speech, and I was so struck by the passion and the humanity that she brought to it across many subjects. I heard her speak to her personal circumstances and experience, and I knew that I wanted to work with her on this. In the end, we have all worked together so well.

I have always been very aware that it is a great privilege to be in this Parliament, but what a waste if we do not use the opportunity to do the absolute best for our community. I think everyone who has spoken has acknowledged me and I appreciate it. But it is not about me; it is not about any of us. It is about what we as a Parliament can do collectively. I say to each and every member, and to the Parliament, that makes me very proud to be here. We often have rancour in this House. We often have divided opinions. My friend the member for Hornsby and I have had some tense times in discussing this legislation, because of my concerns about the approach of the Opposition. But it was always clear that we all believed in what this bill was about, which was how we would deliver the best possible outcome, once again, not for us but for constituents and those people who might be beneficiaries. I thank the member for Keira, the member for Hornsby and everybody who participated in such a way.

I am very grateful for the collaborative approach everybody has brought to this place. I thank the staff of the Minister, Melanie Haskew and Jenelle Rimmer, and Hugh Percival from NSW Health, for everything they have done. It has been greatly appreciated as we went down this path. The member for Terrigal raised the name Rob Manning, who is an incredible human being, a passionate advocate and champion for organ donation and part of the organisation DonateLife NSW. I thank him for the passion he brings to that issue but also for supporting me and my team in putting the story of this bill out there.

I thank all the members of this House who have recognised the benefit of and the need to reform. I have had many discussions about the bill with members of this House and of the other place, and I have received widespread support. I am grateful to those who have championed or strongly supported this reform along the way, including the member for Sydney, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Bega, the member for Holsworthy and also Dr Amanda Cohn from the other place, representing The Greens, who has been supportive from the outset. I am confident, with the passing of this bill, we will see an improvement in organ donation outcomes for many in New South Wales and that, in so doing, we may save many lives.

To receive an organ is an amazing thing for the recipient. Imagine what it is like for those working in this space—the transplant teams, the doctors, the nurses and the technicians—and how fantastic it must be to bring together at the right time somebody in great need of a life-saving or a life-changing intervention and a donor. It must be an amazing feeling. To support them in delivering that is fantastic. But it is wonderful also for those on the other side of the equation, those who have lost a loved one, because, at that time, they know that the donation will save or change a life. What a wonderful solace that must give them at a terrible time.

I am grateful also for the support and assistance of many of those professionals who helped us prepare this bill. I thank them for all of that assistance. In particular I am grateful for the team at St Vincent's Hospital who first approached me regarding the need for the introduction of ante-mortem interventions in New South Wales and for the team's support and assistance in the preparation of the bill. A number of members have spoken directly about the need for more organ donors, and we do need more people to become registered organ donors, but we know that some organs cannot be used or are suboptimal due to the inability to use otherwise uncontroversial

medical procedures where a donor is on life support yet will not recover. This bill gives greater respect to the wishes of that person who had previously made very clear their intention to give their organs.

I am immensely grateful to all who have supported me with this bill, and I must mention my staff and my research officer, Roisin Moir, whom I thank. This is the first bill she has been involved with. I do not know how many more we are going to do, but she did an amazing job. I thank all members of my staff, including Madeleine McKell, who has worked with us in promoting this issue. With that, I acknowledge that our discussions with the Government and the Opposition in particular have not been easy. They should not be easy. We are making very important decisions that will affect people's lives. They are about respecting the gift somebody is offering. It is important that we get to the right answer. I think we have. While I do not agree with every place we have landed on, I believe that we have delivered fully what would have been asked for by the team at St Vincent's. Amendments to come have been foreshadowed by the Minister and by the shadow Minister. I will speak to each amendment during consideration in detail, and I will certainly be supporting them.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** It was lovely to be in the chair while members listened in silence to the contribution of the member for Lake Macquarie.

The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Ryan Park and Mr Matt Kean.**

#### Consideration in Detail

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (15:46):** By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-012F in globo:

**No. 1 Senior available next of kin**

Page 4, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 27C(2), lines 4–7. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

- (a) there are one or more senior available next of kin of the potential tissue donor and a senior available next of kin provides consent under section 27D, or
- (b) there are no known senior available next of kin of the potential tissue donor and the designated officer is satisfied that—

**No. 2 Meaning of "prescribed practitioner"**

Page 4, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 27C(4), definition of *prescribed practitioner*, lines 29–33. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

*prescribed practitioner* means a designated specialist or, if a designated specialist is not available, an experienced medical practitioner, who is not involved in—

- (a) transplantation procedures, or
- (b) the care of the potential tissue donor, or
- (c) the care of a potential recipient of tissue.

**No. 3 Coroner's functions**

Page 5, Schedule 1[2]. Insert after line 9—

**27G Ante-mortem procedure not to interfere with coroner's functions**

Despite the other provisions of this part, an ante-mortem procedure must not be carried out if the procedure is reasonably likely to interfere with the functions of the coroner under the *Coroners Act 2009* in respect of the death of the potential tissue donor.

I once again thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his and his staff's work, and I once again acknowledge Mel Haskew from my team, who has worked extensively with his team, the Opposition and the crossbench on this. I thank Mel and my staff very much.

Currently the bill allows a designated officer to authorise ante-mortem interventions when the potential donor lacks capacity and the senior available next of kin cannot be located. When a person has consented to organ donation and there is no senior available next of kin, we also want to ensure the person's donation will have the best outcome. On this basis, the Government supports a designated officer authorising ante-mortem interventions when a person has no senior available next of kin. However, if a person has a next of kin, it is important that that person makes decisions about whether ante-mortem interventions should be undertaken. That is not how the bill

currently operates; it simply requires a designated officer to make reasonable attempts to locate the senior available next of kin. To address that concern, the first amendment would allow a designated officer to authorise ante-mortem interventions, subject to the other safeguards in the bill, only when there is no known senior available next of kin and, when there is a senior available next of kin, they provide the consent, even if they take time to be located.

The bill includes an important safeguard to protect the interests of the potential donor by requiring a prescribed practitioner to certify in writing that the death of the potential donor is expected and the procedures will not hasten death and will not cause more than minimal harm. The bill appropriately requires that the prescribed practitioner be independent from the potential donor's treating team. However, to ensure proper independence, the prescribed practitioner should also not be involved in transplantation procedures at all or in the care of a potential recipient of tissue. Amendment No. 2 would ensure that. It is possible for organ donation to occur even if a person will be the subject of a coronial inquest. In those circumstances, the Human Tissue Act prohibits a designated officer or a senior available next of kin from authorising removal of an organ without the consent of the Coroner. To ensure that the coronial process remains robust, an amendment to the bill should be made to ensure that the ante-mortem interventions are not undertaken where they would be reasonably likely to interfere with the functions of the Coroner.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:49):** I thank the Minister for Health for moving the amendments, which I have already indicated I will be supporting. The Government's amendments are sensible. They address seemingly small but significant matters. They enhance the safeguards that have been included in the bill and ensure community confidence in both the ante-mortem procedures generally and the organ donation process. Government amendment No. 1 makes clear that a designated officer of a hospital can only consent to an ante-mortem intervention in the absence of a senior available next of kin if there is no known next of kin. It is an alternative to the original proposal that that could occur when a designated officer was unable to locate a senior available next of kin. I support the amendment.

Government amendment No. 2 extends the categories of persons excluded from the definition of a "prescribed practitioner" within the bill. It extends the exclusion to medical practitioners involved in transplantation procedures and the care of a potential transplant recipient in addition to practitioners involved in the care of a potential tissue donor. That amendment fully ensures the independence of the prescribed practitioner. I support the amendment. Government amendment No. 3 includes new section 27G, which clarifies that an ante-mortem procedure might not be carried out if it interferes with the functions of the Coroner under the Coroners Act. The bill was never intended to interfere with the functions of the Coroner. It is a sensible amendment and I support it.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (15:51):** The Opposition supports the Government's amendments. Government amendment No. 1 provides greater safeguards and protections around consent when a senior available next of kin is unable to be contacted. That is absolutely appropriate and is in line with the Opposition's desire to ensure public confidence in the process. The other two amendments clarify positions and are relatively uncontroversial. The Opposition supports the three Government amendments.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that Government amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-012F be agreed to.

#### **Amendments agreed to.**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (15:52):** By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2024-014C in globo:

##### **No. 1 Meaning of "ante-mortem procedure"**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 27B, lines 12–17. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

*ante-mortem procedure* means the following medical procedures, other than normothermic regional perfusion, carried out to determine, maintain or improve the viability of tissue for a relevant purpose—

- (a) the administration of medication,
- (b) the removal of blood and tissue for testing,
- (c) medical imaging and other diagnostic procedures,
- (d) blood transfusions for the purpose of improving organ viability.

##### **No. 2 Designated Officer's authority to carry out ante-mortem procedures**

Page 4, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 27C(3)(b), lines 20–25. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

- (b) a prescribed practitioner has certified in writing that the prescribed practitioner is reasonably satisfied—

- (i) the death of the potential tissue donor is imminently expected, and
- (ii) the carrying out of an ante-mortem procedure on the potential tissue donor will not—
  - (A) hasten the death of the potential tissue donor, or
  - (B) cause more than minimal harm to the potential tissue donor, or
  - (C) cause undue risk to the potential tissue donor.

I have already flagged the reason for moving these amendments. Coalition members believe that it is important to ensure that the public have confidence in what the bill is intending to do—a change to organ donation to allow ante-mortem procedures. In the original drafting there was a proposal to allow a bureaucrat to determine what ante-mortem procedures would be allowable. Notwithstanding that there are changes in science and medicine regularly, the Opposition feels it is appropriate that there is a tight set of guidelines around what those procedures are. The ones that are relatively uncontroversial include the administration of medication, the removal of blood and tissue for testing, the use of medical imaging and other diagnostic procedures and the use of blood transfusions for the purpose of improving organ viability.

The Opposition amendments make it clear that normothermic regional perfusion is excluded from the process on ethical grounds. That is important given that there is fierce ethical debate happening worldwide on those new advances in science and medicine. The use of medical imaging and other diagnostic procedures is appropriate to ensure that the time spent obtaining an organ is for an organ that is viable. The Opposition wants to ring fence that and put it into legislation. If changes occur and there are new methods of obtaining organs for the purposes of donation, then the appropriate place for that to be considered is in this Parliament, which is representative of the diversity of views across the community. We are seeking to bring people on board and encourage them to be part of this process as we look to have more organ donation across New South Wales.

With regard to the designated officer's authority to carry out ante-mortem procedures, the amendments make sure that the scope of their decision-making power is clear—that death has to be imminently expected and that the procedures do not hasten the death of, cause more than minimal harm to or cause undue risk to the potential tissue donor. The Opposition's perspective is to ensure that the community can have confidence in what the Parliament is aiming to achieve. We want to ensure that patients and the public know that the legislation is moderate, reasonable and in the interests of increasing tissue donation across the country. I commend the Opposition amendments to the House.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (15:56):** The Government supports the Opposition amendments and acknowledges the spirit in which the Opposition has engaged in the drafting of the bill. It is a challenging part of the legislation; there are no two ways about it. I will not pretend that it is not. The member for Lake Macquarie and I, as well as the team from NSW Health and my office, have had a number of discussions about the issue. We acknowledge the importance of the bill broadly and therefore we do not want it to be held up. The Government supports the Opposition amendments.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (15:56):** The Opposition has proposed two amendments. I support both of them. In respect of the first amendment, I make clear that the codification of specific medical procedures within the definition of ante-mortem interventions in the bill was not my preferred approach nor, as I understand it, was it the preferred approach of NSW Health or the Government. In my view such matters are best suited for inclusion in regulation but, in the spirit of bipartisanship, we have agreed to the amendment. It was a significant part of the discussion that I had with the member for Hornsby. I recognise that in his role as shadow Minister he is not just dealing with these issues; he has a broad church to incorporate.

During discussions around the terms of the bill and the ante-mortem interventions that would be available, there was one intervention that was raised in a number of occasions: normothermic regional perfusion [NRP]. Most people do not know anything of NRP. I was not aware of it as a procedure until it was raised with me by the member for Hornsby and I took the opportunity to investigate it. Normothermic regional perfusion was never considered by me to be within the scope of the bill. By its nature it is not currently an ante-mortem procedure but, rather, a post-mortem procedure. It is an emerging technology that is not currently used in New South Wales. I acknowledge that normothermic regional perfusion would raise genuine ethical and religious concerns. Whilst I understand there was no intention to introduce normothermic regional perfusion in New South Wales, to allay any fears it has been specifically excluded from the definition of an ante-mortem procedure in the Opposition's first amendment. I support the amendment.

The Opposition's second amendment makes minor changes to the facts to be certified by a prescribed practitioner before a designated officer can authorise an ante-mortem intervention. Those changes specify that death must be not only expected but also imminently expected and require certification that an ante-mortem

intervention cannot cause undue risk to the potential tissue donor. I believe the Opposition's uncontroversial amendments serve to improve the outcome of the bill, and I therefore support the amendments.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2024-014C be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr GREG PIPER:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **CONVERSION PRACTICES BAN BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:02):** Consistent with the main offence, clause 6 (2) provides a similar clarification around consent, and clause 6 (3) provides that the offence cannot be committed by an individual under 18. Consequential amendments are set out in schedule 3.2. These provisions amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to enable an apprehended violence order to be made in relation to the offences set out in the Act. An apprehended violence order is a civil order that can impose prohibitions or restrictions on another person to ensure personal safety. Apprehended violence orders can be made if a person fears and has reasonable grounds to fear the commission of certain offences or conduct against them.

Breach of an apprehended violence order is a criminal offence under section 14 of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, punishable by up to two years imprisonment, 50 penalty units—in other words, \$550—or both. The amendments in schedule 3.2 will mean that fear of the commission of a conversion practices offence will be grounds for the making of an apprehended violence order. Comparable offences, such as stalking and intimidation or assault occasioning actual bodily harm, are already covered by the apprehended violence order scheme. This adds an additional avenue of response to the risk of conversion practices and options for victim safety.

I turn now to the civil response scheme set out in part 4 of the bill. The approach to the civil response scheme in the bill has been to start with the existing architecture for complaints under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 and then to make modifications as needed to ensure that the scheme is fit for purpose. Consistent with that framework, under the civil response scheme it will be unlawful for an entity to provide or deliver a conversion practice. Anti-Discrimination NSW will be empowered to receive and deal with complaints of conversion practices, as well as to perform complementary investigation, education and research functions with respect to conversion practices.

I acknowledge that there is a comprehensive review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 being undertaken by the NSW Law Reform Commission. However, when considering how a civil response scheme could be best administered, the Government has concluded that Anti-Discrimination NSW is best placed to administer the civil response scheme and that the scheme should operate in a way that is broadly consistent with the existing complaints framework for discrimination matters. The Government will have the opportunity to consider the relevance of any findings made by the commission to the civil response scheme under the bill once the commission delivers its final report on the review. The Government is also required to consider the operation of the civil framework established under the bill through the statutory review of this legislation, which the bill provides must take place three years after its commencement.

I now turn to the specific provisions of this scheme. Clause 8 of the bill makes it a contravention for an entity to engage in a conversion practice. "Entity" is defined in the dictionary in schedule 2 to the bill as either a person or an unincorporated body or organisation. The term "person" includes an individual, a corporation and a body corporate or politic, drawing on the definition of "person" in the Interpretation Act 1987. As is the case with the criminal offences in clauses 5 and 6, under the civil scheme the consent of the affected individual—or another person with decision-making authority for that individual—will not be relevant to an assessment of whether an entity contravened the civil prohibition.

Part 4, division 3 of the bill sets out the process for the handling of complaints of conversion practices by the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board. Consistent with complaints made under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, the framework enables a complaint of a conversion practice to be made by an affected individual on their own behalf or on behalf of themselves and others, with their consent; a parent or guardian of a person who lacks legal capacity to make a complaint; a representative body on behalf of a named individual or individuals, with their consent; or an agent of any of those whom I have just mentioned.

Under the scheme, once a complaint is received, the president can either accept the complaint, decline it or refer it to a prescribed entity. The bill allows the president to refer complaints to a prescribed entity where the subject of the complaint may be more appropriately dealt with by the other entity, provided the complainant consents to the referral. The president may also refer a complaint where required by another Act or law. The bill does not limit the application of other laws. Prescribed entities include, to name a few, the Commissioner of Police, the Health Care Complaints Commission and health professional councils regulating health practitioners under the national law, such as the Medical Council.

The requirement for a complainant to consent to the referral accords with feedback received from stakeholders, including people with lived experience of conversion practices, who stressed the importance of ensuring that victims can choose the reporting pathway most suitable to them. If a complaint has been made to the president, this would not preclude a victim or other person independently approaching other complaint bodies, such as the Health Care Complaints Commission, to make a complaint in relation to a health practitioner's conduct.

The bill provides that the president may decline a complaint, either at the time it is received or during an investigation, for specified reasons. These reasons are set out in clauses 15 and 22 of the bill. There is no time limit for making a complaint of conversion practices. This differs from complaints made under the Anti-Discrimination Act, where the president has a discretion to decline a complaint on the basis that it was made 12 months after the conduct that is the subject of the complaint. The removal of a time limit is responsive to feedback received from stakeholders and people with lived experience of conversion practices, in particular, who said that it can take victims of conversion practices a significant period of time to come forward. In place of a time limit, the president will have the discretion to decline a complaint where it is impracticable to investigate due to the passage of time.

If a complaint is accepted, the president must investigate it. As part of the investigation, the president may require a complainant or respondent or other entity to provide information or documents by notice in writing. The president may also seek to resolve the complaint by conciliation. If conciliation is considered appropriate, the president may require the complainant or respondent to appear before them to seek to resolve the complaint. The complainant cannot be required to appear together with the respondent. The purpose of conciliation is to allow both sides to discuss the alleged contravention, educate parties about conversion practices legislation and attempt to resolve the complaint. It is the usual practice of the president in conciliating matters to assist parties to reach an agreement and record the agreement in consultation with the parties.

Following the resolution of a complaint, Anti-Discrimination NSW would also keep a record of the conciliation agreement reached between the parties. If a party to a conciliation agreement considers that another party has not complied with the agreement, they may apply to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to have the agreement registered. The bill requires that this be done within six months of the date of the agreement. However, the tribunal also has a general discretion to accept applications out of this time frame under section 41 of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013. Part 4, division 3, subdivision 5 sets out the circumstances in which a complaint can be terminated by the president. This includes where a complaint has been resolved by agreement between the parties, or where it has been withdrawn or abandoned by a complainant.

Conciliation may not always be possible or appropriate, and the complaints framework includes a pathway to determination by the tribunal. For example, a complaint can be referred to the tribunal where a complaint has been declined during an investigation and the complainant requires that it be referred; the complaint is unresolved after 18 months; or the president is of the opinion that a complaint cannot be resolved by conciliation. This is not an exhaustive list. Complaints can be referred in other circumstances, which are set out in full at clauses 17, 27, 28 and 29 of the bill. I stress that in all cases referrals to the tribunal cannot be made without the consent of the complainant. If they do not consent, the matter will proceed no further.

Part 4, division 4 of the bill governs the determination of complaints of conversion practices before the tribunal. Under this division, the tribunal may hear and determine referred complaints, either by dismissing or finding the complaint substantiated, in whole or in part. If substantiated, the tribunal may make orders requiring the respondent to pay damages, stop continuing or repeating the conduct, take steps to redress the loss or damage suffered, or publish an apology or retraction. Consequential amendments are also made under schedule 3.1 to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 in relation to the tribunal's functions. The bill also gives the

Anti-Discrimination Board complementary functions under part 4, division 5 of the bill. These functions are consistent with the board's existing functions in relation to discrimination.

Clause 47 enables the board to conduct inquiries, investigation, research and provide education in relation to conversion practices. Clause 48 enables the Minister, in this case the Attorney General, to refer matters that conflict or may give rise to a conflict with the Act to the board. When such a referral is made, the board must conduct an examination and report its findings and conclusions to the Minister. The board's complementary functions will ensure that it can respond holistically to issues relating to conversion practices without the limitations of responding to a particular complaint or complaints. Importantly, these functions will enable Anti-Discrimination NSW to engage with the community to raise awareness of conversion practices and their harmful impacts, akin to the role it currently plays with respect to discrimination.

Part 4, division 7 of the bill sets out miscellaneous provisions relating to the civil response scheme. Among other things, it includes a provision requiring the president and the Anti-Discrimination Board to exercise their functions under the legislation in a manner that does not prejudice criminal investigations or proceedings. This provision will militate against prejudice to the criminal process where criminal and civil processes are concurrent and examining the same or similar facts. Consistent with the Anti-Discrimination Act, part 4, division 7 of the bill includes a provision that sets out the circumstances in which a principal or employer will be liable for the actions of an agent or employee. This provision ensures that liability can be appropriately attributed to entities that act through the actions of natural persons, such as a company or body politic.

Finally, I conclude with a brief mention of the other miscellaneous provisions in the bill. Clause 54 requires that a statutory review of the bill be undertaken three years after commencement, with a report to be tabled within four years after commencement—in other words, the report must be tabled within 12 months of the review period commencing. The Minister will be required to undertake the review to determine whether the policy objectives of the legislation remain valid and the terms of the legislation remain appropriate for securing those objectives. This kind of review is standard and important for legislation such as this, which is relatively novel. It will provide an important opportunity for consideration of how the bill is operating in practice and any opportunities for refinement or improvement. Schedule 1 to the bill sets out the transitional provisions. Most critically, part 2 of the schedule makes it clear that this bill is not retrospective. This means that it will only apply to conduct that occurs after the commencement of the law.

Before I conclude, I acknowledge and thank the many people who have worked tirelessly on this bill. They include the staff of my department, the Department of Communities and Justice, in particular Lucian Tan, Julie Mackenzie, Salonika Mitter, Isabella Houston, Sallie McLean, Stephen Bray, Katy Wood, and Mark Follett; and the staff of the Ministry of Health, in particular Gemma Broderick, Hugh Percival and Amelia Parsonage; and former staff of the ministry, Greg Smitheram and Anna Read. I also thank the staff of Minister Kamper's office and my own staff for their excellent work on the long and detailed consultation that accompanied this bill. I see that the member for Sydney is in the Chamber and is nodding. Everyone who took part in the consultation came to the table with good faith, notwithstanding that views were polarised. We have come to a bill that I think the House can adopt with pride.

This bill fulfils the Government's election commitment to ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices, but it is so much more than just ticking the box on a promise made and a promise delivered. This bill is a clear signal that the New South Wales Government—and hopefully the House in its entirety—recognises that practices that are directed to have LGBTQ+ people change or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity are not welcome here. These are practices founded on false premises. LGBTQ+ people are not broken. They do not need fixing. They do not need to be "saved" from their identities. I am proud to be able to bring forward legislation in this place that affirms those statements and that protects LGBTQ+ communities. Once again, I thank the member for Sydney for taking a leading role, along with people like the Hon. Penny Sharpe, with respect to these issues. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **COMBAT SPORTS AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:19):** I continue my contribution to debate on the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024. Currently, the Combat Sports Act 2013 defines a professional contest and deems all others amateur. The bill defines amateur contest and deems all others professional. Further, in order to simplify the specifications, the bill combines the registration classes of "trainer" and "second" into a single class of registration called "trainer". The bill establishes the new term "close associate" and defines close associate for the

purpose of security determinations and other provisions of the Act and regulations that relate to promoter and manager corporations. It is a necessary reform to permit the registration of corporations.

The bill establishes a new offence for approved amateur bodies that fail to comply with the conditions of their approval. That provides the authority with the option to take action against an approved amateur body that is found to not be complying with its obligations rather than revoking its approval. The bill enables combatants that have previously held a registration in a professional class to apply for registration as an amateur, where it is appropriate. That will allow combatants who have competed professionally to compete at an amateur level again, aligning New South Wales with other jurisdictions.

The bill imposes automatic medical suspensions for combatants. Previously, those suspensions were under the authority's rules. The change allows automatic medical suspensions to be taken after a suspected injury as the result of a knockout or suspected knockout. A combatant must notify the authority if they have been subject to a medical suspension in other jurisdictions. That is to protect the combatant's health and safety, and it aims to reduce the potential risk for repeated head injury in a short period of time. [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

In order to streamline processes such as creating a fight card, the bill will enable a public register of combatants. The public register will assist in determining when a combatant is eligible to compete in an event, without needing to contact the authority to provide essential information. The bill enables a corporation to lodge an application for registration as a promoter or manager. [*Extension of time*]

That will also allow sports organisations to register as promoters. The change aligns with modern business practices; it is rare for a single person to be responsible for an event. Significant penalties will be issued to registered corporations for violating parts of the Act. For the purpose of security determinations, under the Act organisations that are applying to be registered promoters or managers will also be required to provide the authority with a list of close associates. As a result of the 2015 coronial inquest into the death of a combatant, the bill aims to mandate advanced life-support training for accredited attending medical practitioners. By creating an accreditation, specific training standards can be mandated in order to ensure that safety standards and the accredited attending medical practitioner requirements are met.

The bill will also increase the penalties for failing to make sure that an attending medical practitioner is present for an event. The bill grants the referee the authority to suspend a contest for the purpose of conducting a modified head injury assessment. With mandated medical training for accredited attending medical practitioners, it will be apparent when there are signs that a potential head injury may have occurred. The bill will empower the authority to grant New South Wales residents an exemption from the suspension-of-contest provisions, where appropriate to do so. There are existing exemptions provisions for overseas and interstate referees. The exemptions ensure that the functions of inspectors, medical practitioners and referees are aligned so that an event can run smoothly.

The bill also includes a transitional provision that allows the authority to extend the registration term of a person for the purpose of enabling them to comply with safety training conditions. The function of the provision allows the authority to align the registration of certain classes, if required, to deliver important concussion training and ensure that the term of that training coincides with the length of registration. The bill introduces a requirement for combatant registration that the applicant must have completed safety training specified by the authority. The intention of that amendment is to mandate concussion and other serious head injury identification training.

The bill creates a mandatory framework for the provision of medical equipment used at events. It also introduces an offence for noncompliance. This equipment is to be listed in the rules to allow for changes over time following the progression of medical advice. It is clarified in the bill that a combatant who does not usually reside in New South Wales is not required to provide documentation to the authority if they are currently registered in the jurisdiction where they typically reside. The amendments made in the bill ensure the safety of not only the combatants but also everyone involved in the process of organising those events and contests. Mandating specific medical training is integral to the wellbeing of our participants, who bring entertainment and pride to New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:29):** I thank Minister Kamper for introducing the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024, for his enthusiastic support of all sports and, in this bill, for his focus on combat sports. The bill was formed with a view to prescribing regulations as to the conduct of the contest, such as suspension or stopping based on the health and safety of the combatants; the introduction of mandatory concussion identification of all participants, including promoters and industry participants; and the need to have a clear understanding of how to assess the challenges of the combatants to ensure that we deal with their health and safety.

Having acknowledged some of the technical improvements to health and safety in the bill, I turn my attention to the value of combat sports to New South Wales in ensuring we maximise our ability to attract major events. The tourism and events sectors are vital to our State's economy. Those sectors inject large amounts of revenue into the visitor economy and support thousands of jobs throughout the State. Combat sports provide a significant contribution to the sectors. The Government secured a partnership with a key stakeholder in the industry, the Ultimate Fighting Championship, which confirmed three UFC events to take place in Sydney over next four years. We brought a high-profile UFC contest to New South Wales in 2023. Those events attract domestic and international tourists to our shores. They support businesses and jobs across the events sector, along with hotels, restaurants, shops and other tourism attractions. The bill balances safety issues with economics. It provides the necessary improvements to the safety of combatants whilst minimising the impact on our State's ability to attract major events, and it allows individual athletes and their support teams to generate income.

An important feature of the bill is the ability to exempt certain high-level contests from the requirement to suspend the contest for the purposes of conducting a head injury assessment. The amendments to the Act and regulations include the ability for the Combat Sports Authority of NSW to exempt persons who are residents of New South Wales from their requirements under new sections 63A, 64A and 66A. It is intended that those provisions will be used for certain high-profile contests. Those provisions are important to ensure that events that are required to be held under certain rules, such as world titles or Olympic qualifying events, can be held in New South Wales. That will mean we can continue to facilitate high-level contests on our shores, which contribute to the State economy. We want New South Wales to be an attractive place to hold contests so that people can travel here to enjoy our beautiful State and see their favourite combat sports athletes compete. 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.

The ability of New South Wales to host world-class events was evident at UFC 293. On 10 September 2023, UFC 293, a professional mixed martial arts contest, was held at Qudos Bank Arena, where 12 contests took place in front of a reported 18,168 spectators with millions of viewers worldwide. Those spectators visited Sydney from across Australia and spent money in our hotels, restaurants, cafes, shops and tourist attractions. Pay-per-view subscriptions were also sold. Those subscriptions streamed advertisements of our beautiful State to viewers across the globe, promoting tourism to our shores. Prior to this event, the Combat Sports Authority of NSW determined that UFC 293 was classified as a "significant contest" under the Combat Sports Regulation 2014. That determination was published on the authority's website. That assisted with the running of UFC 293 and was granted after considering the safety management plans for the event.

The Government and the Combat Sports Authority of NSW will continue to work with promoters and combat sports sanctioning organisations to ensure that high-profile combat sports contests are held in New South Wales. The Government is committed to hosting the best sports content available in New South Wales and promoting combat sports events. Whilst we have spoken about the positives of the bill, I have to bring the Minister's attention to two pressing items of concern. The first issue is how did we miss out on the World Wrestling Entertainment [WWE] Elimination Chamber? It ended up being held in Western Australia last month. Western Australia tourism Minister, Rita Saffioti, said:

When you look at all the indicators, it has been a roaring success—52,000 people at the stadium last night, well above our projections. It eclipsed what I think we thought it would do.

The WWE has a worldwide reach of one billion people, with 14,000 fans who travelled to Western Australia for this event, many from Blacktown. I was upset that I could not go. Many of my coffee buddies told me how they travelled to Perth and stayed multiple nights. We need WWE major events in Sydney. How far is the Minister willing to go to get WWE major events into Sydney? Maybe he will have to wrestle our Western Australian comrades. I could see a tag-team event of the sports and tourism Ministers of New South Wales up against the Western Australians—Ministers David Templeman and Rita Saffioti up against the dynamic duo of Minister Graham and Minister Kamper. I suggest to Minister Kamper that he does not have to wear tights these days. I recall that "Hacksaw" Jim Duggan wore jeans, which might be a better look for our Minister. I am willing to sacrifice myself on behalf of the Government and go to the WWE and negotiate personally to have it in New South Wales.

**Mr Mark Hodges:** And participate?

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** And participate, yes! That leads me to the second point of concern that I have. The bill fails to address ambush marketing. I am still dealing with the trauma as a child growing up watching the wrestling on Channel 9 Saturday or Sunday mornings—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Mario Milano.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Mario Milano, Mr X, Killer Karl Kox—

**Ms Karen McKeown:** Spiros Arion.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Ron Miller, Larry O’Dea, Sheik Wadi Ayoub, Brute Bernard and Gorgeous George Jr.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Gorgeous George, yes. I am still traumatised that, 10 minutes before the wrestling started, I had Bob Santamaria giving his political commentary on Channel 9—whilst waiting for the wrestling to start. Thankfully, Bob’s commentary was nowhere near as good as the legendary wrestling commentator, Mike Cleary, who represented Australia in three different sports and went on to commentate professional wrestling before becoming sports Minister in the Wran Government. I thank the House for its indulgence, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (16:39):** The Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 provides improvements to the regulation of combat sports while also ensuring that we are promoting combat sports and making things simpler for industry participants. I clarify at the outset that I will not be part of the tag team from Western Sydney accompanying the member for Blacktown, but I look forward to seeing the Minister for Sport carrying the flag on my behalf. One object of the Combat Sports Act is to promote the development of the combat sports industry. While we are deeply committed to improving the safety of participants, we are equally committed to ensuring that we have a thriving combat sports sector making a valuable contribution to New South Wales. The Government has ensured that this bill contains provisions to improve the operations of the Act and regulation, and to simplify requirements for the sector where possible.

One example of this is to allow corporations to apply for registration as promoters and managers. A benefit of this change is that it will facilitate sporting organisations being able to register as promoters and facilitate more regional contests, which may be seen as less commercially viable or profitable, in the interests of promoting the sport. If contests can happen in regional areas, those areas would benefit greatly. Previously, this was dependent on individuals stepping up to act as the promoter and take on all risk. With these amendments, sports organisations will be able to register as promoters and host contests without the pressure falling on any one individual.

Another example of our commitment to making things better for the sector is the public register. The public register will ensure that any interested person, including promoters and match-makers, can search for whether a combatant is eligible to compete and build a fight card without needing to contact the Combat Sports Authority of NSW to check the combatant’s status. The public register will reduce the administrative burden on the authority while enhancing convenience for those organising contests. The bill will also facilitate former professional combatants being able to seek approval to compete in amateur contests. This ensures that some of our best athletes are able to represent Australia at the Olympic Games and compete in qualifying contests here in New South Wales.

Another important reform to simplify requirements for the sector is the merging of the trainer and second registration classes into a single class of registration called "Trainer". When developing these amendments, we have, wherever possible, tried to minimise the regulatory impact so as to continue to support the combat sports sector. Of importance to me is that the Government’s commitment to safety is clear in the bill. The Government has clearly demonstrated our commitment to attracting major events, including combat sports events, to New South Wales. Our commitment to bringing the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] here and exposing New South Wales to the hundreds of millions of people who follow it is evident through our recent partnership. In September 2023, UFC 293 was held in front of a sellout crowd, with huge global exposure. The event was a resounding success and showcased New South Wales to a global audience.

The Government will continue to promote and support the combat sports sector, while ensuring it remains as safe as possible for all competitors. This bill strikes the balance successfully and will not only protect competitors but also reduce the administration burden on the sector. Combat sports are regulated in New South Wales, as they are in most Australian jurisdictions and many jurisdictions around the world, due to the inherent risk to the participants. Regulation ensures there are appropriate safety measures in place to minimise the risk to participants wherever possible. The Combat Sports Authority of NSW regulates the sports in accordance with the Combat Sports Act 2013, the Combat Sports Regulation 2014 and the Authority Rules made under section 107 of the Act. The objects of the Act are very clear: to promote the health and safety of combat sports contestants, to promote the integrity of combat sports contests, to regulate combat sports contests on a harm minimisation basis and to promote the development of the combat sports industry.

The purpose of a public register is to improve the match-making process, reduce red tape and streamline the fight card development process. The bill will allow the authority to make public thorough and electronic public register details of all registered people, including their name and registration class and expiry date. For participants, this will include a date to which they are eligible to compete. It means that promoters and match-makers will not need to contact the authority, as I have covered previously. Rather than sending an email and waiting for a response or needing to call during business hours, they will be able to build a fight card at any

time. The current method of preparing a fight card is laborious and time consuming. Making this information public will make the lodgement of fight cards simpler and improve the regulation of combat sports.

During the authority's review it was noted that other jurisdictions around the world allow professionals to compete in the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games. However, in New South Wales this is prohibited. This provision allows the authority to register former professional combatants in amateur classes and determine guidelines for that process. It will ensure that combatants looking to qualify for the Olympic Games or the Commonwealth Games who have previously turned professional will be eligible to compete for our country. During consultation on the exposure draft of the bill we received submissions from 12 individuals involved in the combat sports sector, raising a range of issues. The matters raised will be considered as part of the remaking of the regulation and the rewriting of the Authority Rules in 2024.

Consultation occurred with New South Wales government agencies, including NSW Treasury and the NSW Police Force. During the legislative drafting process, the Office of Sport consulted with New South Wales police, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and the Department of Communities and Justice on relevant provisions. The Information and Privacy Commissioner was also consulted about amendments regarding the public register. The authority, supported by the Office of Sport, consulted extensively with industry to develop its recommendations to the Government. This included discussions with promoters, peak bodies, officials, medical personnel and combat sports participants. During the second phase of the review, the authority conducted surveys, held workshops with stakeholders and completed a survey of other regulators to develop the recommendations proposed to the Government. There is general agreement and support across the industry for these proposed reforms.

Several reforms suggested by the Combat Sports Authority have not been included in this round of amendments, but are supported by the Government. This includes the consideration of match-making guidelines and a tiered, risk-based industry framework. Both of these recommendations require further policy development and consultation, and will be considered for future amendment. The Combat Sports Regulation 2014 is also due to be remade. It is anticipated that this will occur in 2025, once the amendments that have been made into regulation have commenced on proclamation following passage of the bill. The combat sports sector and the public will be consulted during the regulation remaking process. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:48):** I contribute to debate on the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 and thank the Minister for Sport for bringing forward this important and long-overdue reform to provide better protections for fighters across boxing, MMA, kickboxing, Muay Thai and other combat sports. The bill also supports organisations to facilitate contests and to promote them far more simply. Combat sports are regulated in New South Wales and overseen by the Combat Sports Authority. The Combat Sports Act 2013 and the Combat Sports Regulation 2014 have been the subject of an extensive review by the authority. The bill amends the Act and regulation as a result of recommendations made in the review. The amendments are informed by the following principles. Safety is the primary purpose of the legislative reform. The regulatory impact on interstate and overseas participants is to be minimised to promote event attraction, noting the need to maintain safety standards. Medical standards are based on medical advice from the Medical Advisory Committee of the authority which is made up of experienced doctors and neurologists. The current complexity in the regulatory scheme should be minimised, while ensuring that high standards of safety and integrity are upheld.

Members of the previous Government dragged their feet in addressing long overdue concerns with the Combat Sports Act 2013. In September 2015, experienced boxer Davey Browne was knocked senseless in the twelfth and last round of a regional championship fight that should have been called off before then. Three days later he died in hospital, leaving behind a devastated father, brother, wife and two toddlers. The 2017 coronial inquest found: "Tragically, the evidence of this inquest has established that Davey's death was preventable. The seriousness of his condition at the end of round 11 was recognised by a number of witnesses present at the time, albeit with the benefit of hindsight. Action could have been taken to examine Davey and stop the fight prior to the point when it ended in the twelfth round. The evidence clearly establishes that it was the blow in the twelfth round that killed him." I take this opportunity to put on the record my condolences to his family and friends, who I am sure are still gutted by his loss.

My colleague the member for Auburn took quick action and introduced the Combat Sports Amendment (Referee's Duty to Stop Contest) Bill in 2017 to amend the Act to require the referee of a combat sports contest to stop the contest if directed to do so by a trainer of a combatant. The bill lapsed and the previous Government brought forward the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2018, with minimal changes, and inadequately dealing with the coronial inquest recommendations. In the debate on the 2018 bill the former member for Fairfield said:

Despite a comprehensive review of the Act by the Combat Sports Authority, many of the coronial recommendations have not been acted upon or enshrined in legislation ....

The legislation is about the health and safety of boxers and combatants; one only needs to look at the objects of the bill to see that this is the primary purpose of the legislation. This bill should have been introduced 12 months ago ...

I cannot fathom why it should take almost three years to implement a number of sensible changes as recommended in the Coroner's report. However, the Government clearly has its own agenda, and the Opposition—

which was us at the time—

is pretty sure it relates to toll roads and stadia.

I note also that my colleague the member for Charlestown spoke specifically at that time about the need for training. She said:

The Deputy State Coroner also made recommendations that the Minister for Sport amend New South Wales combat sports legislation to provide 'a comprehensive set of rules to govern the conduct of all boxing contests.' She also recommended that the Office of Sport continue to develop training for registered industry participants regarding the rules of the sport, medical examination and the identification of concussion and to introduce an accreditation process to ensure that industry participants and ringside doctors complete annual training on those issues.

The coronial inquest reported in June 2017. It is now March 2024. This Government deserves to be congratulated for taking action on this long overdue recommendation.

The bill includes important safety reforms, including mandatory training relating to the management of concussion and head injuries for industry participants, promoters, referees, combat sports inspectors and combatants; the accreditation of attending medical practitioners to ensure that they have relevant qualifications, skills and experience, including mandatory training relating to the management of concussion and head injuries; the update and simplification of provisions relating to registration, including initial eligibility for registration and renewals; and enabling the Combat Sports Authority to prescribe prerequisite skills and training. I note the Minister's second reading speech on the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024, in which he said:

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.

In particular, I note the Minister's reference to schedule 1 [43]. He said:

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.

In particular, I note new section 16A requires:

A person's registration as a combatant is automatically suspended if the person does not comply with a safety training condition of the person's registration.

These safety training requirements will make a big difference on the ground. The coroner was explicit in the report of the inquest, recommending the Office of Sport:

2. (a) To continue to develop training for registered industry participants, attending medical practitioners and promoters, on the following topics.
  - (i) the rules applicable to combat sports contests in New South Wales;
  - (ii) the roles of industry participants, attending medical practitioners and promoters in boxing contests;
  - (iii) when a contestant should be medically examined during a contest and when a contest should be stopped on account of the condition of the combatant.
  - (iv) the identification, significance and risks associated with serious head injuries including concussion; and
- (b) investigate and implement mechanisms, including an accreditation process, which will best ensure that every relevant industry participant and attending medical practitioner complete training on those topics at least annually.

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.

It is March 2024. It has taken too long to get to this point, but I am proud to be a member of a Labor Government that is doing what should have been done years ago. When I was younger, I spent a lot of time in boxing and kickboxing gyms, and I also know quite a few people who have sustained dreadful concussions and

injuries in fights and in training. I urge the Office of Sport to also consider extending the safety training requirements at the same time as implementing the changes we are discussing today.

Parents or guardians should, if allowing their child to participate in sports with a high risk of concussion, also complete mandatory concussion training. As we know, parents have legal responsibility for their children until they are 18 years of age, and those parents sign the waiver on behalf of the child prior to contests. Without undertaking safety training they may be consenting to possible harm without being educated on the risks. I believe it is not too onerous for parents to complete concussion training if their child is fighting. There is a current provision for parents to sign a waiver to the New South Wales Office of Sport and parental training would be an extension of that requirement. [*Extension of time*]

There is growing evidence about the consequences of repetitive head impacts and multiple concussions across many sports, not just combat sports. For example, in soccer, older research involving amateur and professional soccer players indicated an association between cumulative heading and neuropsychological impairments. One study of 37 former professional soccer players found mild to severe deficits in the areas of attention, concentration, memory and judgement in 81 per cent of the players. In another study involving 53 active professional soccer players, impairments in memory, planning and visuo-perceptual tasks were observed and compared with those in non-contact sport athlete controls.

As we all remember from last year, the Matildas did our country incredibly proud in their Women's World Cup campaign. We also all remember that Alanna Kennedy had to miss the Women's World Cup final stage after suffering delayed concussion symptoms. She missed the semifinal loss to England through illness, with Football Australia subsequently confirming she was suffering delayed concussion symptoms stemming from Australia's quarterfinal win over France. Everyone will also remember Roosters, Blues and Kangaroos captain, Boyd Cordner, announcing his retirement from rugby league in June 2021. He had not played since he was concussed in game one of the 2020 State of Origin series, with his career cut short due to repeated head knocks.

In cricket Will Pucovski is widely regarded as one of Australia's best young batters. His twelfth concussion scare of his career was endured earlier this year after a blow to his helmet during a Sheffield Shield match. He has battled concussion throughout his professional career. The Victorian team's captain said, "He's in good spirits. I spoke to him today. He seems all right. He's headed home already. But hopefully he can look after himself and be back playing as soon as possible." But 12 concussions are a lot. In New South Wales, the Office of Sport partnered with Sports Medicine Australia to release concussion protocols for State sporting organisations. The first set of statewide guidelines for managing concussion in sport was launched in February 2018. Given the growing evidence, I encourage the Office of Sport to continue monitoring the academic research and to work with stakeholders to update the concussion protocols to ensure that safety and injury prevention remain a top priority for all sporting organisations. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** It being 5.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the public interest debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

*Public Interest Debate*

**SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (17:00):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises past Labor and Coalition governments have missed opportunities in south-west Sydney.
- (2) Calls on all parties to provide infrastructure along with approved growth.
- (3) Calls on the New South Wales Government to recognise the need for investment in south-west Sydney.
- (4) Calls on the Government to recognise the future growth and population needs by reviewing previous studies and business cases and undertaking further investigations into the Maldon-Dombarton railway line.

What does "MD" stand for? It stands for not only a medical doctor but also something that can improve the health and wellbeing of many people: the Maldon-Dombarton line. The centre of Sydney is no longer the CBD. Is it Western Sydney, somewhere between Petersham and Springwood or between Parramatta and the Blue Mountains? These areas are where the majority of government money is spent. The reality is that every day the huge number of houses from Leppington to Bowral drags that centre towards the south-west, to growing communities like my own, in Wollondilly, which has been not only forgotten but also used with no consideration of missed opportunities. I was elected to this place on a very clear mandate, not only for infrastructure like the Picton bypass but also for my community's assessment of the major political parties putting out the same spin and promises each time: the same plans unveiled for things that will never take place, the same big novelty cheques and then the delivery of nothing.

This motion seeks to have Parliament and all parties recognise the errors of the past and also address the opportunities that, if done correctly, would benefit not only my community but the entire Macarthur region and beyond—in fact, the whole of New South Wales. It is unbelievable to have planning approval for massive areas of growth with no infrastructure. It is ridiculous that thousands of people are to live in places such as Wilton with the promise of a 30-minute city but they have no hospital, no high school, no jobs and no sewer treatment plant—yes, we truck it in and out—and, most importantly, no connectivity to anywhere other than a traffic queue. The Government continues to be reactive to developers. Why do we not have a plan that drives them to deliver what we and the community want and need, to lay out the plan they must follow, not the other way around? I remember Campbelltown years ago as a rural area with a hospital surrounded by paddocks ready for growth. Since then our whole Macarthur area has grown and continues to stretch south endlessly in a sea of grey roofs.

We have very little infrastructure. Narellan Road and Northern Road have been rebuilt over and over with traffic lights every 400 metres, and more and more houses. Those houses are filled with families who drive hours to their jobs because there are minimal employment opportunities locally. In Leppington, Camden, Campbelltown and Wollondilly our commuting population is between 50 per cent and a staggering 70 per cent. I hear other members talk about teacher shortages in their schools. But we do not even have the schools. Our students fare much worse because we have only one public high school in the Wollondilly local government area, and students travel for hours each day. This area is as large as the entire Sydney metropolis, with one high school. We have few trains. The Southern Highlands line is managed by Australian Rail Track Corporation, which favours freight, and our commuter service of one train every hour at peak times often runs late or is cancelled outright, and that is for the few villages that have the service. Our residents park in Campbelltown and Leppington after driving for an hour or so and take up the limited commuter car-parking spaces.

But things can be different. We need good governance and a mature discussion about what is needed not only for the population now but also for the expectation of the population and generations of tomorrow—a plan and a vision to make our State a great place to live and work in. We are at the crossroads. The aerotropolis is now at our doorstep in south-west Sydney. There will be plenty of imposition on my community, with 24/7 planes, airport noise and loss of rights for secondary dwellings, but no investigation into opportunities. The Government needs to look for the widespread opportunities this airport provides and recognise the growth taking place within south-west Sydney. Let us think for a moment. What do we have? Growth with no infrastructure, a new airport and a huge housing crisis recognised by every member, who all say no to a solution in their backyards.

