

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday 14 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*

### PRESENTATION

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie will come to order.

*Later,*

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. They can debate the matter at a later time.

*Later,*

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

*Later,*

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The member for Gosford will come to order. The member for Terrigal will come to order.

*Later,*

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

## *Bills*

### INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT (MINISTERIAL DIARY DISCLOSURE) BILL 2024

#### First Reading

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

#### Second Reading Speech

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (10:18):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is with great pleasure that I present the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill 2024. At the outset, I refer members to my second reading speech on the original bill, which I commenced on 12 October 2023 and, because of the great detail of and interest in that bill, continued on 19 October 2023. I do not intend to speak for terribly long to this bill nor later to the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024 because both of them were first introduced last year. Tragically, because of parliamentary procedure, the bills lapsed. I bring the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill 2024 on first with great vim and vigour. I was absolutely shocked to see members of the parliamentary Labor Party—members of this Government—vote to defer legislation that would provide for greater transparency and accountability when it comes to the activities of Executive Government.

The core function of parliaments, dating back to the inception of Parliament itself, was the oversight of Executive Government and, indeed, the activities of the Crown. As I referred to in my initial second reading speech last year, there were moves by former Premier Mike Baird, via a Premier's memorandum, to publish ministerial diaries. As a very busy Minister during my time in government, I was proud to tell people what I was

doing. I was proud to share with the world the people who I was meeting with. Instead of the House extending the time for this bill so that it could be debated, I have had to go through the parliamentary rigmarole of reintroducing the bill. But it gives me an opportunity to remind members of the Labor Party why they are running away from greater transparency measures. When it comes to integrity in government and corruption, they have form. We only have to look at the ICAC to see that form.

I am trying to help the new Government. I do not want its members to be like Eddie Obeid and Joe Tripodi. I do not want them to be like the former governments that had a revolving door of Premiers. I do not want to see that. I would have thought that any government that wants to ensure transparency and accountability would say, "We're not doing anything wrong. We've got nothing to hide. Therefore, we're happy to place in legislation, where it should be, the publication of ministerial diaries." Other jurisdictions have moved to do so. One of the things that came from ICAC's Operation Eclipse inquiry was that such provisions need to be enshrined in legislation, because Premier's memorandums can be changed unilaterally.

There was commentary in that report around the extension of the provisions to Parliamentary Secretaries. Having had my own Parliamentary Secretary, they often took meetings on my behalf. They are recognised in the State Constitution Act and can have Executive authority vested in them, albeit that is not a common function. In fact, I do not recall that happening in this place, with all due respect to the exceptional Parliamentary Secretary in the Chamber, who has great experience in his profession. I know he loves his role as Parliamentary Secretary, and he does a terrific job. The work of Parliamentary Secretaries is generally signing letters the Minister does not wish to sign. Having said that, I am sure that this particular Parliamentary Secretary, who is an incredibly experienced medical physician, would provide more than just that support to his Minister. I think he is an adornment to the Parliament.

That aside, we need to ensure that there is transparency and integrity at all levels. To be very clear, this bill is not something I have dreamed up to have a go at the Government. It contains recommendations from ICAC. Again I say how disappointed I was in members of the parliamentary Labor Party, some of whom expressed concern to me after that debate, to their credit. Obviously, they are bound by caucus rules. But a number of members of the Labor Party expressed to me how stunned they were that leadership took the decision to defer the bill and not just vote for it or, indeed, introduce it as a Government bill. If the Government wants to do that, I welcome that. I do not need my name on this bill. This is just the right thing to do. These are recommendations from ICAC to enhance transparency and accountability in government.

They are recommendations in relation to the activities of lobbyists in particular, who can have an influence in this building. I see this building crawling with lobbyists on occasions, in and out of ministerial offices like worker ants, all over this place, seeking to sell their wares and distribute their ideas. Whilst I do not have a problem with Ministers meeting with lobbyists, I do have a problem with those interactions not being transparent. Why wouldn't we want them to be transparent? If someone brings a Minister a good idea that goes through a process and an outcome is achieved, and those lobbyists have been great advocates, that is appropriate. The term "lobbying" comes from the place between the House of Lords and the House of Commons where people would literally lobby their local members. It is not unusual to see people lobbied. It is part of the democratic process. But we should ensure that that process is transparent and accountable. That is what the ICAC has recommended and what I am seeking to introduce.

If the Government wants to take this bill, copy it and put the name of Daley or someone else on it, plagiarism is the sincerest form of flattery. Crossbench members know all too well how well the Government can copy our bills. We know they do not really have a legislative agenda. It is quite embarrassing. But we are here to help. The bill is about helping and genuinely doing the right thing to enhance the transparency and accountability of the government of the day, whoever that may be—this Government or a future government—because today's Opposition will be tomorrow's government, very soon. I am very confident. That aside, this is about doing the right thing. It is about enacting ICAC's recommendations, which I believe should be enacted. If I can have a go at my former colleagues, they should have been enacted by the former Government.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Shame!

**Mr GARETH WARD:** At least it went one step towards doing so. I acknowledge the interjection from my friend the member for Northern Tablelands, who is a fierce defender of his community. He puts his community above the party and always does the right thing.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** It makes me popular.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The results that the member for Northern Tablelands receives are ones that people who do not have to bother with elections would blush at. That aside, this is about doing the right thing. It is about acknowledging ICAC recommendations and acting on those recommendations. I am happy for the Government

to make this a Government bill. It should not be about politics. I acknowledge the work done by Premier Baird when he issued the Premier's memorandum. I simply ask the Government to act on the Independent Commission Against Corruption's recommendations, which I have helpfully provided. I thank Parliamentary Counsel for their assistance. Richard and his team do a great job in assisting the crossbench. We would not be able to have these debates without them. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (VOTER ID AND ELECTRONIC MARK OFF) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

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

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (10:27):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to present to the Parliament the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024. I refer members to my mellifluous tones uttered in this place on 21 September 2023. To apprise members who have not had an opportunity to read the bill, it is a very short and simple bill. It seeks to enshrine in legislation a requirement that when someone goes to vote, they show some form of identification. The list contained in the bill is extensive so as not to prevent people from accessing their democratic right. It also requires rolls to be produced in electronic form so that once someone has voted, they are electronically marked off on rolls around the State.

It might interest members to note that the Electoral Commission's report on the 2019 State election found that more than 2,000 people voted twice. That should concern any person who cares for our democracy and wants to see our system of government fairly represent the interests of the people of the State of New South Wales. The reason I say that is, by someone voting twice, they are effectively cancelling out the democratic right of somebody else. I know that in the past some arguments have been made against this, saying that it somehow impacts vulnerable people. I hope that both sides would agree that I have been a good advocate for vulnerable people in this place in the time I have been here, and I have to say I find those arguments not only wrong but actually offensive.

One of the arguments I have heard is that First Nations people will have trouble complying. That suggests that somehow First Nations people have some form of challenge with getting identification. That is just not true. There is no evidence of that. One of the other arguments is that people from low socio-economic households will not have access to identification. One thing I know from my time as Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services is that 90 per cent of people in social housing have smartphones. And on those smartphones you can download, thanks to the work of Victor Dominello in the former Government, digital IDs. I do not accept this argument that somehow identification is a burden. In fact, I think it is a safeguard in our democracy. When you go to vote, you should have to prove who you are.

I used to say that it was more difficult to get a video rental card than to cast a vote for the future of the State and the nation. I cannot use it today, of course, because video shops do not exist anymore. That aside, the point remains that identification should not be a barrier to getting clearer, more transparent and more accountable outcomes and ensuring that when people go to vote they are exercising that right as individual electors and not doing so on behalf of someone else or exercising it on multiple occasions.

The second part of the bill is straightforward. It relates to electronic mark-off. I would be happy if the Government wanted to split the bill into its two aspects. Obviously, I would like the whole bill to be carried. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has recommended voter identification on multiple occasions. But it has recommended also, and the Government has suggested that it would implement, electronic mark-off. To me that makes total sense. We have the technology to do it, and it is not expensive. Even on its face, that technology is sufficient to help provide those safeguards. If someone turns up and claims to be someone they are not, then, if that person has already voted, you can ask questions. The obvious question is about what happens if someone has already voted fraudulently and the rightful person turns up to vote. The Act already provides for section votes, and you can seek to make a section vote, and that matter can then be dealt with by inquiry and investigation of the commission at a later stage.

I would be more than happy to see this as a Government bill. I think it is the right thing to do. I used to chair the electoral matters committee. In my time, this was considered by the committee, and it was resolved and passed. I know that, subsequently, the committee passed recommendations about electronic rolls. I acknowledge Mr Last is in the Speaker's gallery. I think he may have been a clerk on that inquiry, along with other colleagues. This debate is worth having. I do not want this bill and the Independent Commission Against Corruption

Amendment (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill to be tipped off the parliamentary agenda again. It is most unfortunate that, in the closing hours of last year's session, these bills were kicked down the road. We should vote on them. The Parliament should state its position. In that way, at least we can continue to debate other issues. But these are important to me and to my electorate. They are things I have said I will do. I am honouring that commitment by introducing these bills today. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (RED FLEET) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Adam Marshall, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (10:33):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2023 lapsed at the conclusion of last calendar year, which is greatly disappointing for councils throughout rural and regional New South Wales. This has been an ongoing issue for decades now. This bill seeks to amend the Rural Fires Act by simply inserting five words only: "is vested in the commissioner". It transfers ownership of all Rural Fire Service assets from local councils, which the Act's provisions from 1997 stipulate, to the State Government, where it should be, to make sure that RFS assets are treated consistently, in the same manner in which assets of other emergency services are treated: being on the balance sheet and the books of the State Government and depreciated in the appropriate way by the State Government because they are State Government assets. The assets of the SES, the Volunteer Rescue Association, Fire and Rescue, NSW Police Force and NSW Ambulance—all of those first responder emergency services—are property of the State Government and maintained by the State Government, depreciated by the State Government, as it should be for Rural Fire Service equipment.

Historically, it has not been, because in 1997 the RFS was born as a product and a child of local government. As we heard from the Minister for Local Government last year, in the second reading debate, at the time, local government was happy with that. But since 1997 the nature of the RFS has changed dramatically. It is the world's leading volunteer-based firefighting organisation, with a budget in excess of \$1 billion. It has a strong presence in every community, with professional employed staff supporting the yellow shirts, the volunteers. But what has not been modernised in the RFS is the ownership structure of the assets. We have a complicated ownership structure and depreciation structure, and the penalty is being paid by local councils, ratepayers and communities. The depreciation of those assets costs communities millions of dollars each year, and the perverse impact is that the councils with the smallest budgets but the largest geographic areas are hit the hardest because they have the most brigades, the most sheds, the most vehicles and the highest depreciation cost but the least capacity to handle those depreciation costs because of their small ratepayer base and small budgets. That is why this bill is important.

I note that the Government has referred this matter to the Public Accounts Committee, which you chair, Mr Assistant Speaker, and I look forward to that inquiry and that report. But that does not negate the need for the Parliament to consider this matter, debate it and vote on it. Councils have been waiting decades for this change. Everyone in this place and out of this place acknowledges that the current legislative framework is stupid and nonsensical and does not reflect current practice. It is about time this Parliament does its job and fixes an out-of-date provision in an out-of-date piece of legislation, saves councils money and puts the costs where they should be, with the State Government. On that basis, given that my time has almost expired, I will leave my remarks there, refer the House to my second reading speech on the previous version of the bill, and commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

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

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (10:38):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

If we want to call ourselves a humane society, we need to continually assess how we treat animals and work towards eradicating cruelty. Millions of animals are used in research experiments every year in Australia. These

experiments are done behind closed doors, often in ways that most of us and the world would find objectionable. In 2022 the inquiry of Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 2 into the use of primates and other animals in medical research in New South Wales shone a light on some of the cruel practices used in this industry. The committee heard evidence from whistleblowers of painful procedures done without relief, animals having their toes and tails cut off, animals being bred in excess for research and then killed as wastage, and mass killing of animals where researchers were not happy with the results.

The committee made 13 recommendations to improve animal welfare and transparency of animal research, the first of which called for the rapid phase-out of forced swim tests and the smoking tower test. Forced swim tests are generally used to test antidepressants, with rodents dropped in beakers of water and forced to swim to keep alive. The theory is that a rodent on effective antidepressants will take longer to give up swimming. Forced swim tests lack any scientific merit. The link between a rodent changing from swimming to floating and complex conditions like human major depressive disorder is erroneous. Floating is likely an adaptive survival behaviour that has nothing to do with giving up. Forced swim is never cited by clinically focused papers addressing human psychiatric disorders.

Forced swim tests have also been used in cardiac research. An Animal Justice Party call for papers uncovered one research institute forcing mice to swim for up to 90 minutes a session twice a day in over 30-degree water. Forced swim tests have severe animal welfare impacts. The test causes extreme distress, with the animal being forced into an inescapable life-or-death situation, where they must swim for their life. They also suffer from fatigue, hypothermia and aspiration of water. Rodents commonly die in the experiments. The test has been decommissioned by global pharmaceutical companies such as Bayer, Johnson and Johnson, Pfizer and AstraZeneca, as well as the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, Macquarie University, Griffith University, University of Adelaide and University of South Australia.