That brings me to the point, by a long way round. The Maldon-Dombarton line remains incomplete after a promise stretching from the Labor Wran Government. For five years work was done on bridges, and in 1988 the Liberal Greiner Government cancelled the project, despite telling my community, before the election, that the Liberals would complete it. That broken promise has left the line incomplete to this day, with massive half-completed bridges and an intact corridor right through the growth area. In 2011 a feasibility study on completing the line was done by the then outgoing Labor Government. It was not a business case but an election commitment that led to a promise of contracts that were never delivered. In 2014 there was a business case through a registration of interest process. That was solely for a freight line.

We are now 10 years down the track, and 30,000 homes have been approved in Wollondilly, as well as tens of thousands in Leppington, Camden and Campbelltown. There are also huge developments at the south end of the corridor, in Dapto, Wollongong and Port Kembla. The University of Wollongong had a study done by the South West Illawarra Rail Link—SWIRL—because it would benefit the Illawarra and beyond. Lachlan Regional Transport Committee, which represents councils from as far away as Dubbo and Cowra, has the completion of this line as a priority. We might ask why. Its produce travels the city line, with the imposition of a curfew to allow passenger travel in peak hours. It knows that its product could get to the port with less cost and in a faster time via Illawarra. We have an approved airport, and we have a need for freight to get off Picton and Appin roads. All the money spent on duplication of those roads will not fix the issue of transport.

I believe we can do better. The motion asks the Government and the Opposition to recognise the errors of the past and fix them together. Let us be forward thinking. The motion recognises the reality of the future and asks both parties to be mature and provide for areas of growth and the opportunities with a current business case. The task I have for us is to draw a line in the sand now and start providing together for a better future for the people of New South Wales. I look forward to the debate and urge all members to support the motion.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (17:07):** I thank the member for Wollondilly for bringing this important motion to this House, and acknowledge her advocacy for her community. I acknowledge the presence of the member for Campbelltown in the Chamber, and his ongoing advocacy for his community on this issue. I reaffirm the New South Wales Government's commitment to improving access to public transport in our communities, and I appreciate that residents in south-west Sydney have comparatively few options to travel by public transport. The Government understands that south-west Sydney continues to be one of the fastest growing

regions in New South Wales. Development of a transport infrastructure network and services are critical to providing sustainable travel options. Key parts of these corridors have been identified and protected through gazettal.

A keystone of the Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan is the new M12 motorway, a \$2.04 billion project for a 16-kilometre east-west motorway between the M7 motorway at Cecil Hills and the Northern Road at Luddenham, including a connection to the Western Sydney international airport. The motorway will support around 2,000 direct and 2,400 indirect jobs during its delivery. Major work started in August 2022 and will be completed before the Western Sydney international airport opens, in 2026. Various local roads and precincts are being upgraded to enhance connectivity, accessibility and overall quality of life in south-western Sydney. Those infrastructure investments are crucial for the region's development, economic growth and improved transportation. In the 2023-24 budget, the New South Wales Government allocated \$770 million to establish the Urban Road Fund over four years. The key projects include planning for upgrades on the Fifteenth Avenue Smart Transit Corridor, which is a vital east-west link between Liverpool and Bradfield providing a direct bus connection; duplicating key sections of Heathcote Road; and upgrading Bandon Road, Henry Lawson Drive at Milperra and Hill Road at Homebush.

Significant investment in roads also supports more efficient bus services, including new bus routes to connect the airport precinct and adjacent metropolitan centres. The 2023-24 New South Wales budget included \$302.7 million for new bus services that will connect local population centres, including Campbelltown, Penrith and Liverpool, to the aerotropolis, providing additional public transport options that will be available even before the airport opens. To connect the Illawarra and Shoalhaven to south-western Sydney, the Government is building an interchange on the M1 Princes Motorway at the base of Mount Ousley. The work will lead to improved access between Illawarra and Western Sydney including the Wilton and Greater Macarthur growth areas. The Mount Ousley interchange project will improve safety and reliability for light and heavy vehicles, increase capacity for future traffic growth, and improve access and travel times for vehicles using the M1 Princes Motorway to travel to and from Wollongong CBD and the University of Wollongong.

The Government has committed to deliver an Illawarra Rail Resilience Plan, which is currently in the early stages of development. As part of that plan, Transport for NSW will examine options to improve resilience, reliability and connectivity between Port Kembla, south-western Sydney and the South Coast. The member for Wollondilly has specifically raised the Maldon-Dombarton rail line, and I am aware of proposals to complete the line to enhance freight and passenger services between the Illawarra and south-western Sydney. There have been several studies and reports on the line, and Transport for NSW will continue to investigate options for it. Transport infrastructure is key in connecting communities to economic opportunities, enhancing access to essential services such as health and education, and facilitating social connection. The opportunities to support the growing communities in south-western Sydney are immense and they are equally matched by the will of the Government to support those hardworking, under-served communities.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Before I call the member for Oatley, I acknowledge in the public gallery guests of the member for Davidson, who are year 12 student leaders from the Davidson electorate: Amber, Alan, Nathan, Annika, Leo, Claire, Jessica, Rowan, Ricky, Aaron, Laura, Shirley, Emily, Indiana, Emma, Kiki and Luca. I welcome them to the New South Wales Parliament. They have come at a good time; we are about to hear from the member for Oatley.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:12):** It is a good time. I also welcome the school leaders from the Davidson electorate. I note the member for Wollondilly's comments about missed opportunities. However, the member has failed to acknowledge the many achievements and significant investments of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government in south-western Sydney. We on this side of the House, unlike those opposite, have a proud, strong track record when it comes delivering for south-western Sydney, spanning across health, education, roads and transport infrastructure. Our investments in the region made it fit for the future. By 2031 close to 1.3 million people are expected to call south-western Sydney home. In health—I am sure the member for Holsworthy will mention it later—the former Government invested a record \$790 million into Liverpool Hospital to transform it into the Liverpool Health and Academic Precinct. That significant redevelopment will ensure the long-term health and economic wellbeing of communities right across south-western Sydney.

Our health investments did not end there. In 2022 the Liberal-Nationals Government was able to celebrate the opening of a new 12-storey clinical services building at Campbelltown Hospital, the centrepiece of a \$632 million stage two redevelopment. I am sure the member for Campbelltown will acknowledge the wonderful contributions of the previous Government.

**Mr Greg Warren:** I worked hard for that.

**Mr MARK COURE:** The member for Campbelltown will have his chance to support the previous Government in a second. That was in addition to a \$134 million first stage redevelopment of Campbelltown Hospital and the completion of a \$34 million hospital car park. That major investment in Campbelltown Hospital is strengthening frontline services to deliver better services sooner and closer to home, with a state-of-the-art building that is helping service the more than 130,000 new residents expected to call the region home over the next decade. In education our Government was investing \$8.6 billion in school infrastructure to deliver 160 new and upgraded schools. Labor closed 90 of them when it was last in government.

**Ms Charishma Kaliyanda:** None in south-western Sydney.

**Mr MARK COURE:** I will get to that in a second. We opened Edmondson Park Public School, which offers 44 teaching and learning spaces, four support classrooms and two preschool rooms, accommodating up to 1,000 students and adding 40 preschool places for community use. We also opened Gregory Hills Public School, which includes temporary facilities such as 12 general air-conditioned learning spaces, a staff and administration building, library, communal hall, canteen and more. Those are just two examples over the past four years. We also upgraded many other schools. We invested in many south-western Sydney schools, including Denham Court Public School, Oran Park High School, Glenfield Park School, Ingleburn High School, Prestons Public School and more.

The South West Rail Link Extension, delivered on time and on budget, was an achievement of the Liberal-Nationals Government. Our Transport Access Program provided accessibility upgrades to train stations right across south-western Sydney in Panania, East Hills, Canley Vale and, of course, Narwee in my own electorate. We had a plan to increase and improve services for south-western Sydney and we were delivering on those promises. Who could forget that it was a Liberal-Nationals government that invested in the commencement of the \$206 million Spring Farm Parkway stage one project, connecting communities across the Macarthur region. On completion, that significant project will provide direct access for residents to the employment precincts across the local area.

My role as shadow Minister for South-Western Sydney demonstrates the Opposition's focus on that important area. Interestingly, Labor does not have a Minister representing south-western Sydney. Opposition members will continue to fight and call on the Government to ensure that the significant improvements the previous Government made will continue in south-western Sydney. The people of south-western Sydney should not have to miss out on investments they deserve just because the Minns Labor Government is more concerned about itself than about listening to what the community needs. We on this side of the House delivered on health, education, transport and roads, unlike those opposite, who have failed the people of south-western Sydney.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:17):** In supporting the motion, I will inject some objectivity and some facts into the debate after the contribution of the member for Oatley. I thank the member for Wollondilly for bringing forward her motion. She was elected just under 12 months ago, as I was. Along with her election as the member for Wollondilly and mine as the member for Leppington came a wave of change across south-western Sydney, not because we were new MPs but because we brought a new attitude of working together constructively despite politics, personalities and factions to bring about the best results for south-western Sydney. There is no better example of that than the fantastic motion before the House. I make special mention of the member for Campbelltown, who is also the Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney. He has been a strong advocate for Appin Road, for which he has been fighting for 10 years. Action is happening on that after 12 years of neglect by those opposite.

The member for Camden is another newbie who has hit the ground running, working constructively to clean up the mess left by the previous Liberal member. She is working hard to provide express buses to the airport, and we are also working on a business case to establish a train to the airport. I mention the airport because it is an important catalyst. Despite the argy-bargy, I think we can agree on one thing: The airport in Western Sydney is a project of immense national importance, and the Government will be happy to cut the ribbon on it at the end of 2026. But the key to an airport and an aerotropolis is having those important transport links, and that is what we are talking about today.

I will mention a few other members from south-west Sydney. The member for Cabramatta, who is behind me, has been working hard to ensure that we fix the mess caused by the train timetable of the previous Government—which slashed buses—as have the member for Liverpool and my good friend the member for Fairfield, who is advocating to ensure that the Transport Access Program is again based on priority and not on shoring up marginal Coalition seats. We have already had wins—the member for Macquarie Fields finally has a lift at Macquarie Fields station. Within 12 short months we are delivering lifts, schools and upgrades to roads.

That is just transport infrastructure, but let us talk about health and education. We have already started putting money towards an upgrade to Fairfield Hospital, which is very close to my heart. It is where my two

children were born and I have visited on a number of occasions after some accidents—sprains, breaks and cracks. It has not had any attention for many years, but we are changing that. We are also looking at a site for a new hospital out at the aerotropolis, and we are making strides in health and education. The member for Oatley gave a bit of a spiel about education but—and I have said this many times—despite all the growth in my electorate around the suburbs of Austral, Leppington and Denham Court, the previous Government built not a single public high school. It stands condemned for that.

But I am happy to announce that we are building a new school, which will open in 2027. The people of Leppington and the south-west will be very happy to see that. The Government is also investing in plenty of other schools, not just in Leppington but right across the area—because this debate is not about Leppington but about south-west Sydney—including Camden, another area that was neglected. Kids there had to go to school in demountables that were slapped together a couple of years before an election. I thank the member for Wollondilly. This is the start of a very constructive relationship. Let us keep fixing the mess caused by the previous Government.

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (17:22):** I speak against the motion of the member for Wollondilly. The former Liberal-Nationals Government delivered record infrastructure funding to south-west Sydney. Let us not forget the remarkable strides made in delivering record infrastructure for our region. Some key achievements of the Coalition Government in my electorate and wider south-west Sydney included investing \$188 million in the upgrade and duplication of Heathcote Road between The Avenue and Infantry Parade, and investing \$790 million in the redevelopment of Liverpool Hospital, making it one of the most advanced and modern health precincts in the Southern Hemisphere. That state-of-the-art facility is also a trauma hospital and has a very high-level neonatal intensive care unit [NICU]. One of my children spent time in that NICU, and the staff and facilities there are absolutely amazing. Well done to the former Coalition Government.

It invested \$53.4 million in the Carnes Hill aquatic centre to build a 50-metre pool and wellness centre, \$43.9 million in the Woodward Park project and \$27.7 million in the Light Horse Park embellishment upgrade, which I look forward to visiting in May for its stage one opening. The Coalition also committed to extending Metro West from Bankstown to Glenfield via Liverpool—which members opposite want to ditch and cut; no transport for us!—building the metro from Western Sydney international airport to St Marys, and many more infrastructure projects that will have a long-lasting legacy for the people of Holsworthy and the broader south-west Sydney region.

If members want to see missed opportunities, cuts and south-west Sydney being ignored, they need look no further than the current Government. Labor scrapped the proposed metro line to Liverpool, and instead buses will continue to clog our already-congested roads. Labor's mates in Canberra pulled their funding for the M7-M12 interchange, and we are now left to pick up the tab—what an absolute delight! Labor's mates in Canberra also left us \$1.65 billion worse off in the GST carve-up, meaning we will not reach a budget surplus this financial year as predicted. Labor gutted funding for the Active Kids and Creative Kids vouchers, which were relied upon by so many families in the State and particularly south-west Sydney. Labor members dragged their feet on committing to the metro from the CBD to Parramatta, and even now there are question marks around its viability if the Australian Turf Club does not end up selling Rosehill racetrack. Their track record is to either delay or deny—to deny the right of south-west Sydney residents to world-class infrastructure and government services.

I highlight the deceit of Labor members with one of their biggest commitments made during the 2023 State election. I drive on Fifteenth Avenue in the Liverpool local government area almost every day to take my children to school. It is a single-lane road serving the greenfield suburb of Austral. Some mornings it takes more than 40 minutes to travel a kilometre due to the traffic, and what did Labor do? This is gold. The Labor Government committed \$50 million to upgrade Fifteenth Avenue, but it was recently revealed in budget estimates that the funding was not for the upgrade but to plan for the upgrade. The good people of Austral needed the upgrade yesterday, and now it has been revealed that it will not happen any earlier than 2027.

The 2023-24 State budget was also a let-down for education, with recurrent expenditure increasing by only 0.9 per cent in nominal terms. However, inflation is projected at 4.5 per cent, meaning there is a real cut of 3.6 per cent in overall education expenditure. It is such a shame that the brunt of the cuts will be felt by children in western and south-western Sydney. For example, not a single school within Holsworthy received funding for upgrades in the budget. There are still classrooms without air-conditioning units. Shame! The Minns Government should be condemned for forgetting the bricks and mortar of our education system. Our public schools deserve constant and recurrent investment to give the next generation the best opportunities.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I call the member for Kiama, as Standing Order 109 mandates that a member of the crossbench must participate in public interest debates. Other members may seek leave to make a contribution after the member for Kiama.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:28):** I strongly support the motion put forward by my colleague the member for Wollondilly, and I hope the fact that I am supporting the motion does not mean that members will look upon it pejoratively. This very important motion relates to a critical piece of infrastructure that will deal with the rail freight corridor, which has been in conflict and getting worse for quite some time. Many people have talked about that. We see more freight on our roads, and the passenger-freight conflict on our rail network also needs to be addressed. That would certainly do a lot to alleviate traffic on the roads that run through the electorate of the member for Wollondilly, but it would also be critical to enhancing opportunities in the Illawarra.

I remember that this issue was discussed during my time as Parliamentary Secretary. An expression of interest was released by former Minister Duncan Gay. Sadly, that did not go anywhere. One of the reasons it did not is there was talk that the outer harbour expansion of Port Kembla needed to be brought on to ensure the freight throughput to the port was sufficient to make it viable. I think it is something that we should commit to, but I also think we should acknowledge that Labor Party members have had a lot to say on this particular issue. I note the conspicuous absence of the so-called Minister for the Illawarra, who is not in the Chamber. I also note the absence of the planning Minister—the Premier pro tem himself—who is not here either. I will come back to him.

This project was on Bob Carr's wish list in 1997. Labor members say that they are for infrastructure, but we have to go back a few Labor Premiers. When Labor first started talking about it, it did nothing about it. In August 2019 a bloke called Albanese said the Maldon-Dombarton line "stacked up" more than a decade ago, and it was now more important than ever. He committed \$50 million—remember, this will cost around \$3 billion but he committed the sum total of \$50 million to the project. I come back to my friend, Premier pro tem Mr Scully. In 2018 he said:

Despite warnings that the South Coast Line will be overwhelmed by increased congestion, the Berejiklian Government remains unwilling to invest real money to get the Maldon-Dombarton rail link back on track. NSW Labor has \$50 million—

again, that figure—

on the table to partner with the private sector to kick-start the completion of the Maldon-Dombarton rail link. The future viability of the Port of Port Kembla depends on the completion of the Maldon-Dombarton project. The Maldon-Dombarton rail link just can't continue to remain on a long 'to do' list in glossy, photo-filled documents.

But where is the planning Minister now? The man talks about a big housing agenda but has no real plan, no infrastructure to go with it, does not talk about the impact on roads. Where is that great visionary, the member for Wollongong, who in opposition would stride up and down behind this table and talk about projects? Now that they are actually in government, Government members behave like they are in opposition. They have absolutely no plan to deliver infrastructure for the Illawarra—a region that they totally take for granted. Minister Scully continued his diatribe of stupidity. On 8 March 2017, in this very Parliament, he said, "But does anyone really think that the project will get any cheaper by delaying it ..." Where are the mighty Illawarra Labor members? Where are they? None of them has even bothered to come to the House today to talk about the impact.

**Ms Charishma Kaliyanda:** Because this is about south-west Sydney.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** No. I am sorry, but this is also about passenger-freight conflicts on the South Coast line and freight coming out of Port Kembla. One of my favourite quotes is from the member for Whitlam. He spoke about this project in the Federal Parliament. He talked about the cuts to infrastructure and said the people in his electorate and throughout the Illawarra had been waiting for this since 1988. What is the member for Whitlam right now? He is the Assistant Treasurer. He has his hand on the chequebook. For once, he could actually do something for his electorate other than put his name on the ballot paper every three years. He could actually invest in the Illawarra. Labor members talk a big game, but in government they just deliver for their paymasters in the trade union movement without delivering the infrastructure that makes a real difference.

Albanese, Scully, Park and Jones are on the record saying that they will actually do something about this. But when they are in the Cabinet room—when they are sitting around the Expenditure Review Committee table with the opportunity to do something—members of this Labor Government vacate the field. They are absolutely all talk and no delivery. I commend the member for Wollondilly for standing up for her community—for coming to this Parliament and saying to this Government, "All talk. Time to deliver and time to get on with infrastructure that makes a real difference, grows the local economies of our regions and provides the vital infrastructure that growing communities need, but you continue to ignore."

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (17:33):** I speak in support of my neighbour, the member for Wollondilly, who is a fierce and passionate fighter for her community. Together, we represent the suburbs accommodating the fastest growth and infrastructure investment—initiated by the former State and Federal Liberal-Nationals governments—that New South Wales has ever witnessed. The former Liberal-Nationals Government took New South Wales from being last behind every other State and Territory in Australia to number

one on all economic indicators. Our citizens were experiencing the transformational vision that we brought with our leadership.

Regrettably, but not surprisingly, the current Federal and State Labor governments have no vision for the future of our communities in western and south-western Sydney, which is demonstrable by the cuts to investment that they have wielded since coming to power. Their lack of vision for our State and region is palpable, and our citizens and communities will now pay the price for their failure. I call on the Minns Labor Government and its Federal counterparts not only to restore the funding they cut to necessary infrastructure, but also to turbocharge their investment in New South Wales's biggest economy—Western Sydney. By failing to do so, the New South Wales Labor Government has missed the opportunities arising out of the Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport, the Aerotropolis and the Bradfield City vision.

The Government also failed to stand up for the people of New South Wales, including in my electorate of Badgerys Creek and our Western Sydney region, against the Albanese Government's savage infrastructure cuts. The Federal Labor Government made the atrocious decision to cancel vital infrastructure funding, like its very own M12-M7 interchange connection, which would provide motorway connectivity for vehicles and passengers to the Federal Government's own infrastructure project. It has cut the funding to that essential connection point. It is the Federal Government's own project; it is unbelievable. To delay the announcement of those cuts until this stage of the State and Federal electoral cycles compounds the detriment. It is reflective of putting politics before people.

The New South Wales Government's failure to stand up to the Albanese Government's cuts makes it no better than its Federal counterpart. Failing the community is a recurring theme for this Minns Labor Government. It could not keep in place cost-of-living support measures that the previous Coalition Government introduced, even when there was no pressure or rationale for such measures to be scrapped. What hope does it have of standing up to its Federal Labor counterpart? Today we were told that Federal Labor will slash the GST funding for New South Wales by up to \$10 billion over the next four years. We need to see leadership and strength from the Premier of New South Wales, who must demand that that funding is returned to the citizens of this State—or the students in the gallery who are watching this debate and their families will suffer. When will we see a strong political leader stand on the side of residents rather than remaining a silent puppet of the union leaders who are really running New South Wales?

Some of the affected projects in my electorate include the Mulgoa Road upgrade and the pivotal M7-M12 interchange project. They are amongst the countless projects that are critical for the growth and development of Badgerys Creek and Western Sydney more broadly, and which promised to revolutionise the region's infrastructure landscape. Another urgent project that the New South Wales Labor Government must prioritise is the extension of the Sydney Metro airport line to Macarthur, servicing the growing suburbs of Oran Park, Arcadian Hills and Maryland and Birling estates—just to name a few of the suburbs that are absorbing the population growth in south-western Sydney. Affordable commuter connectivity is critical to ensure that people can get to work, school and entertainment. Commuters are already suffering as a result of traffic congestion. The scheduled arrival of the new airport in 2026 will lead to continued growth in the local and visitor population. We must get connectivity by public transport underway now.

In the interests of our State and the economic, social and educational benefits to our communities, we must ensure that organisations across all fields choose to invest in the future of our region. To do so, Labor must wake up and realise we are already in March 2024 and the airport is scheduled to open in 2026. We cannot wait any longer. We are paying the price for Labor's complacency, with big corporations such as Amazon walking away from their plans. I wonder how many other organisations are revisiting or rethinking their investments in light of Amazon's decision. I call on Labor to stand up and deliver infrastructure for the people of western and south-western Sydney.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (17:38):** By leave: First of all, I acknowledge the great leaders from the Davidson electorate in the gallery. I thank them for coming to the New South Wales Parliament. What they are seeing today is the public interest debate moved by the member for Wollondilly. The member for Wollondilly and, indeed, all members of this place are committed and passionate advocates for their communities. I welcome any motion that discusses the importance of infrastructure investments. I note that the previous Liberal-Nationals Government invested a record \$116 billion in infrastructure over four years. I say to the Treasurer and the Government that I am closely watching their infrastructure spend, as we need to make sure that we keep investing in infrastructure.

To slightly digress from the motion, I am advocating for a new hall at Davidson High School in my electorate. It was good to join the Minister for Transport to open the new Killara railway station. I am also fighting for the \$9.8 million that was cut by Labor for Lindfield commuter parking. I turn to south-west Sydney, which forms part of the new engine room of New South Wales. South-west and Western Sydney deserve their fair share

of infrastructure, like every community. I first met the member for Wollondilly when she was the mayor of Wollondilly in 2007, when I, as a very young adviser to Barry O'Farrell, came to visit—

**Mrs Tanya Davies:** Very young.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** I note the interjection. I visited Wollondilly as an adviser to Barry O'Farrell. The visit was about promoting infrastructure. Paragraph (4) of the motion rightfully calls on the Government to recognise future growth and population. It mentions the new aerotropolis, which is scheduled to open in 2026, and the importance of supporting infrastructure for that, in particular connecting the aerotropolis with the rest of Sydney, including south-west Sydney. I have been a vocal supporter of the new aerotropolis. How good will the new metro line be when the airport opens? We will have a major piece of infrastructure with another major piece of infrastructure already there before it opens. That is how proper planning should happen.

In *The Daily Telegraph* on 16 January 2024, I noted that the "metro is more than connecting travellers to the new airport. It is connecting communities to new jobs and new homes". We cannot have those precincts empty when the metro opens in 2026. The member for Wollondilly is calling for the completion of the Maldon-Dombarton railway line, a 35-kilometre line that commenced in 1983, linking the main south line at Maldon to Dombarton near Port Kembla. In 2014 the Baird Government had Transport for NSW undertake a registration of interest, inviting the private sector to make comment on the construction, operation and maintenance of the line. The Liberals and The Nationals did the proper research around planning. The registration of interest determined that the line:

... would need substantial ongoing State Government funding and policy support to make it commercially sustainable and that the existing infrastructure is sufficient to manage the short- to medium-term rail capacity requirements for the Illawarra.

In 2017 a business case was undertaken by the independent Infrastructure Australia, which stated the project would take five years to build and, back then, would cost \$805 billion. However, it said that the project cost-benefit analysis ratio was 0.9. What was Labor's response to that over the years? In 2017 the member for Wollongong, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, said, "The dilly-dally shenanigans must end, and the curse on this project must be lifted once and for all." Where is the member for Wollongong? Sadly, he is not here.

It is disappointing for the member for Wollondilly that there are Labor members of Parliament, in opposition or now in government, saying that they support a development on this line, yet they are not here for this debate. They are not here to front up and talk about what they are going to do. I look forward to the Labor Government's response to the member for Wollondilly's request. As a member of the Liberal Party in opposition, I look forward to continuing to have discussions and listening to the member for Wollondilly. I thank the member for Wollondilly for fighting for infrastructure for her community.

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (17:43):** In reply: I thank the member for Coogee, the member for Oatley, the member for Leppington, the member for Holsworthy, the member for Kiama, the member for Badgers Creek and the member for Davidson for their contributions. Wollondilly has been forgotten for too long. It was interesting to hear members talk about Fifteenth Avenue, Henry Lawson Drive, bus routes and achievements like Liverpool Hospital, Campbelltown Hospital and the great schools at Edmondson Park and Gregory Hills. Not one of those things is in Wollondilly. I do not think that members know where Wollondilly is. I am disappointed by the political spin and slander, with members throwing insults across the Chamber and talking about what they have done in their particular areas. It is important for young people to hear that this is what happens in this place. There are two opposing groups that continue to insult each other and talk about what they have done and how great they are. That is why I have ended up in here as an Independent member. That is exactly why I got voted in.

My community is disappointed by what has happened in this place. They are disappointed by the fact that there is only one hospital in an area as big as the whole of the Sydney metropolitan area. Not one of the hospitals mentioned during the debate is in my area, and it would take an hour for people from my community to get to one of them. I challenge each and every member who believes they know where Wollondilly is to meet me in Wilton, but I want them to come by public transport to see if they actually get there. They had better put good sandshoes on because they will be walking there. All we have there is houses. Wollondilly gets the houses because members say, "We do not want to build up. We do not want them in our area." They are happy for me to get the houses and the population, but those people will not have access to services. The houses may be cheaper, but people will not be able to afford to live there.

We cannot cut what has happened previously. Both sides are at fault for not delivering the things that could have been delivered at probably a fiftieth of the cost if both sides had worked together instead of opposing each other all the time. All I want is the best for my community, the people of Macarthur and the people of New South Wales. If members of this place do not start getting along with each other and they continue to carry on like pork chops, we will end up, hopefully, with a whole lot more Independent members in not only Federal but State Government and council. Members can come and meet me in Wilton, and then we will talk about it.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills*

**COMBAT SPORTS AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (17:47):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024. It might interest members to know that one of my uncles was Dr John McGirr, otherwise known as Doc McGirr, a medical practitioner who was, in fact, the manager of Jimmy Carruthers, Australia's first universally recognised boxing champion. My uncle was so well known back in the day that, when I was a young doctor working in the St Vincent's emergency department, people who had heard that my name was McGirr did not ask if I was related to the former Premier, the Hon. James McGirr, or his brother, who was a health Minister; they asked if I was related to the manager of Jimmy Carruthers. I assure members that I do not share my uncle's passion and support for boxing. Rather, I support the Australian Medical Association [AMA] in its opposition to combat sports.

The AMA first opposed boxing in 1983, which was the year that I began medical practice as an intern and well after my uncle was in practice. I understand that the position reflected concerns at the time about the risks of chronic brain injury. That was more than 40 years ago. Those risks were to become vivid for the public when Muhammad Ali, one of the most famous boxers of all time, developed severe Parkinson's disease as a result, it is thought, of his recurrent brain injuries. In fact, when I joined the AMA, it was its opposition to boxing that was one of the policies that first drew my attention. I note that the AMA also recommends that boxing be banned from both the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games, and that people under 18 be prohibited from all forms of combat sport. That is how doctors look at the issue. I accept the participants and supporters of those sports will see it differently, and there is no doubt that boxing and other combat sports are growing in popularity.

It is ironic that is happening at a time when we are becoming aware of the dangers of concussion in other sports where injury to the head does not actually take place as a deliberate outcome of the sport. Those sports are taking steps to limit the damage, and I hope that participants in combat sports will become increasingly aware of the dangers of head and brain injury and concussion. I am very concerned about the real dangers posed by sports in which the aim is to strike blows to an opponent's head. Indeed, I am supportive of the bill because it attempts to introduce some long overdue measures to limit damage from head injury. After all, let us remember, the legislation comes about because of the Coroner's recommendations after the investigation of the tragic death of David "Davey" Browne, who died from a head injury in a fight in 2015. Had this legislation been in place, I would expect that such a fight would have been stopped before that tragic outcome.

Head injuries can be catastrophic, so I welcome steps to reduce the risks. If people are to fight for sport, then harm minimisation is the correct way to go to reduce injuries or deaths. I welcome the bill's intention to introduce a head injury assessment process that requires a contest to be stopped when head injuries are observed by an accredited medical practitioner, combat sports inspector or referee. I also welcome the requirement for appropriate training and accreditation for medical personnel attending contests as well as measures to suspend combatants for prescribed periods of time should a confirmed head injury occur during bouts.

One small point I would like the Minister to address in his reply speech is the requirement in the bill to record a medical practitioner's home address on the register. It appears that will not be publicly available, but there is reference to making publicly available the contact details of the medical practitioner. I understand that privacy provisions would prevent the publication of the home address, but I would like the Minister to clarify that the publicly available information will not include the practitioner's home address. As I said, I am very supportive of the bill as a harm minimisation strategy. It is, basically, in the absence of greater protection of combat sports participants, and I would hope that, short of non-participation, the bill will make a difference to the outcomes and dangers of that sport.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (17:51):** In reply: I thank members for their excellent contributions to the Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 debate. I thank the member for Miranda for her professional contribution, the member for Parramatta, the member for Prospect, my good friend the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Blacktown for his colourful contribution, the member for Penrith, the member for Wagga Wagga, and the member for Granville for her informed and passionate contribution.

I briefly address some matters raised during debate on the bill. In relation to the accreditation of attending medical practitioners, it is important to note that while the Combat Sports Authority will hold an attending medical practitioner's personal information, such as home address, in accordance with new section 37E (2), the new section 21D makes clear what information the authority may make publicly available through the public register, and that does not include home addresses. I thank my colleagues for raising key points, including, in particular, the member for Blacktown, who was seeking a tag team match between John Graham and myself and our Western Australian counterparts. I make it clear that I will not be participating on that fight card. It would provide fantastic entertainment for my children and grandchildren, and I would never hear the end of it, but I very much doubt any promoter would be willing to back that type of fight.

I thank my colleagues for their deep focus on improving the safety for combatants. Combat sports play an important role as a diversionary avenue for at-risk youths in addition to other health and social benefits of participating in sport. The great contribution that combat sports events can make to our local economy was made crystal clear during the recent UFC 293 event in Sydney. The bill introduces penalties for failing to ensure that mandated medical equipment is at a contest and increases fines for not having a medical practitioner in attendance at a contest. I also thank my colleagues from the other side of the aisle, such as the member for Miranda, for their positive engagement throughout the entire process. I mean that from the bottom of my heart. It has been great working with the Opposition and the crossbench. I think it is important to note that there is bipartisan support to ensure that we can continue to attract overseas spectacles like UFC whilst also ensuring that we implement a new, higher level of medical safety in combat sports.

The Combat Sports Amendment Bill 2024 will improve the combat sports legislative framework to promote the health and safety of combatants and reduce regulatory burden. The amendments contained in the bill represent significant reform for the combat sports sector and have been the subject of extensive consultation. I foreshadow the Government will move amendments to the bill to correct minor drafting errors that could result in anomalies or ambiguities if not addressed, which I will discuss during the course of that debate. The Government is committed to supporting, promoting and enhancing the combat sports sector. Many of the changes have been requested and expected for a number of years.

The Government wants to minimise the risk of concussion to combatants and to modernise the regulation of combat sports in New South Wales. The bill contains important safety reforms, including mandatory concussion training, automatic medical suspensions, accreditation for attending medical practitioners, and provisions to suspend a contest to conduct a head injury assessment. Those reforms will promote the health and safety of combatants. The Government recognises the significant risks associated with concussion and the need to enhance protections for combatants.

The bill also reduces red tape and improves the administration of combat sports, making it easier to organise combat sports contests. The bill simplifies registration. It allows for the creation of a public register to make match-making and fight card development easier, and it improves the administration of combat sports. I note that the Legislation Review Committee has reviewed the bill as required by section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987 and has referred four matters for consideration by Parliament. I will now briefly respond to those matters.

First, the committee noted that the proposed maximum custodial penalty of up to 12 months for a referee resuming a combat sport contest when the new section 66A (4) is not complied with would significantly impact an individual referee's rights to liberty and freedom of movement. That maximum proposed penalty mirrors the current maximum penalty applicable where a referee fails to stop a contest as required by section 66 of the Act. Except for penalty notice offences, section 104 of the Act requires that proceedings for an offence under the Act must be dealt with by the Local Court or the Supreme Court.

Second, the committee noted that under the new division 2 of part 2A an individual could be prevented from working as an accredited medical practitioner at contests on the basis of a contravention of the Act or regulation without establishing that the offence was committed. New sections 37G and 37I (1) (b) ensure that procedural fairness is provided, and the disciplinary action framework under the new division 2 of part 2A mirrors the disciplinary action framework already applying to registered persons under the Act. Further, schedule 1 [79] to the bill proposes to make that decision one that is reviewable by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal providing an avenue of review.

Third, the committee noted that, given the broad range of public service employees, that may make it difficult for a layperson to identify who is a combat sports inspector and, therefore, authorised to exercise the entry, search and seizure powers in the new sections 85A through to 85C in schedule 1 [81] to the bill. Section 84 (1) of the Act requires that combat sports inspectors are appointed with the approval of the chief executive of the Office of Sport. Further, current practice is that each combat sports inspector is provided with a photograph identification confirming their appointment, which must be worn when on duty.

Finally, the committee noted that a lack of legislative definitions or limitations may make it difficult for affected persons to understand the public interest test that is proposed to be included in the matters that the authority must consider when determining applications for registration. The Act currently requires the authority to consider whether an applicant is a "fit and proper" person to be registered, without regard to a prescriptive or a defined list of criteria. This allows that test to consider all of the applicable context to the specific applicant at the time of application. For consistency, this same structure is being applied to the proposed public interest test, as the factors to be considered will vary from application to application. These reforms will make a meaningful improvement to the regulation of combat sports in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Stephen Kamper.**

#### Consideration in Detail

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 be agreed to.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (18:01):** By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 9 on sheet c2024-016D in globo:

**No. 1 Definitions**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], line 10. Insert "*registration class* of combatant, *registration class* of industry participant or promoter, *registration pre-condition*," after "*promoter*,".

**No. 2 Definitions**

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], lines 5–9. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

*registration class* means—

- (a) for a combatant—the registration class, determined by the Authority under section 10, for which the combatant is registered, or
- (b) for an industry participant or a promoter—the registration class, determined by the Authority under section 22, for which the industry participant or promoter is registered.

**No. 3 Exemption from information requirements for applications if information already held**

Page 7, Schedule 1[13], line 17. Omit "**Section 11(3)**". Insert instead "**Section 11(2C)**".

**No. 4 Exemption from information requirements for applications if information already held**

Page 7, Schedule 1[13], line 18. Omit "section 11(3)". Insert instead "section 11(2C)".

**No. 5 Exemption from information requirements for applications if information already held**

Page 7, Schedule 1[13], line 19. Omit "(3)". Insert instead "(2C)".

**No. 6 Medical suspensions by attending medical practitioners**

Page 24, Schedule 1[60], proposed section 57(1)(e)(iii), line 31. Insert "before a specified date" before "unless".

**No. 7 Conditions imposed on accreditation**

Page 39, Schedule 2[29], proposed clause 21C, line 30. Omit "(b)". Insert instead "(c)".

**No. 8 Conditions imposed on accreditation**

Page 39, Schedule 2[29], proposed clause 21C, line 33. Omit "(c)". Insert instead "(d)".

**No. 9 Conditions imposed on accreditation**

Page 39, Schedule 2[29], proposed clause 21C, line 40. Omit "(d)". Insert instead "(e)".

These amendments are necessary to remove legislative anomalies and ambiguities that would arise if the bill were passed without amendment. Amendments Nos 1 and 2 ensure that the definitions of "registration class of combatant", "registration class of industry participant" and "registration pre-condition" are included in schedule 1 [2] to the bill as needing to be omitted, as new definitions for these terms are proposed to be inserted in schedule 1 [3] to the bill.

Amendments Nos 3 to 5 ensure that section 11 (2C) of the current Act, which allows the Combat Sports Authority of NSW to rely on documents it already holds for a combatant when assessing an application for registration by that combatant, is correctly enumerated in the Act and that its language complements the

amendment in schedule 1 [12] to the bill. Amendment No. 6 ensures that there is consistency between the pre-contest and post-contest medical examination functions of the attending medical practitioner by amending the proposed section 57 (1) (e) (iii) in schedule 1 [60] to the bill, which currently repeats subsection (1) (e) (i), to be consistent with the proposed section 57 (3) (d) (iii) in schedule 1 [62] to the bill. Amendments Nos 7 to 9 address a typographical error in numbering the paragraphs of the proposed clause 21C in schedule 2 [29] to the bill. I commend the amendments to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question is that Government amendments Nos 1 to 9 on sheet c2024-016D be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 as amended agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **ELECTORAL FUNDING AMENDMENT (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL EXPENDITURE CAPS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (18:05):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I bring before the House the Electoral Funding Amendment (Local Government Electoral Expenditure Caps) Bill 2024. Local government general elections in New South Wales are scheduled to be held this year, on 14 September. From 1 July 2024, the capped expenditure period starts. During this period, limits will apply to the amounts that political participants can spend on election campaigning for the elections. These limits are called electoral expenditure caps and are provided for in the Electoral Funding Act 2018. The capped expenditure period ends on election day.

The bill amends the Electoral Funding Act 2018 ahead of the 2024 local government elections to provide for the indexation of the caps that will apply during the capped expenditure period. The adjustment is appropriate because the current amounts of each cap have not been adjusted since the amounts were established in 2019. This is due to the postponement of the 2020 elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the Act the amounts of each of the caps are to be adjusted for inflation at the end of each election period, which runs from the end of one election to the following election, according to the prescribed four-year cycle of local government elections.

The first local government elections following the commencement of the caps were due to be held on 12 September 2020. If the elections had gone ahead in 2020, the first election period would have run according to the four-year cycle—from the end of election day on 10 September 2016 to 12 September 2020. The caps would have been adjusted, with 13 September 2020 being the first full day of the next election period. However, due to the impacts of COVID-19, all local government elections in New South Wales were postponed statewide until 4 December 2021. This was an unprecedented scenario and timing for adjusting the caps is uncertain under the Act in circumstances where no elections are held on the prescribed date.

The bill resolves this uncertainty and will ensure that electoral expenditure caps are indexed before the 2024 local government elections by providing for the adjustment of the current amounts as if the first election period ended on 4 December 2021, being the date of the last local government elections. The bill makes other improvements to clarify certain indexation provisions about local government electoral expenditure caps. It also makes minor amendments requested by officers of the NSW Electoral Commission to improve administration and enforcement of the Act.

I now move to the details of the bill, and first to the amendments relating to caps on electoral expenditure for local government election campaigns in schedule 1 [1] to the bill. Section 31 in division 4 of part 3 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 sets out the current caps on electoral expenditure for local government election campaigns. Clause 3 of schedule 1 to the Act sets out highly technical provisions for the timing and method for adjusting the cap amounts for inflation. Relevantly, the schedule sets out a method for indexation of the applicable caps for inflation for each "election period", which is the period between the end of an election day and the end

of the election day of the next election. The schedule provides that, before the start of each election period, the NSW Electoral Commission must publish notice of the indexed amounts. An "election period" is defined by reference to the four-year cycle for ordinary elections of councillors prescribed in section 287 (1) of the Local Government Act 1993.

However, the Act also provides that, for the purpose of determining an election period, any local government election held on a day other than a day specified by section 287 (1) of the Local Government Act "is to be disregarded". The purpose of this drafting is to cater for a scenario where, for example, because of council mergers or other delays, one or more local government general elections are held on a day other than the prescribed day. As this scenario would leave two or more possible "election days" that start and end an election period, the provision provides that any election held on a day other than the prescribed day does not trigger the end of the election period and thereby indexation of the caps.

However, the provision does not clearly cater for a scenario where no elections are held on the prescribed day. In that case, as occurred in 2020, there is no trigger to end the "election period" and consequently cause the adjustment of the caps. As a result, under the current scheme, there is some uncertainty as to how to identify the end of the "election period" that commenced at the end of election day on 10 September 2016 in the scenario where no local government elections were held in 2020 on the day specified by section 287 (1) of the Local Government Act.

The bill addresses that uncertainty by amending schedule 1, clause 3 (3) to the Act to remove the express provision that any local government general election held on a day other than the prescribed day is to be disregarded. The amendment instead clarifies that so long as one local government general election is held on the prescribed day, that will trigger the end of an election period and the adjustment of the caps, even if one or more elections in other local government areas are postponed. The effect of this amendment will also be that, where no local government elections are held on the prescribed day, clause 3 (3) of schedule 1 will not apply. That is, were there to be a total statewide postponement of the local government elections again, as occurred in 2020, the relevant "election day" for the purposes of determining the end of the "election period" in subclause (2) would be the date of the next local government general elections, excluding by-elections.

This amendment is important because the end of an election period triggers the indexation of the applicable electoral expenditure caps. The bill makes analogous amendments to schedule 1, clause 5B (3) to the Electoral Funding Act 2018. That clause provides for the timing and method for adjusting the amount for office accommodation in section 7 (4B) of the Act that is excluded from inclusion in electoral expenditure caps. Expenditure incurred for office accommodation for staff and candidates, other than campaign headquarters for a party, is excluded from the caps but only to a maximum of \$20,000 for each capped expenditure period. Expenditure incurred for this purpose above \$20,000 in a capped expenditure period is electoral expenditure for the purpose of the expenditure caps. This amendment was introduced in 2022 and is set out in section 7 (4B) and (4C) of the Act. Schedule 1, clause 5B provides for indexation of the \$20,000 cap each election period in analogous terms to schedule 1, clause 3. Accordingly, the bill makes analogous amendments to schedule 1, clause 5B (3).

The bill inserts new clauses 3 (4A) and 5B (4A) in schedule 1 to provide that if a local government election is delayed by up to 28 days by an order under section 288 of the Local Government Act 1993, the expenditure cap amounts and the office accommodation amounts to be excluded from the caps that would have applied to the election continue to apply to the delayed election. An adjusted new cap would apply to any elections postponed by more than 28 days. These changes provide for continuity where the period between the general election and any postponed elections is minimal, and provide the NSW Electoral Commission with sufficient time—that is, at least 28 days—to notify participants of the adjusted caps and update guidance material.

I now turn to schedule 1.1 [3] to the bill. The bill inserts new subclauses (8) and (9) into clause 3 of schedule 1 to the Act. This amendment provides for an adjustment of the amounts of the electoral expenditure caps in division 4 of part 3 for local government election campaigns ahead of the 2024 elections. The amendment provides that the first election period is taken to have ended on 4 December 2021, being the date of the last local government general elections. The amendment provides that the adjustable amounts in part 3, division 4 of the Act are to be adjusted for inflation as per the existing method set out in clause 3 of schedule 1 and that the NSW Electoral Commission is to publish notice of the adjusted amounts. I also note that the bill does not include an analogous adjustment of the cap related to office accommodation amounts in section 7 (4B) of the Act. This is because those provisions were introduced in 2022. For the purpose of local government elections, the adjustable amount in section 7 (4B)—currently \$20,000—is current for the first election period.

I now turn to more minor amendments to the Act contained in schedule 1.2 to the bill, which were requested by officers of the Electoral Commission to improve administration and enforcement of the Act. In particular, the bill omits the final words in the last line of section 32 (1) to correct an erroneous reference to a cap for "elected

members" for local government election campaigns. There is no expenditure cap for elected members, as the applicable cap set out in section 31 of the Act is for the party. Elected members can incur electoral expenditure that will be aggregated to that of the candidate or group. The bill amends section 106 (2) (c) (i) to remove the requirement that a group of candidates must include the name of the group in an application for registration for a State or local government election. Group names are not permitted to appear on any ballot papers for State or local government elections. This amendment will reduce confusion for groups about the name on an application not appearing on a ballot paper, particularly given the number of group registrations for local government elections.

The bill also makes consequential amendments to sections 103 (5) (a), 108 (5) and (6), and 129 (d). Those provisions are now redundant following the amendment to section 106 (2) (c) (i). The amendment to section 103 (5) (a) removes the requirement that the Electoral Commission must include the name of the group, if any, in the register of candidates. The amendment to section 108 (5) and (6) removes now redundant provisions related to the power of the Electoral Commission to refuse to register a group if, in the opinion of the Electoral Commission, the name of the group is obscene or offensive. In the case of section 129 (d), the amendment also removes a redundant reference to official agents appointed by groups as groups cannot appoint an official agent. Only associated entities and third-party campaigners may appoint an official agent.

The bill amends section 130 to provide that registers for by-elections—being the register of candidates, the register of third-party campaigners and the register of official agents—must be kept even if there is only one candidate at the by-election. On the date a by-election register is established it is often not known how many candidates will nominate or whether it will be a single-candidate, uncontested by-election. The amendment will resolve confusion about whether a by-election register is required in circumstances when it is still unclear whether it will be a contested by-election with one or more candidates.

Finally, the bill amends section 158 (1) to provide that the Electoral Commission, and not the Electoral Commissioner, is to conduct the review of provisions of the Act relating to caps on electoral expenditure for election campaigns. The amendment is appropriate because the review function in section 158 (1) is aligned with other review functions exercised by the NSW Electoral Commission. For example, the Electoral Commission must report directly to Parliament annually on its activities under the Act and is empowered to issue guidelines with respect to matters under the Act. I note that the Legislation Review Committee made no comments on the bill in its digest report. This bill was supported, with no amendments proposed by members, during debate in the Legislative Council. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:18):** I will be incredibly short. The Electoral Funding Amendment (Local Government Electoral Expenditure Caps) Bill 2024 was introduced in the Legislative Council on 8 February 2024. It was passed with the support of the Opposition. Although the Minister just, verbatim, gave the same second reading speech as was given in the upper House, I will resist the temptation to do otherwise and simply note that the Opposition supports the bill.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:18):** I speak in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment (Local Government Electoral Expenditure Caps) Bill 2024. In supporting it, I foreshadow that I will raise concerns about enforcement, particularly breaches I observed from the last local government election. Without enforcement, the restrictions that promote fairness are totally undermined. I made those observations at the Cumberland council elections, which those opposite did not contest. So they may not be aware of them.

The bill we are discussing today has been developed through consultation with the Cabinet Office and officers of the NSW Electoral Commission and the Office of Local Government. Those parties support the amendment to index electoral expenditure caps ahead of the 2024 local government general elections. Section 31 in division 4 of part 3 of the Electoral Funding Act sets out the amounts of the current caps on electoral expenditure for local government election campaigns. The current caps were introduced in 2019, following the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters into the impacts of expenditure caps for local government election campaigns. The caps apply to political parties, candidates, groups and third-party campaigners participating in local government elections. There are eight levels of caps for a candidate or group of candidates, ranging from \$6,000 to \$72,000, depending on the number of enrolled electors in an area or ward. For the purposes of the caps, expenditure can be aggregated in certain circumstances.

The cap for mayoral candidates or groups that include a mayoral candidate is 125 per cent of the amount for non-mayoral candidates and groups, if the area is not divided into wards, and increases by 25 per cent per ward for mayoral candidates or groups in an area that is divided into wards. This is, of course, appropriate. It is important that the caps are in place. In the past we saw a number of bizarre examples of campaigns declared as self-funded, where candidates have managed to spend \$90,000, sometimes more, of their own money, even when they do not

seem to have the kind of job which would give them that kind of disposal income. The caps need to be in place to ensure a fair contest but also allow people to convey their messages to the voters.

The caps apply to electoral expenditure during the capped period, which will start on 1 July 2024 and will finish at the end of election day, on 14 September. Under the Electoral Funding Act, the amounts of each of the caps are to be adjusted for inflation at the end of each election period. Ordinarily that is four years, commencing at the end of election day and ending at the end of election day of the following local government elections. The caps have not been adjusted since 2019, when they were established, because of the statewide postponements of the 2020 local government elections during the pandemic. The bill provides that the caps will be adjusted for an increase in inflation for the first election period which commenced at the end of election day on 10 September 2016 and is taken to have ended on 4 December 2021, being the date of the last elections. It also contains provisions to prevent this issue arising in the future, which is useful.

The bill amends section 158 (1) to provide that the Electoral Commission, not the Electoral Commissioner, is to conduct the review of provisions of the Act relating to caps on electoral expenditure for election campaigns. The Electoral Commission exercises the majority of functions under the Act. Examples include publishing notices in relation to adjustment of various caps for inflation, determining and issuing guidelines with respect to matters under the Act, and reporting directly to Parliament annually on its activities under the Act. It follows that the Electoral Commission would be best placed to carry out the review function, given it aligns with the commission's other functions under the Act.

As I mentioned previously, I have concerns about the enforcement of the amendments but also the entirety of the Act because I have some major concerns about how the previous local government election was conducted. I will not name the candidate, but one candidate in the Cumberland council elections submitted their electoral funding return years late and claims to have spent only \$1,500 of their own money on advertising in local publications. No money whatsoever for printed material that they stuck in letterboxes or handed out on the day, including their how-to-vote cards, was declared. That is absolutely impossible. The Electoral Commission has records of every single thing they distributed because you have to register your how-to-votes and any material you are distributing in the wider area.

No questions about how they managed to get all this stuff supposedly for free, out of thin air, have been raised with this particular councillor, even though the councillor was handing out how-to-vote cards inside the polling place, which I find quite ironic. It was outrageous. They went in there to "help" somebody fill in their ballot papers and stayed inside the polling place "helping" other voters until I and a number of other people who were volunteering outside complained and they were kicked out. They did this a number of times. So it was well known that they had how-to-vote material they had printed. I find it absolutely bizarre and unbelievable that someone could run an election campaign for only \$1,500 and manage to get elected by only running ads in the local papers, especially as I had seen their printed material that was distributed and was registered with the Electoral Commission. The commission has the enforcement capacity, and I think it needed to cross-reference the wild claims of underspending by this particular councillor against what they actually registered during that campaign.

I do not want to see the craziness that happened at that election ever repeated. It was probably the worst I have ever seen. It included people not wearing the candidate's T-shirts but instead draped in the flag of another country standing in the doorway of the polling places and telling people in another language that they had to vote for this particular candidate. It was next-level crazy. Enforcement is incredibly important, and this bill is incredibly important. But, to make sure that this bill actually means anything, it needs to be enforced, and I ask that that be considered carefully.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (18:26):** As the New South Wales Greens spokesperson on democracy, I make a short contribution to debate on the Electoral Funding (Local Government Electoral Expenditure Caps) Bill 2024 and indicate that The Greens will support this bill. The bill makes four amendments to the Electoral Funding Act 2018. The first will mean that local government electoral expenditure caps can be properly adjusted for inflation following circumstances where an election is held outside of the ordinary schedule. The second will mean that applications to register candidate groups in a State or local government election are not required to provide a group name. The third will mean that the NSW Electoral Commission is required to keep registers for State and local government by-elections regardless of the number of registered candidates. Finally, the section 158 review will be required to be done by the Electoral Commission, not the Electoral Commissioner.

The bill is primarily concerned with ensuring that electoral expenditure caps for participants in local government elections are properly adjusted for inflation. Those caps have not been adjusted since 2019, when they were introduced, due to the postponement of the 2020 elections to 2021. The Act provides a formula for adjusting the electoral expenditure caps in line with the consumer price index [CPI]. However, timing for adjustment is uncertain under the Act in circumstances where no elections are held on the prescribed four-yearly

date. That is because the trigger for adjustment is contingent on elections being held on the prescribed date. To address that, the bill provides that the caps are adjusted for the CPI ahead of the 2024 government election as if the first election period, which commenced on 10 September 2016, ended on 4 December 2021, being the date when the last general local government election was held. The bill also clarifies that, if in future there is another statewide postponement of local government elections—let us hope there is not—the caps can still be adjusted for inflation.

Additionally, the bill will remove the requirement that a group of candidates must include the name of the group in an application for registration for a State or local government election. Group names are not permitted to appear on any ballot, and the requirement to provide a name upon application for registration is a known cause of confusion and frustration for participants in the election process. Finally, the bill will remove potential ambiguity around when the Electoral Commission must keep registers for State and local government by-elections. Currently the requirement applies only when there are two or more candidates for a by-election, but in practice how many candidates will be involved is often not clear at the time a register is established. The bill will ensure that a register will be required even in cases where there is an uncontested by-election. The bill makes no substantive changes to the electoral expenditure funding caps for local government elections and does not seek to alter the rationale for arriving at the amounts already provided for in the legislation. These are reasonable housekeeping measures that The Greens are comfortable to support.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (18:29):** In reply: I thank the member for Wahroonga, the member for Granville and the member for Balmain for their contributions to debate. As members would be aware, the bill proposes amendments to the Electoral Funding Act and ensures that the correct indexation is in place for the 2024 local government elections. I thank the member for Wahroonga for his brevity and his support of the bill. I note the concerns of the member Granville. Of course, the NSW Electoral Commission has compliance and enforcement processes and it is a matter for the commission to assess and determine the appropriate regulatory response. I appreciate why the member for Granville is raising these matters before the House. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS) BILL 2024

### Second Reading Speech

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:31):** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024. The bill proposes changes to the State's environmental laws to strengthen the regulation of industrial chemicals in New South Wales. The proposals in the bill will align New South Wales with new national standards that are being rolled out across Australia to protect our land, air and water from the environmental risks of industrial chemicals. The Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard is a new national approach for managing the import, use and disposal of industrial chemicals. IChEMS will deliver more consistent regulation across jurisdictions and make it easier for industry to choose and use less harmful chemicals. It will help reduce the risk of chemical contamination and pollution, and strengthen our ability to respond to emerging environmental threats posed by industrial chemicals.

The proposed reforms will be backed by new powers for the Environment Protection Authority to require users and manufacturers of specified chemicals to notify and provide information about their chemical use. That will give the Government greater visibility of emerging problem chemicals so it can better protect the community from the adverse impacts of industrial chemicals. The bill will also simplify the regulation of industrial chemicals by transferring relevant powers from the Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals Act 1985 to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. The Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals Act 1985 will then be repealed. That will make it easier for businesses that use industrial chemicals to fulfil their regulatory responsibilities to

prevent environmental harm. Finally, the bill makes necessary machinery amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to reflect that its mandate will extend to industrial chemicals.

The Government's proposed approach to implementing IChEMS has been informed by discussions with other States and Territories, which have all committed to implement IChEMS in their own jurisdictions. The discussions have highlighted best-practice approaches. The Environment Protection Authority has consulted with other government agencies and led a formal public consultation process in October and November 2023. I thank everyone who provided feedback on these important reforms. Currently more than 40,000 industrial chemicals are able to be used in Australia. Most of those chemicals do not pose a significant risk to people or the environment. But some, if not managed responsibly, can endanger ecosystems and affect human health. That is because they are toxic to living things and do not readily break down in the environment. There can also be significant economic consequences associated with cleaning up and remediating contaminated sites.

Strong, enforceable and modern legislation is needed to safeguard our communities and environments and manage the risks of industrial chemicals. The bill is another example of the Government's commitment to protecting our unique environment and the community from the harmful effects of pollution and contamination, just like our landmark radiation control reforms last year. I now turn to the provisions of the bill. Schedule 1 [11] to the bill amends the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to implement IChEMS in New South Wales. IChEMS was developed by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in response to recommendations by the Productivity Commission that identified a gap in the national environmental risk management of industrial chemicals. Under IChEMS industrial chemicals are listed on the IChEMS register in one of seven schedules, based on an assessment of their environmental risk.

The register outlines specific measures and controls to manage the risks posed by industrial chemicals, providing clarity for industry as to what needs to be done to prevent harm to the environment. Where risks cannot be controlled through risk management measures, the IChEMS register may prohibit or restrict the import, manufacture or use of a chemical. All Australian jurisdictions have agreed to implement IChEMS through their own environment protection frameworks. That will, for the first time, harmonise industrial chemical environmental risk management across Australia. In New South Wales IChEMS will ensure that the highest risk chemicals are more tightly regulated or phased out. The bill proposes to apply IChEMS to form the New South Wales IChEMS register. That means that the classification of chemicals listed in the Commonwealth IChEMS register will automatically apply in New South Wales, along with any risk management measures or other controls listed for the chemical.

However, should the need arise, regulations will be able to modify the New South Wales IChEMS register, such as varying the schedule in which a chemical is included or omitting a Commonwealth scheduling decision. If there is a need to address a specific concern in New South Wales, the bill will also allow for a chemical to be added to the New South Wales IChEMS register. That will ensure that we can respond appropriately to any unique or intrinsic issues specific to New South Wales in relation to an industrial chemical and can act ahead of the national regulatory bodies if needed. All users and manufacturers of a chemical listed on the New South Wales IChEMS register will be required to comply with the risk management measures or controls specified for that chemical. Most chemical users and manufacturers will simply need to follow the outcome-based risk management measures on the New South Wales IChEMS register. Businesses will have flexibility in how they meet any risk management measures, except for the high-risk chemicals.

Failure to comply with the risk management measures specified in the IChEMS register for a chemical will constitute a pollution incident under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. That then allows the appropriate regulatory authority, usually the Environment Protection Authority or local council, to issue a prevention notice with associated penalties including daily penalties for noncompliance. If necessary, the appropriate regulatory authority may also issue a clean-up notice requiring the chemical user or manufacturer to take specified clean-up action. The Commonwealth has already begun scheduling chemicals in the IChEMS register with more to be added over time. Members may be interested to know that in December 2023 the Commonwealth scheduled three high-priority PFAS chemicals on schedule 7 of IChEMS to come into effect over time. This means that the importation, manufacture and use of these PFAS chemicals will be phased out under IChEMS. Some PFAS chemicals are recognised globally as chemicals of high concern that can cause serious or irreversible harm to the environment. The reforms set out in this bill will support New South Wales to cooperate in the national approach to the management of PFAS.

Industrial chemicals of greatest environmental concern, such as PFAS, will be listed on schedule 6 or schedule 7 of the New South Wales IChEMS register. These chemicals are likely to cause serious or irreversible harm to the environment. For this reason, the bill proposes that users of industrial chemicals listed in schedule 6 or schedule 7 will require a licence from the Environment Protection Authority if the use or manufacture of the chemical is subject to a restriction or risk management measure in the New South Wales

IChEMS register and they are undertaking an activity regulated under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. This will ensure that the Environment Protection Authority can closely and consistently regulate the use of any high-risk industrial chemicals where they cannot be phased out.

The bill creates new offences of doing a thing in relation to an industrial chemical that is prohibited by the New South Wales IChEMS register and failing to comply with phase-out conditions imposed on a licence. The offences may attract large penalties of up to \$500,000 for an individual and \$2 million for a corporation. For every day that the offence continues, individuals may face penalties of up to \$60,000 per day and \$120,000 per day for corporations. These penalties are comparable to other serious land pollution and waste offences in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. New division 2 of part 9.3E in schedule 1 to the bill seeks to enhance the Government's oversight of emerging problem chemicals. There is currently very little information available about what chemicals are being used in New South Wales. This is simply not good enough. The bill addresses this by amending the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to enable the Environment Protection Authority to issue a chemical use notice in the *Government Gazette*.

A chemical use notice will require chemical manufacturers and users to notify and provide information about their use of a specified chemical. It may be issued in a number of circumstances, including where the Environment Protection Authority is of the opinion that the chemical presents a potential risk of harm to human health or the environment. The proposed reform will enable the Environment Protection Authority to identify and communicate with chemical manufacturers and users directly, regardless of whether they hold an environment protection licence. Importantly, the proposal will provide greater visibility as to where, how and in what quantities certain chemicals are being used in New South Wales. This will enable the Environment Protection Authority to assess the need for action to protect the community and our environment from environmental threats posed by chemicals. It will be an offence for a person to fail to comply with a chemical use notice.

New divisions 3 to 5 of part 9.3E in schedule 1 to the bill propose to transfer key provisions from the Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals Act 1985 to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. Subsequently, the Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals Act 1985 will be repealed. One Act will provide the legislative requirements relating to industrial chemicals and the implementation of the IChEMS reforms. This will make it easier for businesses that use industrial chemicals to comply with their regulatory responsibilities. All chemical users and manufacturers will be licensed under one piece of environmental legislation, removing the need to hold two licences under two different Acts. This will reduce costs on businesses in New South Wales.

As part of modernising the regulation of industrial chemicals, the bill aligns the maximum penalties for failing to comply with the chemical control order with those under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 for contravening the licence conditions. The proposals set out in this bill will support New South Wales to cooperate in the national approach to industrial chemical risk management under IChEMS. The Government's approach to implementing IChEMS is common sense and risk based, with regulatory oversight increasing with the level of potential environmental hazards. Our focus is on managing the use of the most high-risk chemicals—those that have the potential to cause significant or irreversible damage to our unique environment. This bill has been years in the making. It follows recommendations by the Productivity Commission, extensive collaboration with our interjurisdictional counterparts and involvement from various stakeholders. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (18:44):** I am pleased to speak in debate on the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024. This is important legislation that for the first time will support the harmonisation of standards for the environmental risk management of industrial chemicals across Australia. The Coalition will support the bill. We note that much of the work began under the former Coalition Government. I thank the Minister for the Environment for having her office provide a full briefing on the specifics of the bill. Most of us go about our daily lives blissfully unaware of the industrial chemicals we touch from the moment we wake up to the time we go to sleep, from our shampoos to our make-up, to what is in our clothes, and to what is in the varnish on this table. I will not list any more because there are 40,000 industrial chemicals currently available for use in Australia. Most of them are not harmful to humans or the environment when they are used as intended.

However, a small proportion of industrial chemicals can cause serious harm to the environment and to human health if not managed properly. We know that when dangerous chemicals are not handled and stored properly, they can cause harm to the community—for example, through leaks and spills or the contamination of land and water from poor disposal practices. Currently, national frameworks exist to consistently manage products used in food, human and veterinary medicines and pesticides. However, until very recently, there has not been a mechanism to consistently manage risks to the environment from industrial chemicals across all jurisdictions. This has naturally resulted in uncertainty, duplication and extra costs for businesses. The bill before the House is

part of the work that is being done across States and Territories and the Commonwealth to have a consistent and a harmonious process. It implements new national standards for managing environmental risks of industrial chemicals—the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard [IChEMS].

IChEMS was developed collaboratively with the Commonwealth. All States and Territories have agreed to implement IChEMS through their environmental protection framework. In New South Wales, this will mean that the bill will amend the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997—the POEO Act—to strengthen the regulation of industrial chemicals in New South Wales. The bill will provide for greater oversight and control by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] of hazardous chemicals and enable the New South Wales Environment Protection Authority to require users of specified chemicals to provide information about their use of a chemical, when requested. It also transfers and updates key provisions of the Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals Act 1985—the EHC Act—to the POEO Act and repeals the EHC Act. Therefore, all chemicals will be under one Act. Is that not a glorious thing?

Breaches will carry penalties of between \$1 million for a corporation and \$250,000 for an individual, plus any additional penalties for each day the offence occurs. I had notes on IChEMS and what that means, but it was covered very well by the member opposite. I thank her for that. I will move on to state that the Opposition is satisfied that the stakeholder process has been thorough. The EPA directly contacted over 200 stakeholders that included licence holders, local councils, industry groups, non-government agencies and environmental groups, advising them of the consultation and the opportunity to provide feedback. There were submissions from industry groups and licence holders who expressed their support for the reforms. I have spoken to many of those stakeholders, and they were broadly supportive. I note that some of the concerns they expressed related to the implementation of this legislation, which will be complex. I trust that there will be ongoing communication and consultation and plenty of support for the industry as it goes through the process. This will be happening right around the country. I trust that it is in good hands. In the meantime, I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (18:49):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024. The bill will deliver important reforms to the way in which the environmental risks of industrial chemicals are managed in this State. At the core of the reforms is the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard, or IChEMS, which is a national approach to managing chemical import, use and disposal. IChEMS will deliver more consistent environmental regulation and make it easier for industry to choose and use less harmful chemicals. Under IChEMS, industrial chemicals are listed on the IChEMS register in one of seven schedules, based on an assessment of their environmental risk. Implementing IChEMS in New South Wales will ensure that the highest risk chemicals are the focus of regulation.

Industrial chemicals are used every day and found in a wide range of products. Most chemicals in use are of low concern to the environment and human health. However, a small proportion of industrial chemicals can cause harm if they are not managed properly. In some cases, these chemicals of concern can endanger ecosystems and affect human health. One example of such a chemical is PFAS, which has emerged globally as a chemical of concern that poses a high risk to the environment. PFAS is a group of over 4,000 chemicals recognised as persistent organic pollutants. They are often referred to as "forever chemicals" because of their resilience when exposed to water and heat. This makes them well suited to cleaning products, non-stick pans, personal care products and more. However, PFAS chemicals do not break down easily in the environment. Residues have been found in humans and in wildlife, with studies linking them to health issues in both. PFAS can migrate into land and groundwater and contaminate water sources that our towns and cities rely on.

In Australia there have been several successful class actions brought by landholders impacted by PFAS emanating from defence sites that used PFAS-containing firefighting foam. Until recently, Australia's approach to managing existing PFAS contamination has included working to prevent or reduce environmental and human PFAS exposure wherever possible. Efforts have mainly been directed at dealing with the contamination created by historical uses of these chemicals. Under IChEMS, however, Australia will have a more standardised approach to managing the environmental risks of PFAS chemicals.

In December 2023 the Commonwealth scheduled three high-priority PFAS chemicals on schedule 7 to IChEMS. Schedule 7 to the IChEMS register lists chemicals that cannot be imported, exported, manufactured or used within Australia as they are likely to cause serious or irreversible harm to the environment. The controls introduced under IChEMS for PFAS will apply bans, restrictions and risk management measures to the import, manufacture and specified uses of these PFAS chemicals from 1 July 2025. This means that industries will need to take a more holistic approach to reducing the presence of these challenging chemicals across supply chains and frameworks around them will be strengthened.

The sound regulation of PFAS is responsible and common sense, particularly when safer, cleaner and more sustainable replacements exist. The reforms set out in the bill will support New South Wales to cooperate in the national approach to the management of PFAS. Harmonised laws across borders make it easier for people to

comply, make it easier for enforcement and help us to manage health and environmental risks. The bill will ensure that IChEMS management measures for PFAS can come into force in New South Wales.

The Government's approach to implementing IChEMS is responsible and common sense, with regulatory oversight increasing with the level of potential environmental hazard. This bill will put IChEMS in place in New South Wales and ensure that the use of the most high-risk industrial chemicals, like PFAS, can be managed or phased out. The reforms will help protect New South Wales communities and our unique environment from harmful industrial chemicals and contribute to a safer future for us all. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:54):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024. There are more than 40,000 industrial chemicals currently available for use in Australia. Most of them are not harmful to people or the environment when used as intended. However, a small proportion of industrial chemicals can cause serious harm to the environment and human health if not managed properly. The Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard, or IChEMS, is a significant step forward in the management of the environmental risks posed by the use of industrial chemicals in New South Wales.

The implementation of IChEMS will deliver national harmonisation and bring significant benefits for industry, government and the community. For industry, IChEMS will streamline industrial chemical regulation and provide consistency with other jurisdictions. It will clarify regulatory requirements for preventing environmental harm. For governments, IChEMS will reduce or avoid the future clean-up costs associated with chemical contamination. For the community, IChEMS will provide better protection of human health and the environment.

Most industrial chemicals in use in Australia are of low concern to the environment and to human health. However, a small proportion can cause harm if they are not managed properly because they are toxic to living things and do not readily break down in the environment. Without adequate management, these industrial chemicals can enter the environment in various ways throughout their lifecycle—for example, during production, use, transport, storage or disposal. They can affect ecosystems, air, water, soil, plants, animals and humans. When industrial chemicals have been used for long periods of time without adequate management, the results can be devastating for the environment. There may be contaminated soils, waterways and ecosystems as well as waste streams that need specialised technologies for treatment and disposal.

It is difficult to quantify the total economic impact of poor industrial chemicals management in New South Wales. However, we know that the impact is significant. Historical examples of environmental contamination show that the remediation of sites can take decades and cost hundreds of millions of dollars. An example of this is the dioxin contamination in Sydney Harbour. This contamination cost industry and government around \$200 million and resulted in a ban on commercial fishing in Sydney Harbour to protect public health. Dioxins are a group of persistent environmental pollutants that are highly toxic. They have been linked with numerous serious health problems, including cancer.

The dioxin contamination of Sydney Harbour came largely from a former industrial site at Rhodes adjacent to Homebush Bay. From 1928 until its closure in 1986, the site was used for the manufacture of a wide range of highly toxic chemicals, including timber preservatives, herbicides, pesticides and plastics. As a result of chemical manufacturing, the site was highly contaminated by various chemicals, including dioxins. While the site has been extensively remediated, dioxins from the site have spread throughout the sediments at the bottom of Sydney Harbour. Fishing bans have been in place around Homebush Bay since 1989 and were extended to parts of the Parramatta River in 1990. However, the extent of contamination of Sydney Harbour was not fully recognised until 2006, when all commercial fishing was banned in the harbour after tests revealed elevated levels of dioxins in a number of species of fish and shellfish.

Clearly, the problems caused by the poor management of industrial chemicals can be large and long-lasting. It is difficult and costly and it takes time to clean up industrial chemicals once they have entered the environment. Our current environmental laws need to be continually reviewed and strengthened to ensure that incidents like the dioxin contamination of Sydney Harbour do not happen again in the future. Historical chemical contamination events demonstrate that governments need to provide sufficient regulatory clarity and certainty to avoid pollution legacies that can span decades.

The high remediation costs mentioned earlier could have been reduced or avoided with earlier and more complete information about the environmental risks of the chemicals involved and with more appropriate industrial chemicals management. IChEMS will address this by filling a gap in the existing chemical assessment process to include mandatory risk management measures that jurisdictions can adopt. IChEMS will help prevent pollution, support industry to make better chemical choices and safeguard future generations against contamination and costly clean-ups. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (19:00):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024. The bill implements the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard in New South Wales. IChEMS is a new national approach to managing the environmental risks posed by industrial chemicals. While most industrial chemicals in use in Australia are of low concern to the environment and human health, a small proportion can cause significant harm if they are not managed properly because they are toxic to living things and do not readily break down in the environment. That is why the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] has been working collaboratively with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories to develop IChEMS. Under IChEMS, industrial chemicals will be listed on the IChEMS register in one of seven schedules according to their environmental risk. The register will also specify risk management measures to manage the risks posed by the industrial chemical.

To support the implementation of IChEMS, the bill will enable the EPA to issue a chemical use notice by notice published in the gazette. A chemical use notice will require users and manufacturers of specified chemicals to provide certain information to the EPA. The information requested under a chemical use notice may include how a specified chemical is being used by the person, the location, the amount used and stored, and other particulars. This is a new and important information-gathering power for the EPA in respect of industrial chemicals. The details in a chemical use notice will provide the EPA with important data to identify chemical use patterns and volumes and locations relating to a specified chemical of concern. This will assist the EPA to develop policies and undertake activities to prevent future contamination from occurring. While current environment protection regulation includes some aspects of chemicals management, the type, volume, use and distribution of specific industrial chemicals in New South Wales is not always known. There is no data available on how many businesses are using specific industrial chemicals or their distribution.

This lack of information about industrial chemical use has in the past prevented governments from being in the best possible position to prevent environmental impacts. Concern about PFAS chemicals in firefighting foams highlights how a lack of data available to the regulator can hamper its ability to respond swiftly to emerging threats to the environment and human health. PFAS chemicals are known as forever chemicals because they do not break down in the environment. They are used in many everyday products, such as food packaging, non-stick cookware, electronics and cosmetics. While the full extent of harm from PFAS is still emerging, the fact that these chemicals persist in the environment is alarming. Up until now, Australia has not restricted the trade or use of most PFAS chemicals. However, this will change under IChEMS. In December last year the Commonwealth scheduled three high priority PFAS chemicals on schedule seven of IChEMS, to come into effect over time. This means that the import, manufacture and use of those PFAS chemicals will be phased out under IChEMS.

Over recent years, PFAS contamination has been found at a number of sites, including where firefighting foams containing PFAS have been used. At some sites PFAS has moved from the contaminated soil to pollute surface water and groundwater and migrated to adjoining environments. The EPA does not have complete information on the volume or distribution of the use of PFAS chemicals in New South Wales, which had been used for decades before any concerns were known. Without this information, the EPA commenced a PFAS investigation program to better understand the extent of PFAS use and contamination in New South Wales. The program ensured that New South Wales could respond appropriately as locations with PFAS contamination were identified. However, being able to require details of a chemical's use could have sped up the EPA's identification of users of PFAS and the assessment of how to respond to the risks posed by PFAS.

The bill is a significant step forward in strengthening the regulation of industrial chemicals in New South Wales. It will enhance the Government's ability to protect the community and our environment by ensuring that we are in the best possible position to respond to emerging threats posed by industrial chemicals. The bill will greatly assist the EPA to continue its important work to investigate, assess and manage the use of industrial chemicals in New South Wales if issues similar to those with PFAS arise in future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:06):** I support the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024. This important bill modernises the way that very hazardous chemicals are addressed in Australia, and in New South Wales in particular. More than 40,000 industrial chemicals are currently available for use in Australia, most of which are not harmful to people or the environment when they are used as intended. However, a small proportion of industrial chemicals can cause serious harm to the environment and human health if not properly managed.

It has been over 60 years since the publication of Rachel Carson's seminal work *Silent Spring*, which for the first time raised serious concerns about the environmental impact of pesticides, agricultural chemicals and other industrial chemicals like dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane. Her work led to a paradigm shift in our understanding of the need to carefully manage and use chemicals. In her view—and she was absolutely right—governments and industry at the time were too eager to introduce effective new chemicals without knowing the

full implications of their decisions on workers, on the food chain and on nature. Her findings were based on science, and interest in them led to the establishment of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and similar agencies worldwide. Today we are more and more cautious about the use of chemicals. In this context, the bill seeks to modernise and strengthen the management of hazardous chemicals.

Poor management of the environmental risks of industrial chemicals can result in pollution of the environment due to emissions or waste from manufacture or product formulation; harm to the community or environment from incorrect storage or handling, such as leaks and spills; contamination of land and water from poor disposal practices; environmental and human health risks from high-risk industrial chemicals; and costs associated with legacy issues, such as cleaning up contaminated sites. My electorate has had to deal with so many of those issues due to the industrial history of Granville and its surrounding suburbs. It has experienced huge exposure to asbestos—and then the use of fill that contained asbestos—throughout the area and contamination of the Duck River with lead and other heavy metals from the production of batteries on the riverbank. Further downstream, a chemical was also found throughout the groundwater from a paint factory on the Camellia peninsula. The list goes on and on, and a lot of these issues are still problematic to this day.

The bill strengthens the regulation of industrial chemicals in New South Wales and will achieve that by implementing the new national Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard [IChEMS]. National frameworks exist to consistently manage products used in food, human and veterinary medicines, and pesticides. However, until recently, there was not a mechanism to consistently manage risks to the environment from industrial chemicals across all Australian jurisdictions, resulting in uncertainty, duplication and increased costs for businesses that use or manufacture industrial chemicals.

To address that gap, the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments have worked together to develop the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard. Industrial chemicals are listed on the IChEMS register in one of seven schedules based on an assessment of their environmental risk. The register may outline specific measures to manage the risks posed by the industrial chemical, providing clarity to industry as to what needs to be done to prevent harm to the environment. That can include bans, restrictions and management arrangements for the different classes of hazardous chemicals.

Public consultation undertaken by the Commonwealth in 2020 and 2022 indicated broad support for IChEMS amongst national bodies, government agencies and other interested organisations and individuals. All Australian States and Territories have agreed to implement IChEMS through their environmental protection frameworks to make it legally enforceable in their jurisdictions, and that will harmonise standards for the environmental risk management of industrial chemicals across Australia for the first time. The bill fulfils this State's commitment to other jurisdictions and to the Commonwealth to implement IChEMS.

The bill will allow the Environment Protection Authority to require manufacturers and users of a specified chemical in New South Wales to notify the EPA and provide information about that chemical. The proposed change is needed to support the implementation of the IChEMS reforms, and it provides the EPA with greater visibility over the number of potentially harmful chemicals being used across New South Wales, as well as how and in what quantities they are being used.

Currently, that information is not routinely captured through licensing or other regulatory activities. Having that information will help the EPA assess the need for action to protect the community and the environment from any environmental threats posed by the chemicals. The bill will transfer key provisions of the Environmentally Hazardous Chemicals [EHC] Act 1985 to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, allowing for the repeal of the former. It will simplify and modernise the environmental regulation of industrial chemicals, as one Act will provide the legislative requirements relating to industrial chemicals and the implementation of the IChEMS reforms.

The bill aims to better protect the environment and human health from the risks posed by industrial chemicals, including harmonising the environmental risk management requirements for industrial chemicals and simplifying compliance for businesses that operate across the borders of New South Wales; providing the community with knowledge of the risks posed by particular industrial chemicals, as well the actions that are being taken to protect the environment and their health; reducing the risk of chemical contamination and pollution in New South Wales by requiring better chemical management practices; ensuring the highest risk chemicals are more tightly regulated or phased out altogether; enabling the EPA to assess whether action is needed to protect the community and the environment from the adverse effects of emerging problem chemicals; and making it easier for businesses that use industrial chemicals to fulfil their regulatory responsibilities to prevent environmental harm and make informed choices about which chemicals they will use. That will ensure high-risk chemicals like PFAS are used more carefully than in the past or are phased out altogether.

We will be dealing with the legacy of chemicals where the risks were not identified before their use became widespread in Australia for decades to come. We need to do better and the bill facilitates that. The benefits of a non-regulatory approach to implementing IChEMS include lower compliance costs and no enforcement costs, but the costs to the community as a whole would be huge. More resourcing would be required to encourage and support industry to implement IChEMS scheduling. There would be higher clean-up costs for contamination or other releases to the environment. New South Wales would have a different approach to other jurisdictions in Australia, which would add to business compliance costs. There would be costs to government from the consideration or regulation of industrial chemicals on a case-by-case basis, as currently occurs, compared to the adoption of the IChEMS scheduling decisions, and the EPA would need to rely on licensing conditions or a chemical control order. Those instruments have administrative costs and are more burdensome to implement than a notification power. Duplicative licensing arrangements would remain under the EHC Act and the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, which would be burdensome to both industry and the regulator.

The benefit of the approach we are adopting is that EHC licences and other EHC Act provisions would not need to be transferred to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. It would be a small, short-term cost. Duplicative licensing arrangements would continue if we did not undertake the reforms. There are many good reasons to implement the policy. The amendments in the bill will commence on the date of assent. The EPA will ensure that stakeholders are informed of any changes and will make sure they understand what is required of them. They will also be supported with updated information on the EPA website.

In early October last year, the EPA publicly released a consultation draft bill and explanatory paper. It consulted with the community and with affected business for six weeks, contacting over 200 stakeholders. In the course of the consultation it received a lot of feedback from the community, as well as written submissions from industry groups and licence holders, all expressing support for the reforms. This well-developed reform modernises the regulatory regime, implements the nationally consistent IChEMS standard and strengthens protections, at the same time as promoting consistency across Australia. It should be supported.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:16):** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: In reply: I thank the member for Mount Druitt, the member for South Coast, the member for East Hills and the member for Granville for their contributions to the debate on the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Bill 2024. I thank the member for Vaucluse, as the shadow Minister, for her support on behalf of the Opposition. I also express my deep appreciation for the good work undertaken by the Environment Protection Authority legislation team.

As I have outlined previously, the bill delivers important reforms to better protect our community and the environment from the risks posed by harmful industrial chemicals. The bill will support New South Wales to cooperate in the national approach to industrial chemical risk management under the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard [IChEMS], a new and ambitious framework for reducing chemical contamination and pollution across Australia. It will enhance the Government's oversight of emerging problem chemicals that are yet to be regulated, preventing future harm to people and to the environment.

The bill will deliver national harmonisation of industrial chemical environmental risk management across Australia. It will support a shift in the way businesses manage industrial chemicals in New South Wales, supporting industry to make better chemical choices and safeguarding future generations against contamination and costly clean-ups. The bill will help protect New South Wales communities from the harmful effects of industrial chemicals and is yet another example of this Government's strong commitment to protecting our natural environment for generations to come. As a very proud and committed environmentalist and conservationist, both as the member for Blue Mountains and particularly as the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 7 February 2024.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:19):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2024. It is a very short bill. Effectively, it has two components. One consists of amendments to the secrecy provisions under section 111 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. Those provisions are quite important with regard to the investigative power of the ICAC. The proposed amendments allow for very specific directions to be given with regard to the use of information that is otherwise secret. The Opposition supports the amendments. The other amendment relates to section 111E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. That provision deals with public authority responses to the corruption prevention recommendations of the commission. I understand that the Government proposes to move an amendment to the bill. If the amendment is moved, the Opposition will support it.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:20):** I speak in support of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2024. First, I thank the Minister for Transport for her dedicated work and collaboration with other stakeholders to prepare the bill before the House. The bill implements recommendations by the ICAC to improve the effective exercise of its principal functions. The bill proposes amendments to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, known as the ICAC Act. The ICAC plays an integral role in safeguarding our community. Its primary objective is to maintain public trust and confidence in local and State government institutions by investigating and addressing instances of corruption. The Minns Labor Government is committed to supporting the ICAC to perform its integral role by optimising the legislative frameworks that determine its operating powers.

The ICAC was established in 1988 as an independent organisation to protect the public interest, prevent breaches of public trust and guide the conduct of public officials in the New South Wales public sector. The ICAC investigates and exposes corrupt conduct in the New South Wales public sector; actively prevents corruption, through advice and assistance; and educates the New South Wales community and public sector about corruption and its effects. This bill implements meaningful amendments to the ICAC Act as informed by the report of the ICAC entitled *Investigation into the conduct of the then Member of Parliament for Wagga Wagga and then Premier and others (Operation Keppel)*, dated June 2023. I will refer to this as the Operation Keppel report. The Minns Labor Government is committed to ensuring that New South Wales has strong, effective and independent integrity and accountability agencies. The bill evidences the imperative steps we are taking to support the ICAC to uphold its key functions.

The bill responds to the recommendations of the ICAC following its investigation into the conduct of the then member for Wagga Wagga and the then Premier, as well as others, known as Operation Keppel. It makes amendments in response to recommendation 8 of the ICAC's report into Operation Keppel. This is not the appropriate forum to comment on the substance or findings of the Operation Keppel report, nor the actions of former members. I am of the opinion that it is not responsible or appropriate for anyone in this place to comment on ongoing proceedings relating to that operation and subsequent ongoing legal proceedings and potential prosecutions. As members of Parliament, we are responsible for deliberating and enacting fair and just laws for the people of New South Wales. In respect of this, I will keep my debate centred on the recommendations of the ICAC report and how these may be best implemented to support the ICAC's functions. I now address the amendments in the bill. The bill responds to recommendation 8 of the ICAC report, which is:

That the NSW Government considers amending s 111E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to set requirements for the premier on behalf of the NSW 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 has been to accept this recommendation. It is therefore introducing this bill to make the appropriate amendments to the ICAC Act. Section 111E of the ICAC Act requires a public authority to respond to corruption prevention recommendations by the ICAC. Currently, the provision applies only to public authorities as defined in section 3 to include government entities like a public service agency, a statutory body representing the Crown, a local government authority and the NSW Police Force. Notably, it does not include a Minister of the Crown, nor the Parliament, its Presiding Officers or its committees.

Item 6 of schedule 1 to the bill inserts a new section 111E (4) into the ICAC Act to create a new term: "a relevant public authority or official". This term expands "public authority" significantly to include a Minister of the Crown and the Presiding Officer of either House of Parliament. It will effectively expand the ICAC's ability to direct a recommendation to a Minister or Presiding Officer of either House. Upon receiving such a recommendation, the relevant public authority, Minister or official must inform the ICAC in writing within three months as to whether it intends to implement any action in response to the recommendation. It must then provide a report of any implementation progress 12 months after notifying the ICAC.

With this proposed amendment, it will become a legislative requirement for Ministers and the Parliament of New South Wales to engage with the recommendations of the ICAC in a timely and structured manner. By requiring the ICAC's recommendations to be responded to in this way, we ensure the ICAC's findings are

considered and implemented to improve transparency and accountability in our public institutions. As a member of Parliament—and I am certain my colleagues in this place will agree—it is a distinct privilege to represent our constituencies. With that privilege comes great responsibility: We must always be answerable to the people we are elected to serve. Integrity agencies like the ICAC provide imperative accountability tools to ensure that government and public departments act properly in the public interest. The relationship between the Government and the ICAC must be regulated effectively to hold the Government accountable to the ICAC's findings, whilst preventing any compromise in the ICAC's independence.

I now address the other substantial amendment proposed in the bill. Items [1] and [2] of schedule 1 propose amendments to section 111 of the ICAC Act, the secrecy provision. These amendments were requested by the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM. The amendments provide for occasions when it is appropriate for information obtained in an ICAC investigation to be used further, overcoming the current lack of flexibility in the legislative framework whilst still preserving important safeguards. The secrecy provision creates an obligation of secrecy on certain people identified in the Act, including a legal practitioner assisting the ICAC and a person who is an officer of the Inspector of the ICAC. These persons are prohibited from making a record of any information or communicating any information to another person that has been acquired during their functions under the ICAC Act. Persons to whom section 111 applies are also currently prohibited from producing in court any information that has come into their possession, custody or control in the course of functions under the ICAC Act.

Currently, section 111 (4) (c) of the Act provides an exception to the secrecy prohibitions whereby a person may divulge any 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. However, section 111 (5) operates so that any person to whom information is divulged, including if by direction of a commissioner or inspector, are bound by the same secrecy requirements. Effectively, this is a misnomer.

Section 111 (4) (c) and section 111 (5) currently operate so that a person who is permitted to receive otherwise protected information in the public interest, pursuant to the direction of a commissioner or inspector, still cannot make a record, divulge or communicate that information. The bill proposes to amend those sections of the ICAC Act to safely increase the transparency of the ICAC's work. The amendments will have 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 certain conditions on the use of such information. The amendments ensure that a commissioner or inspector can include restrictions to safeguard the distribution of information and guarantee that it is only used in the genuine public interest. [*Extension of time*]

Further, the bill recognises that circumstances will arise where the further release of information would not prejudice the ICAC's operation but would be in the public's interest to disclose it. In the same way, it recognises circumstances where it is not appropriate to release that information. Those amendments correct the inflexibility within the ICAC Act to provide for the safe and responsible disclosure of information. The bill will ensure that the legislative protections over the secrecy of the ICAC's work continue, whilst preventing secrecy provisions from being applied beyond the circumstances in which they are necessary for the ICAC to function. Ultimately, it will increase transparency of the ICAC's work, whilst retaining the flexibility needed to ensure effective operations. It is in the public interest to equip the ICAC with effective legislative frameworks to enable it to continue protecting our community interests from corruption, misconduct and maladministration.

The ICAC plays a crucial role in making sure government representatives and the public sector are acting with their constituents' interests at heart to achieve fair outcomes for communities across New South Wales. As elected officials, we are all held to a higher standard to represent and advocate for the interests of our constituents. The action taken by former members of this House, as illustrated in the Operation Keppel report, reminds us of our community's reliance on our leaders to be accountable and of the vital role that anti-corruption bodies play in protecting public trust. The role of the ICAC is paramount to the Western Sydney community. Many in my community are people of diaspora, who have immigrated seeking prosperity, safety and a democratic, non-corrupt government. It is chiefly important that our government representatives act with integrity to continue earning the confidence of citizens.

Within the electorate of Prospect, I am especially fortunate and proud to represent a vibrant and diverse community. Many of the incredible individuals who call Prospect home are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and have endured lived experience of other countries that left them distrustful of government officials. The integrity of agencies like the ICAC is essential to building trust in law enforcement and government. In conclusion, the amendments proposed in the bill honour the Minns Labor Government's commitment to ensuring it has strong and independent integrity agencies. The amendments affirm the Government's resolve to support the ICAC to continue as a pillar of accountability and transparency, protecting the people of our great State. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (19:33):** As The Greens NSW spokesperson for anti-corruption, I speak in debate on the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2024 and indicate that The Greens support the bill. The bill will amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 in two ways. First, the secrecy provisions in section 111 of the Act will be amended to allow the ICAC commissioner or the ICAC inspector to permit the disclosure of secret information, as specified in a direction, and clarify that the further use of that information may be used in accordance with the direction. Second, the requirement to provide corruption prevention recommendations to a public authority is extended so that Ministers of the Crown and the Presiding Officers of both Houses of Parliament are included. By extension, the Government will be required to inform the commission, within three months of receiving a corruption prevention recommendation, of its intentions in response to the recommendation.

The secrecy provisions have been included in response to submissions by the ICAC to the 2022 ICAC committee review of aspects of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 1988. I note that concerns have been raised by the Legislation Review Committee about those provisions, but I am satisfied that they do not create any new or additional powers for the ICAC. Indeed, on any reasonable reading, it is clear that they will give clarity to existing rules around the dissemination and use of secret information. The provisions relating to corruption prevention recommendations have been included in response to recommendation 8 of the ICAC's Operation Keppel report. I note that some concerns have been raised about the constitutionality of those provisions. I understand that will be resolved with a Government amendment, which The Greens will support.

The Greens support a strong and independent ICAC that is equipped with all of the tools and powers it needs to investigate, expose and prevent corruption. A strong ICAC helps to uphold our democracy and ensures that the public can have faith in our political system. The secrecy provisions will give clarity to the responsibilities of the ICAC commissioner and the ICAC inspector when disclosing secret information, as well as to the recipient of any such disclosure. They will enhance transparency, on a case-by-case basis, around how and when a record of secret information may be made and the circumstances in which the ICAC will permit secret information to be divulged or communicated further once it has been disclosed.

The provisions relating to corruption prevention recommendations will make it a legislative requirement for the Government to respond to any such recommendations within three months of receiving them. It is a sensible accountability measure arising from a recommendation in the Operation Keppel report, where serious findings of corruption were made by the ICAC against former Premier Gladys Berejiklian and former member for Wagga Wagga Daryl Maguire. The provisions are supported by the ICAC and will help the ICAC to do its job. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (19:35):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2024. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to enable a recipient to further disclose information that has been disclosed under the Act in particular circumstances. It will also require that the commission must provide a copy of a corruption prevention recommendation made about a public authority to the relevant public authority and the relevant Minister. The Act defines a "public authority" to include a range of government entities, including a public service agency, a statutory body representing the Crown, a local government authority and the NSW Police Force. Currently, it does not include a Minister of the Crown, the Parliament, its Presiding Officers or committees. The bill amends that.

The bill empowers the ICAC to direct a corruption prevention recommendation to a relevant public authority or official, being a Minister and the Presiding Officer of either House. Once the report from the ICAC has been received, the relevant public authority or official must inform the ICAC in writing that they intend to implement any of the changes proposed in the recommendation and, if so, must provide a copy of the plan of action. The response must be sent to the ICAC within three months, unless the relevant public authority or official and the ICAC have an agreement in writing for a longer period of time. Further to this, a relevant public authority or official that advises the ICAC of a plan of action must provide the ICAC with a written report of any progress on the matter 12 months after the initial response. If the plan is not completed, they must send another report 12 months after that.

The bill amends the secrecy provisions of the Act, creating an obligation of secrecy for certain people identified in the Act, 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. That means that such persons shall not directly or indirectly make a record of any information or communicate to another person any information that they have obtained during the course of their functions under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, except as permitted by the Act itself.

The bill also specifies that such persons are prohibited from communicating to any court any matter or information that has come to their notice during the course of their functions under the Act. However, if such

persons are directed by a commissioner or an inspector, they may divulge that information if the commissioner or inspector deems it to be in the public interest. The bill states that any person to whom this information is divulged, including by direction of the commissioner or inspector, is bound by the same secrecy requirements as if they had received the information during the course of the Act.

The ICAC has the power to include an order permitting information to be divulged and that the person to whom the information is given or a person or an employee under the control or authority of that person is able to make a record of the information or can divulge or communicate the information to another person. A commissioner or the inspector also has the ability to include conditions and restrictions on the further use of the identified information. The amendments in the bill serve to increase the transparency and accountability of the ICAC. They provide flexibility in relation to what information can be shared in the interest of the New South Wales public and ensure that integrity institutes are equipped with the tools necessary to fulfil their roles. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (19:40):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to this important debate on the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the member for Wahroonga, the member for Prospect, the member for Balmain and the member for Mount Druitt. I appreciate that the bill will be dealt with in consideration in detail later, so I will deal briefly with some of the matters raised in the debate. I foreshadow that we will be moving an amendment and that will be considered in the next stage. Broadly, the bill is non-controversial and, as detailed in my second reading speech, it implements the recommendations within the report entitled *Investigation into the conduct of the then member of Parliament for Wagga Wagga and then premier and others (Operation Keppel)* with respect to the Government.