Forced smoke inhalation experiments, also known as nose-only inhalation or smoking towers, involve placing mainly rodents in small plastic tubes and pumping cigarette smoke directly into their nostrils for a minimum of one hour, twice a day, five days a week for up to 18 weeks. The process is used to induce chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The tests cause severe distress to animals, including a sense of suffocation and confinement, hypothermia and withdrawal symptoms. Death rates are high, with experiments often abandoned and other animals killed. The University of Newcastle advised that, between 2018 and 2021, 91 animals died in smoking tower experiments and the university has gone on to decommission its smoking tower. Forced smoke tests lack scientific validity, with the stress of the experience a causal factor.

There are alternatives to smoking towers that can produce the same outcomes that are able to mitigate some of the more severe animal welfare impacts through what is known as whole-body smoke exposure. It is incomprehensible that such cruelty could be adopted when there are alternatives. Since the committee reported, the Australian Government medical research authority that funds the vast majority of medical research projects through grants—the National Health and Medical Research Council—has issued statements that it will no longer fund forced swim tests and smoke inhalation procedures. The statements cite lack of scientific validity and justification in accordance with the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, as well as significant animal welfare concerns.

The Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2024 will ban those abhorrent and futile procedures. The bill adds the tests to section 26 of the Animal Research Act 1985, which already restricts other tests including the Draize test. The bill creates a standalone offence prohibiting the use of the experiments, punishable by 30 penalty units, a term of imprisonment for 12 months, or both. The effect will be that animal care and ethics committees, which all research institutions have, will no longer be able to approve the tests, and researchers will not be legally allowed to perform them. The forced smoke test ban includes nose-only and smoking towers but does not apply to the whole-body smoking test. The bill also includes some sensible transition provisions, allowing researchers who are currently undertaking forced swim and forced smoking tests to apply for a one-off reissue of their animal research authority giving them a final 12 months to wrap up their experiments.

In the upper House, the Government introduced a number of amendments that made some relatively minor changes to the bill, including clarifying that the prohibition on forced swim tests does not apply to fish and inserting a new offence provision that builds upon the prohibitions the Animal Justice Party had already established in the bill. The Government also introduced a new transition arrangement which provides that a researcher that has a current approval to conduct a forced swim or forced smoking test can apply for one further reissue of the same animal research authority for up to 12 months, as I have already stated.

The bill is simple. It restricts animal tests that have significant adverse impacts on animal wellbeing and lack scientific evidence. The legislation is supported by the RSPCA—and I note that Troy Wilkie from the RSPCA is in the gallery today. I particularly thank the Hon. Emma Hurst of the Animal Justice Party and her team for

bringing forward this important bill, which will make us a more humane society. I thank her and her party for always working to be a voice for the voiceless in our Parliament. The bill is the fourth piece of animal welfare legislation that I have worked with the Animal Justice Party on, and I am grateful to the Government for working with the Animal Justice Party and me on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (10:46):** I contribute to debate on the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2024 on behalf of the Government. From the outset, I indicate the Government's appreciation of the important work that medical researchers undertake. Research that involves animals leads to discoveries that save lives and improves quality of life for people across New South Wales. The Government believes our researchers operate with the best of intentions within the rules that are given to them and under strong ethical oversight through animal care and ethics committees.

Equally, as a government, we need to ensure that the practices in the medical research space align with accepted best practice, scientific evidence and community expectations. For that reason, the Government supports the amended bill that prohibits the use of two techniques in medical research: the forced smoke inhalation experiment and the forced swim test. The Government's position is clear: It is committed to robust animal welfare laws and improving outcomes for animals used in research in New South Wales. The Government supports the passage of the bill, and that reaffirms the Government's commitment to those objectives.

The prohibition on the forced smoke inhalation experiment is founded on the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], as well as the expert advice of the Animal Research Review Panel. The NHMRC statement is unambiguous and advocates for the prohibition on forced smoke inhalation experiments, aligning with the principles outlined in the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*. The Government's support for the bill addresses the ethical, welfare and scientific concerns raised in relation to forced smoke inhalation experiments.

Furthermore, the NHMRC expressed significant concerns regarding the forced swim test, citing ethical, welfare and scientific apprehensions. It highlighted the test's shortcomings regarding its scientific validity in studying depression and anxiety disorders and their treatment in humans. The Government shares those concerns. It is clear that prohibition on the tests is needed in light of the serious issues raised by the NHMRC. The Government has a responsibility to the people of New South Wales to do things the right way and for the right reasons. That is why the Government is supporting the amended bill—to reduce the risks of unintended consequences and enable researchers who have research projects underway and are using the tests some time to adjust to the changes. The approach proposed in the amended bill seeks to protect the welfare of animals in research while also managing the potential impacts on existing research projects.

I highlight the amendments that were introduced in the other place and their benefits. First, we have clarified that the forced swim test prohibition excludes fish and other aquatic animals, enhancing precision and eliminating ambiguities. Those adjustments ensure that the bill's language is clear, minimising the risk of misinterpretation and unintended consequences. Additionally, amending the bill to adopt the precise and well-understood definition of fish from the Fisheries Management Act 1994 ensures that amphibians like frogs and axolotls remain protected by the prohibition on forced swim tests.

Another amendment the Government put forward to enhance the bill is the introduction of a specific penalty for people carrying out those tests, aligning it with existing penalties in the Animal Research Act 1985. That amendment ensures a robust penalty framework for people carrying out the tests with a maximum of 30 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both. That important amendment ensures that there are sufficient disincentives to prevent noncompliance with the prohibition of the tests.

The final amendment is the addition of transitional arrangements. Researchers whose existing animal research authorities have authorised the tests will not commit an offence if the research is carried out in accordance with the existing authority. They will also be permitted to have their animal research authority reissued one more time. Importantly, the transitional arrangements do not apply to new research projects. The reissue of the animal research authority to conduct the tests will provide researchers who have existing research projects the space to conclude their ongoing research projects or develop an alternative way to conduct the research project, without prolonging the use of the tests and experiments in an unmitigated manner.

The resounding message from experts is unambiguous: The tests have significant ethical, scientific and animal welfare concerns. The Government has taken a clear position that they must be prohibited, with appropriate transitional arrangements in place. That is why the Government has been progressing towards the prohibition of the tests through the thoughtful and considered amendments made to the private member's bill. I acknowledge the

work of the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, and the member for Sydney in introducing the bill to the Parliament. The crossbench members have been working on it for some time. Their collaborative approach with the Government has produced the bill that is before the House today. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (10:52):** The Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023 seeks to prohibit two research methodologies, being the use of rats and mice to undertake forced swim tests and the use of rats and mice to undertake forced smoke inhalation. The forced swim test has been used for many years by the research community in neurology and drug testing. The forced smoke inhalation test is used to examine the effects of exposure to cigarette smoke and other hazardous gases.

The Opposition acknowledges that the National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC] and the Animal Research Review Panel have reviewed the research methodologies and recommended they be phased out. The Opposition cannot support the bill in this form, as it is not satisfied that the bill and its proposed amendments will not have unintended consequences. Significantly, there are insufficient transitional arrangements in the bill. We have heard from stakeholders in the research community that current research projects into life-saving cancer treatments could have their research approvals cancelled before the projects are finished. The transitional arrangements contain uncertainties.

The Centenary Institute says that clarity is required as whole-body smoke exposure, which is permitted under the NHMRC statement, still requires mice to be confined and constrained in a restricted chamber. That could be interpreted as restrained, and smoke is directly forced into the chamber and therefore directly provided to the animal's nose, head and body. The Centenary Institute goes on to state:

It is not clear why the Bill did not use the terminology provided in the NHMRC Statement that clearly captures the procedure whilst excluding whole body exposure. The ambiguity could be impactful for research being conducted at numerous other research Institutes and Universities that use whole body smoke exposure and is this the ambition of the Bill?

The bill has positive intentions, and I commend the Hon. Emma Hurst for her work in animal welfare and for progressing the bill to this stage. However, members have a duty to examine legislation for unintended consequences that could have negative impacts on scientific progress that can improve the health and lives of sick and vulnerable people. We are talking about research and testing that will save people's lives and help us gain more knowledge of the impact of medications before they are launched onto the market. Whilst the Opposition acknowledges the important work of the Hon. Emma Hurst to date, it will not be supporting the bill in this form due to the unintended consequences it causes for approved research.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (10:55):** Animal research is undoubtedly an emotive topic that involves complex ethical and moral considerations. It has real stakes for real people, and it is important that we consider that when we debate the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. It is for that reason that I contribute to the debate. When we speak of animal research in this place, in the context of the Animal Research Act 1985, we are speaking of a wide range of matters. They include observational studies of wildlife, pet food palatability trials and clinical trials of new treatments for animal diseases.

While some more invasive forms of animal research also occur in New South Wales, they are well and truly a minority and are rigorously overseen by animal care and ethics committees to ensure that only ethically defensible research occurs. There are high standards in place to protect the welfare of animals used in research, and I specifically recognise the work of the Animal Research Review Panel in that area. We speak much of animal welfare in this debate—as we should, as animal welfare is critically important.

The community has high standards and clear expectations. I share those high standards and clear expectations, as I am sure all members in this place do. I do not take this topic lightly; it is an important one to get right. We must also consider the life-changing outcomes that arise from research, for humans and animals alike. They include lung cancer treatments, vaccines for COVID-19, new treatments that maximise our time with our pets and a better understanding of our populations of native animals. Those challenging ethical considerations should not be taken lightly. We must not pretend that they are simple decisions when we debate these matters.

I acknowledge the work of the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, in introducing the bill. She has been working on it for some time, as have Government members, and her collaborative approach with us has produced the bill that is before the House today. In supporting it, the Government is taking action to improve animal welfare outcomes in New South Wales. That is consistent with what we have said we would do from day one. Today we are supporting necessary changes to improve animal research regulation in New South Wales, while acknowledging that the industry undertakes critical work for the people of New South Wales and the world. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (10:58):** I look forward to contributing to debate on the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. Animal research is undoubtedly a complex issue that require us to carefully consider ethical factors alongside the important medical outcomes that can be achieved. Between those two competing issues is the need to ensure that the regulatory framework is robust and can adapt to the latest advice and evidence. That is why I support the strong and robust framework that governs animal research in this State.

A key component of that framework is the Animal Research Review Panel, known as the ARRP. It is a statutory body set up under the Animal Research Act 1985. The main role of the ARRP is, first, to investigate matters relating to the conduct of animal research and the supply of animals used for animal research; secondly, to investigate and evaluate the efficacy of the code of practice, which is the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, in regulating the conduct of animal research and the supply of animals used in animal research; and, thirdly, to investigate applications and complaints referred to the panel under the Act.

The expertise of the ARRP is an important reason that the Government can support this bill. The recommendations and advice received from the ARRP inform the Minister about best-practice approaches to animal research underpinned by evidence. ARRP membership includes relevant New South Wales Government Ministers and nominated members from the peak body for universities in New South Wales, Medicines Australia, Animals Australia and RSPCA NSW. That membership mix means that the advice provided to the Minister and the Government is not only based on the latest evidence but also considers a wide range of perspectives on issues relevant to medical research.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** 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 hour.

#### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome everyone joining us in the gallery. I extend a specific warm welcome to guests of the member for Drummoyne, Craig and Adele Gray. They are in the seat of honour. I also welcome guests of the member for Maitland, students and teachers from St Joseph's College, Lochinvar, who are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the parliamentary education team. Welcome to Australia's first Parliament. I welcome guests of the member for The Entrance, Denise and Paul Hoyland and Keith Rutherford. I acknowledge a guest of the member for Vaucluse, Natalie Dudych. I welcome guests of the member for Cabramatta, Mr Thanh Nhan Vo and Mr Nhin Huynh. I look forward to speaking with them after question time. I also welcome a guest of the member for Gosford, Ella Legg, who is joining us for the first time as part of the fabulous Gosford electorate office.

#### *Question Time*

#### **EUROBODALLA REGIONAL HOSPITAL**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:05):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast. Will the Minister rule out any changes to the scope or delivery date of the Eurobodalla Regional Hospital in response to the slashing of GST revenue from the Albanese Labor Government?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:06):** For the benefit of those in the gallery, Government members are normally not meant to know what the questions from the Opposition will be, and the Dixers usually come from our side of the Chamber. We will get two Dixers in a row today. I am very glad to be asked about the Eurobodalla project, stage four. The member for Bega is incredible—what a commitment to transform health services on the South Coast. They will be delivered under and via the hardworking Labor member for Bega, and it will improve the delivery of services for the South Coast. Firstly, yes, we will deliver the Eurobodalla Regional Hospital. Secondly, I am engaging in what I think the students in the gallery, or their teacher, might politely call robust discussion with the Federal health Minister, the Hon. Mark Butler.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Have you called him?

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I will talk about that in a minute. I have done more than call him.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order and allow the Minister to answer the question. The member for Hornsby will come to order.



**Mr RYAN PARK:** We did not feel, as a jurisdiction, that we got a good deal under what was proposed in the national funding agreement from the Commonwealth.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** That is because \$2 billion seemingly dropped off the table over a four-week period. The Hon. Chris Picton, the health Minister in South Australia, and I convened a discussion with other State and Territory Ministers. From that discussion, we all agreed that the funding was—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will come to order. I need to hear the Leader of the Opposition's point of order. It is not discretionary.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** It is under Standing Order 129, direct relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Government frontbench members will come to order while I hear the point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The question was not about funding arrangements with the Commonwealth, nor was the question whether Eurobodalla—can I be heard in silence?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The member for Riverstone will come to order. The member for Wollongong will come to order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The question was not whether Eurobodalla would be delivered. It was a specific question about whether there would be changes to the scope or delivery date for Eurobodalla.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the point of order. The Minister is being directly relevant. The issue about scope—

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I addressed it straightaway. I said we would deliver level 4 Eurobodalla. I cannot be any clearer.

**The SPEAKER:** I agree. The Minister has the call.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** State and Territory Ministers convened and made it clear that we were not happy with the deal from the Commonwealth because it would have a significant impact on health funding. The Minister for Education and Early Learning is having those same discussions. The same advocacy is going on in education. Those are two big service delivery areas that the Government is responsible for. We then had the health ministerial meeting and wrote a joint letter to the Federal health Minister.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Have you raised it?

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I will get there in a moment. We did more than raise it. State and Territory Ministers then had a robust discussion directly with the Commonwealth. Amazingly, within a matter of a couple of days, the funding went up by another couple of billion dollars. I am happy to be questioned on anything related to health care, because I know this Government will always stand up for the people of New South Wales. We need to make sure that patients get the best care and that New South Wales health services are the very best we can offer.

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

## REGIONAL AND RURAL CRIME

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (11:10):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister update the House on the action that the New South Wales Government is taking to address regional and rural crime?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:10):** I thank the member for Bega for his question. Members on this side of the Chamber are not blind to the concerns of regional communities, like those in the Bega electorate. Those communities know what the problems are, and the police are doing everything they can to combat this type of crime. It is a big problem, and it has been a big problem for decades. We are seeing similar issues with crime in States and Territories right across Australia. In the past year I have spoken to police all over the State. I visited 33 regional communities in less than a year. I have been to some of those communities more than once. I have listened firsthand to local MPs, to mayors and to community organisations about the struggles that many of those communities are facing when it comes to helping kids. Most importantly, I have listened to local police. I know what they are doing in those communities. They are doing everything they can. In almost every instance of these dreadful offences, police have arrested the offenders within a day or two.

I am tired of those opposite coming into the Chamber and blaming the police for entrenched social problems, when they did zero to address the issue for 12 years. We have heard loud and clear that we need to do more as a government to break the cycle of crime—prevention, diversion and disruption. It is about getting kids the help they need to steer them away from crime and the justice system. The problems are complex and entrenched, but the New South Wales police are doing everything that we could ask of them. That is why the Government this week released a comprehensive plan to tackle crime in regional areas. The Government knows that it will take more work, and it is committed to that. We want to break the crime cycle. We want prevention, diversion and disruption, and that is exactly what the Government did this week. The Government is investing \$13.4 million in a place-based response in Moree. [*Extension of time*]

The Government is introducing new legislation to create an offence for "posting and boasting" and is making amendments to the Bail Act. The Government is investing \$12.9 million in statewide regional crime packages, including expanding the important, police-led Youth Action Meetings, or YAMs. I note that the member for Cessnock is getting one. Government agencies and non-government organisations will come together in a coordinated approach and put together a targeted plan for the most at-risk youth. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has told us that it works. The Government also made a historic announcement last year to pay recruits while they study at the academy, meaning we should be able to get more police on the streets to keep our community safe. We are already seeing huge growth in the numbers of people coming to the New South Wales academy to become police. The Government is very proud of that. Unfortunately, I have noticed that those opposite are intent on blaming police for these deep-seated social problems.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** This Government is right behind our cops.

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** It is taken under Standing Order 74. The Minister is deliberately misleading the House. Members on this side of the Chamber have never called the police into question; we are calling the police Minister into question.

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard enough. The Minister has the call.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** This Government is right behind our cops.

#### PALLIATIVE CARE

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (11:16):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Palliative care specialist provider Silverchain has helped over 8,000 people have dignity at the end of life. On Tuesday we saw that it will not have its contract renewed, resulting in 100 people losing their jobs. Will the Minister guarantee that the services currently provided by Silverchain will continue?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:16):** I will do more than that; the Government will improve palliative care services for Western Sydney. The Government is going to make sure—

[*Opposition members interjected.*]

Quieten down. I do not want to hear 129s either.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Let us talk about Silverchain. It is a service that had a contract until 1 July 2024. That contract then expires. The Government has made a decision, because it believes that palliative care services need to be delivered in an integrated way as part of a range of different health services. The Government will be taking the role in house, to be delivered by NSW Health, with some of the finest palliative care doctors, physicians and staff in the State. That is the first thing. Secondly, over the next few years, the Government will be doubling the funding for Western Sydney palliative care. The Government is increasing overall palliative care funding by just over 6 per cent. Over the next few years, that will become more than 8 per cent.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** The Opposition will need to ask for an extension in one minute and 20 seconds.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Let me go through what the Government is doing. It is bringing palliative care in house. The contract is up, for a start—that is a weird concept—so the Government is bringing the service in house. It is boosting funding for palliative care in Western Sydney. It is expanding the dedicated Westmead palliative care unit, which I know a number of members, particularly on this side of the Chamber, have advocated for. Wait on, there is more. Western Sydney health was going to lose roughly, give or take, 109 nurses as part of the 1,112 that were going to be cut.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** What has this got to do with palliative care?

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I will tell you what it's got to do with it in a minute. Some of those nurses would be working in palliative care services. Let's work out what the Opposition argument is. [*Time expired.*]

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (11:19):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier advise the House on how the New South Wales Government's historic investment in 100 new public preschools will ensure greater access to early childhood education?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:20):** I thank my Parliamentary Secretary for that important question. There is so much evidence, and parents across New South Wales know, that education must start in the earliest years of a young child's life. We know that those first 2,000 days are critical for early intervention as well as setting up the transition to kindergarten. Every school I go to, the principal or the kindergarten teacher can tell me that they can see a difference between the children who have been through early learning and those who have not. As a government, we are committed—unlike members opposite, who just discovered this at the end of their 12-year term, on the eve of an election. We have invested the largest amount ever in public preschools in New South Wales. In fact, we are doubling the number of public preschools in New South Wales. That will be a life-changing outcome for so many children across the State.

Our \$769 million investment will mean that we have identified, through a rigorous independent process, schools across the State that will be getting a co-located public preschool—a free public preschool where teachers deliver world-class play-based preschool education to prepare children for kindergarten. Of those 100 public preschools, 49 are in rural and regional New South Wales. Those sites were chosen on educational need and projected demand. It is a novel idea for members opposite, to look at projected demand, childhood development data and socio-economic data—where it is needed to turn the dial for families.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** More than 600 stakeholders were consulted in this rigorous process, but the impact on—I will focus on the rural and regional impact of this announcement, in particular. There are communities in regional New South Wales that have never had such an investment in preschool learning as this investment and what it will provide for them. The response to the announcement in those local communities, I have to say, has been overwhelming. Their response still is that they have been crying out for this investment—like at Warialda, where the member for Northern Tablelands did not just welcome it, he said he was feeling quite excited. We are all quite excited about this. He is an excitable person. [*Extension of time*]

Continuing in that vein, at Boorowa Central School the member for Cootamundra was not content with just being excited; she said that she was beyond excited. In all seriousness, a quality education should not be determined by where a person lives. We know that the evidence stacks up, that the educational outcomes for our kids—if they get the opportunity of that preschool education, it makes a material difference in transition and outcomes. We have to make sure that we continue this investment in rural and regional New South Wales despite the fact that the excitement does not pervade throughout the National Party room. I know the member for Dubbo was a little bit miserable about this, but the Opposition should be reminded that it did not deliver a single public preschool in its 12 years in government—not one.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will calm down. They are provoked too easily.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Members might remember that what actually happened was, on the eve of an election, after more than a decade in power, the former Government said it was going to promise 500. It had 12 years and did not deliver, and now we are proudly going to deliver 100 public preschools. I cannot wait to see those little people walking through those doors at the beginning of their educational journey.

**PUBLIC LAND AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (11:25):** I congratulate the Speaker on the passing of his bill yesterday. It was a very important achievement in this Parliament.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Wakehurst. I also thank the Government and the Opposition.

**Mr Matt Kean:** So obsequious!

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN:** The Speaker is a good egg. My question is directed to the Minister for Lands and Property, who is also a fine opening bowler of the parliamentary XI. Will the soon-to-be vacated Forest High School site be captured in the Government's audit of surplus public land and, if so, how will the Government deliver its policy commitment for 30 per cent affordable housing—or potentially much more, given the Federal funding on offer—in the redevelopment of the site as the new Frenchs Forest town centre so that hundreds of desperately needed homes can be built for teachers, nurses and bus drivers who have been priced out of the northern beaches leaving key services understaffed?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:26):** What a wonderful question from the energetic member for Wakehurst, who has been proactive in seeking additional social and affordable housing in his electorate. He is a responsible local member who has a keen interest in providing the necessary housing in his community. I know he has been working with the Minister for Housing, Rose Jackson, to identify opportunities to renew some of the existing social housing stock as well as looking for opportunities to grow social, affordable and public housing in his area. The former Government did a shameful job when it came to housing, for 12 years—absolutely disgraceful. Whenever there was a single attempt by someone who really cared, such as former Minister Roberts really cared, they were put on ice or taken off the job, and that is the problem. Every time there was maybe a bit of a positive approach to try to address the housing shortage, they cut it.

It is about making the hard decisions for our community for the long term. It is about not just this generation but also generations that follow us. For 12 years they did nothing; they jogged on the spot. The former Government refused to invest in social housing and, as a result, the social housing stock across the State fell from 5.1 per cent in 2013 to 4.8 per cent in 2022—nearly 10 years, and we went backwards in stock. They also sold off public housing with the number of public housing dwellings declining. Listen to the numbers. Opposition members have to understand what they have done. The number of dwellings declined from 111,547 in 2011 to 96,712 in 2022—down 15,000 public housing dwellings. They decimated our housing stock. In the electorate of Wakehurst, the public housing stock declined from 593 dwellings in 2011—

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

Take this on board. You need to listen to this. You have to understand how you could do better. The stock declined from 593 dwellings in 2011 to 455 in 2021. Guess what percentage that is? It is a 25 per cent reduction. Abysmal! You should all be ashamed of yourselves. Get behind it. Get in the groove. Let us provide housing for our community. Get into it. Stop being negative. Stop listening to those two. All of you, take some initiative.

**Mr Michael Regan:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will draw breath and calm down. I will hear from the member for Wakehurst.

**Mr Michael Regan:** As the son of a maths teacher, I need to hear more statistics. Can the Minister have another two minutes, please?

**The SPEAKER:** I could not hear a word the member for Wakehurst said, but I assume that he requested an extension of time. An additional two minutes is granted.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** Public housing accounts for just 1.6 per cent of the total dwelling stock in Wakehurst, so it is no wonder that key workers are struggling to afford to rent, let alone buy, a home in Wakehurst. It is the same situation across the State.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie will come to order.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** We need to address the housing crisis. That means more housing supply and, of course, more social, affordable and public housing as well. That is why the Government committed to a 30 per cent target of social and affordable housing on surplus government land.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** It is also why we are delivering an audit of surplus government land. I can confirm that the proposed town centre on the former Frenchs Forest High School site has been identified as a potential site for housing as part of the property audit. The site has been rezoned for mixed use, and a 15 per cent requirement for affordable housing was established following consultation with the council and community. As the New South Wales Labor Government continues to state, we are committed to working with the local member and the community to deliver more housing, including more social and affordable housing, to ensure that key workers like teachers, nurses, bus drivers and police can afford to live in Wakehurst. Once again, I thank the good member for his question.

#### WESTINVEST FUND

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (11:31):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier please update the House on how the current Government is putting integrity back into Western Sydney funding following the Auditor-General's report into the WestInvest program?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:31):** The question of integrity when it comes to public grants is an important question for the member for Liverpool and for every member of this House. I can answer the member for Liverpool's question. Firstly, we will adopt all of the recommendations from the Auditor-General; that is an important principle and one that we think needs to be endorsed by both sides of Parliament. Secondly, we have strengthened accountability, transparency and fairness in the administration of grants with last year's passage and acceptance of the Government Sector Finance Amendment Grants Bill, having been called for by the Auditor-General, by many members of the crossbench and by many members in this Parliament for a number of years.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There is a fundamental principle here, and that is that a Minister must not approve a grant unless satisfied that the grant would be an efficient, effective and economical, as well as ethical, use of public money. Fancy that! Of course, this comes off the back of a deliberate and publicly stated strategy of the previous Government to pork-barrel money into what were then Government seats.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Shamefully, in the bush we saw 94 per cent of the Stronger Country Communities Fund directed to Coalition seats, 68 per cent of Refresh and Renew grants to Coalition seats, 75 per cent of New South Wales Government ClubGRANTS to Coalition seats and, most shamefully, 26 of 27 projects for the bushfire recovery grant—something I never thought would be politicised, certainly not through pork-barrelling—to Coalition seats. In response to that—

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will come to order. I call the member for Hawkesbury to order for the first time. I call the member for Hawkesbury to order for the second time.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** In response to that, the WestInvest fund was announced by the previous Government in the run-up to the last election.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** And in the run-up to that election campaign, the then member for Hornsby stood up and said—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This is what the member for Hornsby said at the time: "We have put in place the toughest guidelines, as recommended following a number of reviews, to ensure the community can have confidence in the governance that this money is going exactly where it's intended to go." So how did they go? That was the promise. The Auditor-General released the report. The Auditor-General found:

... the areas of focus for WestInvest were decided by Ministers and their staff without advice from ... agencies.