The bill also proposes to amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to allow certain information disclosed under the ICAC to be further disclosed by the recipient in particular circumstances. The amendments proposed by the bill are a result of the recommendations of the Keppel report and, of course, requested by the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC. It is in the public interest for the ICAC to have an appropriate legislative framework that allows the efficient and effective exercise of its principal functions. We are a stronger democracy for its work, and I know that all members in this place are committed to ensuring that the ICAC is effective, strong and independent. The bill furthers that commitment. 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.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Ron Hoenig.**

#### Consideration in Detail

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (19:43):** By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2024-018D in globo:

No. 1 **Definition of relevant public authority or official—consequential amendment**

Page 4, Schedule 1[6], line 5. Omit all words on the line.

No. 2 **Parliamentary office holders**

Page 4, Schedule 1. Insert after line 5—

[7] **Section 111F**

Insert after section 111E—

**111F Parliamentary office holder**

- (1) As soon as practicable after making a recommendation under section 13(3)(b) for a House, or both Houses, of Parliament to take action to reduce the likelihood of corrupt conduct occurring, the Commission must give a copy of the recommendation to—
  - (a) for a recommendation for a House of Parliament to take action—the Presiding Officer of that House, or
  - (b) for a recommendation for both Houses of Parliament to take action—the Presiding Officer of each House.
- (2) A Presiding Officer who receives a copy of a recommendation under subsection (1) must—
  - (a) as soon as practicable after receiving the recommendation, inform the relevant House of Parliament that the recommendation has been received, and

- (b) inform the relevant House of Parliament of the Presiding Officer's response to the recommendation, including the response to any matter for which the Presiding Officer has responsibility under an Act or an instrument made under an Act.
- (3) If a House of Parliament is, or both Houses of Parliament are, informed under subsection (2) of the receipt of a copy of a recommendation, either or both Houses may refer the recommendation to a relevant parliamentary committee.
- (4) A relevant parliamentary committee to which a recommendation is referred must report to the House or Houses that made the referral.
- (5) In this section—

*relevant parliamentary committee* means a committee of a House of Parliament designated by a resolution or referral by the House for this section.

*relevant House of Parliament*, in relation to a Presiding Officer of a House of Parliament, means the House in which the Presiding Officer sits.

Section 111E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 requires a public authority the subject of a corruption prevention recommendation to inform the Independent Commission Against Corruption within three months whether it proposes to implement the recommendation and, if so, provide the ICAC with a plan of action and a progress report every 12 months. A public authority includes entities like public service agencies but does not extend to Ministers of the Crown or Presiding Officers of the Parliament. Recommendation 8 of the ICAC Operation Keppel report states:

That the NSW Government considers amending s 111E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to set requirements for the premier on behalf of the NSW Government and Presiding Officers of each House of Parliament to respond to the corruption prevention recommendations of the Commission.

The New South Wales Government accepted the ICAC recommendations, and the Government bill proposed amendments to section 111A of the ICAC Act to include a Minister of the Crown and the Presiding Officers of Parliament within the scope of that section. That would mean that the Presiding Officers received a corruption prevention recommendation for ICAC. They would be obliged to inform ICAC in writing within three months or such longer period as the ICAC agrees whether they propose to implement the recommendations and, if so, provide a plan of action and a progress report every 12 months. The Speaker has raised concerns about that approach and suggested a mechanism for responding to ICAC recommendations that is more consistent with the existing practices of the Parliament. While the Government does not consider that the bill raised any constitutional or legal issues, the Government is moving the amendment in response to the Speaker's concerns. The effect of the proposed amendment is that the Parliament will not be required to respond to ICAC when it receives ICAC recommendations.

New section 111F will instead require the Presiding Officers of the relevant House of Parliament, or both Presiding Officers in the case of a recommendation relating to both Houses of Parliament, to inform the relevant House or Houses of ICAC's recommendation as soon as practicable after receiving the recommendation. The new provision will also require the Presiding Officers to inform the relevant House of Parliament of their response to the recommendation, including responses to any matter for which they have statutory responsibilities. Both Houses of Parliament may, by resolution or referral of the House, refer the recommendation to a relevant parliamentary committee. In those circumstances, a relevant parliamentary committee must report to the relevant House or Houses of Parliament that made the referral. No change is proposed as to how Ministers would be required to respond to ICAC recommendations under the bill. I thank the Speaker and the Clerk of this House for their constructive engagement on the bill. I commend the amendments to the House.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (19:47):** While I am the member for Lake Macquarie, it is more relevant that I be speaking, in this case, as the Speaker. I thank the Leader of the House for his explanation of the amendments on Government sheet c2024-018D. There was some concern as to what the implications were for the bill if it was to proceed as it was drafted. There is no argument about the need for a strong and effective ICAC, but there must be an understanding of the relationship between the Parliament, the ICAC and, for that matter, any other government agency. The bill was a clear impingement on the authority of Parliament, and it was very concerning not just to the Speaker but to the President of the Legislative Council and the respective Clerks who examined its impact.

The Parliament and the relationships between the Presiding Officers are prescribed by the Constitution. The Executive Government is a creature of the Parliament and the party that has the majority there. They then establish agencies, and those agencies report to the Executive Government. Obviously, they also report to the Parliament. It is not appropriate for the Parliament to have an agency as a master to whom we, as a Parliament, report back. There is no intention to not do the absolute utmost to continue to shine a light on corruption, but the proposed mechanism was inappropriate.

I am pleased that it has had light shone upon it and that we have had excellent engagement with the Government—the Premier, the Leader of the House, and the Special Minister of State, Minister Graham, in the other place—and with the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Wahroonga. I believe that the bill as proposed to be amended sets the right tone while keeping the notion of the primacy of Parliament intact, which is very important. After I am long gone from here, I want Presiding Officers and parliaments to defend the Legislative Assembly, to defend the Legislative Council. We should not whittle down, bit by bit, the authority of this decision-making body that has been elected by the people of New South Wales. Once again, I thank the Leader of the House, Government members and the Manager of Opposition Business for addressing this matter.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:51):** I make a short contribution to debate on the amendments. The ICAC is the creation of the Parliament and is, and will always be, subordinate to the Parliament. Parliament has determined that members of the Executive Government and authorities will respond to ICAC reports in certain ways under section 111E of the Act as amended by the bill. But I wholeheartedly agree with the Speaker that, in a democracy as we have and because we cherish our democracy in the way that we do, it is important that the supremacy of the Parliament is always maintained. The amendments will do that, and that is why, on behalf of the Opposition, I congratulate the Speaker and I congratulate the Government on moving the amendments, which the Opposition supports.

As I have noted in the past, it is unfortunate that although there is a timing requirement under section 111E for the Executive and government authorities to respond to ICAC reports within 12 months, we do not have any time limits on when the ICAC needs to report its investigations. With regard to recent events, where inquiries have taken many years to be determined, that is something that I think we need to address in due course.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (19:53):** I omitted to thank the member for Wahroonga for his assistance in relation to the amendments. He has always been of great assistance on these issues. On behalf of the Government, I thank him for that.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that Government amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2024-018D be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE AND WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (19:55):** I recognise the 2024 Wollongong Electorate Local Woman of the Year, Maria Di Carlo. Maria is a dedicated and passionate advocate for the Berkeley community. After a decades-long commitment to her community, Maria is showing no signs of slowing down. She began working in Berkeley in 2012, taking up a position with the Berkeley Development Association. Since that time, her work has turned the Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre into a space of safety and support for members of the local community. She has an enduring compassion for enriching the lives of people in the Berkeley area, and the neighbourhood centre is now a thriving community asset. During COVID-19 she was a strong voice for the most vulnerable people in the community, fighting to ensure they had equal access to support, resources and vaccines. Maria also volunteers with the Italian Association, supported the efforts to get lifts at Unanderra train station, and runs her own social support group. I also acknowledge Shannon Fox and Commissioner Carlene York, who were recognised as finalists in the NSW Women of the Year Awards 2024.

#### **MAUREEN CLARK**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (19:56):** I congratulate Maureen Clark of Gynea Bay on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards. Maureen has been a dedicated volunteer at Dandelion Support Network since it began 12 years ago. The Shire-based organisation accepts donations of good quality, pre-loved clothing, and new nursery furniture and other items, and prepares and dispatches them to families in

need. Maureen is a clothing team leader and has been instrumental in ensuring families receive what they need. Last year, when Dandelion's stock of teen clothing was low, Maureen asked Kirrawee High School for help. During COVID times, when volunteers could not be at Dandelion's premises, Maureen was known to go in every week and take clothing home to prepare and pack. Maureen has been an active supporter of Dandelion's fundraisers and has also encouraged other clubs she is a part of to support Dandelion's work, such as getting her knitting group to make items for families. Dandelion's general manager, Dr Gabrielle Humphreys, says Maureen is a great mentor to new volunteers and that they are truly lucky to have her.

#### **RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (19:57):** The NSW Local Women of the Year Awards give us a chance to recognise the hardworking and dedicated women within our communities. I congratulate this year's 2024 Riverstone Local Woman of the Year, Krienne Doherty. Krienne volunteers her time at the Schofields Rural Fire Brigade to keep her community safe. Krienne's dedication and commitment to her community saw her become the crew's first female senior deputy captain. She is a leader who gives up many of her weekends to assist with training firefighters across the district. During those training sessions, Krienne transforms into a drill sergeant of compassion, teaching new recruits how to fight fires and to stay safe. She does not just teach the skills associated with the job; she also imparts her courage, resilience and community spirit in every rookie she meets. When I presented her with the award, we spoke about the importance of keeping the Rural Fire Service properly resourced, and it was clear that her mind was focused on community over accolades. I thank Krienne for her service and congratulate her on becoming the 2024 Riverstone Local Woman of the Year.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DR JOHN PARADICE**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (19:58):** On behalf of the Upper Hunter electorate, I advise the House that Dr John Paradice, OAM, passed away on 11 February 2024, aged 97. Dr William (John) Houston Paradice was a medical practitioner to Scone and district from 1957 until his retirement in 2004. John "Doc" Paradice trained in medicine after serving in World War II on the Royal Australian Navy mine sweeper HMAS *Warnambool* and then on the Fairmiles on mine destruction duty. A meeting with Dr David Warden in England in 1956 during medical training set Dr Paradice on his journey to Scone. One of the collective achievements of their practice was reportedly delivering 24 babies within 24 hours during construction of Glenbawn Dam. Dr Paradice was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2016 for his contribution to the community as a general practitioner. He is survived by his wife, Bobbie, their six children, 17 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Vale, Dr John Paradice, OAM.

#### **JACKIE BOWER**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:59):** I recognise our 2024 Port Stephens Local Woman of the Year, Jackie Bower. In 2019 Jackie was asked by a close friend to help out by stepping into the role of secretary of the Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Surf Life Saving Club. Jackie admits she did not like cold water, waves or sand, and did not know the first thing about helping run a surf lifesaving club—so, of course, she said yes. Stepping into the secretary role led to a bronze medallion, silver medallion for search and rescue, inflatable rescue boats driver cruise certificate, teaching nippers and so much more. Jackie was recognised at the 2022 Hunter Surf Lifesaving awards, receiving both the Branch President's Award and Administrator of the Year, going on to win the statewide award for Administrator of the Year. Recent drownings over summer have highlighted the important role of local surf lifesaving volunteers. Leaders like Jackie make a difference every single day by building stronger communities and brighter futures for the next generation. Put simply, she is a local legend, an inspiration and a worthy recipient of Port Stephens Local Woman of the Year for 2024.

#### **STEPHANIE POWELL**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (20:00):** It was my honour to present the 2019-20 National Emergency Award to Stephanie Powell, nee Radnidge, on 23 February. I cannot think of a more deserving recipient for the medal whose dedication and sense of duty has touched the lives of thousands. Stephanie is a retired NSW Ambulance paramedic, with 32 years of service. As an intensive care paramedic and a superintendent zone manager, her tireless efforts have positively impacted the community in Wollondilly. The National Emergency Award recognises individuals like Stephanie who have demonstrated exceptional courage and professionalism in the face of adversity. Her contributions to NSW Ambulance reflect not only her skill and expertise but also her profound sense of duty and compassion. Stephanie's receipt of this award is a testament to her outstanding service and unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of our community. We are immensely grateful for her contributions and proud to celebrate her achievements. I congratulate Stephanie on this well-deserved recognition.

**JULIE CRANE**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (20:01):** Julie Crane is the recipient of the Parramatta 2024 Citizen of the Year Award. I extend my congratulations and thanks to her for her important contribution to our community. As president of Melrose Park Football Club, Julie has fostered an inclusive culture and an ethos of outreach by providing Afghani refugees the opportunity to play soccer. In doing so she has assisted many newly arrived families to deal with the stresses of moving to a new country, often in traumatic circumstances, and helped them find a welcoming and supportive place in Australia. Research shows people suffering from post-traumatic stress need community and movement to heal, and this is happening through Julie's efforts to make football accessible and a vital and therapeutic activity for them. Julie has also been the driver for the annual Street Football World Cup, a one-day tournament sponsored by Football NSW and hosted by Melrose Park Football Club and City of Ryde Council. I thank Julie for her quiet commitment that is changing lives.

**LEONE ROCKE**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (20:02):** It is not every day you get to celebrate your 100th birthday. I was honoured to be invited to join Leone Rocke as she celebrated her 100th birthday at the Seventh Day Adventist Aged Care facility in Wahroonga. Leone has led a remarkable life. Being born overseas, emigrating to Australia, she has generously served the community as a San nurse and been an active member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. At her 100th birthday party, Leone was surrounded by her many friends from all different stages of her life, including many people from her neighbourhood. I enjoyed hearing the many stories and memories they shared of their time spent with Leone. They describe Leone as kind, loving and caring. I congratulate Leone on achieving this incredible milestone. I thank her for inviting me to be part of her special day. I could see from the way in which her friends came together on her birthday that she is very loved and cherished by those around her. May she continue to enjoy her time in Wahroonga.

**KATE SOADY**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:03):** Last week, I had the great pleasure of attending the exhibition opening of Blue Mountains artist, Kate Soady, at her shop and gallery space in Leura. Kate asked me to launch her exhibition and say a few words that evening, and I always feel incredibly honoured when asked to speak at such an event. Having an opportunity to share my perspective on such an inspiring human being is a privilege. Kate's art is beautiful. It depicts native flora and birdlife in a way that is playful yet sensitively captures the unique biodiversity of our region. Her work invites us to identify as a part of the natural world, acknowledging our shared experiences of the environment we inhabit. When we joined together last Friday night at Kate's exhibition opening, it was a celebration of life, feminine energy and connectedness. I thank Kate for her creativity and her sensitivity. This wonder woman relates deeply to the nature that surrounds her, and I believe her art motivates others to do the same, in an infectiously joyful way. I congratulate Kate.

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK FESTIVAL**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:04):** The local government area of Hilltops is celebrating a two-week long art festival known as Off the Beaten Track from today until 24 March. This art and cultural trail, the largest in a regional area, spans Boorowa, Harden, Young and many villages in between, offering a rich tapestry of over 40 galleries, workshops, markets, gardens, studios and exhibitions. It is a vibrant mix of art forms that will captivate both locals and visitors to the area. Off the Beaten Track is a proud showcase of the incredible artists and artisans we have in the Hilltops. From painting, drawing and sculpture to music, our talent shines through. I am eagerly anticipating the musical journey *From Bach to Beyonce*, a testament to the diversity and richness of our community's artistic expression, held by the Young Regional Conservatorium. This is a fantastic festival. I encourage everyone to get involved, and I look forward to many events over the next couple of weeks.

**JAMES CHAN, OAM**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (20:05):** The Mingyue Lay Temple sits in the heart of Bonnyrigg in my electorate and is managed by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society, or ACBS. The chairman of ACBS is Mr James Chan, OAM. James is a dear friend of mine. Not only is he a successful businessman and leader of the temple but he has also been at the forefront of many humanitarian efforts, including raising over \$100,000 for the Lismore flood appeal with the temple in 2022. James also organises many major community events, including Vesak Day, Mid-Autumn Festival and the blessing of Cabramatta Plaza during Lunar New Year. These events are attended by thousands, with many travelling across Sydney to partake in these important cultural celebrations. Quite deservedly, James has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his work in promoting and supporting the Chinese community in greater Western Sydney. James is a great asset to Cabramatta, and my community owes him many thanks for the wonderful work he has done and continues to do.

**DR NICHOLAS STEPHENSON, AM**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:06):** I congratulate Dr Nicholas "Nick" Stephenson on his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to medicine and medical training. Raised in Bathurst, Dr Stephenson always wanted to return to regional Australia and moved to Wagga Wagga in 1996 after completing his specialist radiology training. He saw the shortage of rural healthcare workers as the major cause of poorer health outcomes for remote, rural and regional Australians and embarked on a journey to make a difference. Realising that more rural-based training was the answer, he has spent decades advocating for rural medical training, both undergraduate and postgraduate. He has also been the driving force behind the Wagga Wagga Recruitment and Retention initiative that has been very successful in recruiting specialist medical professionals to the city. Dr Stephenson has thanked those who have helped and supported him, including his wife, Jenni, and daughter, Camilla, and his many friends and colleagues. He has done truly groundbreaking work for regional health care, and his drive and dedication have been critical to the success of attracting a health workforce to the region. Regional Australia is much the better and healthier for his work.

**LAUREN GOLDIE**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (20:07):** I acknowledge Lauren Goldie, who was a nominated for the New South Wales Woman of the Year for Swansea. Lauren is commended for her invaluable contribution to Surf Life Saving Central Coast and the broader community. She is an outstanding volunteer surf lifesaver and in 2023 received the Surf Life Saving Central Coast Official of the Year award. Lauren enhances and contributes to all aspects of surf lifesaving as she shares her expertise and knowledge with other lifeguards, competes across all levels of surf lifesaving, officiates at special events carnivals and volunteers for regular her patrols. Further, Lauren has been integral in the creation of LiveHeats, which is an online platform for modern sports competition organisers. The Lakes Surf Life Saving Club also recently recognised Lauren's dedication and loyalty to that club in her appointment as the first female life member. I congratulate Lauren. She is a formidable surf lifesaver.

**TRIBUTE TO GUY GRIFFITHS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (20:08):** I pay tribute to the remarkable life of Rear Admiral Guy Griffiths of Castle Cove, who died on 5 March, aged 101. Born in Sydney in 1923, Griffiths grew up in the Hunter Valley and entered the Royal Australian Naval College as a cadet in 1937. Posted to the Royal Australian Navy for further training, Griffiths served on several ships in World War II, including HMS *Repulse* during its the sinking, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in 1945 for gallantry, skill and devotion to duty. Griffiths then served in the Korean War as a gunnery officer on HMAS *Sydney* and commanded the guided missile destroyer HMAS *Hobart* in the Vietnam War. In addition to serving his country with distinction in three major conflicts, Griffiths also served in peacetime. He commanded HMAS *Melbourne* to provide relief operations to Darwin following Cyclone Tracy in 1974. Retiring from the navy in 1980, after 43 years of active service, Griffiths remained active in veterans' organisations and was made an officer of the Order of Australia. Serving his country in war and peace throughout his long life, Guy Griffiths was a great Australian hero. We honour his legacy.

**SEEMA BALASUBRAMANIAN**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:09):** I congratulate Seema Balasubramanian on being named Blacktown City Woman of the Year for 2024 at last week's NSW Women of the Year awards. These awards align with International Women's Day and provide us an opportunity to showcase talented women like Seema who make a positive change to our State. Seema moved to Australia only 10 years ago and received her citizenship in 2019. She is a proud local and has become a strong and tireless activist. Seema is active with Blacktown Ponds Lions Club and Blacktown City Toastmasters, organising youth and regional events. Her long hours of service dedicated to the youth program dramatically improves the confidence and mental wellbeing of participating students. Seema is active in the local South Indian community, having choreographed the seventy-fifth Independence Day celebrations with the Indian consul and also helped to organise the Summer Mela. I congratulate Seema on this much-deserved award. I look forward to her future contributions to Blacktown.

**NSW TOUCH JUNIOR STATE CUP NORTHERN CONFERENCE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:10):** I congratulate Dubbo Regional Council and Dubbo Touch Association on the magnificent success of the NSW Touch Junior State Cup Northern Conference held in Dubbo from 23 to 25 February. Around 9,000 extra people were in Dubbo for the event, with teams in age groups from under 10 to under 18 taking part in the three-day carnival. Despite the hot temperatures, there was no dampening of the excitement, energy and enthusiasm of players, spectators and volunteers. The council's and the association's commitment to delivering an exceptional event has not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive feedback received from all stakeholders. Their seamless partnership proves the power of teamwork and

collective effort in delivering a successful event. By combining their resources and expertise, they ensured that every aspect of the carnival ran smoothly—from maintaining the quality of the play fields to providing essential support services for players and attendees. The event was a great opportunity to demonstrate Dubbo's ability to host major sporting events. All taking part did well.

#### **GOSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:12):** The teacher in me is always extremely proud when I talk about our local schools. This evening I acknowledge Gosford Public School for its top-notch educational programs. Established almost 160 years ago, Gosford Public School has an admirable motto, "honour before honours", which reinforces its dedication to nurturing supportive relationships among students, staff members and caregivers. With a commitment to maximise its students' potential, Gosford Public School includes extracurricular activities such as dance, visual arts, public speaking competitions, university competitions in literacy, mathematics and computers, programs for the gifted and talented, a fantastic band and, recently, senior students' exchanging letters with pen pals in a 5/6 class at Moama Public School, on the border of New South Wales and Victoria. In addition to that, the school cleverly created the preschool buddy reading program, which empowers leadership skills in year 5 students while benefiting local preschools. It is our privilege to have such a high-quality public school like Gosford Public School in our electorate. From the bottom of my heart, I thank everyone involved.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DOROTHY ISAKSEN, AM**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (20:13):** We stand on the shoulders of greatness here. This is especially true in Wakehurst, where we continue to benefit from the life of Mrs Dorothy Isaksen, member of the Order of Australia. Her passing, in last August, and her immense contribution to politics was acknowledged in the other place on 18 October 2023. I too offer my condolences. Dorothy was a formidable role model for women in politics, but it is her community work in Wakehurst that I acknowledge here today. In 1976 Dorothy was an inaugural board member of Bringa Women's and Children's Refuge in Dee Why, which was one of only four refuges in New South Wales at the time. Forty years later, now known as Women and Children First, the refuge still supports women and kids escaping domestic violence. Unfortunately, it is meeting an ever-growing need. For 14 years Dorothy was involved also with Northern Beaches Legacy after her husband, Neville, died in 2002. She actively supported her fellow Legacy widows through her dedicated committee work. I offer my deepest thanks and humble promise to continue her awesome work.

#### **TRIBUTE TO PETER PONTEFRACT**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (20:14):** I inform the House of the passing of Peter Pontefract, honorary member of Mollymook Surf Life Saving Club. Peter recently was recognised for 75 years of distinguished service to surf lifesaving in New South Wales. Peter gained his bronze medallion at North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club, where he began competitive swimming in 1948. In 1955 Peter began competing and volunteering for the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club, before transferring to Mollymook in 1978. Peter and his wife, Leigh, were avid ocean swimmers and were part of the original Mollymook ocean swimmers, who began in March 1999. Peter was a true-blue water man and local legend who continued to swim to his final days. With Peter's passing, an era in the Mollymook surf lifesaving scene has ended. Peter will be remembered for his generosity, passion for lifesaving and community spirit. Peter will be missed by all who knew him. He was a loved and loving husband, father, poppie and friend. Vale, Peter Pontefract.

#### **LAURA ENEVER**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (20:15):** I congratulate the Pittwater Woman of the Year for 2024, Laura Enever, who received her award at the International Women's Day breakfast at the Zonta Club of the Northern Beaches last week. The youngest ever Pittwater Woman of the Year, Laura received the award in recognition of her contributions to the local and international surfing. From being one of the first female surfers in the North Narrabeen Boardriders Club to competing with the World Surf League for seven years to pursuing big wave surfing, Laura proves the sky is the limit. The Boardriders now boast dozens of female surfers. Last year Laura was recognised by the World Surf League and Guinness World Records as the world record holder for the largest wave ever paddled into by a woman, after catching a 13.3-metre wave in Hawaii. Laura is an inspiration to young women and aspiring pro athletes. I congratulate her on the award, and I congratulate also her dedicated parents, Sarah and Phil.

#### **SISTER KERRY MACDERMOTT**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (20:16):** I am delighted tonight to acknowledge Sister Kerry Macdermott for serving Campbelltown's community for more than 40 years. She is an amazing woman. She has contributed so much to not only our community and her faith through the Catholic Church but, of course, so much in so many ways to the Dharawal people, particularly with the Appin massacre and things that have affected our

generation and generations before her, over so many years. Sister Kerry Macdermott was born in Jandowae, near Toowoomba in Queensland. Her father was a bank manager, which led to the family moving frequently. In the early 1960s, when Kerry's family was living at New Farm in Brisbane, she began volunteering with Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor, before joining the congregation in 1964—60 years ago. That is an amazing effort by an amazing woman. I acknowledge her tonight. I am sure all my colleagues do, too.

#### JAMES GAIRNS

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (20:17):** It gives me great pleasure this evening to recognise James Gairns, a courageous young hero who lives in Bulahdelah. James is nine years old and attends Bulahdelah Central School. On 16 February, after school, James was at home with his father. James displayed maturity and quick thinking when his father had a serious accident, falling from a ladder. James calmly dialled emergency services to seek medical assistance and was able to give accurate information to paramedics. James lives with his father on acreage. He ran to his neighbour's house to alert them of the situation. This was a 700-metre run each way. When he returned, for an hour and a half he sat by his father's side, until the ambulance arrived. I commend him on his bravery and for remaining calm during such a serious situation. I thank him for his courage and for being such an inspiration. I wish his father all the best with his recovery.

#### JULIA PARASHKO AND LUCINDA HARVEY

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:18):** In Penrith we celebrated International Women's Day, on 8 March, in style. We began with the annual International Women's Day breakfast, where we named Ms Julia Parashko the Penrith Woman of the Year for 2024. Due to the quality of the nominations, for the first time we named also a Penrith Young Woman of the Year, Ms Lucinda Harvey. This year we had so many quality nominations for fabulous local women that we thought it fitting to acknowledge all the nominees and their nominators with a morning tea on Monday, when we awarded all certificates. It was a pleasure to network with and celebrate all these wonderful women: Lana Borg, Jennifer Crowley, Aida Basto, Megan Dunn, Gina Field, Kris Gauci, Marlene Harris, Gai Hawthorn, Yasmin Kennedy, Belinda Leonard, Rebecca Liu-Brennan and Kyra Quinlivan. I thank them for all they do for the Penrith community.

#### SUE ASHTON

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:19):** It is an honour today to recognise Port Macquarie electorate Local Woman of the Year 2024, Sue Ashton—a deserving award that acknowledges her tireless work with Koala Conservation Australia. The Local Woman of the Year awards recognise the accomplishments of women as part of NSW Women's Week. This year's ceremony was held at the International Convention Centre in Sydney and provided an opportunity for us all to come together to share the global vision to create a gender-equal world. I was proud to nominate Sue Ashton from Lake Cathie, and I acknowledge her unparalleled commitment and ongoing contribution to our koala hospital over many years. She is the current chair of Koala Conservation Australia, an organisation dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating and restoring the natural habitat of our koala population in the Hastings. Sue oversees approximately 200 volunteers over two sites, the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and the international breeding centre at Guulabaa, located in the Cobarra State Forest. A member since August 2017, Sue has worked in koala care as a rescuer, media coordinator, president and now chair. Alongside volunteers, Sue was instrumental during the Black Summer bushfires in rescuing and nursing injured koalas. Congratulations, Sue.

#### HUSSEIN AL MANSOORY

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (20:20):** I thank everyone for the incredible collective effort that was on display in the search for 12-year-old Hussein Al Mansoory. A large multi-agency operation saw the NSW Police Force and New South Wales SES members, along with the support of Cumberland council staff, come together in a remarkable demonstration of teamwork and commitment. I extend my sincere thanks to Superintendent Simon Glasser, Acting Superintendent Ally Fenwick and dedicated officers Paul, Mark and Adam from the Auburn Police Area Command, the Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit and members of the Public Order Riot Squad and PolAir for their invaluable skills and efforts. The SES response, led by Commander Jamie Newman, saw 270 SES members across 25 local units from Waverley to Campbelltown join in the search. Led by local commanders Kathy Garancsi, Christian Young and Michael Hoynes and Unit Commander Jamie Newman, their efforts were exceptional. I give special thanks to Peter Fitzgerald and Brendan Govers from Cumberland council whose support facilitated the operations. I say to every local community volunteer and staff member who braved the heat and put in long hours, their dedication in finding Hussein speaks volumes about their character and the spirit of our community.

### DR TANYA KWEE

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (20:21):** I ask the House to join me in congratulating Dr Tanya Kwee, who is Ryde's Local Woman of the Year for 2024. Dr Kwee's trailblazing efforts to developing culturally responsive pedagogies have transformed the educational landscape of children in West Ryde, Eastwood, Macquarie Park and beyond. Through personalised engagement, storytelling and creative expression, Dr Kwee has enriched students' learning while fostering a sense of belonging and understanding within our diverse community. Her advocacy for gender equality and commitment to nurturing the identity of girls from diverse backgrounds exemplify her impact beyond the classroom. Her scholarly achievements and practical applications of research, such as organising book clubs and philosophy societies for schoolchildren, highlight her dedication to equipping young people with essential skills for the future. She has numerous accolades, including the Australian Graduate Women scholarship and a U21 Graduate Collaborative Research Award. It is a testament to her unbelievable accomplishments. I once again congratulate Dr Tanya Kwee on her well-deserved honour.

### PADSTOW COMMUNITY CARE

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:22):** I congratulate Padstow Community Care on being awarded Canterbury Bankstown council's 2024 Organisation of the Year. Padstow Community Care has provided community and social services to our community since 1985. The organisation and its volunteers deliver support services to those in the community who are experiencing financial hardship, emotional strain and other everyday challenges. Through the Food for Life program, free financial counselling, emergency relief and low-cost food and lifestyle products are offered, assisting more than 1,500 families on low incomes. It offers support and a helping hand to those in need through an established support network for those who do not have close family or friends to assist them in practical ways. Padstow Community Care should be extremely proud of this achievement, as should the many dedicated volunteers. Congratulations, and I thank them for their efforts. The award is well deserved.

### MALTESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF NSW

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:23):** I recognise the Maltese Community Council of NSW, a fantastic cultural organisation that does wonderful work throughout the State. I was made patron this year, after being nominated at its annual general meeting. The Maltese community is vibrant and active in New South Wales, so this nomination means a great deal to me. We are so privileged to live in a multicultural, multifaith society where all are welcome, no matter their background or heritage. I say it time and again in this place, but in New South Wales our diversity truly is our strength. The Maltese Community Council of NSW works hard by discussing issues impacting the Maltese community of New South Wales and then working together to find solutions. I thank the president, Miriam, vice-president Antione and treasurer Michael Zammit—the entire team—for their continued efforts. I am committed to supporting their efforts in promoting Maltese culture, heritage and community engagement for future generations to enjoy. Together, I look forward to building a more inclusive and harmonious society for all.

### CAFE NGAN

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:24):** Cafe Ngan, a local cafe serving traditional Vietnamese cuisine owned by Mrs Ngan Pham, has been serving our local community for the past six years. During the COVID-19 pandemic Cafe Ngan was forced to close temporarily for eat-in orders. However, that did not stop Ngan from giving back to her community. She continued to accept takeaway orders and provided free delivery for her customers. She also donated rice, instant noodles, fish sauce, salt and cooking oil to the needy, including international Vietnamese students who did not have a job. Despite partially closing her business, Ngan is inspirational in her extraordinary acts of kindness and generosity. Twice a month she continues to distribute free vegetarian rice, noodles and iced tea to people in need. Cafe Ngan has also been recognised by the Vietnamese Dynamic Students association in New South Wales for helping Vietnamese students to interact with communities in Australia. I extend a special acknowledgement to Ngan for her contribution to our community and for enriching our diversity and connectedness. Small businesses like Cafe Ngan contribute to making our community a better place.

### TAYLOR SWIFT ERAS TOUR

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (20:25):** There is not a person in Australia today who has not heard of Taylor Swift, as her reputation precedes her. To be sure she never goes out of style, Crows Nest has displayed a breathtaking mural of the famous singer on Alexander Street. The gorgeous portrait of the pop star is thanks to the incredibly talented artist Sidney Tapia, who was commissioned by Manny's Music Store to capture the loudest woman this town has ever seen. I was truly in awe of the awesome attention to detail and the vivid

colours that created a fearless portrayal of Taylor and one that Crows Nest residents can walk by as they shake it off. With the four sold-out Sydney concerts and the Eras Tour merch combined, Taylor is said to have contributed an estimated \$150 million to the New South Wales economy. I was lucky enough to attend one of the concerts at Accor Stadium, and Sydney was ready for it. She made the whole place shimmer in front of me and 81,000 other Swifties, as we sang our hearts out through the eras. We will never forget it. It was truly an outstanding performance and one that I will remember all too well.

### TRIBUTE TO BRUCE SIMPSON

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:26):** Today I recognise the late Bruce Simpson of Deniliquin, a pillar of regional agriculture and a devoted member of the Intereach board. Bruce's impactful work and dedication have left an indelible mark on the Southern Riverina, driven by his commitment to the prosperity and sustainability of rural and regional areas. With a career over 40 years in irrigated agriculture, his expertise has been invaluable in improving planning, management, water policy and corporate governance for the benefit of many. Bruce led a successful farm advisory business and family farming operation. His leadership roles, including as director and chairman of Murray Irrigation and member of the Murray-Darling Basin assessment panel, underscored his advocacy for water policy reform and sustainable farming practices. Recognised for his wisdom, integrity and dedication to governance within Intereach, Bruce was a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. His unparalleled leadership, knowledge and passion for rural and regional development will be greatly missed.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

### RAMADAN

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:27):** I join over 1.8 billion Muslims in observing the holy month of Ramadan—a time for spiritual reflection, fasting, prayer and community connection. During this sacred month it is important to reflect on the meaning and significance of Ramadan, and to empathise with those less fortunate, whoever they are or wherever they may be. Ramadan is a time of introspection, good deeds and self-discipline. Muslims fast from first light until sunset, abstaining from food and drink. Ramadan is a time to focus on faith, charity and compassion—a time to strive to be better individuals and members of society.

It is normally a time of great joy, but this Ramadan an overwhelming sadness hangs over the people of my electorate. While we will break our fast in safety and with plenty of food, it will not be like that for the people of Gaza. As we begin this holy month, we remember the families in Gaza who are currently suffering in the most horrific ways. We are devastated by the attacks on Gaza that have resulted in an estimated 31,000 people being killed—most heartbreakingly, around 14,000 of them being children.

The images hurting my community show an obliteration of homes, schools, hospitals and universities, creating a perception that there is a clear objective to flatten Gaza and all its social infrastructure. As we gather around our loved ones and break our fast, at the forefront of our prayers are those in the most unimaginable of circumstances. My electorate is mourning for innocent people who have nowhere safe to go, who have seen family members killed by an army without any regard for the international rules of war and by soldiers who have been recorded boasting of their kills, looting and bombings. We see collective punishment inflicted on the people of Gaza—a tragic and heart-wrenching reality that cannot be ignored.

Our thoughts are with the people of Gaza, who do not know if they will survive from one hour to the next, who do not know if they will die from a missile strike, from starvation or from illness. While it is not possible to speak of the 31,000 people individually, it is impossible to forget six-year-old Hind—whose body was found in a car, decomposing under the rubble after a missile strike, her frantic pleas for help silenced when the ambulance that was dispatched to rescue her was also bombed—or the horrific images of parents carrying the body parts of their children in clear plastic bags, or the bombings of hospitals and the babies who died because of them. How do you cope with seeing parents write their children's names on their arms and the soles of their feet so they could be identified in case a missile strike tore them apart? It is confronting, yes. It is horrific, yes. But it is the lived experience of children in Gaza, and we cannot ignore the reality of things that cannot be unseen.

People in my electorate are horrified by what Rafah has become—a place of refuge that is anything but, a million desperate people crammed together in what has effectively become an open-air target. Of all of the images that have seared at my community's heart, the recent attack where over 100 people died after they scrambled for aid and were shot at struck a particularly raw nerve. It cannot be like this; humanity cannot be like this. This is not humanity. Humanity is not about the systematic destruction of a people and a place. Humanity is in finding common threads and appreciating that all people are of equal worth. We see examples of people being condemned and accused of antisemitism for supporting human rights and challenging the Israeli Government's actions in Gaza. That is not right. There must be an end to the senseless death and destruction, and I reiterate my call for an

immediate ceasefire. How many more people must die? When is enough enough? As I said, almost exactly five months ago to the day, no-one wins in war.

During Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to give to charity and to help those in need. As we observe this holy month, let us remember the importance of compassion, generosity and solidarity with our fellow human beings. Let us remember those in Gaza who suffer the devastating impact of some of the most unimaginable events we have seen in our times. Let us urge the Israel Government to live up to its moral commitment by adhering to all components of international law, not picking and choosing which elements it wants to support. Let us hope the Netanyahu Government changes course and takes a humanitarian approach.

Normally I would finish a message about Ramadan by saying, "Happy Ramadan", but this year it is not a joyous time. Instead, I offer a prayer on behalf of my community that the blessings of this month bring about a softening of hearts, an opening of minds, a willingness to change and, ultimately, a just and a lasting peace. Ramadan Mubarak.

### PORT MACQUARIE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:33):** I acknowledge the Port Macquarie Australia Day Award recipients, each honoured for their extraordinary achievements and outstanding service to our community. Australia Day is a day we reflect, we respect and we celebrate being Australian—reflecting on the past, respecting each other's stories and celebrating the amazing, fair and free country we all call home. Many Australians refer to 26 January as Invasion Day or as a day of mourning, and for many of our First Nations people it reflects the parts of our history that are, quite frankly, reprehensible.

When I reflect on the stories of the Stolen Generation, for example, it is nothing to be proud of. It is a legacy blotted with dispossession, injustices and harm, so it is understandable that there are differing views about Australia Day. But it also reminds me of the privileges we have living in a democratic country. We have the freedom to act, to speak and to think freely, as long as it does not stop others doing the same. We should be thankful that we share a stable, peaceful, culturally rich and diverse, prosperous, free and beautiful country. Together, let us make sure our future and the road to reconciliation is a much smoother one by acknowledging and respecting the views of others.

I respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land in the northern part of the Port Macquarie electorate where the Australia Day ceremony was held, the Birpai people, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Inclusivity and respect are qualities that all of our local Australia Day Award recipients and nominees have demonstrated in their words and deeds. They are persistent, selfless and committed to supporting others as they go about their various roles as volunteers, community leaders, employers and employees.

The Port Macquarie Citizen of the Year was presented to Erin Denham, co-founder of the local charity Make a Difference, or MAD. Erin strives to support our most vulnerable in Port Macquarie through the delivery of weekly meals for our homeless and those struggling through financial hardship. Through that incredible service, Erin and her inspirational team have delivered literally thousands of meals to our most marginalised since 2016. The Young Citizen of the Year was awarded to Tess McWilliams for her sporting accomplishments on the national level in women's rugby league, which have seen her selected in the under-18 Australian schoolgirls rugby league team in 2023. Tess has toured Papua New Guinea with the Australian schoolgirls side and participated in the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League national championships and the under-18 girls Country Rugby Union team.

The Living Treasure of the Year accolade was presented to Sherrill Weidenbohm. An inspirational lady, Sherrill has racked up more than 50 years of community service. She has been instrumental in coordinating weekly donations for drought-stricken farmers and families in crisis. Sherill has also avidly supported the Variety Club charity through the coordination of raffles to help children in need. The Environmental Citizen of the Year was Peter Berecny from Port Macquarie for his stand-out actions in rescuing and rehabilitating sick and injured koalas in the Hastings. Along with his efforts with the koala hospital, Peter has worked as a volunteer for Port Macquarie Landcare for 20 years and has coordinated a number of successful environmental initiatives aimed at rejuvenating and protecting our natural habitat and native species.

Last but by no means least, the Community Group of the Year was awarded to the Port Macquarie-Hastings Homeless Collective. An integral organisation in our community with a clear focus on supporting our most vulnerable, the Port Macquarie-Hastings Homeless Collective has established a fortnightly service called Our Place that offers a range of support services for our homeless and those struggling under financial hardship, in one central place. As the name suggests, the collective is based on a network of services and agencies, all in the one place on the same day, for a vulnerable person or family to easily access the help they need to improve their health and quality of life. Those services may include a free breakfast and access to showers and laundry facilities.

I congratulate all of our award recipients on being recognised at such an esteemed level. I thank them for their selfless dedication to making the lives of so many in our community so much better.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:37):** Towards the end of last year, a young woman named Orana came into my office for a meeting. Orana is a student from Springwood High, and my team and I had been inspired to reach out to her after she sent us an email expressing some of her concerns relating to climate change. In that email she wrote:

If we want to enhance our environment, we need to understand the natural law of tuning to our surroundings to make that environment a better place. This is an unwritten law that requires us to pay full attention to all the factors of what we human beings do that may impact the other living beings, and the environment in which we co-exist.

I was so touched when I read Orana's words and impressed with the way in which she had so eloquently and simply summed things up. It got me thinking that the time has well and truly come for us all to take responsibility as individuals for the imprint that we leave on this planet. There is no doubt that a hefty responsibility rests with governments in addressing the climate crisis. Sound progressive policy is undeniably key if we are to stand a chance of seeing our way through this—as is well-informed, sturdy legislation that does not dance around the age-old protections of priorities that are perceived to have a greater importance than the ultimate wellbeing of our planet and all of its inhabitants, not just humans.

Since my appointment as Parliamentary Secretary for the environment, heritage, climate change and energy, I have had the great pleasure of working alongside a Minister who cares deeply about the natural world and the protection and preservation of our biodiversity. Hers is not a position I envy, because making good decisions is not always straightforward nor easy, but this Minister is determined and passionate, and I have great faith in her vision. Beyond the work that needs to be done in the halls of New South Wales Parliament, however, each and every one of us must commit to doing our bit. The collective actions of individuals amount to action en masse, and that is something I believe we should feel empowered by, rather than allow ourselves to become overwhelmed and fearful—a message I sent to Orana. I see positive action every day in my community, and I will take a minute to mention some incredible things that are happening in the Blue Mountains to compel us in a direction of hope, rather than trapping us in a state of despair—especially our young people.

The Blue Mountains Planetary Health Initiative is having profound and far-reaching impacts across our region. Lis Bastian and her team are saturating our community with solutions-based education and sharing stories from across the length and breadth of our community that inspire us to action—to think globally and act locally—gently nudging us away from descending into what is arguably one of the biggest challenges we face: the impact of inaction. I also mention the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, which I have had the great privilege of engaging with for many years and of which I am a member. The society's mission is to help protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains Area. I have often turned to society members for their perspectives on environmental issues to guide me in my own advocacy for the ancient and beautiful World Heritage region I represent. Their insights are valuable beyond measure.

Another extraordinary organisation that I feel privileged to work alongside is the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute. Its advocacy is informed by expert research and worldwide collaboration. The institute's generosity in sharing knowledge and focus on attainable solutions for a sustainable future supports me in the work that I do, and I am deeply grateful for every opportunity we have to connect. The climate crisis is huge and it is terrifying. Even with all the evidence, ongoing analysis and speculation, we are still not entirely sure what we are in for. I think we need to hold that space where we allow ourselves to feel the uncertainty of our future on this planet and let that compel us to do better. That is a message for our young people. We simply cannot have infinite growth, economic or otherwise, on a finite planet. Our Indigenous people know this, and the time has long since passed for us to not only listen to the ancient knowledge of our First Nations people but also put into practice what they have been saying, and living, for thousands and thousands of years—we need to tread lightly on this earth.

I was listening to renowned physicist Brian Cox recently and he shared an anecdote, which some members may have already heard, about an astronaut from Saudi Arabia who shared his experience in space. He said that on the first orbit around the planet he looked for his hometown. On the second orbit he looked for his country. But, by the third orbit, he saw only the earth. I find that recollection both profound and moving. It is a reminder that we should treat this planet as a single, fragile world, not a collection of separate places. Governments and big business and industry must act on climate change, but the so-called little things that we all do as individuals absolutely matter. To Orana, I look forward to the day when the human race truly acknowledges that we are a part of the biodiversity of this planet. I vow to work with her and her generation.

### DUBBO ELECTORATE WOMAN OF THE YEAR

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:42):** I take this opportunity to recognise the 2024 Dubbo Electorate Local Woman of the Year, Myff Clarke. Myff, along with her supportive husband, Mat, and their four boys, aged nine, seven, five and nearly three, have been an integral part of the Mudgee community for over a decade. I was really happy to be able to present Myff with her award at a special get-together we hosted at Mudgee with her family and friends and committee members representing some of the groups she is associated with. Known affectionately as the "Crazy Clarke Clan", the family embodies the spirit of resilience and determination. Myff and Mat's eldest son, affectionately known to everyone as "Bug", faces the challenges of Williams syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that affects one in every 20,000 babies. Despite the hurdles, Bug shines brightly with an over-social personality, a trait that is characteristic of Williams syndrome. He is a delight to be around and really loves the company of people. Myff and Mat's journey with Bug's condition led them to a profound commitment to making a difference in the lives of children facing similar challenges.

In 2017 Myff was introduced to the Mudgee committee of the Children's Medical Research Institute [CMRI] through friends. The organisation, which is dedicated to advancing the treatment and prevention of childhood diseases, resonated with Myff. The CMRI is an independent organisation with over 170 scientists committed to finding treatments and cures for serious conditions affecting kids. In 2018 Myff joined the Mudgee committee of the CMRI. She became vice-president in 2022 and president in 2023. Through initiatives like Jeans for Genes Day and Doin' it for Mudgee Kids, the Mudgee committee has raised around \$280,000 since 2021. That is a really impressive amount for a town with a population of approximately 12,000 people.

Myff's dedication to the Mudgee community extends beyond her association with the Children's Medical Research Institute and the Mudgee committee. She actively participates in the Mudgee Public School Parents and Citizens Association, where she serves as the vice-president, and has worked diligently to foster community engagement with the school. Her innovative approach to fundraising has brought the school into the broader community, lessening the burden on parents and families. Myff's community presence has not gone unnoticed, and for the past three years she has been the emcee at the Mudgee Showground Christmas Carols, hosted by the Mudgee Rotary Club, helping to spread the joy of the festive season to everyone.

When Myff is not generously volunteering her time and energy, she seamlessly transitions into her roles as mother, wife and accomplished businesswoman. In addition to her family responsibilities and community involvement, Myff manages her own business as a marriage celebrant. In that role, she brings the same passion, care and dedication that define her character. Guiding couples through one of the most significant moments of their lives, Myff plays a pivotal role in creating lasting memories of love and commitment. While her husband, Mat, acknowledges the challenges that come with Myff's passion for community service, he is also incredibly proud of her unwavering commitment. I have been lucky enough to spend a small amount of time with this amazing family, and I have seen the community support that Myff and the family have, along with the love and support from her entire extended family.

I was delighted that Myff and Mat were able to join me, along with hundreds of other women and proud family members, at the NSW Women of the Year Awards recently in Sydney. It was a special opportunity to come together, but it did require a bit of juggling—as everything does when you have four boys to deal with. I am so glad, and I think Myff and Mat were glad, that they were able to do it. Women who make a difference need other people in their lives to help them make that difference. Myff certainly reminded me of that. Mat and the rest of the family do that with Myff, and I know how much she loves and values all the support she has from the people in her life.