That was one finding. Second, funding advice from the WestInvest steering committee was not followed by the then Treasurer of New South Wales—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —and the justifications for these decisions by the then Treasurer were not documented. Further, "multiple" projects were allocated funding despite being assessed as "ineligible or unsuitable". [*Extension of time*]

Finally, the report states:

... the process for assessing applications ... was not agreed between government agencies and the then Treasurer ...

I heard the former Treasurer speak yesterday when this report was raised by the Deputy Premier. Just out of a corner of my ear I heard him yell out, "Well, it all went to ERC." For those who do not know, that is the acronym for the Expenditure Review Committee. That is the member for Hornsby's way of saying, "It's Dom's fault. It's not my fault. It went to the ERC."

**Mr Matt Kean:** I chaired the ERC.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Well, why would you be disputing the Auditor-General's numbers?

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Will you stop the clock, please, Mr Speaker?

**The SPEAKER:** I would advise the member for Hornsby against it.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Hornsby has been testing the limits of my patience for some time. I remind him that he is on three calls to order. He can take a point of order if he wishes, but he should understand that he has been testing my patience. I do not need advice from the member for Goulburn.

**Mr Matt Kean:** That is the worst attack, Chris.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I have a whole report that says that you were hopeless.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order and cease debating across the table. I will hear the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** There are two parts to the point of order. The Premier is not directing his comments through the Chair but directly—

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The second part is that, if the Premier wants to have a go at the member for Hornsby—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I can do it this way. Why can't I do it this way?

**Mr Alister Henskens:** —he ought to do it by way of substantive motion, not in this fashion.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the second part of the point of order. The Premier will continue his answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The State of New South Wales has to deal with the situation where the former Treasurer thought that the serial number on a \$100 note was an expiry date. That is the truth.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He racked up \$27 billion worth of spending in nine months.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Under Standing Order 249A, I direct the member for Hornsby to remove himself from the Chamber for 10 minutes.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** No, keep him! We love him.

[*Interruption*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Hornsby to remove himself from the Chamber for 15 minutes.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Mr Speaker, bring him back. We need him. We love him. Bring him back.

[*Interruption*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Hornsby to remove himself from the Chamber for 20 minutes.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Hornsby left the Chamber at 11:37.*]

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We do not want him gone. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to bring back the member for Hornsby.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** At the end of the day, in all seriousness, we are left with a gigantic black hole, largely brought to us by the member for Hornsby—

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** —and most of the actions the Government is taking are to remediate a recklessness at the heart of public spending. It is being remediated as a result of the Labor Government.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business has risen on a point of order. But he waited until only eight seconds before the Premier's time expires. That makes things a little difficult. The member for Hornsby was directed to leave the Chamber because I went out of my way to give him the opportunity to cease interjecting and he failed to do so. There is no equivalence. I do not need guidance from members of the Opposition, or indeed the Government, in making my determination. We will have order in the House or more members will follow the member for Hornsby.

### DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ASSAULT AND BAIL LAWS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (11:38):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. The latest NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures show that domestic violence assault is up 7.6 per cent and sexual assault is up 11.3 per cent over two years for regional New South Wales. Why were sexual assault and domestic assault not included in the Government's new bail laws?

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Who said that? Members will be respectful and refrain from interjecting. The Minister was asked a serious question and she has come to the lectern to give her answer. She does not need those kinds of interjections.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (11:39):** I thank the shadow Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault for her question. She is right; the statistics for regional New South Wales in relation to domestic violence and sexual assault are concerning. They have been concerning for some time. In fact, in 2019 the rate of sexual assault was 115.9 per 100,000 people, and in 2023 it was 165. That has taken some time to rise. In 2019, the rate of domestic-violence-related assaults in rural and regional New South Wales was 492.9 per 100,000 people, and in 2023 it was 592.8. We take the rates of domestic and family violence and sexual violence in regional New South Wales—

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. I am aware of the figures of assaults and domestic violence in regional New South Wales. That was in the question. But the question was specifically about the bail laws.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. I draw the Minister's attention to the clear intent of the question and the key point in relation to bail laws. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That bill, which is currently under discussion in this place, is being led by the Attorney General. I have ultimate faith in his ability to lead it. The bill was written in that way because it is particularly focused on the crime of break and enter dwelling offences in an area that has the second highest rate of break and enter dwelling offences. That is why that particular bill is focused in that way. Now that I have put that question to bed, it gives me the opportunity to talk about what this Government is doing to support rural and regional communities. There is a considerable amount. We have—

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order: I seek an extension of time but also take a point of order under Standing Order 129. The Minister has not answered the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. I will grant a two-minute extension if the Minister wishes to provide additional information.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have answered the question in relation to the bail laws.

**The SPEAKER:** I agree. I did not uphold the point of order under Standing Order 129. The Minister can have additional time if she wants it.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No.

## NSW WOMEN'S SAFETY COMMISSIONER STRATEGIC PLAN

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (11:43):** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Will the Minister update the House on the inaugural NSW Women's Safety Commissioner Strategic Plan, *Working together to address domestic, family and sexual violence*?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (11:43):** I thank the member for Auburn for her question and her interest in this morning's launch of the strategic plan for the office of the Women's Safety Commissioner. As all members know, this year we have already seen women allegedly killed by intimate partners or family members. My heart absolutely goes out to the families, loved ones, children and parents who are left behind after the deaths of those women. I know all members' thoughts are with those people.

What we do not often see, though, and what does not often hit the newspapers and television screens, is the many women and children who continue to live with domestic and family violence, with a violent partner or family member, or with coercive control, and who, for whatever reason, cannot escape that situation. My heart goes out to women who are still dealing with those issues. Our focus is, and continues to be, that when someone leaves a violent relationship, they have somewhere to go and somewhere to support them to heal. But we need to focus more on stopping the violence before it starts or escalates. We need to listen to the voices of victim-survivors—the people who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence. We need to take the prevention of domestic and family violence seriously.

Last year this Government appointed Dr Hannah Tonkin as the first standalone Women's Safety Commissioner of New South Wales. She is the first such commissioner to be appointed in any State or Territory. That is how serious we are. This morning saw the launch of the strategic plan of the office of the Women's Safety Commissioner. It is key to transforming the actions we take in relation to domestic and family violence into a whole-of-government and whole-of-community response. The strategic plan has six priorities. Firstly, it puts people with lived experience at the centre of our approach. It also enhances the oversight, monitoring and accountability to deliver the New South Wales Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Violence plans, and promotes safe, accessible and integrated responses. We have much further to go, but— *[Extension of time]*

A key part of the strategic plan is championing a greater focus on primary prevention. We need to strengthen the workforce that works in domestic, family and sexual violence. We also need to support women's economic safety and security, which often gets forgotten. I am very pleased that, as part of the launch of the strategic plan, Dr Hannah Tonkin will establish a lived experienced advisory panel to advise the New South Wales Government on its approach to domestic and family violence. The panel will inform New South Wales policy and implementation. As we heard this morning from Commissioner Micaela Cronin, the voices of people with lived experience are essential to understanding what is happening on the ground now.

Importantly, the priorities of the strategic plan align with our State plans for domestic and family violence and sexual violence. The office of the Women's Safety Commissioner will develop an outcomes framework, and the commissioner will provide an annual report card documenting the progress of her strategy and the outcomes framework. So it is about accountability. That is what this Government is doing in this area. With the strategic plan, we have a road map for the next three years. There have been too many reports of abuse, sexual violence and domestic and family violence in this State. Many things need to occur to ensure that those figures are reduced. We need a strong governance framework and a crime prevention strategy. We need to address the drivers of violence in this State, and that is what this Government is committed to doing.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (11:48):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Did the Minister ask the Attorney General to include domestic violence and sexual assault in the Government's new bail laws?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (11:49):** I am happy to answer that question. The piece of legislation the Attorney General is taking carriage of is aimed at a very specific crime. The Government is bringing in a suite of measures to deal with the prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault.

**Ms Steph Cooke:** Point of order—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Oh my goodness.

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear the point of order.

**Ms Steph Cooke:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question was very specific.



**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Cootamundra. When she took her point of order the Minister was about 20 seconds into her answer. I do not need advice from the member for Dubbo. The Minister will continue her answer.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The legislation the Attorney General has introduced is aimed at a very specific crime. For some time, Opposition members have been calling for that crime to be addressed. We are taking action on that. We have a suite of measures, and we have a strategic plan that has been launched this morning. That is a really great piece of work. It will involve a whole-of-government response. We will have a primary prevention strategy in the near future to deal with domestic and family violence in this State. I have confidence that the legislation introduced yesterday will deal with the crime it is aimed at, and we will also be working very strongly to prevent the abuse of women and children—

**Ms Steph Cooke:** Point of order: My point of order is again taken under Standing Order 129. The question was very specific, about whether the Minister has asked the Attorney General.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Cootamundra. While the Minister has not used the exact words that Opposition members would like to hear, she has been directly relevant.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** It's a yes or a no.

**The SPEAKER:** It is not a yes or a no. The member for Hawkesbury will cease interjecting or she will be called to order. It is disrespectful.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** To think that this Government is not doing anything about domestic and family violence is truly offensive. I have already answered the question.

#### HEALTHCARE SERVICES

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:52):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on the latest Bureau of Health Information data released this week and on the actions the New South Wales Government has taken to rebuild the New South Wales healthcare system?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:52):** I thank the member for Granville for her advocacy for Western Sydney's health issues. One of the challenges of being a health Minister is that every three months a report card on the system is given out. It is an independent report card, like the one from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research for the police. This one is delivered by the Bureau of Health Information [BHI]. This week that report came out, and it is important that the House be informed of how the health system is working in each member's community. Whilst there have been some small improvements and green shoots, there is a long way to go, and we need to work very hard to improve the delivery of health services in the community.

We are experiencing record levels of emergency department [ED] presentations. In the last quarter, there were close to 800,000 ED presentations. On some days last week, we had in excess of 9,000 per day across the system. Areas in Western Sydney are receiving record numbers, week in, week out. That is a challenge. In that context, I update the House on how we are faring. Elective surgery is important for many members' constituents. When we came to office, around 14,000 people waiting for elective surgery had been on the list for longer than they clinically should have. These people should have already had their surgery. We have got that figure from 14,000 down to 2,000. Incredibly, we got the figure at Westmead from several hundred down to zero. Westmead is a big Western Sydney hospital. I thank the allied healthcare professionals, nurses, clinicians and staff members who have driven that incredible result.

We are seeing, in the December quarter for the first time in three years, a very small—2 per cent—improvement in patients getting access to ED treatment on time. There is a long way to go, but the investment we are making is starting to pay off. That includes investment in services such as urgent care. Many members will know these services across their own communities. We are rolling out about 25 centres, and they are working. *[Extension of time]*

The member for Shellharbour will know this. I think that the urgent care clinic in Dapto opened on about 17 December. Several thousand people who are likely to have otherwise ended up in the Wollongong emergency department have gone through that clinic. The Bulli urgent care centre is seeing 50-odd patients a day. These are slowly starting to work. How do we know they work? The BHI data this week showed that we are starting to see a reduction in triage category 4 and 5 patients, who are those more often dealt with by GPs, presenting to EDs. That means more time for emergency patients to be treated by emergency physicians. What else are we doing? For the first time, we are investing in record numbers of nurses. As part of our safe staffing reform, we are rolling out one to three in EDs. We are starting in, arguably, our biggest emergency department, in Liverpool, which the

member for Liverpool and others know very well, and in North Sydney. They are two very busy EDs. We will start to roll out that staffing reform and add on several thousand nurses across the board.

We are continuing to invest in our pharmacists. What role do they play for EDs? They expand the scope of practice. It means people do not end up in emergency departments because they cannot access health care, particularly after hours. It is very important. We are investing in virtual care so that someone can get an appointment to virtually see a physician and does not have to go to a GP. We are starting to see improvement, but we have a long way to go. Together we are determined, through the hard work of our healthcare professionals, to make an improvement to health services across our communities.

#### TRANSPORT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (11:57):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Places. Given that in a budget estimates hearing the Minister misled Parliament about meeting Ms Katie Joyner and had to correct the record, will he rule out—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: Standing Order 128 (2) states that questions cannot contain argument, inference, imputation, expressions of opinion or hypothetical matters. The question is completely out of order. The member for Davidson should not be directed to rephrase it. Opposition members ought to miss out because they know better than that.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** To the point of order: There are two points. The first is that we have had repeated instances today when Opposition members have asked questions and there has been a cacophony from the other side of the House, with Government members screaming over the top of them—

*[Government members interjected.]*

It's happening again.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. This is important. The member for Bankstown will come to order. I need to hear the Manager of Opposition Business on the point of order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The second point is that the member for Davidson was only a few words into his question. He had not completed the question, so it is impossible for the Speaker to make a ruling until the member is given the opportunity, in silence, to ask his question.

**The SPEAKER:** My considered ruling is that sometimes it is evident early in the question where the question is going. Opposition members often tell me that they know where a Minister's answer is going, but in this instance it was much clearer. The member for Davidson said that the Minister misled a budget estimates committee. I am not aware of any determination that that was the case. I understand that the answer provided by the Minister may have been corrected, which would not, in my view, constitute misleading the committee. The member for Davidson can ask the question without offending against Standing Order 128. He will rephrase the question.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Given that the Minister subsequently supplemented his budget estimates evidence about meeting Ms Katie Joyner, will the Minister rule out that Ms Joyner had access to information about Transport Oriented Development sites before they were publicly announced?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:01):** I refer the member to the earlier testimony in the budget estimates hearing that said she did not.

#### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (12:01):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will cease interjecting. I need to hear the question.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Will the visionary Minister—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Blacktown will ask the question plainly.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** —please update the House on action taken by the New South Wales Government to ensure that Sydney does not become, as warned by the Productivity Commissioner, "the city with no grandchildren".

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:05):** The member for Davidson should take note of how to ask a question about planning. I welcome the question from the

Parliamentary Secretary, who is a fantastic advocate for good planning reforms and a great asset to the planning team and the Government. The NSW Productivity Commissioner has a way with words. He recently belled the cat on the very real impact of thousands of people aged in the 30- to 40-year-old age group giving up on Sydney and packing up and leaving. He said, "Sydney risks becoming a city with no grandchildren," and he is right. Around two of every three departures from Sydney are from that working age population group of 25- to 64-year-olds. They are the workers, the creators and the innovators who start and grow businesses and employ people. Worse still, 30- to 40-year-olds are the largest contributors to those departures, with more than 35,000 having left Sydney.

A city without young people is a dead city. This Government does not want that future for this great city of Sydney or for New South Wales. It deserves more. It deserves a lively, vibrant and innovative future, and that is what this Government is determined to deliver. This Government wants young people to stop giving up on Sydney and instead build a life here for themselves and their children. That is why the Government has announced some serious planning reforms to deliver more well-located, well-designed and well-built homes across Sydney and New South Wales. The Government is committed to delivering more diverse housing types that work for all ages and all income levels. Economists have said one thing: If we had built more homes where people wanted to live and work, it would have led to lower prices and lower rents.

Fewer than 30 per cent of key workers employed within 10 kilometres of the Sydney CBD also live in that area. More than 3,000 key workers commute to jobs in the 10-kilometre radius of CBDs every day from more than 50 kilometres away. How do their children and grandchildren ever form a relationship with the city in which their parents work? Without well-located homes, we fracture not only relationships of the present but also relationships of the future. Analysis suggests that a 10 per cent increase in supply could reduce the cost of housing by up to 25 per cent. Would that not be a wonderful outcome for current and future generations? It is a small change with a big impact. The previous Government was not interested in housing and the next generation of Sydney's kids and grandkids. It let the problem build up under its watch, and the result was that it let Sydney become one of the most expensive cities on the planet.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Now we are in a situation where people are lining up around the block every weekend, struggling to get into a rental inspection. [*Extension of time*]

Worse still, they are lining up to get on a plane to leave Sydney altogether. That is the policy that the Liberal Party was actively advocating for and brought in under its watch. That is why it is a problem to oppose housing so bluntly, as members opposite are doing. The young fogies faction is taking over against the wishes of the member for Manly, the Hon. Chris Rath, the Hon. Jacqui Munro and others who recognise the need to deal with the housing question. I know members opposite love a three-word slogan and some are trialling new ones out: "Stop the houses!" "Increase the rents!" "Slash workers' wages!" Those are the sorts of three-word slogans that are the real outcomes of their policy solutions. That is the real outcome of their opposition to sensible planning reforms that simply require councils across New South Wales to consider more diverse types of housing.

Members opposite should stop, take a breath and take a moment to reflect on what one of their colleagues said. In 2021 the member for Epping—the former Premier whom members opposite lined up behind and told everyone how great he was a couple of years ago—said, "We should not be concerned about scare campaigns around reforms that will allow the next generation to buy in the Sydney property market." Members opposite should not be afraid of scare campaigns. Despite the fact that the young fogies faction of the Liberal Party is leading that scare campaign against housing, members opposite would do well to listen to the member for Epping one more time because providing housing for future generations should not be a scary prospect. It should have bipartisan support.

## HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (12:08):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, representing the Minister for Water in the other place. The community of Wollondilly had Wilton and Appin growth areas thrust upon it, and the previous Government said that it was okay to have a development with no sewer. This Government, since coming into office, has approved 13,000 houses but both parties have only promised 5,000 lots with a sewer; the rest is trucked up the M5 to other electorates. When will the Government provide a sewage treatment plant and tell Sydney Water to do its job and match what the planning department has approved? What in the hell were you thinking about?

**The SPEAKER:** I rule that the last sentence of the question is inappropriate and is not part of the question. I call the Minister.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:08):** I thank the member for Wollondilly for her advocacy on this issue. Keira and Wollondilly share a boundary, and I know very well the connections on Picton Road and others and the growth that has occurred in those suburbs. The Government wants to unlock opportunities to increase housing supply. The planning Minister and the Minister for Housing have talked about that a lot, and there is leadership from the Premier. It has been a key focus of this Government. We know how important it is to support housing growth in the area with appropriate infrastructure to make the communities functional and liveable. That is why we have unveiled transformative housing reforms that will increase supply and make housing more affordable for the next generation, as well as deliver the infrastructure needed to support housing.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** The Minister for Water and the planning Minister are working collaboratively to ensure that our cities are ready to support the growth in housing we need, including in communities like that of the member for Wollondilly. Sydney Water acquired the Bingara treatment plant in 2022 to support new development and the existing Wilton township. I understand that upgrades are required to bring the treatment plant up to standard, and that work is now underway. I assure the member the Government is ensuring that that work is done as quickly as possible. The wastewater servicing requirements for Wilton have been reviewed, and services will be provided to support the current committed development of up to approximately 5,000 lots within the precinct. Planning is also underway by Sydney Water for a new Upper Nepean wastewater treatment facility that will service the greater Macarthur region, including parts of the new Wilton development, as well as areas such as Appin.

Those longer term servicing plans will support increased development, including staged land releases. The Government will ensure that the long-term planning is done and infrastructure is delivered to avoid the recurrence of the situation that the member for Wollondilly has raised. I appreciate the concerns raised by the member and note that all of the development was approved and commenced under the previous Government, without the necessary infrastructure being in place. The community she represents is understandably frustrated. The Government takes the issue seriously, and that is why it has instructed Infrastructure NSW to review the water and wastewater capacity of Sydney Water to ensure that it can meet New South Wales's Housing Accord commitments. It will not make the same mistakes as prior governments. *[Extension of time]*

We want to make sure that the investment decisions made by Sydney Water are aligned with the housing priorities of the Government and that infrastructure will be in place to service the development we need to see across Sydney. From the beginning, we want it done right. I understand the member for Wollondilly has already met with the Minister for Water to discuss the issue, and I assure the member that the Minister would be more than happy to meet with her again to continue to discuss her views on the important matter she has raised on behalf of her community. The Government is always looking for opportunities to better understand what more can be done to accelerate housing supply to meet the needs of the New South Wales community.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:12):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services, representing the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on the actions the New South Wales Government is taking to increase penalties for environmental crimes?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:13):** I thank the member for Shellharbour. There will not be a comedic answer today as we are short on time, so I am sorry to disappoint the House. Labor went to the last election promising the people of New South Wales that we would give them an Environment Protection Authority [EPA] with teeth, and that is exactly what we are delivering. I am proud to advise the House that the Government is introducing the biggest boost to environmental regulation since the creation of the EPA in 1991. Our reforms will directly improve the protection of human health, the environment and the community.

During the 12 years of conservative government, environmental regulation and penalties came to a grinding halt. Fines for pollution have not been increased since 2005, not even to keep up with inflation. Too many bad operators just factor in fines as the cost of doing business, and it is not good enough for governments to sit on their hands while the natural environment suffers as a result. The current criminal investigation into asbestos-contaminated mulch highlights the need to address loopholes and give the EPA more investigative powers. On behalf of the Government, I thank the EPA and Fire and Rescue NSW for their speedy work in testing multiple sites for asbestos contamination.

The EPA is in the process of finalising its criminal investigation, but it is not too early to examine key learnings and take decisive action, and that is exactly what Government members will do. We will make polluters

pay, deterring repeat offenders, doubling penalties and boosting the EPA's powers. The Government has introduced the Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024, which will double the maximum penalties for tier 1 serious offences. Instead of a \$1 million fine for individuals, it will become \$2 million. Instead of \$5 million for companies, it will be \$10 million. For tier 2 offences related to asbestos, penalties for individuals are going from \$500,000 to \$1 million, and fines for companies will increase from \$2 million to \$4 million.

The Government will crack down harder on illegal dumping, introducing a higher penalty specifically for small-scale illegal dumping on sensitive land such as schools and national parks. The Government will introduce new product recall powers for materials that may be contaminated with harmful substances, establish a name-and-shame process to issue public warnings about poor performers and set up a new waste accreditation scheme that targets the source of contamination to stop it happening in the first place. Those are just some of the well-overdue reforms that the Labor Government is introducing and asking the whole Parliament to get behind. After 12 years of inaction by the former Government, the Labor Government promised to put a tough cop on the beat in the EPA, and that is exactly what we are delivering. [*Time expired.*]

#### *Committees*

### **JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE NSW RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY**

#### **Membership**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:17):** I move:

That:

- (1) Royal Francis Butler be appointed to serve on the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority in place of Philip Donato, discharged.
- (2) A message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:17):** The Opposition supports the appointment.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Documents*

### **OFFICE OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY COMMISSIONER**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 22 (3) of the Modern Slavery Act 2018, I announce receipt of the report of the Office of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner entitled *Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018*, dated December 2023, received on 13 March 2024. I order that the report be printed.

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning has received a referral from the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to conduct an inquiry into historical development consents in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

#### *Bills*

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

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (12:18):** The Animal Research Review Panel is not the only mechanism built into the animal research framework to support robust animal welfare protections in this State. The animal research framework is also supported by the role of animal ethics committees, or AECs. These AECs are responsible for approving and monitoring research within accredited animal research establishments, including carrying out inspections of animals and facilities. Importantly, no animal research may be carried out without

AEC approval. AECs must consider and evaluate applications to conduct research on the basis of the researchers' responses to a comprehensive set of questions, including the justification for the research, its likely impact on the animals, and procedures for preventing or alleviating pain and distress. I emphasise that point.

I acknowledge the work of the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, from the other place, in introducing the bill. I know the member has been working on it for some time—as have Government members. The Hon. Emma Hurst's collaborative approach with the Government has produced the bill that is before the House. The Government, which supports a strong animal research framework in this State, cannot rest on its laurels. We need to take the advice of our experts. That is why the Government supports the strengthened animal welfare outcomes in the bill. I am reminded of the amount of structure work that the Government has been doing. Creating strong frameworks for our organisations is exceedingly important. It is vital that government bodies and private bodies understand the framework and the parameters within which they are able to work. I am also reminded of something that has worked very well in my local area. The Camden Show, which is coming up this weekend, is very dear to people's hearts. On Friday and Saturday of this week—

**Mr David Harris:** Not St Patrick's Day.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** St Patrick's Day is also important to the people of Camden, which is why I am wearing green today. The Camden Show is extremely important to the Camden community. Some 40,000 people come to enjoy the show every year. It is one of the last shows to be held before the Sydney Royal Easter Show, so it is a great opportunity for people who have not yet done so to qualify for the Easter show. There is a fantastic array of horse events and an incredible number of cattle events.

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** I'll be there.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** It is a fantastic event. We have the affectionately named "politicians' corner", where every politician in the area has a stall. We all get to hang out together. I am looking forward to the robust conversation that will ensue between me and Angus Taylor. It is a fantastic weekend of incredible things. On Friday—

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** What about the music?

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** I am so pleased that you asked about the music. On Friday there will be an all-day festival featuring performances by schools, including dance performances. Special needs dance groups will also perform. It is fantastic. Then there will be the Battle of the Bands on the Friday and Saturday nights. There will be incredible fireworks. We have a fantastic—

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** It will be a cracker!

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** It is a cracker. I issue a general warning to everyone in Camden to bring their dogs inside on those nights. We always have a problem on the Saturday and Sunday mornings with missing dogs because of the fireworks. But we do have a fantastic—

**Ms Robyn Preston:** We are still talking about animals. That's good.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** Yes, we are still talking about animals. It is important that our animals are looked after beautifully. It is important that we incorporate care of animals into events like the Camden Show, as well as into our animal research framework. It is important that next weekend people will get to show their hand-reared animals. There will be chickens, cows, goats, cats, dogs and horses. It is a fantastic event. A two-day rodeo is held concurrently with the Camden Show. It is an amazing opportunity for people to come to my area and spend their money. They can see what it is like to be in the country for a day, and wear the appropriate outfits. That is why the Government supports the strengthened welfare outcomes for animals used in research that are outlined in the bill before the House.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:26):** My speech will be more sombre than the previous contribution, but I did get excited about perhaps attending the show. It sounds fun. The Greens support the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for introducing it. I also thank the member for Sydney, who has carriage of the bill in this place. I give a shout-out to the animal welfare spokesperson for The Greens, Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC. The bill is very timely. These tests are outdated and appalling, and it is time to get on with making changes. So many aspects of the flawed animal welfare laws in our State need correcting. As someone who has been an ethical vegetarian since I was 14 years old, I have a personal interest in this issue. I have always been appalled by the lack of scientific rigour in the treatment of animals used in testing.