Myff's story is one of inspiration and a testament to the empowering environment for women in the Dubbo electorate. That is something I am really proud of. The outpouring of support and admiration on social media for Myff on receiving the award is a clear reflection of the respect the community has for her. Comments such as "beautiful acknowledgment", "well-deserved" and "Congratulations, Myff" demonstrate the impact she has had on the lives of many people around her. I congratulate Myff. She is an inspiration to all of us, and her dedication is truly deserving of this recognition. Well done.

### MACQUARIE FIELDS STATION

**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) (20:47):** Nine years ago I was elected by the good folk of the Macquarie Fields electorate as their representative in the New South Wales Parliament, which has been a great privilege. But a lot can change in nine years. Now, with the first Labor Government in New South Wales in more than a decade, I am delighted to say that life is about to change significantly for the people of Macquarie Fields.

Why is that? Because the Government is getting on with the job of improving accessibility and safety at Macquarie Fields train station. That is right—Macquarie Fields station is finally getting its lifts!

The station upgrade is a major win for our community. It comes after years of advocacy—a joint campaign spearheaded by me and the Federal member for Werriwa, Ms Anne Stanley. The long-overdue lifts will make the station inclusive for all: for people with a disability, people with prams or luggage, older people and people with mobility issues. For the first time in 136 years, Macquarie Fields station will be fully wheelchair-accessible. I thank my community for their perseverance and patience. This win is for them.

Over the years, I have met with constituents at the station and listened to their stories. They have shared their struggles of dealing with over 70 stairs. They have shared their frustration at having to travel to Ingleburn or Glenfield to catch a train, adding time and cost to their journey. They have shared their anger at being consistently ignored. Time and again, our community was short-changed and held in contempt by the former Liberal Government. Let us not forget that the Liberals were in government for 12 long years—and long years they were, especially for the people of Macquarie Fields, who wanted nothing more than their fair share. There was nothing fair about the former Liberal Government's prioritisation of station upgrades.

More than 10,000 trips are taken through Macquarie Fields station every week. The community is home to 2,000 people aged over 60, yet the former Liberal Government invested in less-used stations first, like Hawkesbury River station, which sees one-quarter of the weekly passenger numbers of Macquarie Fields. The former Treasurer and current shadow Minister may recall that he once boasted that political "skulduggery and manoeuvring" resulted in his local station at Hawkesbury River being bumped up 150 spots to receive a lift upgrade at the expense of other stations, like Macquarie Fields, which were much more deserving. It was pork-barrelling 101.

A 2019 Auditor-General's report slammed the former Liberal Government's politicisation of station upgrades that prioritised stations with a lower-ranked need than Macquarie Fields. That is why the New South Wales Government is restoring integrity and fairness to station upgrades, to ensure that those with the biggest needs do not miss out. It is true that members of my community have waited too long. They can finally look forward to a station upgrade, with work set to get under way later this year. Macquarie Fields is one of seven stations that will receive upgrades as part of a \$800 million commitment to accelerate accessibility upgrades across stations in New South Wales. I thank the Premier, the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Disability Inclusion for making that momentous announcement.

I thank my community, which includes people like Donna Palmer, who lives up the road from the station but who has been denied access to it for many years because she uses a mobility scooter. People like Donna can now look forward to knowing that the New South Wales Government will not leave them behind. I am proud to be part of a New South Wales Labor Government that is delivering long-overdue infrastructure for our growing communities. I recently had the privilege of opening the new Edmondson Park North Commuter Car Park, which will provide more than 900 new spaces, delivering much-needed community infrastructure. Commuters will now have access to around 2,000 additional parking spaces at Edmondson Park. The car park features over 800 rooftop solar panels, 10 electric-vehicle charging stations and a range of sustainability initiatives.

I thank everyone for their support for our community campaign to deliver Macquarie Fields its fair share of infrastructure needs. I recall visiting Edmondson Park when I was first elected in 2015 and seeing a conga line of cars around the station precinct. People would park cars illegally on footpaths and risk a fine just to catch a train to work or for other activities. It was total chaos. Now, with two dedicated commuter car parks at Edmondson Park, people finally have the infrastructure they deserve. A lot can change in nine years, but change need not take that long. After only one year, the New South Wales Government has not wasted time in delivering for the Macquarie Fields community. It is time for our fair share.

## WATER BUYBACKS

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:53):** Tonight I talk about comments made by the Premier during question time yesterday. The Government does not want to admit it, but it has a water problem. The more this Government gets that water problem wrong, the more families in rural New South Wales suffer. In question time yesterday, the Premier said that he does not support the Federal Government's planned buyback of 450 gigalitres of water for environmental reasons. It sounds comforting, but it is not. Not supporting something is not the same as stopping something. We have had enough of the weasel words. The Minister for Water, Rose Jackson, and the Premier are both using the same phrase from the same political cheat sheet. We do not care what they support or do not support; we need to know what they are going to stop. Right now, the Premier does not have a plan to stop the buybacks.

Yesterday the Premier said he had presented the Federal Government with some alternatives to buybacks that the Federal Government might choose. But offering alternatives is not the same as stopping the buybacks. If efficiencies can save water in parts of regional New South Wales, that water should stay in rural New South Wales. It should not be given to the Commonwealth. The Premier knows that constraints along the river would prevent that amount of water from ever being delivered safely. Some parts of Wagga Wagga would be destroyed by flooding if the 450-gigalitre plan was ever allowed to happen. My advice to the Premier and the Minister for Water is to do two things. The first is to stop the doubletalk. We are not being fooled. No-one is comforted by the "not support" line. The second thing is to actually stop the buybacks.

There are two simple ways that the Premier could stop the Federal Government buybacks today. One option is to do what Victoria has done and disallow the buybacks. Premier Minns could simply disallow the transfer of any water from New South Wales to the Federal Government if that water is part of the 450-gigalitre buyback plan. Alternatively, the New South Wales Government currently has more than 1,000 gigalitres of environmental water sitting in dams around the State. Why doesn't Premier Minns sell some of that water to the Federal Government? It is another way to stop the buybacks of farming water, and it could be done today.

Let us not forget that the tens of thousands of gigalitres that the Federal Government wants to buy back will be used to fill up South Australia's Lower Lakes. I visited the fake lakes, as I call them, earlier this year. I cannot understand why any Premier would allow valuable New South Wales farming water to be sent south to fill up those fake lakes. Currently, the lakes are being kept artificially filled with fresh water, using man-made barrages to keep the rich local South Australians happy. But the fake lakes could be naturally filled with fresh water from the Murray-Darling system and sea water from the Murray Mouth. There are so many reasons why the Premier must stop New South Wales's water being taken from farming communities by the Federal Government. The Premier needs to accept that his tricky words will not solve the water problem. Only strong, decisive action to protect New South Wales's farming communities will get the Premier out of this murky mess.

#### **BLACKTOWN ELECTORATE**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:57):** Tonight I speak about various issues impacting upon the Blacktown electorate. Firstly, I recognise some of the fabulous women who have won awards in recent times. I have previously spoken in a community recognition statement about Rachael Hanlon, who was named Citizen of the Year at the Australia Day awards. She has been the chair and secretary of the Blacktown City Lions Club and is doing many different activities. Ebony O'Connor was named Young Citizen of the Year. She was the youth ambassador in 2019, the Blacktown City Show Society Young Woman of the Year in 2023, a New Colombo Plan scholar in Japan in 2024 and was recently named as one of the *Australian Financial Review's* top 100 future leaders. Angela Van Dyke was recently named the Blacktown City Council Woman of the Year. She is a wonderful leader at the North West Community Services in Riverstone. And Seema Balasubramanian was named Blacktown Woman of the Year, which I spoke about in my community recognition statement earlier.

I was happy to see that the Premier and Ministers Ryan Park, Sophie Cotsis and Jodie Harrison came to Blacktown Hospital to make a major announcement, together with Holly Masters, the CEO of the McGrath Foundation, and nurses Melinda and Melissa. The McGrath Breast Care Nurses make all the difference for patients at Blacktown Hospital. The Premier announced an \$18.6 million investment over the next four years, honouring the Labor Party commitment at the last election that will see 29 new McGrath Breast Care Nurses providing free support to breast cancer patients in metro, regional and remote communities. The specially trained McGrath Breast Care Nurses provide free care and support and are a key point of contact for patients during their treatment. They become a trusted, consistent and knowledgeable point of contact, and they explain complicated aspects of treatment to patients during what can be an incredibly stressful period.

While support and treatment of breast cancer is extremely important, as the old saying goes, prevention is better than cure. Unfortunately, BreastScreen NSW lost its permanent commercial hub when Myer in Westpoint Blacktown closed its doors in April 2022. As an interim measure, a mobile van was established and moved between Blacktown venues on council or Blacktown Workers Club sites. The Blacktown permanent commercial centre at Myer resulted in 9,158 screens for the last full financial year in 2021. For the 2023 financial year, the mobile van accommodated only 1,847 screens, meaning that Blacktown women had to travel further, to Castle Hill or Parramatta, for screening. By 2029 Blacktown city's target population for breast screening is anticipated to be 53,550 women, which means 26.7 per cent growth over the next 10 years. In 2023 only 40.9 per cent of eligible women in Blacktown city participated. The number was even less for women from Hindi-speaking background, at 39 per cent; Arabic-speaking background, at 36.4 per cent; and Mandarin-speaking background, at 28.5 per cent.

We must provide services in convenient centres and increase capacity to ensure participation rates increase within the City of Blacktown, particularly when comparing Blacktown, at 40 per cent, with the national average of 50 per cent. Over the past year I have been working with Graeme Loy, the CEO of Western Sydney Local

Health District, and others in NSW Health, Westmead Breast Cancer Institute, BreastScreen NSW and the Minister for Health to re-establish access to essential life-saving screening services for women. I understand that a permanent location has been identified, and the final funding of the fit-out is currently being negotiated. I look forward to the Minister and the health district funding that very important service for the women of Blacktown.

### HAWKESBURY HOSPITAL

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (21:02):** On 31 January this year the operator of the Hawkesbury Hospital, St John of God Health Care, and the Minister for Health announced that St John of God Health Care would not be renewing its contract with NSW Health. With that announcement came the reassurance that NSW Health would take over the operation of Hawkesbury Hospital from 1 July 2024. Unfortunately, the media releases, subsequent ministerial statements, frequently asked questions and statements at budget estimates raised many unanswered questions about critical areas, including job guarantees for staff currently employed by St John of God Health Care and their entitlements and conditions.

Equally important to my community are myriad issues that matter to them. I feel for the Hawkesbury branch of the United Hospital Auxiliary. Those incredibly compassionate, caring volunteers are very worried that NSW Health will close their gift shop, as has occurred elsewhere across the State. That matters because revenue from the Hawkesbury Hospital gift shop resources the auxiliary to look after new mothers and vulnerable people who use Hawkesbury Hospital. I am extremely concerned about the hardworking staff at Hawkesbury Hospital. Statements from the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, in answer to frequently asked questions about the transfer of the hospital to NSW Health, contain some very worrying words. It said:

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District will work with current staff to ensure their skills and highly valued local knowledge continues to play an integral role in providing health care to the community.

That is a long way from a job guarantee. It is not good enough, and I insist that the Minister for Health provide a guarantee that every job and every position will migrate to NSW Health without disadvantage. It should not matter what a worker's status is—whether they are a casual, part-time, full-time, contract or long-term employee or a recent hire. Every one of those valuable health workers needs the reassurance of a role going forward with NSW Health that matches or exceeds the pay and conditions they currently enjoy.

I am deeply concerned about the future of bed numbers at the hospital. The local health district says that there are currently 131 beds at Hawkesbury Hospital. It confirms that all services will continue, but nowhere does the Minister or Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District state categorically that it will retain at least the same number of beds. Given the last Labor Government's history of cutting bed numbers in New South Wales hospitals, the Hawkesbury community is entitled to an absolute assurance that there will be no cuts to operational bed numbers.

The Minns Labor Government has introduced paid parking at hospitals across the State. Nurses and other health workers are taking industrial action over the betrayal by Premier Minns and Minister Park. NSW Health admitted at recent budget estimates hearings that it intends to bring Hawkesbury Hospital into alignment with its policy of charging hospital staff for parking, as it has done throughout New South Wales. I appeal to the Minister for Health to step up and promise that there will never be paid parking at Hawkesbury Hospital for all users. To now charge health workers is a fundamental breach of trust by the Government. To also charge visitors, volunteers and contractors to park at Hawkesbury Hospital will be a massive gouge to the hip pocket, and it reeks of hypocrisy.

Labor Government members have stood in this Chamber complimenting the Minns Government for delivering pay rises to health workers, yet here we have a disgraceful display of deceit, no care and no responsibility. Think of the consequences of paid parking at Hawkesbury Hospital. Nearby streets will become congested and businesses and residents will suffer. Imagine an elderly cancer patient who cannot afford paid parking arriving for treatment and having to walk to the hospital from several blocks away. The idea is abhorrent. The people of Hawkesbury are passionate about their hospital. The first hospital in the Hawkesbury region was built 201 years ago. The current facility was built in Windsor in 1996. Our local hospital is a pivotal, treasured part of our community. I call on Minister Park to give an absolute guarantee on jobs, worker conditions, services and no paid parking at Hawkesbury Hospital.

### PUBLIC PRESCHOOLS

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (21:07):** Every child deserves access to the best possible education, and we cannot say we are delivering on that front if we do not work towards access to preschool education. That is because preschools make a fundamental difference to the academic and social skills trajectory of kids in the years that follow. Unfortunately, a gap in access exists between many disadvantaged communities in Western Sydney compared with other regions in New South Wales. That is why I am proud to say that the New South Wales Labor

Government's proposed delivery of 100 new public preschools is truly special. It is an educational game changer for so many kids, especially when Western Sydney is front and centre of the Government's focus.

In my region, the Fairfield local government area will receive 10 new public preschools, while Cumberland and Canterbury-Bankstown will also receive six and four new schools respectively. They include Cabramatta West Public School, Carramar Public School, Edensor Park Public School, Fairfield West Public School, Governor Philip King Public School, Lansvale East Public School, Prairievale Public School, Villawood North Public School, William Stimson Public School, Mount Pritchard Public School, Sherwood Grange Public School, Guildford West Public School, Guildford Public School, Granville South Public School, Granville East Public School, Blaxcell Street Public School, Birrong Public School, Chullora Public School, Harcourt Public School and Yagoona Public School. That is fantastic work, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Government to do more in the education space in the years to come.

### SWANSEA ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (21:09):** On 25 March it will be one year since the 2023 New South Wales State election and the election of the Minns Labor Government. It has been a great pleasure to serve as a member of this Government. I am very pleased to say that significant investment has taken place in the Swansea electorate the past 12 months. Upon the election of the Government, work commenced to deliver on our election commitments to the Swansea community. I am pleased to say that our first budget provided funding for those commitments.

We have already delivered the first round of dredging of the Swansea Channel as part of a \$1.5 million investment in dredging, with another round to come later this year. The dredging has removed almost 17,000 cubic metres of sand and established a 30-metre-wide channel. This follows years of neglect by the former Government, which put the safety of boaties at significant risk. Alongside the dredging of Swansea Channel, I have been a passionate advocate for funding to address traffic congestion on Carters Road at Lake Munmorah. In fact, I made consistent budget submissions to the former Government, but I am sad to say they fell on deaf ears.

The people of Swansea can be assured they now have a New South Wales government that values our community. After years of the Liberal-Nationals Government turning a blind eye to the congestion on Carters Road, I can confirm that Labor's first budget provided \$1 million to fund a traffic study to help plan a collector road link between Tall Timbers Road and Chain Valley Bay Road, Lake Munmorah. We are also delivering millions of dollars in funding for footpaths right across the Central Coast, with \$2 million a year to fund essential footpath projects over the next four years, and \$2 million in funding has also been delivered for planning of the Central Coast shared pathway. The path will link coastal walking tracks from Lake Macquarie to the Central Coast to form a great coastal walk.

The Government is committed to supporting critical community infrastructure in our growing communities, and I am thrilled that the New South Wales Government is providing \$6 million to design and build a new sports complex at Colongra. The Colongra Sporting Complex will be a multi-use facility with two turf sporting fields, three netball courts, a car park, amenities building, play space and a skate park. It will also have the capacity to host regional events—something we have not been able to do in the north of the electorate in the past. We are also providing \$174,000 to upgrade lighting at Blacksmiths Oval. The current system is outdated and in need of upgrades to allow the Belmont Swansea United Football Club to continue to grow. Another \$120,000 will fund floodlighting at Halekulani Oval, which will allow the Budgewoi Bulldogs Junior Rugby League Football Club to use two fields, which they have been calling for. We are also backing our local surf clubs, providing over \$100,000 in combined funding to purchase vital equipment. Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club, The Lakes Surf Life Saving Club, Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club, Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club, and Redhead Surf Life Saving Club will all receive funding from the Minns Labor Government.

Since being elected, the New South Wales Government has worked diligently to rebuild our essential services by scrapping the wages cap—that was most important. We have been delivering pay rises for teachers and paramedics. Locally, teachers have been delivered employment certainty, converted to permanent positions after having been casual for more than a decade in some cases. In addition, we are beginning the rollout of safe staffing in our hospitals and paying police to study at the NSW Police Force Academy at Goulburn. We have delivered all of this in under 12 months, and we will not waste a second in government. There is more to come. I thank the New South Wales Labor Government for all it has done.

### DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (21:14):** This evening I speak about some important issues affecting my community. I begin my contribution by bringing to the House's attention a recent success we achieved in relation to additional services that have now been permanently added to the F3 Parramatta River ferry

service. An additional 14 services each weekday and 26 extra services each weekend have been added to the timetable, increasing the number of ferries between Sydney Olympic Park and Circular Quay by 96 services a week.

The increase in service availability has been welcomed by many in my community, who, particularly during the warmer months, are now able to commute in and out of the city with reasonable certainty of being able to board a ferry. I hope that the updated timetable with permanent additional services helps to alleviate the countless stories I have heard of people being abandoned at the wharf because a ferry was full and could not stop. The positive news came as the result of a huge lobbying effort by the community. I particularly acknowledge Di Brown and the Friends of Cabarita Park and Wharf community group, who have been fighting hard to lobby for the additional services.

I will always place the needs of my community over politics. I think it is a hallmark trait of a good representative, so I thank the Minister for Transport for listening to my community and working collaboratively with me to improve the ferry service. There is more work to be done and I am engaging with Transport for NSW on those matters, which include securing extra evening and weekend services that start further down the river to give commuters at wharves like Cabarita, Abbotsford, Chiswick and Drummoyne an opportunity to get on the ferry. For many in my community, ferries are the only viable transport option, so it is vital that they are able to access those services. Too often the ferries become full at Parramatta or Sydney Olympic Park and do not stop at subsequent wharves.

I also want to highlight the importance of addressing the issue of wharf cleanliness and maintenance. It is a daily occurrence that my office receives an email or a phone call from a commuter telling us that the ferry wharf has been left in a disastrous state. I have seen it myself. Wharves are being littered with fishing hooks, wires, old bait, and I have even seen fish heads. It is just unacceptable. Commuter wharves need to be fit and safe for commuters. I have heard of commuters tripping on fish guts or stepping on old fishing hooks. It is simply not good enough. I have written to the transport Minister, seeking her intervention to ensure that wharves are appropriately maintained and cleaned before the start of the morning commute. I have also been advised of, and seen firsthand, illegal fishing occurring at Cabarita wharf and other wharves after the gates have closed. I want better enforcement and I will ensure that the Minister addresses that.

I take this opportunity to provide the House with an update on the ongoing traffic congestion along Victoria Road at Drummoyne and in surrounding local streets following the opening of the Rozelle interchange. As this is a serious matter for local residents, who are dealing with the daily impacts of traffic congestion, I have sought to engage with the Minister for Roads, his office, and Transport for NSW in good faith. It is disappointing that I do not appear to have received the courtesy of a written response from the Minister to my letter dated 1 December 2023 requesting that Transport for NSW hold a community meeting with my constituents. However, I am pleased to hear that Transport for NSW will finally be visiting Drummoyne on Monday to talk about the traffic and safety issues that our community has been dealing with since late last year.

I stress how vital it is that this meeting goes ahead to bring the community together to discuss ways to improve the current traffic situation and to work to find suitable solutions. People cannot exit their driveways. They are late to work and appointments. Traffic light sequencing has caused extreme congestion and we simply cannot accept the rat-running that is occurring in local streets. I am looking forward to this community meeting on Monday evening. I will absolutely be attending to join my community in calling for change.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (21:19):** With the current cost-of-living crisis, more and more households are choosing to install solar in a bid to reduce their own energy costs, as well as contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions. However, the existing energy network infrastructure struggles to manage the flooding of the grid with excess power supply at peak production times, leading to volatile feed-in tariffs for solar production and a growing dissatisfaction among consumers on the way their power is managed, accessed and reimbursed.

One of the key challenges in meeting the Australian Government's goal of 82 per cent renewable electricity by 2030 is the sheer scale of renewable energy sites required and the infrastructure to get that energy to consumers. Virtual energy networks [VENs] and community batteries offer a way to rapidly decarbonise through consumer participation in the energy network. It brings energy generation and storage to a localised site, with the benefits being seen locally. Tapping into a renewable resource brings self-sufficiency and reliability. There is a potential to be leaders in this field. With the fact that nearly one in three homes in Australia already has solar panels lies the potential solution to the massive challenge of adapting our current energy infrastructure to suit renewable energy production and storage.

One community group in Wollondilly is not waiting for the solution to be offered to them. Rather, they are taking matters into their own hands. Inspired by a successful small-scale agriculture VEN, which included participants such as Pecora Dairy, WinZero is implementing a trial of a VEN in the Southern Highlands, allowing a group of motivated volunteer participants to take control of their own energy security. A virtual energy network works as a peer-to-peer trading system. Excess solar that is created can be given or sold to another consumer within the network. So beyond just powering their own site, this sees a sharing of energy and resources, and thus savings, between users in the network. The access to power stored on site is invaluable. Not relying on the grid addresses energy efficiency as well as energy security. In producing energy from existing rooftop solar and storing it in batteries, or distributing it to other households in the network that do not have solar, this community group is leading the way in implementing a sustainable and resilient energy system, using an innovative approach that empowers communities and individuals.

In addition to virtual energy networks, community batteries are a reliable and exciting option for supplementing the power supply to residents. A large-capacity battery gets installed in a neighbourhood and nearby residents are connected to the battery to feed in excess power that is created through their rooftop solar that would otherwise be sent back into the grid. It is then stored in the local battery and drawn upon at times when solar production is being created by a household, such as at night-time or during inclement weather. Storing power locally in a community battery further enhances power security and reduces carbon emissions.

Reduced pressure on the supply grid and reduced carbon emissions are wins for everyone, and these are issues that should be prioritised by government. One immediate incentive is the financial benefits to the individual resident in taking control of their own power supply and storage. Community batteries and virtual energy networks represent a relatively simple intervention that has the potential to reduce the cost of living for a huge number of households, with minimal additional infrastructure investment from the Government. We know that consumers are already turning to solar panel installations on their homes to beat rising electricity costs. By creating a VEN complemented by a community battery, there is an opportunity to maximise the resources that already exist in so many households today, along with encouraging more people to install good quality, large-sized solar panel systems.

The WinZero VEN trial already underway shows what can be achieved when motivated individuals work together. We need real climate solutions, fast. Why wait for the infrastructure to catch up when there are small-scale, viable solutions that can be rolled out today with very little upheaval to the existing structure? The energy network will take time to evolve to new methods of energy production, but with Australia's climate commitments deadlines fast approaching, solutions are needed now. Australia can achieve its clean energy transition successfully, and maximising the potential of household solar and community batteries through virtual energy networks will play a vital role in transitioning to a renewables-based economy.

### **PENRITH WOMAN OF THE YEAR AND YOUNG WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (21:23):** I follow my theme today celebrating all things International Women's Day. I especially congratulate our Penrith Woman of the Year, Julia Parashko, and the Penrith Young Woman of the Year, Lucinda Harvey, and will inform the House further about their achievements. As Penrith's Woman of the Year, Julia's journey is one of resilience, determination and boundless generosity. Her dedication to education is truly inspiring. She not only nurtured her two daughters to success but is a role model to countless students and local women, using her singing talents to guide them towards their goals and aspirations. Her commitment to empowering others extends far beyond the classroom, as evidenced by her active involvement in local charity work, including Anzac Day services, the Cancer Council's Relay for Life, the McGrath Foundation's Pink Up Penrith events, local Christmas carols and the annual Christmas tree lighting event.

As an Indigenous woman, Julia has proudly shared her heritage and culture with our community, enriching our lives with her performances and traditional ceremonies. She has selflessly offered years of free service to the local RSL club, singing the national anthem and doing the acknowledgement of country. Having had the privilege of working alongside Julia on various charitable endeavours, I have witnessed firsthand her boundless energy, infectious enthusiasm, genuine compassion and service to community. Julia's contributions to our community are immeasurable, and it is with heartfelt gratitude and honour that I presented her with the well-deserved recognition of Penrith Woman of the Year for 2024. Julia would be particularly miffed if I did not also mention her awesome shoe collection. She has the best shoe collection of any singer, presenter or MC that I have ever seen.

For the first time we awarded a Penrith Young Woman of the Year. I was privileged to acknowledge Lucinda Harvey, a remarkable young woman whose charitable contributions greatly improve our Penrith community. I have previously spoken about Lucinda's achievements in this place, and it is a pleasure to do so again. Lucinda's commitment to mental health awareness, community engagement and advocacy showcases her exceptional leadership. At the young age of 19, Lucinda founded Saving True Blues to raise awareness for suicide and mental health. What began as a local initiative has now expanded into a statewide movement. Lucinda's

innovative approach involves organising four-wheel driving and camping weekends, providing a platform for individuals to step out of their comfort zones, explore nature and engage in crucial conversations about mental health. Lucinda was driven to start her foundation after a personal experience where she lost a very close friend to suicide.

Beyond her mental health advocacy, Lucinda stands as a beacon for women in agriculture. She uses this platform to empower women, challenging stereotypes in traditionally male-dominated sectors of the Australian agriculture industry. Lucinda's pride in the Penrith community is evident through her active participation in local events. Her engagement extends to medical research and education initiatives, highlighting her commitment to the broader community's wellbeing. Lucinda exemplifies the power of compassion, and she has cemented herself as an invaluable member of the Penrith community. I cannot wait to see what her future holds.

### MERRIWA

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (21:27):** I inform the House about a beautiful little town in my electorate by the name of Merriwa. It is a fantastic place—a wonderful place for people to move to and live in. It is a lovely little agricultural town, but we have some challenges, as there always are across regional New South Wales. Of course, one of the big challenges is getting staff and teachers into our schools. Merriwa has had a problem in that regard. We have programs like the regional teachers incentive that try to get teachers in these schools, but we need to do more. I thank the Merriwa Central School Parents and Citizens Association for sending me an email last week to provide an update on the current situation. Their words will be much better than mine, and I quote:

Country students deserve to be taught by suitably qualified teachers in their local community.

Unfortunately, the teacher shortage is significantly impacting on the learning of students at our school.

The situation has steadily worsened over the past five years.

Currently 42 per cent of teaching positions on our secondary campus are unfilled.

The school has advertised vacancies on multiple occasions however have been unable to attract staff.

Some positions have been vacant for over 18 months.

Subject choices for students have been cut, and senior students have been forced to study through distance education due to the teacher shortage.

The ongoing shortage and lack of casual teachers is having a significant impact on the workload of the existing teachers who are attempting to cover additional classes on a daily basis.

This is clearly unsustainable for the existing teaching staff.

One of the Merriwa parents observed in an email to me last week:

Public education in NSW is dying a slow and painful death, particularly in regional communities.

Our children's futures are on the line, and it is time that your government steps up.

Something needs to be done. Yesterday!

My constituent went on to add:

I am sick and tired of the reality, that we are becoming increasing more disadvantaged just because we choose to live in the country.

A thumbnail sketch of Merriwa Central School's situation depicts a teacher shortage, high school students being denied opportunities at one of the most important times of their education, and a community that feels like it is being short-changed because of where it is located. All this is in a country town just a short drive from the two main council areas that generate coal royalties in this State.

Putting politics and political philosophies to one side, yes, we have a well-documented skills shortage in our State and our nation. Teachers, nurses, police officers, plumbers, electricians, miners, tradespeople—I wonder whether any members can name a trade or profession where skilled qualified people are not in short supply. If teachers are considering coming to Merriwa, there are plans currently on the drawing board for new accommodation in the town. I urge the education Minister and the Minister for Housing, who has the Teacher Housing Authority as part of her portfolio responsibilities, to work with Merriwa's residents and Upper Hunter Shire Council to get this project moving and get it done right, as soon as possible.

What can a member of Parliament do to get more teachers to come and work in their electorate? As they say, if you don't ask, you don't get. I ask young teachers in New South Wales to accept this invitation. As the tourism body Upper Hunter Country says, come on up, visit Merriwa, have a look, and consider this lovely country town where the teaching profession has opportunities waiting to be filled. Go to Upper Hunter Country's website and read its magazine and see what Merriwa and surrounds have to offer. People might be surprised by the

diversity of our region. Finally, I guarantee that I will help any young teachers who come to the region. We have a lot of good-looking farmers, male and female. It is a great place to explore. Come on up. We need you.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (21:32):** Being a Hunter MP myself, I recognise the comments of the member for Upper Hunter about Merriwa. It is a beautiful town. The running of the sheep is a wonderful thing. This Government is certainly working hard to attract and keep teachers within our State. We have had a massive teacher shortage for some years now. That is why this Government is taking seriously the need to retain and attract good teachers. We are giving them the largest pay increase in a generation, which has converted them from being the worst-paid teachers in Australia to the best-paid teachers in Australia. It will take time to fix. But we are certainly committed to making sure that all of our kids right across this State get the best possible education in our public schools.

### GRANVILLE ELECTORATE AND GAZA CONFLICT

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (21:33):** Ramadan Mubarak. I offer my best wishes to the entire Muslim community for the holy month of Ramadan, for their sacrifices, prayer, good deeds and self-reflection as a commitment to becoming closer to Allah and to empathise with those who are suffering. This year Ramadan coincides with Lent and Easter, when Christians like me also commit to sacrifice and prayer in anticipation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This should be a wonderful opportunity to come together and learn from one another. But this year is different. This time Ramadan is not a time of celebration, with the war in Gaza in its fifth month, and with over 31,000 Palestinians killed, over 70,000 injured and 1.7 million people displaced from their homes. Those who have been killed include over 400 while queueing for food, over 100 in what is being referred to as the flour massacre. At least 25 children have starved to death, and over 12,000 have been killed in Gaza, which is more than the number of children killed in all other conflicts combined around the world since 2019. According to UNICEF, another 17,000 children are unaccompanied or separated from their families. It is horrific.

I usually host an iftar dinner during the holy month, bringing together friends from the Muslim community and community leaders to break the fast together and to thank them for their friendship and hospitality—but not this year. Not because of statements about not inviting politicians to iftars this year or anything like that, but purely because I feel deeply uncomfortable to be hosting a feast while children in Gaza are starving to death. It is not just me who feels this way. In *The Guardian* this week my brilliant friend Ramia Abdo-Sultan wrote:

How can I sit down at a table laden with steaming soup, bowls piled with fresh tabbouleh and fattoush, succulent meat and rice dishes, when my family and loved ones in Gaza find no respite from their imposed starvation?

The grief in my community is overwhelming. Last year I spoke in this place of Mona Sakr, who runs an Arabic school in my electorate and who had been stuck in Gaza after going to visit her brother and sister, when the current conflict started. She came to Parliament to tell us about her terrifying experience. She spoke about how worried she was for her relatives who remained in Gaza and how guilty she felt, being able to leave, as an Australian. She was really worried about what would happen to her family. A few weeks ago her brother and his wife were killed in northern Gaza and their daughter horribly injured when the Israel Defence Forces bombed their home. They did not flee to the south because he uses a walking frame, making the journey through bombed and destroyed roads incredibly difficult. They hoped the worst had passed, but it had not. Mona is heartbroken. I know so many like her who have lost loved ones and many others—Christians and Muslims—who are trying desperately to sponsor their relatives to come to safety in Australia.

Many families have recently arrived from Gaza, and I commend the many individuals and organisations trying to help them: Palestinian Christians in Australia; Merciful Group; Gaza Children's Fund, which usually provides support in Gaza but has also been helping the recently arrived families; National Zakat Foundation; and Islamic Relief. Instead of hosting an iftar, this year I am donating to some of the organisations supporting people in Gaza, organisations like Médecins Sans Frontières, or local organisations helping the new arrivals here. I will be joining everyone in the community, Christian and Muslim, in praying for and advocating for a ceasefire, as we have done for months. I am incredibly disappointed because there has been no relief from this onslaught for the holy month, as many had hoped. We need an end to the slaughter in Gaza, the release of the hostages kidnapped by Hamas and the Palestinians held in administrative detention without charge, and Palestinian statehood. In concluding, I will read the last poem written by the incredible poet and academic Refaat Alareer, who was killed by an Israeli airstrike on 6 December. He taught many of the journalists who have also been killed in Gaza.

If I must die,  
you must live  
to tell my story,  
to sell my things,  
to buy a piece of cloth  
and some strings,

(make it white with a long tail)  
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza,  
while looking heaven in the eye,  
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—  
and bid no one farewell,  
not even to his flesh,  
not even to himself—  
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above,  
and thinks for a moment an angel is there,  
bringing back love.  
If I must die,  
let it bring hope.  
Let it be a tale.

## COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (21:38):** International Women's Day on the Coffs Coast gave us an opportunity to thank the women who are central to our lives. It gave us also a chance to congratulate and acknowledge the local women who are making a positive difference to the lives of so many people in our local community, like the inspirational community champion Carol Cleary, the 2024 Coffs Harbour Electorate Local Woman of the Year. Carol was awarded this prestigious honour in recognition of her significant work and leadership to actively support her local community over many years. Carol is well known for her extraordinary commitment and ongoing contribution to the betterment of the Ulong and Lowanna communities. She is able to bring people together and harness their energies to make a most positive difference in the delivery of services on the Eastern Dorrigo, most particularly the Ulong Health Hub and other vital programs. Carol certainly loves a challenge and she will work passionately and diligently to see a community project completed. Her work ethic is legendary and she is to be admired for her humility and warm sense of humour. She provides powerful inspiration to others in her community to realise their potential and to ensure that where they live is empowering and inclusive for all.

I thank Carol for going above and beyond each day and for selflessly dedicating her time and energy to making Ulong and Lowanna even better places to live, always with a smile on her face. I also acknowledge the support of her family—Steve, Katie and Vince—in all of the endeavours she undertakes. The Coffs Harbour electorate Local Woman of the Year Award runs alongside the NSW Women of the Year Awards and coincides with International Women's Day. The Coffs Coast International Women's Day Breakfast is a major event in our community every year. From humble beginnings 25 years ago as an initiative of Zonta Club of Coffs Harbour, the event has grown into a collaboration with two other leading women's organisations in Coffs Harbour: Business and Professional Women's Association Coffs Harbour, known as BPW; and the Coffs Coast Business Women's Network, better known as BWN.

This year's sold-out event at the Coffs Harbour Racing Club boasted more than 400 attendees. I congratulate the Coffs Coast International Women's Day Woman of the Year Award winner, Falak Othman, runner-up, Heather Duncan, and other finalists Angela Martin, Glynis Kirby, Tegan Baker and Robyn Dever. At just 19, Falak is a testament to the power of youthful energy and dedication, balancing her studies in nursing and business with her volunteer work. Falak is fluent in six languages and she leverages her linguistic skills to volunteer as a translator for refugees and is a former refugee herself, bridging gaps within the community. Her early involvement with UNICEF from 2014 to 2017 saw her support traumatised individuals, supervise children, organise activities and train volunteers alongside managing administrative duties. Her recent contributions during the 2023 New South Wales election underscore her commitment to civic engagement. Falak's multifaceted volunteer work combined with her academic pursuits illustrates a remarkable blend of service, leadership and a global perspective.

Runner-up Heather Duncan's contribution to football, particularly for women and the younger generation, is extraordinary. Juggling a full-time job and four children, she is a driving force behind the establishment of a local community organisation that champions football. Heather has been instrumental in securing sponsors and donations, and is vital in providing coaching and support to aspiring players. She conducts fitness programs specifically tailored to girls under 18, but more than just physical training, they are a haven of support and foster mental wellbeing. I also congratulate the winner of the Zonta International Young Women in Public Affairs Award, Lily Betland; the Zonta International Woman in STEM scholarship recipient, Sapphire Stewart; and the Southern Cross University International Women's Day scholarship recipient, Rachele Stevens. I thank the hardworking 2024 International Women's Day Breakfast planning committee, comprising Jenny Wiseman, Isabella Brandli and Michelle Williams from Zonta; Lyndall Weatherby and Deb Johnson from the BPW; and Vicky Bamford, Cath Fowler and Kerstin Thode from BWN.

## AUBURN ELECTORATE AND GAZA CONFLICT

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (21:42):** On Tuesday the Islamic community marked the start of Ramadan, a commemoration of Mohammed's first revelation, the observance of which is regarded as one of the five pillars of Islam. The date is marked by the Hijri calendar, a cornerstone of the Islamic faith and a testament to a rich cultural heritage. The Hijri is a lunar calendar consisting of 12 months in a year of 354 or 355 days. Unlike the Gregorian calendar, which is based on the sun, the Hijri calendar is guided by the moon cycles, making each month 29 to 30 days long. The Hijri calendar is not just a system of dates and months; it is a living symbol of Islamic culture, a guide for religious observances and a bridge connecting us to history.

Whilst Ramadan is often a time of great celebration in the Auburn electorate, this year it is tinged with great sadness and grief. Our local community and many Palestinians across Australia, both Muslim and Christian, are burdened by the unfolding catastrophe in Gaza. The air there is thick with not just dust and debris but also the palpable sorrow of a people enduring unimaginable suffering. The relentless toll of lives lost, now numbering over 30,000, the majority of whom were innocent women and children, is a sombre testament to the scale of the tragedy. The wounds inflicted, both physically and emotionally, on more than 70,000 Palestinians will forever mark the survivors and alter the destiny of countless families.

The very fabric of Gaza, home to 2.2 million souls, has been torn asunder. Homes, neighbourhoods and communities have been devastated, their inhabitants forced to flee in search of safety, only to find themselves in a so-called safe zone that offers no respite from the horror. There, even in their sleep, they are haunted by the fear of relentless shelling. Amidst this chaos, not one mosque stands—a poignant symbol of the cultural and spiritual desolation that has befallen Gaza. In these times of great sorrow, as Ramadan is observed, a period marked by reflection, prayer and community, the contrast between our reality and that of the families in Gaza is stark and harrowing. Many in the Auburn community are asking, "How can we sit down to a feast when our family and loved ones find no peace, no shelter and no momentary escape from their relentless torment?"

The shared meals of Ramadan, traditionally a time of joy and togetherness, are now imbued with a profound sense of guilt and helplessness. In those moments of profound disparity, we must find the strength to act. Our empathy and shared humanity compel us to reach beyond our feelings of sorrow and helplessness and stand in solidarity with those who suffer. Let us use our voices, our resources and our collective will to bring attention to their plight, to advocate for an end to the ongoing siege of Gaza and to provide whatever aid we can to those in need.

A logical first step involves posing a straightforward question to the Federal Government: Considering that Canada and Sweden have resumed their financial support on United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and in the light of the humanitarian crisis escalating in Gaza, why has the Australian Government been so sluggish to respond? Most telling of the horrors and the severe hardships faced by Gaza's inhabitants is that the United States has resorted to constructing a makeshift pier and initiating aerial food drops. That comes as the Netanyahu Government persists in dismissing international pleas for permitting aid access. Throughout the holy month of Ramadan, let us hold the people of Gaza in our hearts and use our voices to continue to demand a ceasefire and an end to the endless loss of life of innocent civilians—men, women and so many children.

## KIAMA ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (21:46):** When I stood for Parliament I had a plan to transform our community and I am very proud of what I have delivered. Initially, my first set of objectives was to upgrade the Princes Highway and to deliver the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. When I have made a promise, I have always got it done. Today the Princes Highway has been fully duplicated throughout my electorate, which has saved an incalculable number of lives. More than \$2 billion was delivered to upgrade the Princes Highway at Gerringong, Berry, Foxground, Albion Park Rail and Berry to Bomaderry; and to fund a new Shoalhaven River bridge to deliver the futureproofing of the crossing of the Shoalhaven River that was so desperately needed. The cancer centre has opened, which has supported my mum on two out of the three occasions that she has required treatment.

During my time in government, I argued for funding to upgrade every hospital in our region and I have delivered. The Minns Labor Government is now one year old. Prior to coming to government the then Opposition promised what it called a fresh start for New South Wales. After one year in office, and having served as a Cabinet Minister, I believe that fresh start has been a false start for my electorate, which has experienced Labor cuts, broken Labor promises and downright Labor dishonesty.

Putting to one side the Premier's arrogant and smug attitude to questions I ask on behalf of my community in question time, it is clear that this Government is now actively punishing my local community for not voting for the Labor Party. I am not talking about its broken promises to keep the important cost-of-living measures like the

regional seniors travel card or the regional student travel card, which it has cut, or its cuts to Active Kids, Creative Kids and First Lap vouchers; I am talking about its Sydney-centric focus, which is coming at the expense of regions in my electorate. In spite of talking about rail upgrades in opposition, Labor has cut the proposed passing loop at Toolijooa and associated station upgrades, which would have doubled the capacity of the South Coast line, a much-needed boost to public transport that it has walked away from.

This Government has a big development agenda, and whilst we do need more homes, we also need infrastructure alongside growth. But this Government seems to only want to deliver for its developer mates rather than keep the infrastructure pipeline going. The Government has refused to answer questions on the future of two key hospital sites in our region. Without consultation, it announced the closure of David Berry Hospital in 2025. In spite of my questions in this place, the Government has refused to rule out the sale of the site to developers, despite the site being gifted to the people of the Shoalhaven for medical services. Whilst having a great opportunity to develop a bold new vision, including new frontline worker housing on a decommissioned Shellharbour Hospital site, the Government has still said nothing about the future of the site—no vision, no plans, just pathetic rhetoric.

In what is becoming a more common affair, Government members are also childishly seeking to take total credit for projects they had nothing to do with. I thought that infantile approach ended in student politics, but it has become a staple for Labor in the Illawarra. From a photo-op with Labor's hopeful candidate for Shellharbour city mayor in front of the new Shellharbour Hospital site, a project I secured the money for during my time in Cabinet, to the photo-op at the Jervis Bay Road intersection, which was signed off during my time in government, to the Minister for Health re-enacting a sod turn at the Shoalhaven Hospital upgrade, which had been turned months before the 2023 State election, to hard hat and high-vis vest photos with Labor MPs in front of the Shoalhaven River bridge, which was opened months before, ignoring me as the local MP and trying to take credit for projects Labor had nothing to do with is becoming embarrassing, and the community know it.

The recent Artie Smith Oval and Kiama tennis court upgrades, where the Minister personally instructed officials to cut me out of proceedings, are two appalling examples of Labor's stunning arrogance. To my shock, this week Labor issued a Government press release finally announcing that works would begin on Moss Vale Road over Cambewarra Mountain, following severe rain events almost two years ago. To my shock, a Labor spokesperson for the Kiama electorate—who was not elected as the local member and who does not even live in our community—was quoted, in spite of having had nothing to do with what should be bipartisan funding. The Minister's office has not even offered a briefing. The same upper House member recently distributed a taxpayer-funded flyer lying to the local community, telling them that I had cut funding for the Tripoli Way bypass project, when I was the one who actually assisted Shellharbour Council to secure \$20 million for the project.

The claim by that Sydney-based so-called Kiama Labor spokesperson is simply a lie. This is the same government that has left Kangaroo Valley without a fully staffed ambulance station and has cut resources to local schools, such as the opportunity classes at Illaroo Road Public School. This is the same government that has cut palliative care positions in our region and has increased taxes on resource royalties, which simply get passed on to households, and this is the same government that talks about housing targets but rolls out the welcome mat to foreign investors buying up residential properties and crowding out first home buyers. Whilst this Government has a lot of great talkers, its members still behave as if they were in opposition. Their lack of vision is one thing, but their decisions are now hurting my community, and I will not stand for it.

#### LIVERPOOL ELECTORATE AND GAZA CONFLICT

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (21:52):** This week marks the start of Ramadan, a time of introspection and reflection, often marked by lively night markets in areas like my electorate of Liverpool. I know that this Ramadan will be very different for many in the Muslim community. For many Muslims in my community, this Ramadan will be marked by prayers for a ceasefire in Gaza. As the death toll in Gaza surpasses 31,000 people, I know that many across my community feel that they cannot indulge in what is usually such a joyous time for them and their families. My electorate is mourning the innocent lives taken by the senseless collective punishment. I share the grief of my community during the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Recent reporting from *The Guardian* asserts that 1 per cent of people in Gaza have been killed, 25 per cent are starving and 85 per cent have been displaced. Gaza is on the edge of famine, with many aid trucks being blocked entry. Many of those who have been displaced have gathered in Rafah, where they now face the imminent threat of an assault from Israel. The situation in Gaza is unconscionable, and I repeat my calls for an immediate, permanent ceasefire. I have heard from countless Liverpool residents and community members about their feelings this Ramadan. I recently spoke to Omar Alwan, a former student leader of Al Amanah College in Liverpool, who told me:

Ramadan, the month of mercy and forgiveness. The month of remembrance and understanding. A month where Muslim communities all around the world unite under a banner of moderation and strength, sharing moments of solidarity. It is a month in which joy and laughter fill the hearts of those fasting around the world. But sadly, given the recent events in Palestine, this laughter and joy is shadowed by the sombre awareness of the challenges faced by our fellow Muslims.

Upon Ramadan's arrival, in our gathering for iftar and prayer, an underlying sense of sorrow and concern engulf us in response to our brothers and sisters facing hardships. In a month of forgiveness and mercy, Muslims are enduring the polar opposite.

The nightly Taraweeh prayer becomes a time for collective supplication in hope that peace, justice and relief is achieved for the oppressed.

I know that this complex set of emotions is shared by many within the Muslim community in the Liverpool electorate. Many juggle the horrors they have seen beamed to their phones through social media with the guilt of being safe with family and having the capacity to observe a key tenet of their faith. Siham Nachar, another young person who recently graduated from Al Amanah College in Liverpool, shared her sentiments with me in saying:

This Ramadan is different to previous years as thousands of Palestinian Muslims, particularly women and children, have lost their lives in the past few months.

This Ramadan, as we fast, the people of Palestine are in our minds and hearts, as we know they do not have access to sanitation, water, and basic food. Therefore, Muslims in the community and around the world are feeling distressed and saddened, due to the harsh conditions that the fasting Palestinians are facing.

Ramadan is a month of fasting, unity and togetherness for Muslims worldwide. However, thousands of Palestinian children have lost their parents and family members. Therefore, we feel emotional, and stand in solidarity for the Palestinians in Gaza who despite the hardships they are enduring, continue to fast and practise their faith with pride.