But one does not have to be an ethical vegetarian to be appalled by animal testing in this country. National research over the past few years has shown that most Australians are very uncomfortable with cruelty to animals

and testing on animals. The scientific community has long known that there are alternatives. Many people I have spoken with over the years—scientists, doctors and vets—agree that animal testing is outdated and it is time to move on. According to research by Animal Liberation, up to seven million animals are cruelly exploited through animal experimentation and research every year in Australia. We have a long way to go to phase out this incredibly cruel industry. The bill takes a straightforward step towards doing that by banning two of the most shocking types of experimentation.

In 2022 Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health conducted an inquiry into the use of primates and other animals in a number of settings. Some ethics committees had already banned the use of these two tests. They are no longer considered necessary by many universities and global pharmaceutical companies. I rarely take my cues from pharmaceutical companies, but that provides some context. If global pharmaceutical companies think the tests are unnecessary, then the tests really are unnecessary. Page 24 of the inquiry's report illustrates what is meant by the forced swim test. It states:

The forced swim test was developed in 1978 and has been used for decades in neurobiology research and drug studies, including to evaluate antidepressants. The test involves placing a mouse or rat in a transparent cylinder of lukewarm water where they swim and attempt to climb the walls of the cylinder before becoming immobile and floating. The animals are generally removed after a set time, but some animals die after the test from aspirating water.

The test is grounded in theory that animals that spend more time floating (and less time swimming or attempting to escape) are feeling helpless and that this indicates depression or anxiety. There is a correlation between the efficacy of some antidepressants and the outcomes of the test. However, there have been questions raised as to whether this test is a good model for a complex, chronic condition like human depression, as contradictory evidence has shown that floating is a learned and adaptive behaviour that saves energy and is beneficial for survival.

I am not a scientist, but reading that in the report, I thought, "Holy cow. Does anyone seriously think that is a pertinent, deeply probing test into the efficacy of antidepressants?" It feels very antiquated. As Humane Research Australia submitted during the inquiry, there are many humane alternatives available, including methods involving the use of human tissue or cells, or mathematical and computer models of human systems. Pages 26 and 27 of the inquiry's report describe what is meant by forced smoke inhalation, or the use of the smoking tower. It states:

Forced smoke inhalation research exposes mice to cigarettes or other hazardous inhalants and observes the physical effects that follow.

We are not in a scene from *Mad Men*; we know what smoking does. Why on earth would we need to continue doing that? It continues:

Smoking towers ensure nose-only or head-only exposures by placing mice in small chambers. Mice are forced to breathe in smoke for a minimum of one hour, twice a day for five days a week, for up to 18 weeks. In whole-body exposure, the animals are immersed in the smoke without being restrained.

Although some participants of the inquiry sought to justify that kind of extreme animal cruelty on the basis of providing insight into human health issues, most scientists think that the high welfare impact of using mice in smoking tower research cannot be justified. RSPCA Australia and all organisations committed to the humane treatment of animals think that it is beyond the pale. Other witnesses to the inquiry outlined the severe distress experienced by animals in the smoking test, including hypothermia, withdrawal symptoms and even mass culling when research is not proving fruitful.

Many stakeholders point to less cruel alternatives—if we do really need to prove over and over that smoking kills. The evidence to the committee in 2022 was overwhelming that these are outdated methods and are no longer required. All stakeholders, including PETA, the RSPCA and many other organisations, have made that point. In closing, The Greens welcome the bill. We are surprised that there would be any opposition to reforming this area of the law. It is time to move. I give a shout-out to my daughter, who is an ethical vegan and an absolute champion in this space. I never really talk about my family, but she is doing amazing work.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (12:33):** I am pleased to contribute to debate on the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023 as the Minister for Medical Research. I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, as well as the member for Sydney for sponsoring the bill. I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Tara Moriarty, and her department in the further development of the bill. The bill is a sensible means of aligning our laws to expert advice whilst appropriately managing transitional arrangements for research projects that are underway.

The New South Wales Government supports a responsible approach to the use of animals for medical research, limiting use wherever possible, with the highest standards of animal welfare. We must carefully consider ethical factors alongside the important medical outcomes that can be achieved through that research. High-quality medical research in New South Wales saves lives; there is no doubt about that. But we need to ensure the

regulatory framework that underpins our medical research is robust and can adapt to the latest advice and evidence of the time. That is why I support the strong and robust framework that governs animal research in this State, particularly when it comes to the high-quality medical research produced by our world-leading medical research institutes and staff in New South Wales—our researchers, doctors, academics, students, lab technicians and assistants.

The National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC] and the Animal Research Review Panel [ARRP] have raised significant ethical, welfare and scientific issues with forced smoke inhalation experiments and forced swim tests. The NHMRC has specifically highlighted the shortcomings in the scientific validity of using forced swim tests for studying depression and anxiety disorders, and their treatment in humans. Additionally, the NHMRC has cited the significant adverse impacts on animal welfare associated with the forced smoke inhalation experiment. The Government has listened to those concerns and supports their prohibition in the bill.

A key component of our robust framework is the Animal Research Review Panel, which is a statutory body set up under the Animal Research Act 1985. The main role of the ARRP is to investigate matters relating to the conduct of animal research and the supply of animals used for animal research; to investigate and evaluate the efficacy of the code of practice, the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, in regulating the conduct of animal research and supply of animals used in animal research; and to investigate applications and complaints referred to the panel under the Act. The expertise of the ARRP is an important reason that the Government can fully support the bill.

The recommendations and advice received from the ARRP will inform the Minister for Agriculture about best-practice approaches to animal research, underpinned by evidence. ARRP membership includes members nominated by relevant New South Wales Government Ministers, the peak body for universities in New South Wales, Medicines Australia, the Animal Societies' Federation NSW and RSPCA NSW. NSW Health nominates a member to sit on the Animal Research Review Panel. It also acts as the point of contact for the National Health and Medical Research Council when ethical guidelines are in development. The membership mix means that the advice provided to the Minister and the Government is both based on the latest evidence and also considers a wide range of perspectives on issues relevant to medical research.

The ARRP is not the only mechanism built into the animal research framework to support robust animal welfare protections in this State. The animal research framework is also supported by the role of animal ethics committees. The AECs are responsible for approving and monitoring research within accredited animal research establishments, including carrying out inspections of animals and facilities. Importantly, no animal research may be carried out without AEC approval. AECs must consider and evaluate applications to conduct research on the basis of the researchers' responses to a comprehensive set of questions, including their justification for the research, its likely impact on the animals, and procedures for preventing or alleviating pain and distress.

On 23 January 2023 the previous Government handed down its response to the New South Wales parliamentary inquiry into the use of primates and other animals in medical research in New South Wales. That inquiry provided 13 recommendations, mostly for the Department of Primary Industries. Two recommendations for NSW Health were supported and implemented by 16 October 2023. Support for recommendation 11 led to the launch and adoption of the Openness Agreement on Animal Research and Teaching in Australia, through the Office for Health and Medical Research collaborating with the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching. Recommendation 13, focusing on funding transparency for animal research and alternative methods, has been integrated into NSW Health grant applications and annual reporting starting in 2024, promoting alternative research methods like cell and organoid models.

I turn to the work on alternative models to animal research being led by the Office for Health and Medical Research. Research organisations are constantly tracking developments from around the world that can strengthen animal welfare or that offer alternatives to the use of animal models of disease. Research using non-animal systems, such as computer or cell-based systems, can be used as a replacement or partial replacement for animal research. In 2023-24 the New South Wales Government, through the Office for Health and Medical Research, is providing \$4.5 million to support Replacing Animals in Medical Research Grants. That funding will be provided for several projects that reduce or replace the use of animals in research. Examples include precision medicine, 3D printing technologies and organoid research.

Just last week I saw examples of organoid research in practice at the Children's Medical Research Institute in Westmead. The institute was first established in 1958 through a public campaign and is dedicated to advancing the treatment and prevention of serious childhood diseases. I visited the institute to see for myself their life-changing research and to speak with their expert scientists. I visited the lab of Associate Professor Anai Gonzalez-Cordero, head of the Stem Cell Medicine Group and Stem Cell and Organoid Facility. Associate Professor Gonzalez-Cordero and her incredible team of researchers showed us how they are growing and



developing organoids to support brain, eye and kidney research. It was truly amazing to see the work they are doing in that space and how it is progressing and attracting experts from around the world.

That research can assist us in better understanding rare diseases and testing new therapies, and can ultimately change the trajectory for children and their families in New South Wales. That is what medical research is all about—saving lives and improving health outcomes for our community, including the future, our kids. I am proud of that life-changing medical research occurring in New South Wales, and I acknowledge all of the people involved in ensuring that research can be developed all the way from benchtop to bedside. [*Extension of time*]

It is truly amazing to visit those facilities and see that incredible work. I had never heard of organoids until a few months ago, and to be growing human organs in a test tube so cancers can be introduced and vaccines critically tested et cetera is absolutely amazing. I talked to some of the scientists who said that when they first introduced the concept, people said, "This is science fiction." Now they are doing it. It is incredible, and I appreciate the fact that they not only talked to me about it but also let me into the lab. I put a lab coat on and saw, up close, what they were doing. One of the interesting technical things was that they can train each of the little cells to be something, like a brain, a kidney or a retina, and once the cells start talking to each other, they cannot stop them. The cells reach out with tendrils and start to make connections. It is a really interesting field.

In closing, I particularly acknowledge the work of the Hon. Emma Hurst—who is in the adviser's area today—in introducing the bill. She has been working on it for some time, and I thank her for her collaborative approach with the Government, which has produced the bill before the House. I acknowledge her passion for improving animal welfare across all areas of policy. We sometimes test each other and do not agree on all subjects, but I respect her strong commitment to improving animal welfare standards in New South Wales. My good friend the Hon. Mick Veitch, who is no longer with us, always speaks highly of her and continues to do so. Anyone that Mick thinks is all right is pretty good by me too. The Government supports a strong animal research framework. We will continue to work on new opportunities and research to replace animals in medical research. We can improve on the way we conduct medical research while still contributing to finding new outcomes. That is absolutely vital. The Government supports the bill, which improves welfare outcomes for animals used in research. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:46):** I make a very brief contribution to debate on the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. At the outset, I join with other members in thanking the Hon. Emma Hurst, who has made a huge difference to the lives and welfare of animals in the time that she has served in this Parliament. I am sure that one day, when she eventually goes on to other things, she will look back favourably on everything that she has achieved for animals, which often do not get the attention that they deserve from governments. Credit goes to her and her team for their work on not just this bill but on other bills. I also thank other colleagues, including the former Minister who just gave quite an eloquent speech, although I do have to correct the record. I think he referred to the late Mick Veitch. Rumours of his death have been grossly exaggerated; he is still very much with us. Sadly, he is not in this place because some Government members ran the numbers against him. He should still be here. He was a very passionate advocate.

I was stunned to learn that those animal tests still existed when the Hon. Emma Hurst came to see me about the issue. The fact that we need legislation to outlaw them is quite extraordinary, and I urge every member who has rallied around this legislation to outlaw those practices that were developed in the 1970s. I am sure there are other examples we need to focus on that the Hon. Emma Hurst could tell us about. I look forward to seeing those come forward. It is incumbent upon consumers when they look at products they buy to make sure that the research methods that are used are humane and appropriate. I know that many colleagues in this place love championing animal welfare. In fact, that is one of the few things that my usual sparring partner, the member for Shellharbour, and I agree on. She is a great champion of animal welfare. Recently I saw a lovely photo of her at her local pound.

Over the years great initiatives have been instigated by all sides of the House. I acknowledge my great friend and former colleague Shelley Hancock, who was local government Minister and introduced reforms to pounds and the rehoming of animals, which she was very passionate about. I am the proud owner of Oscar, who is currently at Meroo Kennels. I give a big shout-out to Nathan and Mel, who are minding him while I am in Parliament. I will be home tomorrow, Oscar. I am sure he is listening to this webcast right now. I want to see more bills like this that receive bipartisan support. The Parliament is at its best when we rally around important causes that often get forgotten. The fact that we have come together to outlaw those practices is a positive step. I commend the member for Sydney, who introduced the bill in this place, and all members from all sides of the House who have today chosen to use the House's time to put animal welfare first.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (12:49):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. This bill relates to animal research authorities. It precludes licensed animal research establishments from issuing

authorities for animal research activities involving two specific procedures: the forced swim test and the nose-only form of the forced smoke inhalation experiment. I take the time to highlight the process by which these authorities are issued, and the rigorous ethical review process that occurs before any form of animal research is permitted to occur. Under the Animal Research Act, accredited research establishments may issue authorities to any individual researcher to carry out animal research in connection with a particular research project. The establishment may only issue an authority on the recommendation of its animal care and ethics committee.