The flow-on impact of what is happening in Gaza is clear. Many organisations, community groups and religious groups are cancelling iftar celebrations and directing the moneys to relief efforts and refugee support organisations. Omar pointed out to me this:

With its emphasis on empathy and compassion, Ramadan inspires actions beyond personal reflection. Fundraisers, charity drives, and community initiatives gain greater urgency as we strive to make a positive impact on the lives of those facing adversity in Gaza. The bonds forged during this holy month extend beyond local communities, connecting us in solidarity with the global Muslim ummah.

While there is a bleak feeling among many in the Muslim community as they reflect on the catastrophe in Gaza, some have opted for an approach of radical joy. Human rights lawyer Sara Saleh takes strength from the resilience of those in Gaza, many of whom are putting up lights in their tents. As many in Liverpool grapple with what this Ramadan means for them and their families, I note that part of Ramadan's joy is the act of looking forward—to iftar, the meal that breaks the fast every evening; to Laylat al-Qadr, the night when the first verses of the Koran were revealed to the Prophet Mohammed; and to the feast of Eid, which marks the end of daily sacrifice. I hope that we can look forward to a swift end to the suffering of many.

#### LAURA STONE

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (21:57):** Last week we celebrated International Women's Day, to honour and recognise the achievements and contributions of women throughout our history and the women making enormous contributions today but also to continue raising awareness for gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women. In many areas across our communities women still face many challenges, whether it is access to health care, the gender pay gap, period poverty, underrepresentation in our parliaments and the business sector, the scourge of domestic and family violence, or many other areas. While we celebrate how far we have come as a society, it is important to highlight the areas where there is still so much work to be done.

But it has also been a time to celebrate and recognise those in our own local communities. While many local women deserve to be celebrated for their outstanding efforts and contributions, I make special mention of this year's North Shore Woman of the Year, Laura Stone. That recognition is not just an accolade; it is a testament to the remarkable impact that Laura has had on our community through her dedication to local business and her unwavering commitment to conservation and the environment.

Laura is well known in my community and is completely passionate about making a difference. Laura runs the successful local business Sydney by Kayak, which offers guided tours on Sydney Harbour with a focus on environmental education and activism. My team and I have even braved the early morning start in Lavender Bay to head out onto the harbour, and it is truly one of the best ways to start the day. With a coffee in hand and Laura as our guide, we headed out onto the harbour just after 5.00 a.m., before the first morning ferry services started. I thank Laura and her incredible team for looking after us. Exploring the harbour and its history—and picking up a lot of rubbish along the way—was a great way to spend the morning.

As part of the business, Laura maintains a strong focus on the environment and marine conservation. She encourages participants on the tour to scoop up rubbish that they find floating in the water as they undertake their tour. She has also developed several conservation and sustainability programs to reduce waste in Sydney Harbour

and regenerate the coastal foreshore to enhance and protect the fragile marine environment. Since 2018 Laura and her team have contributed \$15 from every Clean-up Paddle seat sold to local conservation projects, which is nearly \$50,000 to date. Thanks to their success, hundreds of mangroves have been planted and thousands of kilograms of waste have been removed. Some of the funds went to initiatives such as the famous Bruce. He is not the same Bruce from *Finding Nemo*—although he does have a shark fin—but he patrols Berry's Bay and picks up stray rubbish. There is also the Darling Harbour Seabin. Together with Bruce and all the Clean-up Paddles, over 5,000 tonnes of rubbish have been collected from Sydney Harbour in 2022-23 alone, which is an incredible effort.

I joined Laura in April last year for the installation of 18 new Living Seawall Boulders in Lavender Bay. That was a world-first innovation. In collaboration with Reef Design Lab, the team at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science—another institution in my community in Mosman—and North Sydney Council, the boulders were specially designed to emulate natural rockpools and create hospitable environments for a range of different marine life. Laura and her team have also teamed up with ECOBEL Sydney to support their goal of planting one million mangrove and river plants by 2040. Anyone walking around Waverton would have seen the mangrove nursery that Laura and her team have set up. From all reports, they are on track to meet that goal.

Some of the contributions that Laura has made reflect her goal to make our planet better. She focuses every single day on improving our marine environment and ecosystem. Not only has she been recognised for her contributions to the environment as an ecotourism warrior, but also for her contributions more broadly to tourism. She was recognised in the NSW Tourism Awards just last year as the Ecotourism Provider of the Year. Laura will be going to Darwin to see how she fares in the finals of the Australian Tourism Awards.

We need people like Laura who will put their energy, aspiration, passion and heart and soul into achieving such outcomes. I was really excited to join Laura—and her mum, all the way from Inverness in Scotland—at the breakfast last week to celebrate and recognise her for her contribution. It is incredibly important to take the time to recognise the women who make such a big difference in our local communities, because often the impacts in our local communities will have spillover efforts to broader society and the globe.

I know that Laura is making a difference to our world and making a healthier and happier planet for all of us and our children to come. I congratulate Laura and thank her for her integrity, her resilience and the profound sense of responsibility she brings to the community and to the environment. I recognise her achievements and her accomplishments, but she also inspires me every day as a mother, a businesswoman and a passionate conservationist.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (22:02):** I join with the member for North Shore in congratulating Laura Stone on winning Local Woman of the Year for her dedication to local business—Sydney by Kayak sounds like a beautiful way to start the day—and passion for environmental issues. As well as recognising local women and the work that they beautifully do, these awards give them a platform to continue to raise the issues that they are passionate about. As I have mentioned to other women, I encourage Laura to use the 12 months she has as the Local Woman of the Year to continue to raise the flag of environmental conservation.

#### STATE BUDGET AND EAST HILLS ELECTORATE

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (22:03):** I welcome and endorse the Minns Labor Government's budget. The budget addresses the teacher shortage problem in New South Wales, acknowledges the importance of essential workers, including our great teachers, and invests in quality infrastructure for our schools. The Government is investing \$4 million to progress upgrades in my electorate of East Hills, with funds allocated to Condell Park High School, Sir Joseph Banks High School and Picnic Point High School. Government members believe every child has the right to a quality education. At the heart of this budget is our commitment as a government to addressing the teacher shortage crisis, because the biggest resource in our schools and classrooms are our wonderful teachers.

The Minns Labor Government, with the guidance of the education Minister, continues to address the teacher shortage crisis in our public schools by recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers through an historic pay rise. The agreement is a nation-leading investment in our 95,000 teachers. It will ensure that our children are taught by teachers who know that their contribution is valued. This is a big relief for schooling communities across East Hills. For far too long the previous Liberal-Nationals Government failed to deliver the best education outcomes for the electorate of East Hills.

The Government understands the importance of quality infrastructure to deliver the best learning environments. We need not only quality teachers but also quality classrooms—something that the previous Government neglected to deliver for some schools in East Hills. I welcome and commend the Minns Labor Government's \$4 million investment to be injected into school infrastructure projects across my electorate,

including just under \$2 million for a major upgrade at Condell Park High School, \$1.3 million for major upgrades at Sir Joseph Banks High School and \$18,000 to finalise projects at Picnic Point High School. Those announcements are not just political spin; they are commitments that are budgeted and, most importantly, are being delivered.

We will fund necessary upgrades based on need to meet the demand for public education right across East Hills. The \$4 million commitment to public school infrastructure is a great start from the Labor team. Sixty per cent of students in the electorate of East Hills attend a public school. There has been an increase of 6 per cent from 2016 to 2021, and we anticipate the number will continue to rise. That is why my priority is to continue working with Minister Car and the Department of Education to fix the backlog of infrastructure projects in public schools across East Hills. East Hills Boys High School is a growing school with over 750 students. Recently the school principal, Mr Paul Abboud, told me that the school has been requesting air-conditioned classrooms for many years. During scorching temperatures, classrooms reach 40 degrees, creating unbearable learning environments. We spoke about the need for East Hills Boys High School to have a school gymnasium—an important piece of infrastructure for the electorate's only rapidly growing boys school. I will continue to work with the Minister to make sure we get the best outcome.

East Hills Boys High School is not the only school in my electorate that has been neglected. Primary schools such as East Hills Public School need important upgrades to their buildings and classrooms as well. The list goes on. There have been so many missed opportunities for our public schools to benefit from critical upgrades to their infrastructure. I will continue to meet with school principals, P&C presidents, teachers and their unions to identify the needs of their schools and schooling communities. I will continue to advocate for our public schools and ensure that they receive the funding for crucial upgrades that deliver a safe, reliable and reputable learning environment for our students.

I wholeheartedly endorse the budget presented by the Minns Labor Government. It marks a significant step towards ensuring that every child, regardless of their location, has access to a high-quality education. It recognises the invaluable contributions of our dedicated educators. It is a start for vital infrastructure improvements in the East Hills electorate, and emphasises the value of education. We must continue to work together to fulfil our shared commitment to providing the best possible educational opportunities for our children, not just in the electorate of East Hills but right across New South Wales.

#### CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE HOUSING

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (22:07):** I speak about the Government's lack of consultation with councils and the community with respect to its planning reforms. Over the past six months the Government has made decisions and exhibited planning reforms that will have a destructive impact on the amenity, landscape and liveability of our communities. However, such decisions and policies have been made without any appropriate community consultation. Last year the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces—without any community consultation, and with the stroke of a pen—amended the Hills Local Environmental Plan to remove a cap of 5,000 dwellings within the Castle Hill Showground precinct. The cap was put in place by the former Liberal-Nationals Government after extensive community and stakeholder consultation in 2017.

According to the *Showground Station Precinct: Finalisation Report*, dated December 2017, the consultation included telephone surveys, newsletters, advertisements in local newspapers, information stalls, an online community values survey, media releases, exhibition notification letters to residents in the precinct, two drop-in sessions, and stakeholder briefing sessions. I mention the various forms of consultation to highlight and to help those opposite understand how responsible governments consult with the community. The finalisation report noted that issues raised during the consultation included a new high school when considering the priority precincts. More recently, it has been reported that Castle Hill High School is in the top three for student numbers in the State. I look forward to the Government announcing a new high school in my electorate—something that it has not done as of yet.

The Government's approach to amending the Hills Local Environment Plan last year did not involve any consultation with the community or council. The Government's consultation was zero. More recently, the Government circulated policies that will see more density within land zoned R2 for low density and R3 for medium density that is located within station precincts and town centres. Again, there was no consultation. The proposed new planning rules that I mentioned will fast-track low- and mid-rise housing in new station precincts and town centres. We can all agree that there is a housing crisis in New South Wales. I have two children and one grandchild. I know the importance of our children being able to purchase a home. The Government should be making decisions that will not destroy the character and landscape of our suburbs. Governments should ensure that the community is consulted and not just told to "get out of the way", as the Minister for Housing told the community last year.

Councils have spent years doing the necessary strategic planning work to plan for growth. The work carried out by councils was directed by the Government's strategies, such as the district plan, the region plan and housing targets. Rezoning and urban renewal are complex matters, and councils are best positioned to understand those policies and make the necessary assessments. It is a pity that the planning Minister and the housing Minister do not understand that councils are in the best position to plan for their own communities. In my electorate, planning has been carried out by the Hills Shire Council, which has significant zoning capacity in its greenfield areas along the Sydney Metro Northwest corridor for approximately 50,000 dwellings. Those opportunities exceed the council's 20-year housing supply targets.

The Government continues to suggest that housing affordability is linked to supply. I note that the number of approved developments within my community means very little when developers land-bank approvals. In the past 10 years, the Hills Shire Council has given consent for about 30,000 dwellings. However, only 19,000 dwellings have been completed. The rate of approvals to completions means that developers are land banking. Such evidence suggests that forced rezoning, such as that put forward by the Government, within the existing suburbs will do little to improve housing affordability. The Minister should be thanking the Hills Shire Council for not only meeting but exceeding its housing targets, rather than unfairly adopting a lazy, one-size-fits-all policy that will damage the existing character, landscape and liveability of our suburbs.

The Government's policies for low- and mid-rise housing must also consider whether appropriate infrastructure exists within each location where the policies will increase density. Residents' fears that the character and amenity of our suburbs will be destroyed will be realised if the Government continues its lazy, one-size-fits-all approach. The Minister should be allowing councils to plan for the future of residents within their suburbs. I also note that a rally took place yesterday and many members attended. I thank the Mayor of the Hills Shire Council for attending and expressing his concerns. I urge the Government to reconsider its approach to solving the housing crisis and commence the process of listening to the council, listening to communities and listening to stakeholders. I ask the Minister to commence working with councils to achieve best-practice planning results for the long-term sustainability of all communities.

#### HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (22:12):** Access to quality health care is core business for the New South Wales Government. While it works towards upgrading the capital infrastructure of the healthcare network, it needs to be proactive in ensuring that our hospitals have the healthcare professionals to meet the community healthcare demand. That is why I am delighted to see that more than 1,000 medical graduate interns recently started work in public hospitals in New South Wales. Interns are medical graduates who have completed their medical degree and are required to complete a supervised year of practice in order to become independent practitioners. Those junior doctors will learn from and work under experienced and highly skilled medical staff. They will also rotate across different specialties, including surgery and emergency medicine. South Western Sydney Local Health District, which covers hospitals such as Fairfield Hospital and Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital, received 122 junior doctors. I extend my deepest welcome and thanks to those doctors as they work towards bolstering our healthcare network and making a difference to the lives of many families in Fairfield and Western Sydney.

#### PETS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (22:13):** In recent weeks we have seen the great absurdity of pets being allowed on planes but not on New South Wales trains. The question of whether pets should be allowed on public transport may seem trivial on the surface but it goes to the very heart of whether a government puts people or itself at the centre of public policy. Locally, in Ryde, we are one of the better serviced communities when it comes to public transport, in a country with one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. Ryde is on track to exceed its housing targets by over 300 per cent, with a large proportion of those dwellings being high density. Naturally, many of those new occupants choose small indoor pets, namely cats and dogs, as their companions. That is particularly the case among young professionals, singles and an increasing number of seniors. Therefore, I was not surprised to see Virgin Australia this week announce its interest in allowing certain pets on domestic flights. It is not a statement of virtue from Virgin but, rather, a reflection of a changing customer base.

The same principle applies to how we make policy in this place. Rather than cater to a lazy or convenient status quo, we should be making policy that reflects the changing needs of our society. For the more recalcitrant among us, I offer a solution: a trial. The question of whether pets should be allowed on public transport is not uncharted territory. Indeed, from Berlin to San Francisco, there are policies already in place that allow pets and their owners to co-exist beyond the confines of their homes. Those jurisdictions have actively embraced pet-friendly public transport policies, which is leading to increased mobility, improved mental health, stronger community ties and, even more relevantly to our current political discourse, an increased degree of inclusivity towards those struggling with the rising cost of living and housing unaffordability.

The reality is that transport is a significant cost to the family budget. Public transport is an alternative to private car ownership, and it certainly drives down car dependence. However, for a population that is so enamoured of our pets, we have scored an incredible own goal by restricting our furry friends from the public transport journey. While a person can legally take an assistance animal, non-assistance pets are permitted on buses, light rail, ferries and taxis only with the express permission of the staff or drivers. On trains, they are banned altogether, and that is also the case for metros.

I do not advocate a free-for-all but, rather, a trial, particularly on trains, with three very clear conditions. Firstly, we need more regular and reliable peak-hour services. Having caught the train to Parliament this morning, I was among the many battling for a seat. Those times of day are stressful for the best of us, and no trial should encroach upon that window of time. Peak hour should be exempt but, beyond that, there is enormous opportunity to travel in the company of pets. Secondly, while I may be a lover of animals, I accept that not everybody is as comfortable. All pets travelling on public transport should be tethered or contained not only for the safety and comfort of other passengers but also for the protection of the animals themselves. Finally, I note that there are reasonable concerns regarding allergies and people wanting the choice to not travel near an animal. In the case of trains, the most suitable solution is to dedicate certain carriages as pet-friendly carriages, as we currently do for silent carriages. That would give non-pet travellers the choice to stay away, if desired.

For those worried about waste, I observe that pets generally do not like relieving themselves in uncomfortable or unfamiliar environments. Having said that, owners need to be responsible. In the same way as if people graffiti, spill a drink or rip up a seat, consequences would apply for damage caused by pets. But, secondly, do not think for a second that humans are not immune from those behaviours. I have seen some truly dreadful conduct on trains—conduct I will not detail from the dignified dispatch box. Ultimately, as a society, we need to be responsible. That is why, before jumping head first into unfettered animal transport liberation, I would love to establish an evidence base to take our community on a journey as we endeavour to use our public utilities for broader social good and to reflect the values, inclusivity and compassion that I believe defines what it means to live in this great State. I call on this Parliament to initiate the trial—even just trial it in Ryde. The worst that can happen is that it fails, in which case we walk away knowing, rather than living knowing only "what if?"

#### HEART RESEARCH INSTITUTE

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (22:18):** I recently had the opportunity to visit the Heart Research Institute facility in Newtown and learn about all the fantastic work it is doing both in my community of Oatley and throughout New South Wales. I take pride in organisations that contribute to a better future for all Australians, and the Heart Research Institute is one such operation. Since 1989 the team there have been working tirelessly to undertake groundbreaking cardiovascular research. Their efforts as a team have significantly advanced the development of medical treatments and interventions for heart-related conditions.

Heart disease is truly one of the biggest silent killers, not just in my electorate but in communities right across New South Wales. Cardiovascular disease is one of the biggest burdens on the healthcare system in New South Wales and is the leading cause of death and disability in Australia. One limb is amputated every two hours in Australia due to diabetes-associated peripheral artery disease, which is one of the largest killers. It also costs the economy more than \$875 million each year, a number that is expected to only grow over the coming years.

Cardiovascular disease affects different people disproportionately. We know that women have worse outcomes after treatment than men, and that First Nations people have a threefold higher risk of developing peripheral artery disease than non-Indigenous Australians. Currently the only treatment that is available does not permanently improve or prevent cardiovascular disease. While significant strides have been made, we know that further research is necessary. That is why I believe the work of the Heart Research Institute is so vital to my community of Oatley and to communities across New South Wales. At its core, the work it does is all about ensuring that people live a better and more comfortable life into the future.

In New South Wales we want to ensure that every person, regardless of their background or circumstances, has the opportunity to live a full and healthy life free from the burden of cardiovascular disease. The Heart Research Institute employs some of the brightest minds and researchers from all over New South Wales, Australia and the globe to make strides towards that future. Working alongside the University of Sydney and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, its breakthroughs have resulted in better outcomes for thousands of Australians.

The institute works in preventative health care. This means that by understanding the underlying issues behind heart diseases and identifying risk factors, targeted intervention programs can prevent those conditions from ever occurring in the first place. Of course, a proactive approach is always the best approach. Not only does the work of the Heart Research Institute save lives but it also reduces the strain on our healthcare systems by

reducing the need for costly treatments and hospitalisations. Those breakthroughs can have far-reaching implications for cardiovascular health and related fields such as medical technology and pharmaceuticals.

The discoveries made today at institutions like the Heart Research Institute pave the way for tomorrow's medical advancements, shaping a future where people suffering from currently untreatable diseases can receive more specialised care. We look forward to a future where fewer lives are lost to cardiovascular disease and where fewer families endure the pain of losing a loved one prematurely to that debilitating disease. As we continue to support institutions like the Heart Research Institute, we are not only investing in the health and wellbeing of our communities today but also laying the groundwork for generations to come. My visit provided me with a deeper understanding of the institute's impactful work in cardiovascular research. It is clear that the institute's efforts are making a significant difference in the fight against heart disease.

A special thank you to the researchers, the directors and the entire team, who continue to work incredibly hard for the stability of cardiovascular research in New South Wales and Australia. I personally thank each and every researcher for their contributions. The remarkable progress achieved by the Heart Research Institute over the past 35 years would not have been possible without the dedication of its exceptional team. I look forward to working with the Heart Research Institute team well into the future, and I thank them for inviting me to learn more about their research initiatives.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 22:23 until  
Thursday 14 March 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

**GEORGIA COLE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, Forbes is recognised as a rugby stronghold in the Central West with the Forbes Platypi one of the benchmark clubs of our competition. It's not hard to understand why this is when you look at the calibre of player the club produces, players like Georgia Cole. Ms Cole has just been named as Forbes' Sportsperson of the Year, after completing a year that included playing a standout role for the Platypi's women's side, selection in Australia's Super W youth squad and then being invited to train with the NSW Waratahs' pre-season squad. The Super W youth squad enabled Georgia to benefit from a week of intensive training in Queensland while the NSW invitation doubled down on that experience with four weeks in Sydney. Georgia, who was 16 when she joined the Platypi, has thrived in the sport thanks to a supportive club culture and is now eyeing off the next representative step in her career, NSW Country senior selection after being a member of the successful 18s last year. Rugby better act fast, Georgia has been identified by Penrith Panthers, having made its Tarsha Gale squad in 2023. I congratulate Georgia on her budding footy career.

**CARGO ROAD WINES**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, wine is known for getting better with age – well in the Orange district the soil at one vineyard has also been proven to be improving with time. I congratulate Cargo Road Wines' James Sweetapple and its cellar door manager Dominic Walsh on recently gaining an Ecological Outcome Verification [EOV]. The EOV is bestowed by the Savory Institute, an international non-profit organisation with the mission of facilitating large-scale regeneration of the world's grasslands through holistic management. Cargo Road Wines' vineyard at Lidster, just outside Orange, is reported to be the first vineyard in the world to gain an EOV accreditation. What the EOV essentially means is the soil at the vineyard is improving every year thanks to sustainable farming and production techniques. Using empirically-based data, the EOV ticks off boxes for biodiversity, water and soil health and the ecosystem function. It was developed by leading soil scientists, ecologists, agronomists and land managers around the globe. As Mr Walsh says, Cargo Road Wines are making great vintages, which are grown from soil that's getting better and better for future generations. Well done.

**JESS HEALEY**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I congratulate my constituent Jess Healey on her dual selection in NSW hockey squads for national titles this year. Jess, who plays in the very specialist position of goalkeeper, was last month named in the NSW under 21 side after a strong performance for the Orange women's team at last year's state championships. Studying teaching at CSU in Bathurst, Jess, who is still in her teens, will juggle her studies with training commitments for the state outfit, in preparation for the National Under 21 championship to be staged in Newcastle in March. Jess was also selected to pad up for the NSW indoor team which contested the Australian titles at Canberra in January. Her under 21 field selection was also a natural progression for Jess, who has been a regular member of the Blues through the state-age ranks. Locally, Jess plays with the CYMS side in the Central

West Premier League where she is keen to help the team improve on last year's third placing. The competition is a great nursery for the region's talented players, women and men. I commend Jess on her commitment to her sport and congratulate her on these representative honours.

#### **RECOGNISING THE INTEGRITY AND COMMITMENT OF SENIOR CONSTABLE BRADLEY NEATE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Driving over the 63m high Picton Road Bridge at Maldon on January 20, Wilton resident Colin Tyson noticed a distressed young woman on the bridge. He realised that the woman was at risk of self-harm but was unsure how to proceed. Fortunately, another motorist noticed the situation and pulled over. Within two minutes of talking to the young woman, this passerby was able to escort the woman safely off the bridge and home. This passerby turned out to be off-duty Senior Constable Bradley Neate of Police Transport Command Bankstown Police Station. Senior Constable Neate swiftly and calmly intervened, despite the potential danger to himself. Later that same day upon learning that the young woman was back at the bridge, Constable Neate, still off-duty, called for backup and immediately returned to the bridge once again to assist. His quick assessment and decisive interventions undoubtedly saved a life that day. Constable Neate's exemplary dedication, both on and off duty, reflects his personal integrity and deep commitment to public service. His actions are a great credit to himself, his family and to the NSW Police Force as a whole.

#### **ANNIE COOKE WINS SILVER IN THE MASTERS WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—She's done it again - Annie Cooke has shown that age is no boundary to excellence in sports by achieving a Silver medal in the 200m backstroke at the Masters World Swimming Championships, held in Doha, Qatar in February 2024. Her remarkable achievement is the culmination of years of unwavering dedication and rigorous training, much of which has taken place at the Wollondilly Community Leisure Centre. Clocking in at 4 minutes, 28.73 seconds, Annie's performance in the backstroke event exemplifies her tenacity and skill in the pool. Competing in the 80 to 84 years old category, Annie's Silver medal is a well-deserved result, up from her 7th place in the same race last year, showing some things just get better with age. Annie is an inspiration and a role model to many, and this result is a testament to her enduring commitment to excellence. We look forward to celebrating her future triumphs in the coming years.

#### **WOLLONDILLY NOMINEES FOR THE SENIORS WEEK AWARDS**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Seniors week is an opportunity for seniors to engage in a range of activities and events, and one aspect that I look forward to in particular is celebrating the achievements of Wollondilly citizens through the Seniors Week Awards. I've received dozens of outstanding nominations, and in anticipation of the winner I would like to recognise some of those in the running. Evelyn McDonald is a founding member of the Wollondilly Riding for the Disabled. Situated at Tahmoor and in operation for thirty years, the riding school provides social therapy and recreation for disabled people of all ages and abilities. Evelyn previously held the role of treasurer for Tahmoor Primary School P and C, and currently for the riding school, and along with her husband has been a Meals on Wheels Volunteer for 20 years. Gail Hanger is the President of the NSW and ACT Association of Family History Societies, a position held for 10 years. She conducts monthly information sessions at the Picton & District Historical & History society of which she is also President, and is also a member of the Bargo History Group. Congratulations to Evelyn, Gail and many others on your nominations.

#### **HILLS KELLYVILLE ROTARY, JAZZ AT THE PINES**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I recognise the important contribution to advancement of culture and music which is the result of the continual and long service of the members of the Hills Kellyville Rotary Club. On Sunday, 18 February 2024 the Hills Kellyville Club signature Jazz at the Pines event was held for the first time this calendar year. The Jazz at the Pines season commenced this year with the very popular Carolyn Packer and her Stomp'n Rhythm Aces Band. About one hundred and sixty community members were treated to a wonderful afternoon of Jazz under the beautiful pine trees in the garden setting at the historic Roughly House at Dural. I thank the organising committee of the Hills Rotary, particularly President Ian Pascoe and the entire club executive for the continuing service to our community. All proceeds from Jazz at the Pines are put back into Rotary projects. Jazz at the Pines will be held on 17 March 2024 with the Geoff Power Jazz Band and then again 21 April 2024 with the Zenith Jazz Sextet. Once again, thank you to Hills Kellyville Rotary.

#### **CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY [CASS], LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On 22 February 2024 I joined with members of the Chinese community to celebrate Lunar New Year and the commencement of the Year of the Dragon. The Chinese Australian Services Society [CASS] held the Lunar New Year celebration for Seniors Activities Groups. The origins of the Lunar New Year festival are steeped in legends. One legend is that of Nian, a hideous beast believed to feast on human flesh on New Year's day. Because Nian feared the colour red, loud noises, and fire, red paper

decorations were pasted to doors, lanterns were burned all night, and firecrackers were lit to frighten the beast away. The beast was turned away when the community came together as one to frighten the best with colourful and vibrant displays. The moral is that a community working together can achieve prosperity, unity, and kindness. As we commence the Year of the Dragon, I wish everyone a happy, healthy, peaceful, and prosperous Year of the Dragon. I say to everyone, "Xinníán hǎo" (meaning 'New Year Goodness'). Lastly, I thank Anthony Pang and the team from CASS for organising the event for the Seniors Activities Groups

#### **HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY -19 FEBRUARY 2024**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On 19 February 2024 I had the pleasure of welcoming two hundred and thirty new Australian Citizens at the Hills Shire Council citizenship ceremony. It was a pleasure to join Mayor Dr. Peter Gangemi, Deputy Mayor Mitchell Blue, Robyn Preston MP, and other Councillors at the Citizenship Ceremony. The Hills Shire Council contains many wonderful and diverse community members who have made the decision to live and work in the wonderful Hills community. The new Australian Citizens will add to and enrich the cultural fabric of our growing community. The Hills Shire Council is known as the 'Garden Shire' and in keeping with the name of the Shire Council provided to each new citizen a native plant. I had earlier visited the Council Community Nursery and expressed my appreciation to volunteers Blake, Mark, and Roslyn who were giving up time to prepare the native plant gift for our new citizens. Thank you to each new citizen for your commitment to the Australian values of fairness, freedom, equality of opportunity. Our values define our community and are the reason why so many people chose to become citizens of our nation.

#### **END OF YEAR AWARD PRESENTATION DAY 2023**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—St Johns Park High School is a comprehensive coeducational high school in my Electorate of Cabramatta. St Johns Park High School was founded in 1978 due to the increasing population of the area. Currently, the school is guided by Mr Steven Moisisdis as the relieving Principal. The Tri Vo Recognition Awards, presented by me, commend students who have exhibited exceptional qualities in academics, leadership and cocurricular activities. In the recent awards ceremony at St Johns Park High School, the following students from various grades were celebrated for their outstanding Achievements: Year 7: Phoenix Eng and Ryan Talevski; Year 8: Sanar Polina and Jasmime Nguyen; Year 9: Jade Hoang and Michael Kozelko; Year 10: Max Bowen and Sarah Polina; Year 11: Nidhi Sharma and Savvas Touma. These students symbolize the school's dedication to fostering well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also showcase remarkable leadership skills. I thank Mr Steven Moisisdis for his kind invitation and support of the Awards. Also, I congratulate the award recipients, teachers, staff, parents and the school for the successful year.

#### **VIET TAN HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I would like to extend my appreciation to Viet Tan Australia for organising Human Rights Day on the 10th of December 2023. The 2023 theme was Freedom, Equality and Justice for All. On this day 10th December 1948, exactly 75 years ago the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, gender, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. The Declaration is the most translated document, and available in more than 500 languages. I thank Mr Long Tran Representative of Viet Tan/NSW Chapter and Viet Tan Australia for inviting me to this special event in Freedom Plaza Cabramatta. I also acknowledge their immense efforts over the many years to advocate for human rights and democracy in Vietnam and around the world.

#### **VIET TV AUSTRALIA**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the 10th of December 2023, I had the pleasure of attending the launch of Viet TV Australia's YouTube Official Channel. Viet TV Australia, also known as Vietface TV Australia, is a recently established media outlet dedicated to members of the Vietnamese community in Australia. Viet TV Australia covers a wide range of topics, spanning from daily breaking news, government policies, politics, global news to Australian culture and societal issues. The presence of Viet TV Australia on the YouTube channel provides the Vietnamese community members with further access to up-to-date and reliable sources of Australian news and information. I commend Ms Kim Hoang, the management team, all the staff and volunteers for their passion, commitment and hard work in putting together this Channel and in keeping members of the Vietnamese community in Australia informed and entertained. I thank Ms Kim Hoang and her Team for their kind invitation and congratulate them for the successful launch of this official YouTube Channel with so many interesting people, speeches and entertainment. I wish them success in running this new Channel.

### WINGHAM ROTARY CLUB AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS RECIPIENTS

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise the Wingham Rotary Club Australia Day Awards recipients. The Young Achiever of the Year award was presented to Aaron Walker - the dedicated deputy captain of the Burrell Creek Rural Fire Brigade. The Sportsperson of the Year award was presented to Jett Gilbert, who excels in rugby league and volunteers for the Valley Industries all abilities touch football program. The Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Bill Beach for his contributions to Wingham's history, festivals, and community organisations. The Pride of Workmanship award went to Wingham and Valley Vets for establishing a modern veterinary hospital. The Wingham Rotary Presidential Award honoured Mary Doust, Wingham High School's assistant principal, for her contributions as an educator and caregiver, notably the impactful breakfast program. Congratulations on your well-deserved recognitions, I thank you for making such positive and impactful contributions to our community.

#### CARTER COX

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Carter Cox, for his outstanding achievement in cricket, securing his first century, scoring an impressive 105 not out for Manning under 13s. Carter's dedication to cricket shines through his continuous involvement in various competitions, whether playing, watching, or practicing in his backyard. Carter's involvement in multiple sports highlights his versatility and passion for athletics beyond cricket. From football to futsal and surf lifesaving, Carter's dedication to sportsmanship is commendable. Last year he toured Spain with an Australian under 12 futsal side for two weeks! Congratulations, Carter, on your well-deserved recognition as the Manning River Times-Iguana Sport Award winner, I look forward to witnessing your future successes both on and off the cricket pitch.

#### LUKE LIGTENBERG

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Luke Ligtenberg, a very talented local musician who auditioned for Australian Idol 2024. Luke played a one-man-band blues version of Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode". Playing guitar, bass drum and didgeridoo to accompany his vocals, the judges - Kyle Sandilands, Marcia Hines and Amy Shark, the host and the other contestants were visibly impressed. His audition was given an immediate yes from all three judges, sending Luke to the waiting room with six other contestants, anticipating finding out which of them would be given golden tickets to go through to the next stage. While Luke didn't advance to the top 30, he is already a winner in the Myall Lakes where he has already established himself as a musician and has a line-up of gigs. Congratulations Luke, for pursuing your passion on a national stage, I wish you all the best with your future endeavours.

#### WE BEAUTY

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—With New South Wales having the highest sheep population in Australia, it is only fitting for our regional communities to hold local competitions to see who has the best flock on the ground. For the third year in a row, Darren and Gale Clarke of Barmedman have claimed the top spot of the West Wyalong Flock Ewe Competition with their August 2022 drop One Oak blood ewes. The Runners Up award was presented to Jason and Leonie Ridley of Grenoble, Giral, with their flock of Haddon Rig blood ewes. Third place was given to Gerard, Caroline, Glen, and Maureen O'Brien of Caloola, Bellarwi, with their Pooginook blood flock. John and Leanne Staniforth, of Golden Vale, Tallimba, received the Encouragement Award. Kitto Pastoral Co, from East Yalgogrin, Tallimba, also participated in this year's competition. Despite a challenging season for all producers because of natural disasters, the judges of this year's competition, Ian Cameron of The Yanko, Jerilderie, and Alex Karsten of Kiawarra Merino Stud, were still shocked by the high-quality ewes entered in this year's competition. Congratulations to all five farms on this tremendous achievement. I look forward to seeing their flocks as I travel around the Bland Shire.

#### FIRST MEDALLION AWARDED TO SHANE LOGAN

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Many of us witnessed and attended several celebrations held across all our electorates to celebrate Australia Day. It was wonderful to see so many people recognised for contributing to their communities through several categories. One such celebration was held in Junee at the Junee Ex-Services Memorial Club, conducted by the Junee RSL Sub-Branch, where Shane Logan was awarded The Australia Day Achievement Medallion for his dedication and service to the RSL-Veterans and the Junee Community. This was the first time a Junee RSL Sub-Branch member was awarded this medal. Mr Logan is a well-respected community member, attending every ANZAC Day Dawn Service march and performing the Last Post since 1965. The Australia Day Achievement Medallion is administered by the National Australia Day Council, of which no more than 15 medallions are allocated to RSL NSW for distribution to RSL Members to acknowledge individuals for their contribution to the Nation, State, and Local Communities for their outstanding

performances. The medallion inscription read, "Presented to Shane Logan, for his dedication to service to the RSL-Veterans and the Junee Community 2024". Congratulations, Shane; thank you for your dedication.

### **BARELLAN MASTERS GAMES**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The country town of Barellan came to sporting life on Sunday, 25 February for the annual Barellan Masters Games. This year's games saw over 120 competitors battling it out across eight sports. Competitors enjoyed the sports of Elgas Golf, Codemo Machinery Services Tennis, Barellan War Memorial Bowling Club Lawn Bowls, Kelly+ Partners Chartered Accountants Walk, The Commercial Hotel Barellan Cricket, and the Serafin Ag Pro Triathlon. Congratulations are extended to this year's committee, including President/Sports Coordinator Jodie Landy, Vice President Louise Hornery, Secretary Katrina Hornery, Treasurer Laura Curran-Flagg, and Publicity/Sponsorship Carl Chirgwin. Events like this would not be possible without the voluntary efforts of our local community members. I further congratulate all the placeholders of this year's event, especially Lachlan Date, who was awarded the Narrandera Community Bendigo Bank 'Master Blaster'. This award is presented to the competitor with the highest points and medals across the eight sports. Congratulations once again to all involved in another successful Barellan Masters Games.

### **ROAD2BOLLYWOOD ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to join Road2Bollywood Arts & Culture at Rosehill on 9 March to celebrate International Women's Day. On this International Women's Day, we celebrated the remarkable women in our community, igniting the spirit within each of us. Road2Bollywood stands as more than mere dance and cultural expression; it embodies empowerment, offering a platform for women's collective support towards a purposeful future. Led by President Maxine Simmons and her dedicated team, Road2Bollywood stands as a beacon of cultural enrichment and empowerment, alongside esteemed guests, community leaders, and friends. Acknowledging the challenges women encounter, including the juggling act of careers, families, and personal aspirations, we aspire to a future of unity and understanding. The resilient spirit of Bollywood's women champions this vision.

### **DACCHI DANG AT GRANVILLE CENTRE**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 7 March 2024 I was delighted the inaugural solo exhibition of the artist, Dacchi Dang, entitled "The Microdot" at the Granville Centre Art Gallery. Dacchi Dang's journey as a photographer and artist spans over three decades, marked by an unwavering dedication to exploring the intricate nuances of visual language and the profound depths of human emotion. Through his lens, he unveils the multifaceted layers of our memories and experiences, inviting us to contemplate the complexities of our existence. He is based in Western Sydney and was a founding member of 4A Centre for Contemporary Art, Sydney. In 1996 alongside fellow artists and founding members, Dang sought to establish meaningful relationships between the Australian arts ecology and the broader Asia region through the creation of 4A as a space for conversations and creative exchanges surrounding contemporary art. I encourage people from the Granville electorate, and beyond, to visit the exhibition, which is on until 15 June.

### **CAMDEN CRYSTAL FESTIVAL**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—Organised by Crystal Festival Australia, the Camden Crystal Festival was held at Camden Civic Centre on February 3-4. The exhibition and sale showcased a stunning array of items. Visitors to the festival were able to explore a diverse collection, including jewellery, gems, findings, minerals, silver rings, beads, opals, pearls, and carvings. This event also features an assortment of fossils, rocks, and crystals, providing a fascinating glimpse into Australian geology and minerals. Congratulations to the organisers of this fantastic festival, I'm sure all of the attendees thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

### **LIFELINE MACARTHUR GIFT WRAPPING**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—Back during the Christmas period, I was privileged along with my Electorate Office staff to be able to participate in one of the many sessions offered by lifeline as part of their Christmas gift wrapping. Each year Lifeline Macarthur and Western Sydney partners with local organisations and businesses to help with their Gift-wrapping Stalls, which raise awareness and vital funds for the important services that Lifeline provides in Western Sydney and the Macarthur region. It was a very rewarding and fun experience to get involved in and support the fantastic work Lifeline continues to do every day. I would encourage everyone to volunteer for a Gift-wrapping Stall when the Christmas period approaches.

### **STEPHEN GILBERT**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Stephen is a long time Coolah resident and was award 2024 Coolah Citizen of the year. Stephen is a highly respected community member, who started volunteering his time when he was just a teenager, when he became the assistant club leader at 1St Coolah clubs in 1986. Stephen worked for

the Warrumbungle Shire council in various positions from 1996-2006 and started with Fire and Rescue NSW in 1994 as a retained firefighter in Coolah. Stephen serviced his community for 11 years before moving to a full-time position with Fire and Rescue NSW. In 2007 Stephen joined the Coolah Rescue Squad and was appointed captain in 2018. Stephen also started a program to educate young drivers on road safety and in his spare time, volunteers his time to referee the local football team. I would like to congratulate Stephen on receiving the Citizen award and I also thank him for dedicating many years of his life to the community. Community spirit like this, is what keeps little towns alive.

#### **NOREEN BOEHM**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Noreen was nominated by Boggabri MPS (Multipurpose Services) for the NSW Centre for Senior Volunteer of the year. Noreen has been volunteering her time at the Boggabri MPS since 2015. Noreen has a lifestyle and leisure Diploma and completed a Dementia course. Using these valuable skills, Noreen offers her time to have one on one time with residents for company, and attends group sessions to assist the diversional therapist in activities. I would like to congratulate Noreen on receiving a nomination for this award and I also thank her for dedicating her time to fulfill other lives within the community.

#### **ST JOHN PAUL 2ND COLLEGE 2024 SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt congratulations to Tara Dempsey and Sanika Kulkarni on their successful election as school captains and to Tristan Kemp on his appointment as College Mission leader at St John Paul 2nd College in Quakers Hill. Their election reflects the trust and confidence their peers and teachers have put in their leadership abilities. As they enter the new roles, I encourage them to remember the importance of leading with integrity, empathy, and inclusivity. Their dedication to serving the school community will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact and inspire those around them. Together, as a team, they can make positive changes, foster unity, and create memorable experiences for everyone at St John Paul 2nd College. To the new leaders, embrace this opportunity with enthusiasm and determination and know that you have the support of your fellow students, teachers, and staff behind you. Congratulations once again on this well-deserved achievement. Wishing you all the best as you embark on this exciting journey of leadership and service.

#### **QUAKERS HILL HIGH SCHOOL 2024 SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt congratulations to Grace Sammons and Hayden Snashall on their successful election as school captains and to Ashwin Tenneti and Tahira Armeda on their appointments as vice-captains at Quakers Hill High School. Their election reflects the trust and confidence their peers and teachers have put in their leadership abilities. As they enter the new roles, I encourage them to remember the importance of leading with integrity, empathy, and inclusivity. Their dedication to serving the school community will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact and inspire those around them. Together, as a team, they can make positive changes, foster unity, and create memorable experiences for everyone at Quakers Hill High School. To the new leaders, embrace this opportunity with enthusiasm and determination and know that you have the support of your fellow students, teachers, and staff behind you. Congratulations once again on this well-deserved achievement. Wishing you all the best as you embark on this exciting journey of leadership and service.

#### **RIVERSTONE HIGH SCHOOL 2024 SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt congratulations to Alexander Billett and Naaki Mangu on their successful election as school captains and to Almez Kaddour and Ana Tiannah Powel on their appointments as vice-captains at Riverstone High School. A special message to these students – leading the school I once went to in my youth. Their election reflects the trust and confidence their peers and teachers have put in their leadership abilities. As they enter the new roles, I encourage them to remember the importance of leading with integrity, empathy, and inclusivity. Their dedication to serving the school community will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact and inspire those around them. Together, as a team, they can make positive changes, foster unity, and create memorable experiences for everyone at Riverstone High School. To the new leaders, embrace this opportunity with enthusiasm and determination and know that you have the support of your fellow students, teachers, and staff behind you. Congratulations once again on this well-deserved achievement. Wishing you all the best as you embark on this exciting journey of leadership and service.

#### **DIANNE BATTY- CRONULLA SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Dianne Batty of Kirrawee on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards. Dianne has been a committed volunteer in the Sutherland Shire for 40 years across several organisations and causes. She joined the Elouera Surf Life Saving Club in 1983/84 when

her children started Nippers. Dianne achieved her bronze medallion in 1988, and had an extraordinary 100 per cent patrol attendance across six seasons. Dianne's service has included surf patrol, an age manager at 37 surf awareness clinics, race secretary and helping with catering at many club events over the years. Dianne was recognised for her significant contribution to the Elouera club by being awarded the President's Medal in 2022. Dianne has also served as a volunteer for eight years at the Sutherland Hospital kiosk, been an active member of her local community fire unit for 30 years and was part of the organising committee for the John Franklin Christmas Luncheon for 17 years, including a stint as President. Dianne was recognised for her significant contribution to the Elouera club by being awarded the President's Medal in 2022.

#### **CATHERINE CARMICHAEL AND ALICE TIERNEY- CRONULLA SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Catherine Carmichael of Caringbah on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards. Catherine was nominated for her dedicated volunteer work providing end of life care and support and for the help she provides for women with young families. Catherine interviews dying people and then prepares biographies for them. She also massages the feet and hands of people in palliative care. She also volunteers for a group who look after women with young families, who are struggling to cope with life; Catherine chats with them and looks after babies and youngsters to provide mothers with respite. I congratulate Alice Tierney of Caringbah South on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards. Alice spent more than half a century leading exercise and physical culture classes in the Sutherland Shire. Alice loved teaching children and women in halls and youth centres, and running annual competitions and concerts.

#### **STEWART CAMERON- CRONULLA SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Stewart ("Camo") Cameron of Cronulla on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards. Stewart has been a member of North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club for over 60 years. He was awarded Life Membership in 2018 for his service to the club. He was also the Junior Activity Group [JAG] winner of the Zane West Memorial Award for services to the Nippers. Stewart had an outstanding competitive lifesaver career, winning multiple Australian Championship individual and team medals, but the club says it is Stewart's volunteer side of Camo that makes North Cronulla so grateful and proud. He has given countless hours of coaching, water safety, first aid, gear trailer towing, club maintenance and mentoring to the Club. He is passionate about helping young members to improve their surf skills and encourages members of all ages to participate. Stewart was also part of a group who received a meritorious award for the club at Surf Lifesaving Australia's Awards of Excellence last year for their swift, decisive and courageous actions and combined teamwork in performing a group rescue in 1972.

#### **OLIVER SPAKE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Oliver Spake, from Shell Cove, for being awarded the Support Superstar at the Shellharbour Community Awards which were held on 17 January 2024 at the Civic Centre, Shellharbour City Centre. Oliver, or "Olly" as most know him, has been a volunteer with Shellharbour Parkrun since it began in 2014 and is currently Event Director. He has been integral in supporting this weekly event that brings hundreds of community members together in the beautiful Killalea State Park, with almost 300 Saturday mornings volunteered. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Oliver on his award and wish him well in his future endeavours.

#### **MERETE DONNELLY – DAPTO COMMUNITY FARM**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate volunteer Merete Donnelly, for her work at the Dapto Community Farm. Dapto Community Farm has rented plots to anyone who's interested in growing their own fruits, veggies or flowers for almost 20 years, and Merete Donnelly said the past season was one of their best. The adjoining working farm is certified organic, and while the community plots aren't certified, they stick to organic farming principles. Chemicals are frowned upon, the soil is enriched with compost and worm castings, and crops are rotated to ensure good soil health. It also ensures a bountiful harvest. Merete is kept busy harvesting cucumbers, zucchinis, tomatoes, chillies, pumpkins and dahlias. Other gardeners do the same in their patches, although with different crops. The plants represent the diverse backgrounds of the Illawarra community, and many first- or second-generation migrants have a plot to grow produce that tastes like home. Kale, taro, corn, Vietnamese mint, okra, turmeric and ginger all thrive alongside one another. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Merete, and all the volunteers who have plots at the Dapto Community Farm, on this successful initiative.

**STEPHANIE MCDONALD - KINDER READY**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Stephanie McDonald who has created a Shellharbour business 'Kinder Ready' to help make the transition as smooth as possible and give children the best start on their educational journey. Kinder Ready closely focuses on school readiness skills around academic, social and emotional skills. Ms McDonald said that "Our aim is to develop our little ones into inspiring, confident, creative, and independent learners who are ready to thrive in school and spark a passion for lifelong learning." This includes addressing struggles which some children have never experienced before, like being separated for a longer amount of time from their parent or caregiver. Students develop the skills to prepare for all these changes through a weekly one-hour session run over the course of four terms, designed to be completed in the year before the child starts school. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Stephanie on this business and wish her well in this endeavour.