In accordance with the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, a researcher's application must include details of the research project such as the educational or scientific aims of the project; the potential benefits of the outcomes; details of why the use of animals is essential to achieve the stated aims; what alternatives to the use of animals have been considered and why these are not suitable; information that supports the researcher's case for ethical acceptability of the proposed use of animals in research—that is, their justification for why any potential impacts on the animal are justified by the potential benefits; and the project's design and details about the animals intended to be used in it, including the number of animals to be used and the rationale for why this number is necessary.

An application must also include a clear description of how the researcher has considered and applied the three Rs of replacement, reduction and refinement; how animals will be housed and cared for both during specific procedures and while not being used in research; a step-by-step breakdown of what will happen to the animals used in research at the end of their use in the project; how the welfare of the animals will be monitored and assessed during the project, and the actions to be taken if problems are identified; and a range of information about who will be involved in the project, and their competence. These applications are detailed for a reason: to facilitate a comprehensive review by an animal care and ethics committee to ensure they are satisfied that the project is ethical and can be conducted in a way that minimises the impacts to the animals involved. If the animal care and ethics committee is not satisfied of this, the application for an authority can be rejected.

When authorities are issued, they describe the kind of animal research that can be carried out. They can be issued with specified conditions to which the authority is subject and must be met by the researcher. Authorities last 12 months at a time. Importantly, the animal care and ethics committee will continue to supervise the conduct of the research throughout the duration of the authority. This is a rigorous process that ensures high standards of ethical review before animal research is permitted to occur. The Government's support for the bill is about providing direction to industry about what animal research is acceptable based on the latest scientific evidence and expert advice. From there, the robust animal research framework will ensure animal research in New South Wales is undertaken to a high ethical standard.

I acknowledge the work of the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, in introducing the bill to the Parliament. It is a matter the member has been working on for some time, as has the Government. Her collaborative approach with the Government has produced the bill before the House. I also thank the member for Sydney for taking carriage of the bill in this place. During the course of this debate, my colleagues have outlined the many reasons, both ethical and scientific, that this bill is a necessary step forward. I know that many people in my community and across the State would agree that the legislation needs to keep up with the scientific evidence and maintain a rigorous balance between protecting animals that otherwise have no voice and enabling ethical research.

The bill is of significant interest to researchers in my community. The guidance contained within the bill will be of great use to the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research, which is located in Liverpool and forms part of the greater Liverpool Innovation Precinct. Liverpool Hospital is one of the largest hospitals in the Southern Hemisphere. Along with others in the greater South Western Sydney Local Health District, it conducts a great amount of medical research that will help many in our community for decades to come. But our community must be satisfied that this is done in an ethical way and without harming those who have no voice. I thank those involved in bringing the bill to the House. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I indicate to members that an authorised photographer is taking photos of our apprentice clerk, Kieran, on his first day in the House. Welcome, Kieran.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:54):** I am delighted to make a contribution to debate on the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. At the outset, I acknowledge my good friend the Hon. Emma Hurst, who has done a lot of work for this bill to be before us today. I acknowledge her passion for and contribution to all things in and around animal care and her continued advocacy for animals in the other place. I acknowledge the Legislative Council amendments to the bill, and the Minister's contributions and efforts, as well as the work put in by her staff.

The Government's support for the prohibition of the forced smoke inhalation experiment and the forced swim test is rooted in the concerns articulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC] and the Animal Research Review Panel regarding substantial ethical, welfare and scientific issues. The NHMRC

has specifically highlighted the shortcomings in the scientific validity of using forced swim tests for studying depression and anxiety disorders, and their treatment in humans. Additionally, the NHMRC has cited the significant adverse impacts on animal welfare associated with the forced smoke inhalation experiment. The Government has acknowledged those concerns, and rightly so. Our support for the prohibition of those tests serves as a clear demonstration of this Government's commitment to addressing those issues.

The bill is a sensible means of aligning our laws to expert advice whilst appropriately managing transitional arrangements for research projects that are underway and already using these tests. This approach will assist in ensuring that we are not losing the scientific and medical knowledge that arises from animal research. That is why it is Government policy that these tests should be prohibited in the most expedient manner possible—which, in this case, is to support the passage of the amended bill before the House. One of the Government's accepted amendments, now incorporated in the bill, allows for transitional arrangements for researchers that are already authorised to use the tests under an existing animal research authority. Let me be clear: there will be no new research projects using these tests after the passage and assent of this bill.

However, there will be time for existing projects to either run their course or for researchers to develop alternative means of undertaking their research that do not involve these prohibited tests. Researchers who already have an existing animal research authority that permits these tests will be allowed to apply for one reissue of that authority. Those researchers will not commit an offence if they act in accordance with an existing authority or an authority reissued under the transitional provisions. This is a sensible and considered approach. It means important research can continue under appropriate ethical oversight and does not have to be abandoned at the next animal research authority renewal. It means new research using these tests on animals cannot commence. It means that researchers need to develop alternatives and are being given time to do so.

The Government also included an amendment in the bill to clarify that the forced swim test prohibition excludes "fish" and other "aquatic animals", enhancing its precision and eliminating ambiguities. These adjustments ensure that the bill's language is clear, minimising the risk of misinterpretation and unintended consequences. By adopting the precise and well-understood definition of "fish" from the Fisheries Management Act 1994, amphibians like frogs remain protected by the prohibition on forced swim tests. In relation to penalties, a Government amendment that has improved the bill is the inclusion of a specific penalty for persons who perform a forced smoke inhalation experiment or use a forced swim test once the prohibition comes into effect. The penalty provision provides that a person who undertakes a prohibited activity will be subject to a maximum penalty of 30 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both. This penalty aligns with other similar penalties in the Animal Research Act relating to unlawfully carrying out animal research. The penalty provision does not apply to research projects that are already underway with an existing animal research authority that authorises the test or with an animal research authority that has been reissued under the transitional provisions.

To conclude my brief contribution, I again to acknowledge all those colleagues, in both the other place and this place, who worked on the bill. I understand the member for Sydney was an active participant in bringing the bill before us today. I commend him on his good work. He continues to impress me with all the things he does in this place. He is a great example of a member who successfully ensures bills are passed, achieving action on issues that members are passionate about. I commend the Hon. Emma Hurst and everyone involved. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (13:01):** I speak in support of the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. I thank the member for Sydney for bringing the bill to the House. I also thank the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, for bringing the bill to the other place and for her ongoing advocacy for animal justice in New South Wales. I respect the lives of all animals, and the thought of them suffering through experiments that offer little to no benefit to members of my community or society as a whole is very distressing. Not only are there significant welfare concerns with these types of experiments but their validity and scientific merit is not certain in some or most circumstances.

My support for the prohibition of both the forced swim test and the forced smoke inhalation experiment matches up with the concerns articulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Animal Research Review Panel regarding ethical, welfare and scientific issues. I have genuine concerns about the scientific validity of using forced swim tests for studying mental health related conditions such as depression and anxiety disorders, and their treatment in humans. A forced swim test is essentially research where an animal is placed in water and forced to swim, with the water deep enough to ensure that the animal is unable to escape or stand. Hearing examples of research where animals are forced to swim for up to 90 minutes a session, twice a day, in water over 30 degrees Celsius makes my support for the bill very easy. Clearly, better research methods are available to researchers, and it is time that such tests are outlawed.

The significant adverse impacts of forced smoke inhalation on animal welfare are also of major concern. For such experiments, we need to strike a balance between potential positive outcomes for people and the obvious

negative impacts on the animals used in such experiments or tests. This Government acknowledges the significant concerns related to animal welfare, and our support for the prohibition of those types of tests shows our clear commitment to addressing these issues. The bill allows us to align the laws of New South Wales to expert advice, whilst also managing transitional arrangements for research that is already underway. Those transitional arrangements are important and will allow either for existing projects to run their course or for researchers to develop alternative means of undertaking their research that do not involve the prohibited tests. This balanced approach will ensure that we do not lose the medical and scientific knowledge that comes from animal research.

Importantly, there will be no new research projects using the forced swim and forced smoke inhalation tests after the passage and assent of the bill. To ensure fairness and a sensible approach to forced swim tests, the Government has included an amendment in the bill to clarify that the forced swim test prohibition rightly excludes aquatic animals and fish. Those adjustments ensure that the bill's intention is clear, therefore minimising the risk of misinterpretation and unintended consequences. By adopting the well-understood definition of "fish" from the Fisheries Management Act 1994, amphibians such as frogs remain protected, and rightly so.

I now briefly touch on the penalty provisions of the bill. One of the Government's amendments that improved the bill was the inclusion of a specific penalty for people who perform a forced smoke inhalation experiment or use the forced swim test once the prohibition comes into effect. The penalty provision provides that a person who undertakes a prohibited activity will be subject to a maximum penalty of 30 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months, or both. The penalty aligns with similar penalties in the Animal Research Act relating to unlawfully carrying out animal research and will act as a real deterrent for those considering breaking the law. Importantly, the penalty provision does not apply to research projects that are already underway with an existing animal research authority that authorises the tests or with an animal research authority that has been reissued under the transitional provisions. The bill offers a sensible set of changes that will reduce animal suffering. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (13:05):** I contribute to debate on the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. Who would have thought I would be speaking in Parliament about the need to stop humans making animals swim or have smoke blown in their faces as a means of studying depression and anxiety disorders and their treatment in humans? It is a bizarre day in the New South Wales Parliament. I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for introducing the bill. On behalf of all animal lovers in this place, I think experimentation using animals to test outcomes to try to improve the lives of humans sometimes goes too far, and I would not be surprised if we see further recommendations in the Parliament in future regarding this issue.

Support for the use of these animal research tests in the scientific community and the wider community is decreasing. Not only are there significant animal welfare concerns with these activities but their validity as a model for human disease is not certain in some circumstances. I thank the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Animal Research Review Panel for their input regarding substantial ethical, welfare and scientific issues around this testing. The significant animal welfare concerns associated with the forced smoke inhalation experiment are obvious. Our Government acknowledges those concerns, and our support for the prohibition of these tests serves as a clear demonstration of our commitment to addressing these issues. The bill is a sensible means of aligning our laws to expert advice.

It is important we expedite the passage of the bill whilst appropriately managing transitional arrangements for research projects that are underway and already using the tests. One of the Government's accepted amendments, now incorporated into the bill, allows for transitional arrangements for researchers who are already authorised to use the tests under an existing animal research authority. Let me be clear: There will be no new research projects using the tests after the passage and assent of the bill. However, there will be time either for existing projects to run their course or for researchers to develop alternative means of undertaking their research that do not involve the prohibited tests. Researchers who have an existing animal research authority that permits the tests will be able to apply for one reissue of that authority. Those researchers will not commit an offence if they act in accordance with an existing authority or an authority reissued under the transitional provisions.

I thank the researchers who are phasing out the tests and who realise that it may impact some of their long-term research. That is the nature of protecting the welfare of animals, which we prioritise in this Parliament. This is a sensible, considered approach, allowing important research to continue under appropriate ethical oversight. It does not need to be abandoned at the next animal research authority renewal. It means that new research using these tests on animals cannot commence. It means that researchers need to develop alternatives and are being given ample time to do so.

Let us now look at definitions around fish. The Government included an amendment in the bill before the House which clarifies that the forced swim test prohibition excludes fish and other aquatic animals, enhancing precision and eliminating ambiguities. These adjustments ensure that the bill's language is clear, minimising the

risk of misinterpretation and unintended consequences. By adopting the precise and well-understood definition of "fish" from the Fisheries Management Act 1994, amphibians like frogs remain protected by the prohibition on forced swim tests. From a penalties perspective, one of the Government's amendments that improved the bill was the inclusion of a specific penalty for persons who perform a forced smoke inhalation experiment or use the forced swim test once the prohibition comes into effect. I support the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023, and I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for introducing the bill in the other place and the member for Sydney for bringing it to this House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (13:10):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. The bill marks a significant step forward in the realm of animal welfare and ethical research practices. I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for introducing the bill in the other place and the member for Sydney for bringing it to this House. As I discuss the specifics of the amendments in the bill, it becomes evident that the bill not only reflects evolving scientific understanding but also underscores our collective commitment to compassion and integrity in research. A cornerstone principle driving support for the bill is the growing recognition of the ethical and welfare concerns associated with certain animal research tests. Scientific and community support for the use of forced swim tests and forced smoke inhalation experiments has steadily waned, with mounting evidence casting doubts on both their efficacy and ethical justifiability.

It is imperative to acknowledge the pivotal role of organisations like the National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC] and the Animal Research Review Panel [ARRP] in highlighting the substantial ethical, welfare and scientific issues inherent in these tests. The NHMRC's critique of the scientific validity of forced swim tests for studying human conditions such as depression and anxiety disorders, coupled with concerns about adverse impacts on animal welfare associated with forced smoke inhalation experiments, underscores the urgency of action. In short, the experiments are cruel and the results are questionable. I support the prohibition of the tests through the proposed amendments.

By aligning our laws with expert advice and addressing the shortcomings identified by bodies like the NHMRC and ARRP, we reaffirm our commitment to upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct in scientific research. By moving to prohibit the tests, we are demonstrating this Government's commitment to ensuring that the State's laws reflect the evolving scientific understanding and ethical imperatives. Crucially, the transitional arrangements incorporated in the bill strike a delicate balance between the imperative to cease the use of the tests and the need to ensure continuity in ongoing research projects. The provision allowing researchers with existing animal research authority to apply for one reissue of that authority acknowledges the practical realities of maintaining consistency with scientific experiments already underway while also recognising the ethical imperative to not initiate new projects involving the tests. That measured approach not only safeguards the welfare of animals involved in research but also underscores our commitment to supporting the pursuit of knowledge through ethically sound means.