**PHOEBE DORAN**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Phoebe Doran for her performance at the 2024 Australian Interstate Surf Life Saving Championships at Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club. The Australian Interstate Championship is an annual event that sees Australia's best lifesavers compete in ocean and beach lifesaving events to battle it out for the National Champions title. Phoebe from Swansea-Belmont Surf Life Saving Club represented the New South Wales Team in the competition and was instrumental in assisting the state being crowned Australian Interstate Champions. Phoebe triumphed at the competition, taking out 2nd in the U17s Sprint, 1st in the Mixed Beach Relay and 4th in Mixed Taplin. Phoebe is a dedicated member of Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club, continuously showcasing her skill and teamwork in weekend nippers and lifesaving events and competitions. Congratulations Phoebe on your outstanding performance, you are a credit to your club and community.

**RILEY GOUGH**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Riley Gough for his performance at the 2024 Australian Interstate Surf Life Saving Championships at Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club. The Australian Interstate Championship is an annual event that sees Australia's best lifesavers compete in ocean and beach lifesaving events to battle it out for the National Champions title. Riley from The Lakes Surf Life Saving Club represented the New South Wales Team in the competition and was instrumental in assisting the state being crowned Australian Interstate Champions. Riley triumphed at the competition, taking out 3rd in both the flags and sprinting events, and further placing 1st in the NSW relay team. Riley has been a member of The Lakes Surf Life Saving Club since U6s and has continuously proven his skill, passion and dedication to the club through patrolling Central Coast's beaches and being selected as one of The Lakes' Youth Lifesavers of the Year. Congratulations Riley on your outstanding performance, you are a credit to your club and community.

**NICOLE BELL**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Nicole Bell for her performance at the 2024 Australian Deaf Games held in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The Australian Deaf Games is the pinnacle multi-sport event for Australia's Deaf and hard of hearing community, inviting participants from Australia and the neighbouring Pacific nations. The Games provides a platform for over 1000 Deaf athletes to compete across 20 different sporting events. The Games promotes the development of Deaf sport and constitutes a major social and cultural event for the whole Deaf community. It caters for a diversity of Deaf community needs and attracts large volumes of spectators, friends and family to onlook the festivities. Nicole represented the New South Wales side in the Single Ladies Lawn Bowls event. She triumphed in the competition, making it to the semi-finals and receiving a bronze medal. Nicole is also currently ranked at No.1 in New South Wales and No. 3 in Australian for the Ladies Singles. Congratulations Nicole on your outstanding performance, you are a credit to your community.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—What an empowering and unique International Women's Day [IWD] celebration we had in Ryde! As a proud supporter of this global movement, I'm thrilled to share the success of the special IWD Forum held on Saturday, March 9, at North Ryde School of Arts. With the theme 'Count her in: invest in women, accelerate progress,' we emphasised women's pivotal role in shaping a better future and provided a platform to discuss and highlight the importance of investing in their success. The event featured distinguished human rights and discrimination lawyer Prabha Nandagopol and successful stage, theatre, and screen actor Karen Pang as keynote speakers. The talented Masha Mnjoyan, winner of The Voice Armenia, provided entertainment. The discussions were not just enlightening; they were transformative. The atmosphere was filled with inspiration

and empowerment, leaving a lasting impact on all who attended. It was a wonderful opportunity for our community to come together, learn, and celebrate women's achievements and contributions. Thank you to everyone who participated in and supported this important event. Let's continue to strive for equality and empowerment for all women, not just on International Women's Day but every day.

#### **CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating those in Ryde who took part in Clean Up Australia Day 2024! Particular tribute must be given to 2023 Granny Smith Queen, Jessica Ingham and first runner-up, Sophia Daher who coordinated an impressive community clean up in Eastwood Plaza. The two of them represent a new generation of community volunteers, and should be enormously proud of their debut efforts! I also acknowledge the Rotary Club of Macquarie Park who hosted Councillor Sophie Lara-Watson and I at Kissing Point Park earlier in the day. Combined, the efforts of these volunteers and the many other clean-up locations across Ryde have contributed to making our community even cleaner and greener. These efforts have made a visible difference and underscored the importance of community involvement in environmental preservation. Together, we tackled littered streets, parks, and waterways - with a noticeable reduction in bottles and cans thanks to the incredible success of the Return and Earn scheme. Clean Up Australia Day 2024 was a resounding success, thanks to everyone's incredible efforts. Let's continue working together to keep Ryde beautiful for generations. Thank you once again for your invaluable contribution to our community!

#### **MARIST COLLEGE EASTWOOD HSC RANKINGS**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating my alma mater - Marist College Eastwood [MCE] - for entering the top 100 for Sydney Morning Herald school rankings. Climbing 50 positions, they now occupy the 93rd position in the State! This ranking is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the students, teachers, and families and I congratulate the Class of 2023 for their outstanding performance in the HSC. Under the guidance of Principal Ms Silvana Rossetti, they have excelled, ranking as the sixth best-performing school across Sydney Catholic Schools. Furthermore, they are the third highest ranking boys' school and the second most improved school of 2023. With 107 Distinguished Achievers, two All-Rounders, and a Band 6 rate of 17.7 per cent, MCE has demonstrated excellence across the board. Ms Rossetti attributes the success to a strong emphasis on student alignment with courses, unwavering commitment from HSC teachers, and shared responsibility among all staff. This remarkable achievement reflects the dedication of the staff to the well-being and academic success of the students. I am immensely proud to call myself an alumna of MCE. I extend my warmest congratulations to all involved in this outstanding accomplishment.

#### **CAREVAN- RUFFY SWAGS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge the Carevan Team, founder John Brabant and CEO Leanne Johnson and Uniting Wodonga's Catherine Byrne, who are spearheading their current project to combat the pressing issue of homelessness. They have produced a backpack 'called a Ruffy' swag, for individuals in need. Working in collaboration with Beechworth Correctional Centre, where inmates are producing swags for individuals facing housing insecurity, this has become a collective 'giving back' initiative for those doing time. Carevan and Uniting secured an \$18,000 grant from Border Trust Give500. The collective giving initiative has empowered individuals, families, and businesses across the Border region to contribute to local causes and create a positive impact. Carevan, Uniting & Border Trust – this is very much community joining forces to address local challenges. I commend & thanks all those involved in making this initiative a reality.

#### **REGINALD MORLEY 100TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Reginald Morley as he approaches a remarkable milestone, celebrating his 100th Birthday, on Thursday 30 March 2024. Mr Morley's journey has been as an integral part of the Albury Wodonga border community. From humble beginnings working as a pushbike patrol service, he went on to establish Armaguard and MSS (Security Services) on the border, leaving an incredible mark on the region's security landscape. Beyond his professional endeavours, he has been actively involved in numerous clubs and organisations. His dedication to the Salvation Army, Wodonga Golf Club, 36 years of service with the Rotary Club, and his commitment to Meals on Wheels, exemplify a lifetime of selfless contribution. In honour of his many years as a volunteer he was awarded 'The Volunteer of the Year' in 2019. To many, he is known as the 'King of Volunteers', a title earned through seven decades of immeasurable service. Mr Morley may your birthday be filled with joy, surrounded by the admiration of a community forever indebted to your generosity and good will.

#### **BUDDING CHEF TO GET A TASTE OF FINE DINING**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Albury's very own SS&A chef, Arlyn Ramirez, who has been awarded the prestigious Oliver C. Shaul Cooking Scholarship. The scholarship

will provide Ms Ramirez with an opportunity to embark on a culinary journey overseas, including three months of training at a renowned Michelin-star rated, Mume restaurant in Taiwan. Ms Ramirez's passion for the culinary is evident. Graduating from TAFE NSW, Albury in 2023, she has proven to be a hard-working and committed student. Ms Ramirez was inspired by her mother and grandmother, who instilled in her the love for cooking. As she embarks on a journey to further her skills and expand her culinary opportunities, may she return to the border with her newfound experience and training and inspire others. A special mention to Albury TAFE teacher David O'Dea, for his role in nurturing talent within our Border community. His dedication provides students like Ms Ramirez with the opportunity to develop their skills and pursue their culinary passions across the globe.

#### **MARILYN HEINECKE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises recently retired local nurse Marilyn Heinecke from Gerringong. After forty years of dedicated service as a nurse and in aged care, Marilyn bids farewell as she begins her retirement. Marilyn began her career in aged care in 1984 at Mayflower in Gerringong, now known as Uniting. She also worked part time at Gerringong Medical Practice where Dr Robyn Dalley also recently retired after 40 years of service to the local Gerringong community. During her tenure at Uniting and later at the Gerringong Medical Practice, Marilyn maintained a fierce commitment to making a real difference for her many patients and their families. Her dedication to nursing education, mentoring younger nurses, and advocating for improved healthcare funding stand as a testament to her unwavering commitment to the well-being of others. Marilyn leaves behind a distinguished legacy of service, compassion, a tremendous dedication to nursing and a strong commitment to improving the lives of those she served. We are very fortunate to have people like Marilyn. After four decades of serving and helping others, I would also like to wish Marilyn all the best with her future endeavours in her well-earned retirement.

#### **KIAMA HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Kiama High School for its 70th anniversary this year and for its outstanding commitment to the future of education in our region. Kiama High School is gearing up to mark its 70th anniversary this year with an exciting fundraising initiative to get the community involved and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come. As part of its anniversary celebrations, the school is inviting supporters to participate in their Brick by Brick fundraiser where path pavers can be purchased and personalised to form a pathway on the school grounds. The pathway is set to be unveiled later in the year during the 70th birthday celebrations. For those interested in participating you can contact Kiama High School for a form to fill out and return. Orders close on 8th May 2024. Kiama High School hopes that the initiative will not only honour its past 70 years of service and education to our local community but to also pave the way for a bright future in education for many years to come. I acknowledge Kiama High School Principal Catherine Glover and Deputy Principals Melissa Anthony and Gordana Sterjovska.

#### **WARWICK SHANKS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Mr Warwick Shanks OAM. From Jamberoo, Mr Shanks was recently awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] for his outstanding service to the community with his involvement in a number of different organisations. As the Chairman of the Illawarra Committee of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Warwick has been a vital component and a key driver of our region's business community. Mr Shanks is also involved in the judging of the Illawarra Business Awards and dedicates much of his spare time to growing our region's economy and promoting entrepreneurship. Having known Mr Shanks for many years now, I know that his efforts and hard work exemplifies the spirit of service above self and that his leadership and efforts have made a distinguished and lasting contribution to our region. I am delighted to see Mr Warwick Shanks OAM officially acknowledged with this esteemed and well-deserved recognition. A huge congratulations and well done Warwick.

#### **TROY DODDS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I commend and congratulate Troy Dodds on reaching his 15-year anniversary as the Managing Editor of the Western Weekender, one of the newspapers covering the Penrith City region, including a significant portion of my Badgerys Creek electorate. Over the past 15 years, under Troy's leadership, the Western Weekender has delivered countless stories showcasing changes in the region, in addition to many interesting stories that arise in such a thriving and vibrant region as ours. Troy's passion for the region can be seen through the work that he has produced. Whether it be reporting on the personal successes of locals or reflecting concerns about matters of importance to the community, Troy's desire to see the region and its community excel is second to none. I also recognise the important role Troy, as Managing Editor, has played in relaying messages between representatives and the community, as well as holding representatives to account. I congratulate Troy and wish him continued success.

**ELYSSIA SULTANA**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate Glenmore Park local Elyssia Sultana for taking her career to new heights through her traineeship with Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport. Elyssia's role at Western Sydney International Airport is primarily in administration and has involved assisting with the WSI Community Open Day and working with the Early Careers Network on a fundraising event at WSI for the Cancer Council. Elyssia should be proud to be contributing in such a valuable way to such a large infrastructure project that will transform our region and connect it to the world. I have no doubt that the experience in a corporate working environment and the skills gained will assist Elyssia in her career growth and development. I also congratulate Elyssia for attaining her Certificate IV in Business through Liverpool TAFE. I thank Elyssia for her contribution to this project and wish her the very best in her career.

**DAVID NORTHEY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend Glenmore Park local Mr David Northey on winning the 2023 PGA NSW/ACT Club Professional of the Year award at the annual PGA awards last November. The award reflected Mr Northey's success in the role of Director of Golf at Concord Golf Course, a position he has held for over three years, having previously served at Castle Hill Golf Club in the same role for over a decade. Mr Northey's commitment to communication and connection with members at Concord Golf Course, and the delivery of a warm and friendly atmosphere saw Concord Gold Course rank 1st out of 40 clubs in a 2023 Member Survey. Whilst Mr Northey is a Glenmore Park local, his connection to the area also extends to him having commenced his golfing journey in 1988 as a junior member at Glenmore Golf Club, now known as Glenmore Heritage Valley Golf Club. Mr Northey was awarded life membership of this club, in recognition of his services. I congratulate Mr Northey and wish him continued success in his career.

**REILLY MITCHISON**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to talented Ashtonfield dancer Reilly Mitchison who joined the cast in the Newcastle Civic Theatre's production of Superstars last week. The Superstars concert featured esteemed Australian entertainers Marina Prior, Silvie Paladino, Chloe Zuel and Joshua Robson. Reilly has been dancing since the age of three and is passionate about performing arts. Reilly's role in the production involved both dancing and singing and he says singing is definitely one of his favourite things to do. He sang in three group performances, including the Lion King's I just can't wait to be King. Reilly is enrolled at Hunter Drama in Maitland for both drama and musical theatre, where he gained a scholarship for in 2024 as the best junior drama student. Last year, Reilly landed a lead role at the Civic Playhouse as Nemo in Finding Nemo Jnr. He has also been cast in both The Jungle Book production at the Civic Playhouse and The School of Rock at the Civic Theatre this year. Reilly is currently a Year 6 student at Ashtonfield Public School, I wish him well in his audition for the Hunter School of Performing Arts in 2025. Congratulations Reilly.

**RECYCLING SUCCESS FOR MAITLAND**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the residents of Maitland who have recycled more than 121 million bottles, cans and cartons since Return and Earn began six years ago. Maitland residents have earned \$12.1 million in container refunds that have gone back into the community's pockets, through refunds, vouchers and donations to local organisations. Turning 121 million recycled containers into new containers, rather than using new materials, has saved 711 million litres of water, which is enough water to fill 284 Olympic swimming pools. It has also saved 159,236 gigajoules of energy, which is enough to power a household for 1274 years, and has saved 7.26 million kilograms of waste from landfill, enough to fill 764 garbage trucks. The recycled containers have also saved 14.593 million kilograms of carbon emissions from going into the atmosphere, which is equivalent to keeping 5401 cars off the road for a year. Maitland has four collection machines at Rutherford, Aberglasslyn, Rutherford and Thornton. At the recent Clean Up Australia Day event, we saw the least amount of plastic bottles that we have seen for the last 8 years, largely thanks to the community's recycling efforts. Congratulations Maitland, keep up the great work!

**JAMES BRENNAN**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—James Brennan of Aberglasslyn began his art career as a child by creating 'funny' art, this year his art has captured attention from the other side of the globe. The Bald Archy's is a portrait competition for satirical art. Mr Brennan has entered the prize every year since 2004, winning four times with portraits of the Danish royal family, horse trainer Bart Cummings, cricketer David Warner, and comedian Anh Do. This year he has three paintings which have been named finalists, one of Matildas star Sam Kerr, champion golfer Cameron Smith and the one which has gathered the most attention is of Australian cricket captain Pat Cummins. This portrait, Like taking Ashes from a Baby,

depicts Cummins holding the ashes, looming over English cricketer Jonny Bairstow and presenter Piers Morgan as they 'spit the dummy'. Mr Morgan saw the painting, and posted online "I may have to buy this to stop some cocky Aussie putting it on their loo wall." Mr Brennan, whose paintings are acrylic on canvas, is primarily self-taught, and says each painting starts with a funny idea. The Bald Archy winner will be announced next week, I wish James well.

#### **ST MARYS SAINTS FIRST RON MASSEY CUP**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—Congratulations to the St Marys Saints who have won their first Leagues Clubs Australia Ron Massey Cup at the end of the 2023 season. The St Marys Saints defeated the Wentworthville Magpies 40-12 during a riveting game of Rugby League. This is a great achievement for the St Marys Saints, inspiring the next generation of rugby league players. I would like to give Jake Butfield a special mention, who won Player of the Match. What a great achievement for the Saints players and the St Marys Leagues Club. Keep up the great work Saints!

#### **JEWISH CLIMATE NETWORK LAUNCH IN NSW**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate the Jewish Climate Network on their successful launch of Project Electrify in NSW, which was held at Chiswick restaurant, Woollahra on 21 February 2024. The evening brought many members of the local Jewish community together to talk about home electrification and to give them confidence to make some changes around their homes. I was delighted to be a guest panellist at this event and will continue to be an enthusiastic supporter of JCNs work. In the current economic climate, it is important that we are looking at ways to lower electricity bills for families and businesses in our community and across NSW. Cooperation between local, state and federal government will be important to help households plan and invest in cheaper and sustainable energy. Congratulations, Joel Lazar, Dina Bloom, Anna Solomon and Mitch Burnie on a fantastic evening. I look forward to supporting the Jewish Climate Network in the future.

#### **ALETHEA GOLD OAM- 2024 VAUCLUSE WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Alethea Gold OAM on receiving the 2024 Vaucluse Woman of the Year Award. Alethea is a Goodwill Ambassador to SmartAID - an international NGO that works in disaster zones around the globe. Alethea received an OAM in the 2023 Kings Birthday Honours for service to the community, particularly through humanitarian aid endeavours. Prior to this she was the Fashion Editor of STUDIO BAMBINI where she transformed the industry's outlook in Children's fashion. Despite her significant achievements, Alethea is admired by many in our community for her many unacknowledged good deeds, her unwavering work ethic and her humility. Congratulations Alethea, our community is thankful for your leadership, advocacy and service.

#### **NORBERT SCHWEIZER OAM VATIK AWARD RECIPIENT**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Norbert Schweizer OAM on receiving the Vatik Award at Emanuel Synagogue on Friday 9th February 2024. The Vatik Award was created solely for past presidents of congregations, and affiliate organisations who have continued to give excellent service and make a valuable contribution to their community and the wider community. Mr Schweizer served as President of Emanuel Synagogue from 2003 to 2006. He is a former chairman of the Silver Committee of the Royal NSW Institute of Deaf and Blind Children, a member of the Dean's Board of Advice of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Chairman of the Schizophrenia Research Institute and is also an active participant of multicultural projects. Mr Schweizer is also a recipient of a Swiss Business lifetime Award issued by the Swiss-Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I was pleased to be present when Norbert received his award and note his gratitude to his partner Sonya who has supported him through all his work. Congratulations Norbert and thank you for your service and contributions to our community.

#### **MATILDA PARIS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Matilda Paris has been an unyielding advocate for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. She has journeyed from adversity to advocacy and is now a local leader in initiatives to support survivors and rehabilitate offenders. In the local community, Matilda is a prominent supporter of causes fighting against domestic and sexual violence. Her advocacy for these causes has catalysed awareness and action, and her lived experiences have made her an exemplary leader in the fight to prevent them. She is committed to advocating for legal reform, mandatory education, and support for survivors with local not-for-profit organisation What Were You Wearing?, which has had widespread effects that foster positive change at levels both national and local. Matilda has also authored a children's book, "My Super Power," addressing child abuse at an age-appropriate level. This accomplishment is particularly noteworthy considering

Matilda's lived experience of DV and SV, along with the remarkable feat of raising two children while working full time. The book sensitively explores the topic, fostering conversations around identifying abuse and seeking help. Matilda Paris exemplifies the spirit of resilience and leadership and I thank her for her service to my community.

#### **RENATA ROBERTS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Renata Roberts is a staunch supporter of women in industry. As the Chief Corporate Services Officer of the Bloomfield Group, she has worked her way up in the male dominated mining industry since her career began in her early 20s. Through a number of initiatives, she has worked with the Bloomfield leadership team to drive diversity, including a lift in female participation in non-traditional roles such as apprentices, trades, and operations. Renata was selected among the 100 Global Inspirational Women in Mining in 2022 by the non-profit Women in Mining. She has connected with community and industry colleagues in a number of professional bodies. She is also known for supporting her own local community through the maintenance of a free community library. Renata is an inspirational figure for women in industry and is committed to fostering greater female participation. I would like to thank her for what she does and congratulate her on all her work.

#### **ROBYN FRASER**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Robyn Fraser is a criminal defence lawyer at Newcastle Legal Aid NSW, who tirelessly represents the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and rejected members of our society. She was the first female Solicitor in Charge of Newcastle Legal Aid and in this role, she leads a large team of lawyers and support staff. Throughout her 20-year career she has been dedicated to public service, through Legal Aid NSW, the NSW Drug Court, the Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, the Coronial Inquest section of the Crown Solicitor's Office, and at the Criminal Law review division of the Attorney General Department. In a world where you can judge a society by how it treats its most vulnerable, Robyn stands out for her compassion and integrity. The work that those in the social justice sphere do is often overlooked and derided. I am grateful for the opportunity to recognise Robyn's accomplishments and thank her for what she does for the community.

#### **42ND GREEK FESTIVAL**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Sunday 25 February 2024, I attended the official opening of the 42nd Greek Festival of Sydney at Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour. The Greek Festival of Sydney began in 1980 as the Greek Community Council's way to express and maintain Greek cultural and artistic practices; and to introduce and include the wider community to Greek culture. The Festival runs from February to June, offering a diverse range of events from the Greek Language Writers Festival to Greek Mythology, Creative Arts, music and, of course Greek food. Australia has benefited greatly from the rich culture and history brought to this country by the people of Greece and Greek heritage. I recognise Nia Karteris as Festival Chair and Harry Danalis as President of the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW, for their ongoing commitment and enthusiasm in bringing the spirit of Greece to the community of Sydney. It gives me great pride to represent members of the Australian Greek community who live in the Davidson electorate in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **DEAN SIMES**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I am proud to recognise Dean Simes, who was awarded a NSW Government Community Service Award. This award recognises individuals in NSW who helped to improve the quality of life of members of their community. I was pleased to join Ku-ring-gai Council Mayor Sam Ngai to present this award to Dean at a meeting of Computer Pals on Thursday 22 February 2024 at the Centre for Seniors in Turrumurra. Dean is the current President of Computer Pals, a local group dedicated to helping seniors gain a better understanding of computers and the technology, that now drives much of our lives, from our smart phones to internet connected televisions and everything in between. Dean is also an active member of the Killara Probus Club and Killara Music Club. He has no signs of slowing down, even after celebrating his 100th Birthday in 2023. Dean Simes is a very easy nomination for a Community Service Award. I recognise his community spirit and his unwavering enthusiasm for life and service to others. It gives me enormous pride to represent Dean Simes as a constituent of the Davidson electorate in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **YEAR 12 SCHOOL LEADERS 2024**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Wednesday 13 March 2024, I hosted our Year 12 school leaders for 2024 from the Davidson Electorate at Parliament House in Sydney. Our school leaders have an important responsibility to exercise leadership in their local communities. Leadership is about solving problems and having a clear purpose. It is a public service, and I acknowledge their time and dedication to this important work. I am proud to recognise Natasha Townley and Indie Smith from Brigidine College in St Ives; Amber Smithies and Alan George from Covenant Christian School in Belrose; Nathan Barlow and Annika Hore from Davidson High;

Leo Wang and Claire Polczynski from Killara High; Jessica Baker and Rowan O'Meara from Ku-ring-gai High in North Turrumurra; Ricky Maltz and Arin Ginsberg from Masada College in St Ives; Laura Parker and Shirley Ding from Ravenswood in Gordon; Emily Barnard, Indiana Hunter and Emma Wilson from Roseville College; and Kiki Margetis and Luca Parsenejad from St Ives High. My final advice is to make every day count as school leaders in 2024! I am proud to represent you and our local school communities in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **ELLE HANNIGAN**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Richmond Valley Council Young Sportsperson of the Year 2024, Elle Hannigan. Elle shows outstanding determination and grit to strive to be better at every sporting commitment. Her achievements are admirable, and her positive attitude is reflected in her performances. Over time Elle has showed commitment that excels expectations with the Casino Cougars Rugby League Club. Her leadership qualities influence her fellow teammates and in turn she became Team Captain and has held this position for the past two years. Elle is involved in many sporting teams and events and has always managed to commit to each one with as much motivation and determination as the other. Elle not only commits to every sport she puts her heart into, but she also gives back by volunteering her spare time to her local football club with the younger players and the committee. Elle's abilities and skills are more than worthy of this award, and to see an up-and-coming female represent her community and herself, is exciting. I thank Elle for her invaluable contribution to our community.

#### **LILLIAN COLLESS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Richmond Valley Council Citizen of the Year, Mrs Lillian Colless. Mrs Colless is an inspiration to all for her passionate selfless community spirit and energy. Lillian exemplifies the volunteer spirit of the Richmond Valley and has done so for multiple decades. Mrs Colless spends a lot of time helping bring the community together. Mrs Colless spent most of her life at sea, and it has shaped her attitude to life. The first law of the sea is to always look after those who look after you, because you never know when someone may throw you a line. She brings that attitude with her everywhere she goes. Her leadership and creativity have worked to the benefit of many in the community. Mrs Colless created and researched the exhibits on the fishing industry, Black Sand mining industry, the sugar cane industry, and local sporting heroes, including four sculling world champions and the Surf Club. In 2009, Mrs Colless coordinated the 70th Anniversary WW2 RAAF celebrations which involved the Governor General & over 2000 people. She included all local schools and the Casino Dance group. I thank Mrs Colless for her invaluable contribution to our community.

#### **ELAINA UNDERHILL**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Richmond Valley Council Young Volunteer of the Year 2024, Elaina Underhill. Elaina shows commitment to fundraising for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service and has been fundraising for this service for the past six years. She is the highest individual fundraiser for this service and has been for the past three years. Elaina is 10 years old and on December 18, 2015, was critically injured in a road trauma accident which claimed the life of her four-year-old sister, Elle. She sustained life threatening injuries and was transferred to the Queensland Childrens Hospital by the Westpac Rescue Helicopter. Time was critical and this service saved her life. During 2021-2022 Elaina individually raised \$16,000 and in 2023 raised almost \$7000, a combined total of \$23,160. To this date, \$61,850 has been raised for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter by Elaina and her parents. Each Christmas Elaina 'pays it forward' in remembrance of her sister Elle. This means the money Elaina would have spent on a Christmas gift for her sister, is now given to a random stranger. I thank Elaina for her invaluable contribution to our community, you are an inspiration, Elaina.

#### **MARKING TWO DECADES AT THE HELM OF THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES NEWSPAPER**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I congratulate Bob Dooley and Sue Stock as the editorial team behind The Nimbin Good Times free monthly newspaper, dubbed The Alternative Journal of the Rainbow Region. The Nimbin Good Times was the name of the daily bulletin printed during the Aquarius Festival in 1973. The original masthead was drawn by festival organiser Graham Dustan with his new set of Rotring nibs and still adorns the front page. The name was revived for a free monthly tabloid in 1997 with Bob Hopkins as founding editor, followed by Peter Atkinson's editorship from 1999 to February 2004, when Bob Dooley took the helm, assisted by Sue Stock. Managing Editor/Layout and Assistant Editor/Photographer, together with their staff, have grown The Nimbin Good Times into a quality publication – fiercely independent, reflecting its vibrant patch, and offering a diverse range of opinion on current issues. Bob is a former Head Teacher English, documentary maker and musician. Sue is a former teacher-librarian, independent alderman on Leichhardt Council and has curated exhibitions of Aboriginal art. As a regular columnist, I value their independence, creative skills and longevity as media professionals. Long may it be so.

### **MURWILLUMBAH CORE LEADS COMMUNITY FLOOD PREPAREDNESS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to pay tribute to Murwillumbah Core, a local organisation which has been awarded a \$40,000 State grant towards programs to help local communities in the Tweed Valley respond to future disasters. Murwillumbah Core, part of the Hub 2484 project, grew out of the local volunteers who worked so effectively to support communities during the devastating 2022 floods and recovery period. During that humanitarian disaster, all around the Northern Rivers region local volunteers ran flood recovery hubs on the fly, without training or funding, doing what needed to be done to keep people safe, fed and informed about the situation. The volunteers from Murwillumbah Core did that work, and the funding now will enable them to identify and train local leaders in flood-impacted areas, to set up registers of residents needing assistance, have clear avenues of communication and understand the risks. I congratulate Murwillumbah Core Coordinator Kerry Pritchard and committee members Jennifer Booth, Sarra Robertson and Kath Nolan, and all volunteer members, for the dedicated, practical work they have done for their community and for their ongoing commitment to finding effective ways to help the community be better prepared for future natural disasters.

### **NORTH COAST NATIONAL A AND I SOCIETY SHOWCASES - BUILDING BACK BETTER**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I recently attended Business Lismore's Business After Hours event hosted by the North Coast National A&I Society at the Lismore Showground in North Lismore. Following the devastating 2022 floods, the Society has invested heavily in the Showground's facilities to ensure it remains at the heart of our community long into the future. Last year's Lismore Show attracted more visitors and sponsors than at any time in its 139-year history. I congratulate President John Gibson, Treasurer Andrew Gordon, Secretary Mark Sollom and all concerned on the magnificent job they have done to 'build back better'. Business After Hours was something of a moveable feast where we explored all of the new facilities around the Showground, creating multiple venues that can now be hired for events such as weddings and meetings. Four guests won the lucky door prize of a sunset helicopter ride over Lismore and Goonellabah courtesy of Rotorwing Helicopter Services. Entertainment included knife-throwing and juggling by The Harrington Circus Show, music by Bruce Worrall and a speedway demonstration by driver Nathan Gordon. The Secret Chef catered for the event. The Lismore Showground looks absolutely stunning with new roads and green lawns.

### **AVONDALE SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Being elected to a high school leadership position is an honour and is the ultimate vote of confidence in these young people's ability to lead the student body and represent their school with integrity. I would like to congratulate Avondale School's newly elected, 2024 leadership team. Caleb Morton has been elected as a School Captain, he is a confident and capable leader who excels in being up front and leading the student leadership team and is a solid role model to his peers. Ebony Dunne has been elected as a School Captain and is another confident and capable leader. She is a student who is compassionate and has high levels of personal integrity. Desire Sibanda has been voted in as a Vice Captain and is an excellent role model to junior students, who constantly supports others. Lillee Sawyer has also been elected as a Vice Captain and is a student of high principle and thorough in her approach to her work. She also has excellent leadership qualities. Congratulations again to Caleb, Ebony, Desire and Lillee.

### **AVONDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected primary school leadership team at Avondale School. Alannah Morton and Samuel Renshaw have won the respect and trust of their peers, and have been elected as the 2024 school captains. They both have excellent leadership skills, and I am sure they will strive to represent Avondale Primary School with integrity and enthusiasm. This year's Sport's House Captains are Bethany Klepzig, Charles Smith, Bowen Jakes, Isla Jess, Zoe Harrison, Samuel Brown, Amelia Hill and James Smith. The 2024 Prefects are Ruby-Mae Tams, Katharine Tasker, Romey Radford, Shelbie Mitchell, Jonty Edwards, Felipe Gutierrez, Judah Borgas and Cayden Naidoo. These young leaders now have the responsibility of helping to deliver Avondale School's objective which is to encourage each student to be the very best they can be in all areas that they involve themselves in. Congratulations again to Avondale Primary School's 2024 Captains, Sports Captains and Prefects. I am sure that you will have a remarkable year together.

### **ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE STUDENT LEADERS**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to the newly elected 2024 Captains of St Paul's Catholic College Booragul. This school has an excellent reputation in the Lake Macquarie community, of providing a quality education that challenges students to reach their full potential. Kिर्रily Boslem, Jian Grasso, Lucas Walz and Kasey Crebert form the 2024 leadership. These students were elected due to the trust and confidence placed in them by their peers and faculty alike. Their dedication, integrity, and

commitment to serving the school community has been recognised by their fellow students over the past five years and there is a strong confidence amongst the school-body that they will lead with grace and make a positive difference. I know Kirrily, Jian, Lucas and Kasey will do their utmost to represent their peers, foster unity, and drive positive change within the school's environment. Congratulations again to these young leaders.

#### **GEZEL BARDOSSI – WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise an absolutely sensational young superstar in our community, who recently was nominated as 'one to watch' at the 2024 NSW Women of the Year Awards. The NSW Woman of the Year Awards have recognised thousands of women across the state who have displayed exceptional skills, determination and passion. This year, there were a record number of nominations. Gezel is a high achiever from St Raphael's Catholic Primary School at South Hurstville and was recently a contestant on the Voice, finishing within the top six! She also is a professional actor and has had many roles in films, TV series and music videos. Gezel is also committed to her education and has a passion for STEM subjects, recently receiving a scholarship for St George Girls High School. I am so proud of high achievers like Gezel, who continue to demonstrate that our community is the best place to live, work and succeed. She has shown consistent effort and good character in every aspect of her life. Congratulations Gezel! I look forward to seeing what you achieve over the next few years.

#### **HURSTVILLE LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to take part in Georges River Council's Lunar New Year Celebrations, held in Hurstville. This is the largest Sydney Metro, Council-led celebration, with 50,000 in attendance. This year is an important time in the Lunar Calendar, as many gather to celebrate the year of the dragon. The dragon represents prosperity, good health and luck for the new year. Hurstville was absolutely buzzing, with thousands of locals coming down to join the celebrations, enjoying cultural performances, spectacular food and entertainment for the kids. A special nod to Georgie the Dragon – the official mascot for Georges River Council. The dragon truly is at the heart of our local community. As the Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism and Local Member, I would like to thank everyone at Georges River Council who helped to make the event a smashing success! I'd like to thank Councillor Nancy Liu and Mayor Sam Elmir in particular. Our state's vibrant multicultural community here in New South Wales is built upon events such as this. I look forward to attending next year.

#### **MORTDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL SWIMMING CARNIVAL**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate students from Years 2 – 6 at Mortdale Public School, who recently attended the 2024 Swimming Carnival at Roselands Aquatic Centre. These students showcased their incredible talent in various events and competitions. I am well informed that there were plenty of young athletes keen to get stuck in and give swimming a go. I believe this is what grassroots sport is all about. Local sporting opportunities like swimming carnivals provides a platform for young athletes to develop their skills, whilst fostering a lifelong love for physical activity. At the grassroots level, every child, regardless of their background or ability, has the opportunity to participate, learn, and grow. Mortdale Public School have been so instrumental in developing this love of sports within our community. I would like to give a special mention to the students who have progressed to competing at the Georges River District Swim Carnival! A special shoutout also to Marlene H, Ryan D, Audrey H, Lucas M and Maya P for their exceptional effort. The outstanding performance and sportsmanship displayed by the students is a true reflection of our community. Congratulations everyone!

#### **PEACE AWARDS**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—In February, I had the pleasure of attending the 2024 combined Rotary Clubs of Wagga Wagga Peace Day Ceremony. It was a privilege to meet people who have done so much for peace locally and globally, including Rotary Club Award for Community Service recipients Elizabeth Parsons, Uncle Hewitt Whyman, Judy Heard, Patricia Walmsley, Ali Tanner, John Evans and Rev. Karen Kime, and the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital Auxiliary Op Shop, which received the Helen and Peter Walsh Memorial Peace Award. It was my honour to present School Community Service Awards to leaders from Wagga High School, Kildare Catholic College, Mount Austin High School, Koorungal High School, Mater Dei Catholic College, The Riverina Anglican College and the Wagga Christian College. Special mention should go to Uranquinty's Damien Nye who received the Wagga City Council Peace Award for his incredible efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to victims of the war in Ukraine. These individuals and organisations have made a remarkable contribution to the ideal of peace – made even more by poignant by the fact that Wagga Wagga was declared the world's first Rotary Peace City in 1993 – and I congratulate all for their dedication to creating a better world.

### GORDON AND FAY MOWBRAY

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations to Wagga couple Gordon and Fay Mowbray, who this month celebrated a special milestone – 70 years of marriage. Theirs is a love story that began when 19-year-old Gordon met 16-year-old Fay at a dance in Newcastle. United by love, friendship and strong faith in the Methodist (now Uniting) Church, they married in 1954 and later moved to Wagga where Mr Mowbray became deputy principal at Wagga High School. Their next move was to Culcairn where Mr Mowbray was the inaugural principal of Billabong High School. With two sons, Peter and Paul, family was always at the centre of their lives and Mr and Mrs Mowbray are now proud grandparents and great-grandparents. Mrs Mowbray believes their long and happy life together reflects their enjoyment of each other's company, honesty, and dedication to their church, which they still attend. In Mr Mowbray's words, "If you're a good person and you marry a good person, you'll have a good life". Gordon and Fay Mowbray have done just that, and I congratulate them on their platinum anniversary – a very special milestone for a devoted couple with much to celebrate.

### JOHN WHITELEY

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate John Whiteley of the Wellington Lions Club who was recently presented with a Lions Chevron Award. The Chevron Award is one of the rarest Lions awards and is presented to members for 60 years of service! This award is a testament to John's remarkable dedication and unwavering commitment to the Lions club and the Wellington community. John was presented his award by Lions District Governor Geoff Fredenstein. The Wellington Lions Club was inaugurated in 1957 and John started volunteering in 1963. When he joined, he was a farmer with three small children. He joined because he wanted to do a bit for the community and the social aspects. The Wellington Lions club are proactive service club doing good work for the community, of which John is a big part of. John's dedication to making a positive difference to others and our community serves as an inspiration to us all. Thank you, John, for your kindness, generosity and selfless service which has enriched the Wellington community over six decades!

### MELANOMA MARCH

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Dubbo Melanoma March Committee on the success of the 2024 Melanoma March held in Dubbo. 250 people united at the Macquarie River Foreshore to participate and raise money for Melanoma Australia's vital research. Led by the passionate and dedicated efforts of the committee, spearheaded by Emily Nettle, the March not only raised awareness about Melanoma but contributed to funding research that will ultimately save lives. The trek that people marched along was lined with educational information about Melanoma, as well as faces of local loved ones that have passed from Melanoma as a poignant reminder of the importance of their contribution. The Dubbo Melanoma March was co-developed by the Beggs family whose daughter Carrie-Ann died of Melanoma aged just 43. The first time the event was held in Dubbo in it raised \$20,000. This year the event raised the phenomenal amount of approximately \$50,000. Every six hours, one Australian dies from Melanoma. The success of the march serves as a beacon of hope for those affected by melanoma and inspires others to join the fight against this deadly disease. Well done on an outstanding event!

### ROBERT SNOW REYNEN

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Dubbo's Robert "Snow" Reynen on his retirement from the automotive industry after 52 years' service at Dubbo's Ford Dealerships. Robert, affectionately known as "Snow" a nickname that started in his school days because of his blonde hair, started in the automotive field in 1971 at the age of 18 with Harold W Taylor and Sons. Learning on the job was the start of it all. The first year of his apprenticeship was sweeping floors, emptying bins, getting morning tea, and helping the mechanics. Robert has kept a book of all the people he has worked with over the years. With over 400 entries, around half of those are apprentices he has taught, and some now own their own mechanical workshops. He might be retiring, but Snow will always be a Ford man and own a Ford. His goal is to one day own a 1970 XW Falcon GT-HO Phase II Sedan. In the meantime, he is planning a well-deserved holiday in his caravan. Congratulations on your fantastic career Snow, as you embark on this next chapter of your life, I extend my best wishes for a well-earned retirement!

### EAST MEETS WEST SYMPHONY

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I commend the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra for staging a magnificent concert, East Meets West, on Friday 23 February. As one of the major events in Willoughby's Lunar New Year festivities, the concert was due to be held outdoors at Chatswood Oval, but due to wet weather, the location was changed to The Concourse Concert Hall. As the title of the concert suggested, the event was a celebration of musical masterpieces from the Chinese Eastern and European Western traditions. Highlights of the concert included Wang Huiran's Dance of the Yi People, a solo composition for the pipa, and Hua Wu's rendition

of the popular Chinese Opera tune Deep Night, featuring the jinghu. Other highlights included music from the West Side Story acknowledging Leonard Bernstein's work with the recent popular 2023 film Maestro, directed by and starring Bradley Cooper, Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker pas de deux, and of course another crowd favourite, Butterfly Lovers – a Chinese legend. This wonderful concert was a free, family-friendly event enjoyed by all, and I thank Willoughby City Council for their terrific support. It was truly an adornment to Willoughby's Lunar New Year celebrations.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY BEARS 2024 SEASON**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I am a huge fan and proud member of the North Sydney Bears Rugby League Club and was delighted to be present at the club's season launch on Wednesday 28 February 2024. It was wonderful to be amongst friends and supporters of the Club. I would like to congratulate the Co-captains of the North Sydney Bears, Kurt De Luis and Jerry Key, who are two legends of the game. I also predict that Pat Weisner will have an incredible first year as coach. I would like to heartily thank the Club Chairman Daniel Dickson, CEO Gareth Holmes, Bears legend Greg Florimo and everyone who is behind the mighty Bears this year. I wish them a terrific season for 2024. As I said in my maiden speech to this place, I will not stop advocating for the North Sydney Bears to return to their rightful place in the NRL.

#### **WILLOUGHBY RECYCLING MILESTONE**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—As NSW celebrates the milestone of 11 billion containers recycled under the Return and Earn scheme, I would like to commend the efforts of the Willoughby community for having recycled an incredible 26 million bottles, cans and cartons through our local return points. In Willoughby, the collective recycling efforts are making a difference with energy savings equal to the average annual use of 277 households, reduced CO2 emissions equivalent to taking 1181 cars off the road for a year, and water savings that could fill 62 Olympic swimming pools. With all plastic and glass drink containers collected through the network recycled in Australia, Return and Earn has led to a 54 per cent reduction in drink container litter since pre-scheme levels and become a leading contributor to our growing domestic circular economy. I am proud of the environmentally conscious habits of Willoughby locals and their practical resolve to realise a cleaner future. The Return and Earn recycle scheme has surpassed all expectations with over a billion dollars of container refunds in people's pockets and almost a million tonnes of materials recycled.

#### **PREMIER'S DEBATING CHALLENGE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of students from Guyra Central School for their outstanding performances in the recent Premier's Debating Challenge, with two teams making it to the finals. I congratulate the Primary Stage 3 debate team of Sammy-Rose Dowden, Lincoln Atkin, William Collins and William Vidler for their success in making it the Regional Finals for the first time. Another well-deserved congratulations goes to the Year 8 debating team of Rose Kliendienst, Summer Tibbs, Dixie Orford and Georgette Loeb, who won the regional finals and secured a place in the state finals held in Sydney. I commend each of the students for their hard work in their preparation and practice leading up to the Premier's Debating Challenge and their commitment to the event. Each is a great representative for the power of public education to provide useful skills that can be applied in day to day life. I also acknowledge Mrs Michelle Nicholson, Principal and Mrs Annette Callister, Debate Mentor and to the teachers and families for the support they provide to these future leaders.

#### **POETS ON THE MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Australian Poetry Hall of Fame [APHOF] for staging a successful Poets on the Mountain Festival held at Guyra. The festival celebrates the Australian bush poetry tradition, whilst offering a platform for talented poets to showcase their skills and creativity. I congratulate James Warren on hosting and bringing this event to life, with the schedule of activities over the weekend including the Australian Bush Poetry Film Festival, poetry workshops and performances, as well as the NSW Bush Poetry Championship and the Rhymers Variety show. The show featured Tom McIlveen and Susan Ashton, with special guests the renowned Australian poets, Ray Essery, Bill Kearns and Robyn Sykes. I commend James Warren, the Australian Bush Poets Association and all involved, as events such as this in regional towns cannot function without the ongoing support and commitment provided by organisers and volunteers.

#### **WALCHA PAIR FUNDRAISING FOR THE CANCER COUNCIL**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Walcha's Jed Wittig and Cameron Norbury for their efforts to promote awareness and fundraise for the Cancer Council, through joining the Mystery Box Rally during August. The pair have raised a staggering \$17,500 to assist in the funding of Cancer research. I congratulate Jed and Cameron on this achievement and for the impressive trek over 1500 km through all types

of terrain. The event commenced at Bundaberg Queensland, with an unknown route over five days and finishes at the same destination – with a lot to see and going on in between! I commend Jed and Cameron's sponsors, as well as local supporters who have kindly donated to this worthy cause. The impact of such events will be felt right across Australia!

#### **PROFESSOR IAN HICKIE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Professor Ian Hickie who was recently made an Officer of the Order of Australia [AO], for distinguished service to psychiatric research and reforms as an advocate for improved mental health care and awareness in the 2024 Australia Day Honours Awards. Currently Co-Director of Health and Policy at the University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Centre, Ian's distinguished career has included significant contributions as a global leader in mental health research and digital innovations in care. Ian was an inaugural National Health Medical Research Council Australian Fellow (2007-2012), then Senior Principal Research Fellow (2013-2017 and 2018-22) and is now supported at the highest level of personal Investigator Grants (2023-2027). He was also an inaugural Commissioner on Australia's National Mental Health Commission (2012-18) overseeing enhanced accountability for mental health reform and suicide prevention. Ian is an internationally renowned researcher in clinical psychiatry, with particular reference to digital innovation, youth mental health care and adolescent-onset mood disorders. Congratulations and thank you Ian for your ongoing contribution and advocacy for improved mental health care and lifting awareness.

#### **MOLLY PICKLUM**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take the time to congratulate Molly Picklum, an incredible young female surfer who at the age of 21 has recently won the 2024 Women's Hurley Pro at Sunset Beach Hawaii which is part of the international surf tour. Born and raised on the Central Coast, Molly has been catching waves since the age of three and has won many competitions and awards along the way. Some highlights include winning the Australasian Junior Series of 2019, being awarded the Rising Star Award in 2020 and being inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 2021 as a Scholarship Holder. Molly was defending the title she won last year and came into the final in strong form having earned the first ever perfect score of 10.0 by a woman at the famous North Break in the Pipe Pro in the week prior. Molly assumes the world No. 1 ranking on the women's championship tour, donning the yellow jersey as the tour heads to Portugal. Congratulations Molly on this exciting win and leader ranking, a testament to your ongoing hard work and commitment. Continue to chase your dreams and good luck at the upcoming Paris Olympics.

#### **ERIC FLOOD**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Eric Flood who was recently awarded an OAM for service to veterans and their families in the 2024 Australia Day Honours Awards. At 98 years of age, Eric is still very much involved in Legacy, having first becoming a Legatee with Lithgow Legacy in 1967. Eric started as secretary and when he later moved to Sydney, he became chairman at St George Legacy. He was also a member and committee member of Sydney Legacy. Eric joined Brisbane Water Legacy here on the Central Coast in 1998 where he undertook many roles. He was a member of the pensions committee and held the role chairman of the scholarship committee which he remains as a committee member to this day. Eric was chairman of the Chatterbox quarterly news magazine for six years. In 2021 Eric was also fittingly awarded the Central Coast Council's Seniors Community Award. Congratulations Eric on this prestigious recognition. Your community thanks you for your lifelong commitment to Legacy and helping people.

#### **BROTHERS REPRESENT AT NSW INDIGENOUS CRICKET CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I rise today to recognise the sporting achievements of two local Biripi and Dughutti cricketers who were selected for a second time to represent NSW in the National Indigenous Cricket Championships. Brett Russell and Lesley Smith helped secure the state's fourth consecutive championship last year and returned in the hope of taking out a fifth win in Alice Springs. The National Indigenous Cricket Championships play a key role in fostering connections with culture and celebrating the skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cricketers from across the country. Both brothers, originally from Kempsey, discovered their love for cricket as an alternative sport in the summer during the rugby off-season. At first, they tested out the waters, trying out the game before they took a love for it. Unfortunately, the NSW men's team was defeated by Western Australia in the final by five wickets, however the NSW women's team did reclaim their title in a 42-run victory over Queensland. Brett and Les now live on the NSW Central Coast and I wish both men the best for all their future sporting achievements.

**JUSTICE OF THE PEACE CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION- BRUCE LOY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Bruce Loy on receiving a Justice of the Peace Certificate of Appreciation by the Cumberland Branch of the NSW Justices Association on Monday 20th November 2023. The NSW Justices Association was established in 1911 to offer support, information and advocacy to Justices of the Peace across NSW. The Cumberland Branch of the NSW Justices Association performs an integral role in our community, providing accurate and trusted verification services. Entrusted independent and impartial witnesses, Justices of the Peace certify legal documents, including powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits. Justices of the Peace are key to the functions of our legal system, assisting courts and governing bodies to provide timely outcomes. The Certificate of Appreciation is awarded to outstanding members of the Association, who have demonstrated great loyalty and longevity. Bruce has generously volunteered his time as a volunteer JP in the NSW JA – Cumberland Branch for 20 years. Congratulations Bruce on this significant award. Thank you for your dedicated service to our community. I also thank NSW Justices Association State President, Dr John Brodie, and the Cumberland Branch for your considered advocacy and ongoing support for our community.

**JUSTICE OF THE PEACE CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION – EDWARD GODDARD**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Edward Goddard on receiving a Justice of the Peace Certificate of Appreciation by the Cumberland Branch of the NSW Justices Association on Monday 20th November 2023. The NSW Justices Association was established in 1911 to offer support, information and advocacy to Justices of the Peace across NSW. The Cumberland Branch of the NSW Justices Association performs an integral role in our community, providing accurate and trusted verification services. Entrusted independent and impartial witnesses, Justices of the Peace certify legal documents, like powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits. Justices of the Peace are key to the functions of our legal system, assisting courts and governing bodies to provide timely outcomes. The Certificate of Appreciation is awarded to outstanding members of the Association, who have demonstrated great loyalty and longevity. Edward has generously volunteered his time as a volunteer JP in the NSW JA – Cumberland Branch for 20 years. Congratulations Edward on this significant award. Thank you for your dedicated service to our community. I also thank NSW Justices Association State President, Dr John Brodie, and the Cumberland Branch for your considered advocacy and ongoing support for our community.

**JUSTICE OF THE PEACE CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION – GRAHAM SEACH**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Graham Seach on receiving a Justice of the Peace Certificate of Appreciation by the Cumberland Branch of the NSW Justices Association on Monday 20th November 2023. The NSW Justices Association was established in 1911 to offer support, information and advocacy to Justices of the Peace across NSW. Justices of the Peace perform an integral role in our community, providing accurate and trusted verification services. Justices of the Peace are entrusted to be independent and impartial witnesses. Certifying legal documents, such as powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits, they are an important component in our legal system. Justices of the Peace assist courts and governing bodies to provide timely outcomes. The Certificate of Appreciation is awarded to outstanding members of the Association, who have demonstrated great loyalty and longevity. Graham has generously volunteered his time as a volunteer JP in the NSW JA – Cumberland Branch for 10 years. Congratulations Graham on this significant award. Thank you for your dedicated service to our community. I also thank NSW Justices Association State President Dr John Brodie and the Cumberland Branch for your considered advocacy for JPs in our community.

**TIERNEY GIBBENS (GEORGES RIVER ART PRIZE)**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate local artist Tierney Gibbens for winning the 2024 Georges River People's Choice Prize. The Georges River Art Prize is a biennial national art competition that provides a platform for visual artists in the local community to showcase their finest work. Ms Gibbens won the People's Choice Prize taking home the much coveted \$500 prize. Tierney's artwork was the most popular amongst the Georges River community with visitors casting their votes over the course of the competition. Tierney's outstanding artwork, Shift is a moody self-portrait set to a rich grey backdrop composed of oil on canvas. Her work explores themes of guilt, confusion, and loss. The competition's judges and audiences were struck by the artwork's expressiveness, mood, detail and life like quality. This achievement is a testament to Tierney's artistic talent and dedication to her craft so I would like to commend her on this amazing achievement.

**DANIEL SU**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and commend Mr Daniel Su for being named one of Georges River Young Citizens of the Year for 2024. Throughout 2023, Daniel took on

the role of Chairperson of the Community Services Committee (CSC) at Sydney Boys High School organising numerous fundraising events, including BBQs, bake sales, movie nights and donation collections. Under Daniel's leadership, the CSC raised nearly \$40,000 for 13 charities, exemplifying his ability to inspire fellow students and enact positive change. Daniel also founded Help Elevate Youth, a non-for-profit organisation that strives to provide immediate solutions to homeless and disadvantaged communities. Some of Daniel's many other achievements include being selected on the Youth Advisory Committee for Georges River Council and participating in a CSIRO internship aimed at designing high-performance computer programs. All these achievements demonstrate his commitment to leadership, community development and innovation. His continuous passion for combatting social inequality exemplifies a strong sense and dedication to his community. Daniel's unwavering devotion to service and social activism is incredibly admirable and truly an inspiration to us all.

#### **BARIATRIC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE, ST GEORGE PRIVATE HOSPITAL KOGARAH**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate St George Private Hospital in Kogarah for achieving a coveted accreditation by the International Surgical Review Corporation. The bariatric centre was established in 1998 and has the largest intake of bariatric patients in Australia. The centre now has 10 bariatric surgeons and a team of specialised bariatric nurses performing more than 1400 procedures each year. The centre first received accreditation in 2012 and was the first hospital internationally to do so becoming a Bariatric Centre of Excellence. To obtain accreditation, according to The Surgical Review Corporation, the hospital must supply a high concentration of expertise in a particular area of medicine, delivering excellent care and the best patient outcomes possible. This accreditation is a tremendous honour and is a validation of our healthcare workers' diligence and commitment to providing exceptional care. Their commitment to excellence, compassion, and teamwork contributes significantly to the overall success of our bariatric program. I would like to give a special thanks to the hospital staff whose hard work and dedication play a pivotal role in ensuring a seamless and patient-centred experience.

#### **THE SETTLEMENT**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown Electorate, I would like to acknowledge and thank The Settlement for their significant and continued contribution to our local community. The Settlement does such important work, supporting young people and making connections through community-led programs - and being a place to play, learn, and grow. Since their establishment over 130 years ago, they have continuously provided a broad range of essential services to those in our inner city and inner west communities - including after school care, school holiday programs, a community food support program, and individual and family support. The team, volunteers and community members who are the heart of The Settlement are highly experienced and deeply embedded in the local community, over the years having built deep and genuine trust that so many rely on. I'd particularly like to acknowledge the work of CEO Lesley Yates Butt, Fundraising Manager Jo Anne Miley, Youth Team Leader Phoebe Ferguson who I had the pleasure of sitting down with recently. The Settlement is such a pivotal part of our community. We look forward to working more closely with them in the future to continue to support their initiatives and programs.

#### **LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown Electorate, I thank the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce and the Australian Malaysian Singaporean Association for hosting two wonderful celebrations for Lunar New Year as we welcomed back the Dragon. Lunar New Year is one of the most significant dates for so many in our community and it was so special to be able to celebrate by sharing wonderful meals. In the face of difficult times, it is so important to show compassion and courage, and come together to build a more equitable and compassionate world. Both these organisations do such important work to support our communities and rely on volunteers who contribute significantly to the work of both organisations. I thank them for their significant contributions to the Chinese, Malaysian and Singaporean communities in Australia as well as their ongoing passion for Haymarket with all its historical significance and future plans. I also acknowledge the many other community festivals, events and organisations - including local councils - who contributed to a wonderful Lunar New Year in our city. It truly is such a special time that connects our city to the world and many of our closest neighbours.

#### **TWO WONDERFUL COMMUNITY SERVICES AT STUARTS POINT**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The Stuarts Point Men's Shed, a wonderful bunch of community-minded individuals presented their local Chemist Kate with a new wooden table and chairs to replace her old "pile of Wood". The members of the Men's Shed all contributed their skills in wood and metal work to make the very generous donation. When presenting the woodwork to Kate, the men told her that as the local Chemist she does much for the community, so they wanted to do something in return for her. Kate was truly

surprised by the generous gift. Kate the Chemist does much for the Community as the first Women's Health Clinic was held in February 2024, the second Tuesday of every month is the Women's Health session at the Stuarts Point Pharmacy, the clinics provide vital women's health services including cervical screening, pre and postnatal care and much more women's health information. It's great to see community groups and businesses helping community. The Men's Shed's kind gesture will go that extra mile to providing free service to the women in the Community. Well done, everyone!

#### **ADVOCACY ACKNOWLEDGED: WEST KEMPSEY COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I had the great pleasure to be at the opening of a new Community Centre in West Kempsey on Thursday 7th March 2024. Uncle Bob Smith and other Aboriginal Elders from the Aboriginal Community welcomed all to country with smoking and water ceremonies. The Centre in Gordon Nixon Avenue was opened by Minister Rose Jackson and the opening was well attended by the wider Community. The centre will offer a range of programs including, Tenant Employment Program, health and wellbeing activities and Alcohol and Other Drugs counselling services. The centre is funded by the State Government and is a great collaborative between Community Housing Limited (CHL), local partners, Aboriginal Elders and the Kempsey community. Uncle Bob Smith said it was important to have a community Hub in West Kempsey that residents can make their own. Where they can go to respectfully discuss issues affecting their community. Community Housing NSW manager Megan Davidson spoke of the collaborative effort of the Dunghutti Elders and the local community in the centres establishment. I look forward to working with the centre for the betterment of the Community.

#### **DARREN THORNTON**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Darren Thornton reaches an incredible milestone celebrating his 40th anniversary as an employee at The Doylo at Doyalson. Darren began working at the Doylo as a 1st Year Apprentice Greenkeeper in 1984 and transitioned to casual bar work then moving to Assistant Greenkeeper and full-time bar work in 1988. In the early 90's Darren made a change at The Doylo to Appointed Purchasing Officer and Supervisor to Appointed Gaming Manager and then Appointed Assistant CEO. May 30th, 2007, Darren became Appointed CEO and continued to make achievements by overseeing the development of The Doylo brand and culture, the genuine development of The Doylo staff and building strong community relations. Darren also, volunteers and supports community organisations such as The Westpac Rescue Helicopter, Camp Breakaway, Operation Christmas Hamper, Central Coast Kids In Need and We Care Connect. Congratulations to Darren's service in the workplace at The Doylo and your connection to our local community.

#### **ELDERSLEE FOUNDATION**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Elderslee Foundation based at Tuggerah for receiving the Community Group award at the Central Coast Council's 2024 Australia Day Awards. The Elderslee Foundation began in 1970, building a retirement community at Bateau Bay and from 2012 Elderslee decided to sell their villages and inject the proceeds of \$5 million back into community projects across all ages and demographics to significantly assist multiple Central Coast agencies. Over the years Elderslee funded not-for-profit groups such as Senior Smiles, Kidney Health Australia's, The Big Red Kidney Bus, Behind the Seen, Orange Sky Laundry, Iris Foundation, Men's Shed and Action on Housing Older Women. The Elderslee took on a project in 2018, developing a warehouse in Tuggerah and transformed the space into a vibrant arts and community centre called Red Tree Theatre, attracting nearly 30,000 visitors to date. Red Tree Theatre offers rehearsal, office, and meeting spaces, training rooms, exhibition space, and a 130-seat theatre that can be used for performances, concerts, productions, as well as seminars, presentations, and conferences. The foyer and entrance area host art exhibitions, and The Monkey Bar is a space for celebrating openings and award ceremonies, as well as interval refreshments during performances.

#### **NOEL MOULDER**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Local resident Noel Moulder from Blue Haven has been awarded an OAM for service to veterans. Mr Moulder has been working with the National Servicemen's Association of Australia since 1991 and has been recognised for his achievements and positions held over the years. Currently Mr Moulder is Vice-President of the National Servicemen's Association of Australia since 1991, Vice-President of the NSW National Servicemen's Association and a member of Tuggerah Lakes Sub-branch. Becoming a life member of Tuggerah Lakes Sub-branch in 2013 and in 2011 was awarded the Barry Vicary Fellowship Award, National Servicemen's Association of Australia.

Across NSW each sub-branch helps and supports their community and in 1972 there were up to 45 sub-branches and today there are up to 20 sub-branches remaining. Mr Moulder is dedicated in providing welfare support for the national servicemen who served our nation. Congratulations to Noel Moulder for receiving the OAM for service to veterans, your work is greatly appreciated.

#### **BEAR COTTAGE**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to visit Bear Cottage, the only children's hospice in New South Wales. Bear Cottage is a place where kids with life-limiting conditions and their families can come for support, respite, and end-of-life care. The amazing staff and volunteers at Bear Cottage are committed to providing an environment that feels like a home, not a hospital, where kids can be kids while still receiving the care they need. Caring for a child with a life-limiting condition changes a family's life forever. Bear Cottage provides respite care, so families can focus on enjoying time together. Many of the roles and facilities at Bear Cottage exist because of philanthropy. I commend the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation [SCHF] for their work raising funds for Bear Cottage and the Sydney Children's Hospital Network. Pittwater is such a generous community, and I was so proud to learn that our community provide significant support to Bear Cottage and the SCHF. I thank Narelle Martin, the Nursing Unit Manager who has been at Bear Cottage since day one, and all the staff and volunteers at Bear Cottage for their work and commitment to serving families in across our State.

#### **MARINE RESCUE COTTAGE POINT**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to visit Marine Rescue Cottage Point, meet with members of the Unit and even go out on the water. Spending time on the water is part of the Australian way of life and my community are so fortunate to call Pittwater our backyard. The volunteers at Marine Rescue Cottage Point do an amazing job keeping people safe on the waters of the beautiful Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and surrounding areas. Recently, the Unit has had an overwhelming amount of interest from potential new volunteers, and they are eager to train more people and expand their capacity to keep people safe. From volunteers who have served for 30 years to young people who do their shifts when visiting their grandparents in Cottage Point, the Unit is an inclusive place where all can learn new skills and contribute to the community. The Marine Rescue Cottage Point team are energetic and passionate, always striving to be the gold standard. I thank Stuart Manley, Unit Commander, and all the Unit's volunteers for their service.

#### **MARINE RESCUE BROKEN BAY**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I acknowledge and thank Marine Rescue Broken Bay for their service to the community and ongoing commitment to keeping people safe on our waters. Spending time on the water is part of the Australian way of life and my community are so fortunate to call Pittwater our backyard. The volunteers at Marine Rescue Broken Bay do an amazing job keeping people safe on Pittwater and the surrounding waters. I have been fortunate to visit the Unit several times, even having the chance to drive a boat for a few minutes under close supervision! The last two summers have been particularly busy out on Pittwater, and the Marine Rescue Broken Bay team have been integral to keeping people safe as they enjoy the water. The Pittwater community is so appreciative of the work of our Marine Rescue volunteers. I am so pleased that Unit Commander, Jimmy Arteaga, was honoured as the 2024 Citizen of the Year for the Northern Beaches. I thank Jimmy and all the Unit's volunteers for their service.

#### **ROSEMARY TURNER**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Rosemary Turner. Rosemary was recently nominated for the Goulburn Electorate Local Woman of the Year Award for her outstanding contribution to the township of Marulan. Rosemary is the current President of the Marulan Progress Association and has been involved in many activities with the Marulan Historical Society, Country Women's Association and Anglican Church. Rosemary is also the Editor and main contributor of the monthly Marulan Messenger publication, which provides a valuable connection to community for news, events, and projects. I take this time to recognise the significance of the time and skills which you volunteer to undertake each of these roles. I commend you on your tireless contribution within the community and thank you for your dedication.

#### **SARAH WATSON**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Sarah Watson. Sarah was recently nominated for the Goulburn Electorate Local Woman of the Year Award for her outstanding contribution to the local community of Yass, in recognition of the multiple roles she undertakes to improve and sustain community well-being. Sarah a veteran of the Australian Army serving primarily as an Intelligence Officer between 1997 – 2015, which included a seven-month deployment in Iraq. Sarah returned to Yass to settle and raise her family. Sarah has energetically taken on a number of roles within the community, seeing her elected to the NSW

RSL Board of Directors, a dedicated member of the Yass RSL Subbranch and the inaugural Chair and member of the RSL NSW Young Veterans Committee, and an active Soldier On Ambassador and spokesperson. Sarah holds remarkable sporting achievements, representing Australia in the Triathlon World Championships in 2017, 2022 and 2023, and the Invictus Games. Sarah is the founding member and President of the Yass Triathlon Club, forming in August 2022, and volunteers at both of the weekly Murrumbateman Little Athletics and the Yass Park Run. I commend your highly motivated spirit and thank you for your dedication and leadership within the community.

#### **SHENAE LAMBERT**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Mrs Shenae Lambert. Shenae was recently nominated for the Goulburn Electorate Local Woman of the Year Award for her outstanding contribution to the local community and Karate school, where she has excelled in the sport and mentored up to three hundred local multigenerational students and become a role model for female participants. Shenae in her own right has excelled in the art of Karate, becoming the highest graded Black Belt for the National Association, taking out the 2023 National Championship title in the AOGKF National Tournament and club championships, Captaining the Goulburn Dojo to victory. Shenae was instrumental alongside her husband, in developing and delivering two free defence courses for over one hundred and twenty local women, in response to a number of assaults within the local region. The courses were aimed at improving awareness, self-defence skills and confidence. Shenae has also held a free Women's Free Fighting Skills course, to empower female Karate Practitioners Australia from Australia wide. Shenae has been recognised by many in the community as an inspirational, caring, and thoughtful mentor, who is held with the highest regard. I commend your spirit and leadership within the community.

#### **ANNE MCCORMICK OAM**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—I pay tribute to the outstanding community contribution of Anne McCormick OAM. Anne has been involved in the community since the 1970s and is a founding director of Horden House Rare Books. Anne is a subject matter expert in Australian history, art and culture. Anne is also a committee member of the Potts Point Preservation Group, a group dedicated to protecting and celebrating Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay's unique and exceptional architectural heritage, its cultural and social history, as well as its demographics, location and amenities. Through this work, Anne has become a voice for residents and works tirelessly to protect the history and heritage of this unique area. Anne continues to fight to preserve the diversity and affordability of Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay while raising the profile of the area as a tourist destination. Anne also assists local charities and has a strong commitment to small business development. Anne has dedicated her life to celebrating Australia's history and preserving art, culture and architecture for future generations to enjoy. Every community needs an Anne and on behalf of the Sydney electorate, I thank her for her service.

#### **BOBBY GOLDSMITH FOUNDATION**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I add my voice to the celebrations for 40 years of the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation [BGF]. BGF is Australia's longest running HIV charity, providing support for people with HIV since 1984. It started out as a group of friends who cared for their friend Bobby. This was before there were effective treatments for HIV and people with HIV often died very quickly after being diagnosed. There was also a lot of fear and misunderstanding about HIV at this time, with those diagnosed with HIV being denied services and help. Bobby's death helped galvanise community support and self help within the LGBT community. BGF also took on campaigns encouraging condom use and public meetings to inform and strengthen the community response. While there have been massive improvements in treatment since 1984, with HIV now able to be managed as a chronic health condition, there are still many people with HIV who continue to need support. Everyone involved with BGF over those 40 years deserves our thanks and recognition for their role making sure that people with HIV are not alone and get the help they need.

#### **BANKSTOWN KMART DONATIONS FOR WISHING TREE APPEAL**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to thank the Bankstown branch of Kmart for partnering with the Salvation Army to raise over \$500,000 as well as managing to collect 300,000 gifts to help those in need during Christmas and beyond. I would like to acknowledge the store manager James Slade for his work and ongoing support during this amazing charity work. The rising cost of living is impacting more families who are now struggling to pay rent, transport, food, childcare, and education. I am pleased to see the Bankstown community come together and help those in need. There were many donations which included arts and crafts supplies, beach supplies, books and stationery, gift cards, and vouchers. Helping those who are in need during a challenging time and making everyone feel happy was the aim of this charity drive. Kmart has opened donations to come either online or in-store to allow everyone to participate. Once again thank you to Bankstown Kmart for

their amazing work and for helping bring joy and relief to the many families in need. It's these kinds of charitable events that show what a kind and supportive community we are.

#### **WINNER OF 2024 COMMUNITY WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—It is with great honour and admiration that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Rawaa El Ayoubi, the worthy recipient of the 2024 Community Woman of the Year award. In a community overflowing with remarkable individuals, Dr El Ayoubi has risen above and beyond, embodying the spirit of compassion, dedication, and resilience. Dr El Ayoubi has tirelessly devoted her time and efforts to enhance the well-being of our community. Through her dedication and commitment to various charitable programs, she has become a driving force for positive change. Whether its organising impactful community events, championing important social causes, or lending a helping hand to those in need, Dr El Ayoubi has demonstrated an unparalleled passion for making a difference. In addition to her outstanding community contributions, Dr El Ayoubi exemplifies the qualities of a true role model. Her resilience in the face of challenges, her commitment to inclusivity, and her genuine concern for the well-being of others set a standard that inspires us all to strive for greatness. Congratulations, Dr El Ayoubi on winning the 2024 Community Woman of the Year!

#### **PACIFIC CULTURE BEING SHOWCASED THROUGH ARTS – TWINNIES BOOKS AND GOODS STORE**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—With a large Pacific Island population in the Bankstown area and surrounds, it is an honour to be part of celebrating the Pacific Island culture through writing, art, music and crafts. I would like to congratulate and acknowledge the work of Twinnies Books & Good Store who stock bilingual books in English and Tongan, Samoan, French and Mandarin languages. The store also sells arts and crafts made by Pacific Islander women groups and holds language and drumming classes. Twinnies Books and Good Store will host the first Pacific Art Exhibition this month, with special storytelling and music performances, Tongan drums entertainment and refreshments. Through her passion for culture and history, founder of the bookstore, Ana Tuionuku, has provided a unique opportunity for Pacific Islander history and culture to be showcased to the wider community. We highly appreciate their continued efforts to engage the community in their diverse cultures and rich history of the Pacific Islands. I am pleased to acknowledge the work of Pacific Islander members of our community in showcasing their culture through means of art, history and storytelling.

#### **AIDA BASTO**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—In Penrith we celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March. We then followed up with a morning tea recognising all those fabulous women who were nominated. I would like to acknowledge and extend my deepest appreciation for Ms Aida Basto, the President of the Philippine Language and Cultural Association of Australia [PLCAA]. Aida is now in her fourth term as President, and her leadership has been exemplary in steering PLCAA's mission to inspire and motivate Australian-Filipinos to embrace and promote their language, culture, values, customs, and traditions. Under Aida's guidance, PLCAA has evolved into a cultural cornerstone, fostering unity and understanding within the Penrith community. From 2007 to 2023, PLCAA has shared their Filipino heritage through events like the annual Flag Raising Ceremony, commemorating the Philippine Independence, and other cultural celebrations such as Buwan ng Wika and Pasko na Naman. This year marks a significant milestone as the PLCAA celebrates its 16th anniversary, a testament to over a decade of continuous success in providing the Australian-Filipino community with a platform to continue their cultural heritage. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for her tireless efforts in promoting unity. Penrith is truly enriched by Aida's remarkable contributions.

#### **DR KAREN LIVESEY**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Congratulations to Charlestown electorate resident Dr Karen Livesey for her well-earned Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, a prestigious Australian Award for University Teaching. Dr Livesey has developed new courses and curricula over the past 5 years which other institutions have internally integrated. These have been received as engaging and contemporary in exciting students and supporting their career preparation. Dr Livesey is a theoretical condensed matter physicist, specializing in magnetic nanomaterials researching magnetic thin films and nanoparticles, for a wide range of applications in medicine and computing. Her work is currently as an Associate Investigator with the Australian Research Council's Centre for Excellence in Future Low Energy Electronics Technologies [FLEET]. As one of the superstars of STEM in 2023-2034, Dr Livesey inspired as the Women in Physics Lecturer with over fifty talks and radio interviews. Dr Livesey is recognised as one of 8 women in the world chosen as an

Emmy Noether Fellow of the Perimeter Institute in 2018-2019. Dr Livesey is an inspiration and a highly esteemed role model. Congratulations!

#### LAKE MACQUARIE SES VOLUNTEERS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—State Emergency Service volunteers from Lake Macquarie were among those recognised at the SES Lake Macquarie City and Hunter Cluster Awards for their outstanding service. The 79 recipients, including several from the Central Coast, Cooranbong, Lake Macquarie City, Swansea, City of Newcastle, Port Stephens and Tomaree units, can boast a whopping combined total of 915 years of experience and service between them. One highlight was a special presentation to Christine Speer, the Local Commander of the Lake Macquarie City Cluster. In recognition of her forty-two years of service to the SES, which has involved helping through a number of major events including the 2007 Pasha Bulker storm and the 2017 Lismore Floods, Christine received lifetime membership of the NSW SES. In 2021, she was named Lake Mac Volunteer of the Year. I am so proud of the contributions Christine and her fellow SES members from the Charlestown electorate have made, assisting those in need during times of crisis all around the state. I cannot thank them enough for their hard work and dedication.

#### MEGAN PAYNE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Megan Payne from the New Lambton Football Club was awarded the 2023 NSW Good Sports Volunteer of the Year award for her unwavering dedication to strengthening her club and the broader community. I would like to extend my congratulations and appreciation for all that Megan has done for the New Lambton Football club and recognise the value of her efforts including the scheduling, finances, mentoring and efforts to streamline the club. Megan's service also includes organising large-scale fundraising and social events for the club's development. Club Vice President, David Thomas said Megan is the heart and soul of the club, leading by example, and selflessly investing her time, energy, and resources into making it a better place. "Her impact on the club, its members, and the community is immeasurable and has made her a shining example of what makes our club proud," said David Thomas, Club Vice President. Megan is a mentor and role model, creating an environment where members feel supported, encouraged, and part of a larger family." My congratulations are also extended to New Lambton Football Club as the NSW Good Sports Club runner up.

#### HUNTER MELANOMA FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 35 YEARS

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—Hunter Melanoma Foundation aims to defeat melanoma through education and awareness about prevention and early detection – and they celebrated the major milestone of 35 years of operation in 2023. Initially established in 1986, the HMF is today one of the Hunter's most recognisable education community organisations. Australia has the highest incidence of melanoma per capita in the world and the Hunter has the 8th highest incidence of melanoma per capita in the world. One in 25 males and one in 30 females in our region will suffer from melanoma. Significantly, through educational and research programs supported by HMF, this trend continues to steadily decrease. HMF engages closely with the local community: the Spot Check campaign, free skin check clinics, SWAP (SunSafe Workplace Awareness Program) offering online training to employees of businesses with outdoor workers, the Annual Race Day, Knockers and Moles the Cabaret presented by Newcastle's own drag queen, Timberlina, Gimme 5 money boxes which have raised over \$47,000, and free education programs for community groups. I thank Hunter Melanoma Foundation for their work in raising awareness about melanoma and other skin cancers in the Hunter community.

#### ELIZA GRABDA

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—Australia's waste challenges continue to grow, so we all need to support solutions that will move us closer towards a circular economy and zero waste in the near future. To this end, 8-year-old Eliza Grabda from Wallsend decided she wanted to "help the environment so future kids can live better without climate change and the world dying". On January 6, Eliza made a signup sheet to rope in the family's friends and neighbours. Her mother has always encouraged her kids to follow through with their ideas, so, to make it official, they looked up Clean up Australia to sign up and to make sure they were prepared with all the right rubbish bags and official paperwork. Eliza organised a group of ten people for 26th January at Wallsend Park and spent two hours with her volunteers picking up around seven bags of rubbish. Notably, a few years ago, Eliza held a paper plane stall, selling the planes to raise money for the local charity Our Backyard - Car 2 Home Project for Macquarie Care. Congratulations and thank you for your commitment and community spirit, Eliza!

### TREVOR HEIGHT

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Completed October 2023, the official opening of the Trevor Height Athlete Testing Facility took place on 23 January 2024, at the Hunter Sports Centre, Glendale. Dr Trevor Height PhD is a research chemist, but finds time to be an administrator, coach and sportsman. As a youngster in Geraldton, he taught himself how to hurdle, competing at state level, and eventually coaching around 200 athletes at the Hunter Academy of Sport in a 30 year association. The ground-breaking facility, run in partnership with UoN, caters for local and visiting athletes and will offer a range of services to monitor and improve their development and performance, from beginners to elite levels, using the latest technology and research, everyone from high school students learning about human movement, physical activity, biomechanics, anatomy and sports physiology, to the world's best. I am pleased the NSW Government has contributed \$1 million to the facility, and it will also complement existing allied health services offered locally, such as physiotherapy and sports nutrition. The future of athletics in the Hunter looks bright, with the region attracting talent and being well-placed for Olympic involvement in 2032.

### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - BELLAMBI PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Kaleea Sammon, Braxton Duncan-Shields, Carra Hoppo and Harley Parkinson who have been named as the 2024 Bellambi Public School leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to lead by example. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extra curricula activities. Each of them will spend 2024 acting as role models for their peers and I have confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate Kaleea, Braxton, Carra and Harley on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at primary school.

### CUMBALUM RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the wonderful contributions of Cumbalum Residents Association to our community. The purpose of the Association is to meet quarterly, following Ballina Shire Council Ward meetings to discuss how to campaign and work with Council and various interest groups to enrich the community, and they have been doing just that with great success since its foundation in 2012. Some of their incredible achievements include: the installation of solar powered street lights and improved traffic safety at the intersection of Tamarind Drive and Deadman's Creek Road, the upgrade of the playground equipment at the Cumbalum Sports Ground and organising a question and answer session with State election candidates. This active community group works very hard to ensure that local issues are brought to the attention of the local council and the community, creating an important bridge between the two and a great model for our area. President Marshall Chang and the volunteer team continue to work for a more engaged, cooperative and vibrant community into 2024 with some wonderful plans already on the agenda.

### WARDELL RIVER FESTIVAL

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the vibrant contribution that Wardell Core has brought to our community through the second Wardell River Festival. Wardell is a small town on the Richmond River that was devastated in the 2022 floods. It, like so many other towns in the area, is still in recovery, which makes a high-spirited event like this a wonderful example of resilience. It is exciting to see surrounding community members join local residents to celebrate our incredible strength and to have such a joyous occasion to forge bonds outside the immediate challenges of flood recovery. This fun family friendly event hosted an array of activities that helps community connect not only to the river on which the town sits but also to each other. Affordable food, free live music, arts, crafts, and some spectacular weather created a beautiful backdrop to engage children and adults. There was a wonderful educational model of the local water system from Rous County Council and of course the locally famous Wardell Pies baking up incredible treats. Well done to the community of Wardell and Wardell Core for hosting another successful Wardell River Festival.

### TET FESTIVAL

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Tet Nguyen Dan, which celebrates the arrival of spring, is the most important festival for our Vietnamese diaspora community. Also known as the celebration of the Lunar New Year, Tet brings together families and is an opportunity for people to connect with each other over food and observance of traditional customs. This year saw the large Vietnamese community in South West Sydney come together at Fairfield Showground for the first community Tet Festival since 2020. And the turnout definitely showed how much we'd all missed it! The festival included delicious food, fantastic performances, lion dancers, and carnival rides. Along with the Members for Cabramatta and Leppington, I held a stall at the festival

to share the celebration with our communities. To have the Premier attend the festival on the afternoon of Saturday 17 February to join in on the festivities (and specially seek out a satisfying serving of Phở) was the icing on the cake! I wish to extend my best wishes to the Vietnamese community in Liverpool and South West Sydney as we enter the Year of the Dragon and share their hopes for a happy and prosperous year ahead. Chúc mừng năm mới!

### **MAR GEWARGIS III YOUNAN**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Over the last few weeks, His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Younan has visited Australia and New Zealand on his first trip as the 110th Patriarch of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East. I had the unique opportunity to engage with His Holiness and senior members of the Church twice in just a few days! We toured the new Yellamundie or Liverpool City Library, and the Member for Leppington and I hosted His Holiness for afternoon tea. These were special opportunities to discuss his upbringing as an Assyrian-American in Chicago, as well as the role the Assyrian Church of the East plays in the Liverpool electorate. We also discussed the needs our growing community. I want to thank His Holiness for his graciousness in meeting with us and his service to the thriving church community in South-West Sydney. I also thank the community at St Zaia Cathedral for their help organising the afternoon tea and all they do within our local community. I know His Holiness' visit to this region has been of great interest to the Assyrian community in Liverpool. I wish him the best and look forward to his next visit.

### **FELIX HAMILTON**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—After being a competitive rower for most of her youth, Felix found her calling in dragon boat racing becoming an integral member of the Dragon Sports Association one of the cornerstone organisations for the sport in Australia. In addition to her success as a paddler, Felix's efforts have led to her recent appointment to the position of Head Coach for the Sydney Metropolitan team and Assistant Coach for the NSW Premier Division State team. When not on the water, Felix helps to shape and drive the strategic direction of DSA as the Club President. As one of the leaders of the club, she can often be seen supporting the development of her fellow team mates both on and off the water. Felix is also a Director of Dragon Boat New South Wales, the governing body for dragon boating in New South Wales. As a strong advocate of women in sport, Felix also plays an active role in helping drive female participation in the club. She hopes to promote a culture that recognises women's skills and the value of diversity. I congratulate Felix on her remarkable sporting achievements and thank her for her advocacy for equality in sports.

### **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—On Saturday I hosted a morning tea for the nominees for the NSW Women of the Year Awards 2024: Parramatta Local Woman of the Year Award. It was a pleasure to meet these remarkable women and hear firsthand about the contributions they make to our community. Each nominee was presented with a letter of recognition. The recipient of the Local Woman of the Year Award was Jaqueline Mosthaghi-Qaziani. Known as 'Jackie' to her friends, Jaqueline has been a volunteer member of St John Ambulance NSW for 35 years and superintendent of the Parramatta Division for almost a decade. She selflessly gives hundreds of hours to our community every year with no expectation of reward. In her role at St John Ambulance Parramatta, Jaqueline has been a strong leader, particularly through during COVID. In addition to her role at St John, 'Jackie', as she is known to her friends, is a mother of three and active in their school activities including organising the St Kevin's Catholic Primary School fete. Thank you to the broader community for recognising these remarkable women who call Parramatta home and make it an even better place to live each and every day.

### **SRI OM FOUNDATION SENIORS WEEK**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Recently I was privileged to attend the Seniors Week festivities coordinated by the Sri Om Care Foundation. They have been working hard for 17 years to bring high quality, attentive care to the elderly with a specific focus on connecting participants with their cultural heritage. They have improved the lives of many by providing them dignity, comfort, and company in their old age. It is a universal truth that we all grow old, something that we must all make our peace with. I imagine it is a great comfort to many people in the South Asian community that an organisation like Sri Om exists to ensure that experience is not one to fear. Their current work supports over 600 people and everyone who works and volunteers with Sri Om should be extremely proud of the enormous contribution they make to improving lives. On behalf of my community, I thank Sri Om for their dedication through the delivery of Home Care, Disability Services and Assisted Living. I look forward to seeing the Foundation flourish and continue to strengthen connections to culture as a fundamental aspect of the delivery of aged care to our community.

### TONY BERNARD

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I rise today to recognise a hardworking and multitalented member of the Manly community, Mr Tony Bernard. Tony is not only an emergency doctor on the Northern Beaches, but also a successful author. Tony's latest work, 'The Ghost Tattoo' is a profoundly moving autobiography which details the life of Tony's father, Henry, and his holocaust survival story. Compiled from Henry's memoirs shortly before his passing, it is a tale of self-discovery, sacrifice and courage, and a testament to Tony's powerful love and admiration for his father and his gift for storytelling. I wish to congratulate Tony on the wonderful achievement of recently receiving the Holocaust Memoir Award at this year's National Jewish Book Awards. I am certain that there would be no one prouder or more pleased about this wonderful achievement than Tony's father, Henry. I wish Tony all the best for his future endeavours and congratulate him once more on his success.

### MARY'S HOUSE AND DAISY CENTRE SAVING LIVES

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, I want to acknowledge the incredible work of two local organisations that provide an important service for women escaping domestic and family abuse. Mary's House and the Daisy Centre are based across my local community operates a refuge that accommodates four women and their children each night. They are supported by case workers, social workers, and a housing coordinator with referrals to psychology services, financial advice, legal advice, and advice on assessing future risk and creating a long-term safety plan. We know that domestic and family violence doesn't discriminate. It can happen to anyone at any time, and so this important service ensures that women in my community are able to reach out to help when they desperately need it. The Daisy Centre was opened in 2020 as an outreach service for women who are not in the refuge but still need support. The centre provides essential services such as pro-bono legal advice, safety audits and technology sweeps on laptops and phones to look for tracking apps. I commend the work of Mary's House and Daisy Centre for this incredibly important work, assisting vulnerable and at risk women in our community.

### BALMORAL SWIM FOR CANCER

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, each year thousands of swimmers take to the water in the beautiful surrounds of Balmoral Beach to raise much needed funds for cancer research. Now in its 33rd year the annual Balmoral Swim For Cancer is a fantastic event that has distances for all ages and levels of swimming capability, encouraging everyone to get in the water and give it a go. Since 2006 the Balmoral Swim has raised over \$2,300,000 and has set an ambitious goal to raise \$200,000 this year. We know that cancer kills more children than any other disease in Australia with nearly three children still dying from cancer every week. This event is not only an important way to raise money for the Children's Cancer Institute to aid their quest to end cancer, but it has become one of the most enjoyable and iconic events on the Mosman calendar. I wish everyone the best of luck with their swimming later this month, and hope that together our community and friends from elsewhere can smash that fundraising goal to help end the scourge of cancer in our community.

### NEW SPINAL CORD INJURY TRIAL AT RNSH

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, I commend the efforts of researchers at Royal North Shore Hospital who have developed an innovative clinical trial to support those living with a spinal cord injury. This is a world-first technique that uses breathing and heart rate feedback to reduce pain and to improve brain fog and sleep. We know that spinal cord injuries often affect multiple bodily systems and functions, and there is a high chance of subsequent conditions including chronic pain, diabetes and cardiovascular and respiratory problems. This new trial is being undertaken by Kolling Institute rehabilitation researchers at Royal North Shore Hospital. I want to acknowledge Ashley Craig from the John Walsh Centre for Rehabilitation Research who has been appointed the chief investigator lead in Australia with support from Ilaria Pozzato, Mohit Arora, and James Middleton. I wish the team the best of luck with their research in this field, and acknowledge that New South Wales and Australia in general are often at the forefront of health research and breakthroughs that benefit many hundreds of thousands with any of their medical conditions.

### MEGAN DUNN

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—In Penrith we celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March. We then followed up with a morning tea recognising all those fabulous women who were nominated for awards. I am honoured to recognise Megan Dunn, a cornerstone of our Penrith community, for her exceptional contributions to business, charity, and community welfare. As a local photographer, business owner, and now in her sales role at Western Weekender, Megan's professional journey is marked by skill, resilience, and a deep commitment to service to community. Megan's dedication goes beyond her career. Megan tirelessly gives to charity volunteering her photography skills, she actively supports local charities and their events. During the

challenging times of Covid, she volunteered at the Penrith Community Kitchen, contributing to the packing of hampers for emergency and elderly clients. Megan's charitable spirit also extends to participation in Cancer Council's dancing with the stars. Additionally, Megan fosters connections among local businesses, actively facilitating partnerships and contributing to the growth of enterprises. Megan's tireless dedication, drive, and compassionate nature make her an exemplary figure and inspiring woman in Penrith. We thank her for her service to the great community of Penrith.

### LANA BORG

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—In Penrith we celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March. We then followed up with a morning tea recognising all those fabulous women who were nominated for awards. The idea for a not-for profit Foundation was born when Roger and Lana cooked for the fire fighters battling the Blue Mountains bush fires. They delivered 350 meals a day over a 12 day period as well as cooking BBQ breakfasts and dinners for Volunteers. In November they cooked a banquet Christmas Eve dinner from a carpark in Penrith for the homeless and underprivileged. From here, Roger and Lana realised the great need in our local community to help feed the homeless and underprivileged and began delivering meals four nights a week. Mama Lana's Community Foundation increased meal services to the current arrangement of six nights each week. With the help of volunteers, Lana provides thousands of hot, homemade meals to underprivileged Penrith residents with toiletries, food packs, blankets, sleeping bags, swags and hampers. Her Foundation also provides meals to schools, victims of DV, and ensures every Penrith family receives gifts on Christmas. Lana's dedication and commitment not only warms the stomachs of Penrith's residents' but also their hearts.

### MARGARET NOONAN

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I acknowledge Margaret Noonan, 2024 Drummoyne Woman of the Year. She is a passionate member of our community who goes above and beyond to help others. Margaret is President of the Rotary Club of Five Dock and has been a long-standing member. Recently, as part of her work as PolioPlus Committee Chair of Rotary District for Sydney, Macarthur & Illawarra, she has helped to raise funds and awareness to end Polio worldwide. She has also been instrumental in local causes including raising money for the Children's Medical Research Institute and 'Jeans for Genes'. She was the President during Five Dock Rotary's 50th Year and led the anniversary celebrations for this occasion. It would be remiss not to acknowledge her presence volunteering at many community BBQs, and this is just a small part of her community involvement. Margaret truly defines the meaning of 'service above self' and her heart is always dedicated to community service. It was wonderful to be able to present her with her award at Five Dock RSL on Monday 11 March, 2024, at a regular meeting of the Rotary Branch. I congratulate Margaret and thank her for all that she does for our community!

### BELLE PROPERTY - 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I take the opportunity to recognise Mrs Melissa Strazzeri and Mr Antonio Ariola, Co-Principals of Belle Property Drummoyne. Belle Property Drummoyne has recently celebrated ten outstanding years in business. This is a wonderful achievement and a testament to the care and dedication shown to clients by Melissa, Antonio, and their staff. As long-standing residents of the Inner West, Melissa and Antonio value the area's family-oriented lifestyle, a value that sits at the core of their business. Helping families find their forever home in the best place in New South Wales to live, work and raise a family. I am proud to see small businesses like Belle Property Drummoyne flourishing and this milestone shows that all of the sacrifices that Melissa and Antonio have made for their business have paid off. It was a highlight to recently be invited to celebrate this important milestone with clients, family, and friends of Belle Property Drummoyne at Aqua Luna. I wish to sincerely congratulate Melissa, Antonio and the fantastic team at Belle Property Drummoyne. Wishing you all the very best and many more successful years.

### OLA SCHOOL LEADERS

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I take this opportunity to recognise the incoming school leaders at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School in North Strathfield. In February, I visited the school to speak with Year 5 and 6 students about leadership, as they prepared for their 2024 Captain's and Leader's speeches. Along with students, we came up with three main qualities of a leader: 1. We are all leaders, whether we wear a badge or hold a title. 2. Treating everyone with kindness and respect. 3. Listening to our peers. Congratulations to the newly elected school leaders: - School Captains: Jacob Davies and Emily Moussa - Vice Captains: Lachlan Jacques and Sumin Park - Faith Leader: Alannah Clarke - Blue Colour House Captain: Ana Kakala - Blue Colour House Vice Captain: Telina Senzio - Gold Colour House Captain: Gillian Bedford - Gold Colour House Vice Captain: Maggie Bucca - Green Colour House Captain: Noah Gustella - Green Colour House Vice Captain: Claire Vargas - Red Colour House Captain: Daniel Martinez - Red Colour House Vice Captain:

Sienna Ibrahim I also wish to thank and acknowledge the hardworking teachers at the school, led by Principal Siobhan Van Den Nieuwenhuizen.

#### **BILL CREWS FOUNDATION**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—For over 30 years, the Reverend Bill Crews has supported the homeless and vulnerable across Sydney. The Foundation was borne out of his work. I recently had the privilege of visiting Liverpool Uniting Church to help the Foundation serve lunch to their clients in the Liverpool community. I even had the immense pleasure of personally thanking Bill for all the work he has done across the Liverpool electorate and Sydney more broadly. In addition to Liverpool Uniting Church, the Bill Crews Foundation serve free meals to those currently doing it tough in Miller and Warwick Farm. This is vital work, made all the more important given the current challenges in housing, cost of living and accessing health care experienced by so many in our community. However, this would not happen without the selflessness of volunteers, and I recognise Sedfrey, Ben, and Scott who so kindly took me under their wing and showed me the ropes at Liverpool Uniting Church. I thank the team at the Bill Crews Foundation and look forward to partnering with them in the future, as they work to address the causes and effects of homelessness, poverty, and unemployment across the Liverpool electorate.

#### **DARIAN BROOKER**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate Darian Brooker of Kirrawee for being named a finalist for the 2024 NSW Young Woman of the Year Award. Darian's story is truly inspiring. Darian is a foster care leaver who is motivated by her personal experience of adapting to 26 different schools and the subsequent vision that emerged for her of creating a supportive environment for all students regardless of their circumstances. Today, Darian is the CEO of We, Future Leaders – a youth-led education and mentoring organisation that she founded to assist students to unlock their full academic and personal potential. Under Darian's leadership, the team of 45 committed people has already supported over 2,000 students across our State with an aim of reaching a million young Australians by 2040. Darian and her team leave an indelible mark on people through 2 learning centres in Kirrawee and Taren Point, online tools and schools embracing the '100 Free School Talks' initiative which helps students become resilient leaders. I commend Darian on being named a finalist for this year's NSW Young Woman of the Year Award and assisting young people in our community to reach their potential.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL LIFEGUARDS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I recognise the fundraising efforts of the incredible team of lifeguards from Sutherland Shire Council who participated in the Starlight Super Swim. The Starlight Super Swim is Australia's biggest charity swimming challenge, with funds raised going to support the Starlight Children's Foundation's in-hospital programmes that every day help children across Australia by lifting their spirits, building resilience, and forming an integral part of their care. Each lifeguard swam at least 20 kilometres throughout February, with the goal of raising \$5000. As of 13 March, the group had swum a combined 869 kilometres and raised \$10,842, to support the Starlight Children's Foundation's important work. I take this opportunity to acknowledge these amazing individuals. I recognise Liam Watson, Joshua Pritchard, Cruz McKee, Bede Elphick, Morgan Lloyd, Will Banister, Charlie Morris, Drew Pike, Darcy McPherson, Carl Vanzino, Cam Pyett, Charlie Winkelmeier, Zac Diefenbach, Richard Garnsey, Jon Hayman, Daniel Green, James Young, Francisco Desrets, Harry Came, Goran Rajchinoski, Steve Winner, Mackenzie Hannington, Zachary Roja and Lara Hughes for taking part in the Starlight Super Swim. I commend this group of Sutherland Shire Council lifeguards on their efforts in raising funds for the Starlight Children's Foundation.

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