The amendment clarifying the definition of "fish" serves to enhance the targeted nature of the legislation while ensuring that amphibians like frogs remain protected under the prohibition on forced swim tests. By adopting well-understood definitions from existing legislation, we minimise the risk of misinterpretation and unintended consequences, thereby clarifying the bill. The inclusion of new penalties for individuals undertaking prohibited activities underscores the seriousness of ethical research standards. By imposing penalties in line with those found in existing animal research legislation, we send a clear message that the ethical treatment of animals in research is non-negotiable.

The Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill, as amended, represents a pivotal moment in our collective commitment to ethical research practices and animal welfare. By heeding expert advice, implementing transitional arrangements, clarifying definitions and imposing penalties, we reaffirm our dedication to fostering a culture of compassion and integrity, along with scientific rigour, in research. I urge all members of the House to support the bill, and I commend it to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Before calling the member for Blue Mountains, I welcome to the public gallery guests of the member for Hawkesbury, head of government relations Lawrence Muskitta and Harry Grant from the Black Dog Institute—an organisation we all love and support. I thank them for the work they do with the Black Dog Institute. I also welcome the Hon. Scot MacDonald, who is a former member of the other place. It is good to see him in this House watching work happen, which is a nice change. I call the member for Blue Mountains.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:15):** I very briefly make a contribution to debate on this important bill, the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. I thank the member for Sydney for bringing it to this place and for all of his work across

this Parliament with all people and parties on important issues. This is an important piece of legislation. The tests have lost support from the scientific community and the community at large, and are considered cruel and unethical. I appreciate having a moment to acknowledge the relentless advocacy over a long period of the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, and to thank her for her conciliatory approach to working with the Government and across the Parliament to produce the bill before the House.

I also take a moment to acknowledge the animal-loving people of the Blue Mountains. I mention Greg Keightley of the Animal Justice Party, with whom I have worked closely and well on many issues over many years, including animal welfare. Greg was the Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service disaster recovery coordinator during the bushfires of 2001 and 2013 and a rescuer of animals and other wildlife during the 2019-20 fires. We worked together on protecting and conserving landscape and wildlife, on climate change and against the commercialisation of our national parks. We were often on the same page, for many years in many different election campaigns. It is important to acknowledge in this place Greg's work preserving the natural environment and our work together opposing the Warragamba Dam wall-raising project. At every meet-the-candidates event, Greg was always the one who asked about the consequences of an issue for animals and biodiversity and got people thinking. I acknowledge him today in commending the amended bill to the House.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (13:18):** I make an extremely brief contribution to debate on and speak in favour of the Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. I recognise the Hon. Emma Hurst in the other place for introducing the bill and the member for Sydney for his carriage of the bill in this place. I also acknowledge Vanessa Blazi, Animal Justice Party candidate for Penrith in the 2023 State election and thank her for her important work for animal justice. I am proud to be part of a government that supports this commonsense bill. It is abundantly clear that scientific and community support for the use of such animal research tests is decreasing. Not only are there significant animal welfare concerns about these activities but the validity of them as a model for human disease is not certain in some circumstances.

In 2022 the Portfolio Committee No. 2 inquiry into the use of primates and other animals in medical research in New South Wales brought to light the extensive use of animals in scientific experimentation and the poor treatment and condition of those animals in government-funded research projects. Prior to the inquiry practices such as the mass breeding of animals for research and mass killings when there were too many animals for the research needs had very little transparency. The inquiry also highlighted cases of animals not being given pain relief when undergoing painful experimentation or procedures and a lack of oversight by the agencies that were meant to be regulating the industry. As I have said, the bill is a sensible approach in response to what the experts say in this area; it has been prepared in lock step with the evidence. I commend the bill to the House. I thank all members for their contributions to this debate, especially those who introduced the bill and the member for Sydney who has carriage of it in this House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (13:24):** In reply: This is an exciting moment. We are about to see the passage of the first non-government bill through the Fifty-Eighth Parliament, thanks to the leadership of the Hon. Emma Hurst. I thank all members who have contributed to this debate: the member for Monaro; the member for Hawkesbury; the member for Camden; the member for Ballina; the member for Wyong, and Minister for Medical Research; the member for Kiama; the member for Liverpool; the member for Campbelltown; the member for Shellharbour, who gave a passionate speech about her ongoing concern for animal welfare; the member for Gosford; the member for Penrith; the member for Riverstone; and the member for Blue Mountains. I hope the member for Blue Mountains features the passage of the bill in her podcast *From the Beach to the Bush*, which she co-hosts with the member for Coogee. I give a shout-out to that podcast. It is a weekly wrap-up of things that happen in the Legislative Assembly.

This is the fourth Animal Justice Party bill to pass the Parliament of New South Wales. The three other bills that the Hon. Emma Hurst and I worked on passed the Fifty-Seventh Parliament. With the passage of each Animal Justice Party bill this State becomes a safer place for animals. The legislation to prohibit forced swim tests and forced smoke tests caught the attention of a lot of members, and their concern that such tests ever occurred was reflected in their speeches. A lot of other inhumane and cruel tests continue to occur in New South Wales. The important work of the Animal Justice Party continues to bring those to light and provides us with the opportunity to prohibit them. We can then move towards a more humane society in New South Wales.

The Portfolio Committee No. 2 inquiry into the use of primates and other animals in medical research in New South Wales in 2022 laid a lot of the groundwork for this important legislation. I pay tribute to the Hon. Greg Donnelly, the chair of that committee. The Hon. Greg Donnelly and I do not agree on every topic, but we certainly agree on this one. As I said, this is an exciting moment for the Parliament. The first private member's bill to pass the Fifty-Eighth Parliament is the Animal Justice Party's Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

### Motions

#### FRONTLINE HEALTH WORKERS

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (14:31):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the importance of the frontline health workers and allied health staff, including but not limited to our doctors, nurses, paramedics and cleaners.
- (2) Recognises the commitment and dedication provided by our frontline health workers and allied health staff across New South Wales, particularly those working in and for the Blue Mountains.
- (3) Thanks our frontline healthcare workers and allied health staff for their work throughout the festive season and beyond to ensure that communities receive the care and support that they need and deserve.

I am very proud to be part of a government that recognises that our frontline healthcare workers are the very backbone of our State's hospital system. Without them it would simply not function, which is why the Government is determined to support our frontline healthcare workers. The doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health staff, paramedics, frontline support workers, health and security assistants, cleaners and security staff all go above and beyond in their jobs. I am sure all members in this place across the political spectrum would agree. At times those workers are faced with the most challenging of circumstances, all the while caring for patients and families across New South Wales.

Communities in the Blue Mountains know only too well how important their frontline health workers are. They rely on those devoted professionals and the service, care and treatment they provide to keep them well. They draw comfort from the fact that the frontline healthcare workers are there to respond to their needs. Whether the dedicated doctors, nurses, midwives or allied health workers care for them at the Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial Hospital—nearly 100 years old—at our little Springwood community hospital or at the Nepean Hospital, or whether the local paramedics, one of whom is my son, treat them on their way to hospital, each frontline worker is a valued member of the community that they serve.

That is why the Government is focused on building an effective, highly skilled health workforce so we can continue to keep people and communities in the Blue Mountains and throughout New South Wales healthy and well. Government members are therefore devoted to the task of continuing to build an engaged, capable and well-supported healthcare workforce. The 2023-24 New South Wales budget committed more than \$2.5 billion over four years towards our frontline healthcare workforce. That includes \$438.6 million to recruit an extra 500 rural and regional paramedics, \$419 million to recruit an extra 1,200 nurses and midwives and \$572.3 million to permanently employ more than 1,000 nurses and midwives who were previously hired on a temporary basis by members opposite.

The Minns Labor Government delivered on its commitment to scrap the wages cap and delivered a pay increase to our frontline health workers—a huge step that is valued by the communities of New South Wales. The Government also reached a landmark deal with the Health Services Union that will rightly see paramedics' pay significantly increase over the next two years by around 25 per cent on average. Right now communities across New South Wales are benefiting from a major boost to the State's medical workforce, with more than 1,000 medical graduate interns starting work in public hospitals at the beginning of this year.

The Government is also looking to employ more nurses and midwives right across the State, providing \$121.9 million over five years to support 12,000 healthcare students with study subsidies. To encourage school leavers to consider a future in health, new students undertaking a healthcare degree will be eligible for a \$12,000 subsidy on their study expenses—that is \$4,000 every year for three years—if they work a minimum of five years in the New South Wales public health system. Students already enrolled in a healthcare degree will be

eligible to apply for a one-off payment of \$8,000 when they graduate and commence employment with NSW Health, committing to work for a minimum of five years.

It is worth noting that with just over 176,000 staff, NSW Health is the largest healthcare employer in Australia. Employed across our many public hospitals and health facilities are more than 15,000 medical staff, 54,000 full-time nurses and midwives and more than 12,000 full-time allied health staff. The workforce continues to strengthen and grow each year, with a record number of medical interns and more than 3,400 new graduate nurses and midwives commencing employment with NSW Health across 2024. Our nurses are involved in the care of patients at every step and form an integral part of the health system, while our midwives support the births of close to 100,000 babies across our State every year. Each makes a valuable contribution to the care and experience of patients, families and carers all over New South Wales.

Many families of frontline healthcare workers in the Blue Mountains would have seen very little of their partners, parents, children and friends during the recent holiday period—I lodged this motion at the beginning of the year, but it applies to any holiday period—because they are at work keeping the community safe and well while many of us take a break. I thank those families and friends of healthcare workers, who miss out while their loved ones are caring for our community, for the sacrifices they make. I thank the frontline healthcare workers, doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health staff, paramedics, frontline support workers, cleaners and those who serve up food in the hospital for everything they do for the sake of our communities. I hope that they manage to find time to take a well-earned break themselves.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (14:38):** I acknowledge the very hardworking and fine member for Blue Mountains for bringing this important motion to the House. The Opposition supports it. Our frontline workers do so much to keep us safe, and they got us through the worst health crisis that we have ever seen. I acknowledge the students in the gallery today. I am sure we are curing their insomnia, but it is great that they are listening to this discussion about the important work that our frontline health workers do. We have heard about the cleaners and auxiliary staff in our hospitals, but we should not forget the doctors, allied health professionals and, of course, our incredible nurses, who do such important work.

My family, like so many families across the State, has recently been touched by the great work of our teams in the public health system. My mother-in-law recently had a stroke, and we were the beneficiaries of the outstanding quality of care that the citizens of this State should expect and rightfully deserve. That would not be possible without the dedicated people who serve in our public hospitals and our health system more broadly. But that is why it is very disappointing that the member for Blue Mountains has moved this motion, which we all support, to acknowledge the incredible work of the health staff and health workers who do so much to keep us safe when we need it while her Government is not listening to their plea to do some basic things.

We are in a cost-of-living crisis at the moment. That is the reality for many families across New South Wales, but it is felt particularly hard by those working on our front lines, and none more so than our nurses. That is why it is disappointing that the Government is now taking away free parking for our nurses, who are just doing their jobs. Our nurses, who go to work every day to help people, to keep them safe, to look after them when they are sick, are now being charged to actually do their job. The Government is making it harder for them to do their job. In opposition, the current Premier said that charging nurses and health staff to park at hospitals was a slap in the face. Yet, now he is in government, he is saying, "We are actually going to charge them just for doing their job." Hypocrisy has a name, and it is Chris Minns.

Chris Minns told people one thing while in opposition and then does the exact opposite now that he has the ability to do something about it. He wants to punish our health workers for just doing their job. He cannot say one thing in opposition and then do the exact opposite when he actually has the chance to do something about it. That is not the only thing. Our incredible health workers and our incredible nurses campaigned for legislated ratios. What have we had from this Government in response? Nothing. No legislation—nothing. The Government will not commit to it. Labor members promised these things while in opposition, but they get to government and they do not deliver anything.

**Ms Maryanne Stuart:** One to three in the ED and one to four on the floor. What did you do for 12 years? Nothing. Zero. Zilch.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Heathcote. I do not see her standing up for the nurses and their plea for ratios to be legislated. I look forward to the member for Heathcote telling all of the nurses in her electorate why she will not be supporting them getting a pay rise in line with the pay rise that the paramedics got.

**Ms Maryanne Stuart:** We abolished the wages cap. You voted to keep it in.



**Mr MATT KEAN:** I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Heathcote, who has not answered the question as to why she does not support nurses getting the pay rise that the paramedics did. Members opposite stand here in government—

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: The member should direct his comments through the Chair and not entice debate across the Chamber. He cannot cast aspersions on another member in the Chamber. If he wants to do so, he should do it by way of substantive motion.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I acknowledge the very good interjection from the member for Auburn, who is an outstanding member. So outstanding—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I will rule on the point of order. The member for Hornsby will come to order.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** —that she should be on the front bench. You know you should be on the front bench. What is your crime? Standing up for Labor values—something that has no place in Chris Minns' Labor Party.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Hornsby will resume his seat. I will rule on the point of order. The member for Hornsby has been directing his comments—to the best of his ability—through the Chair, but the member will return to the leave of the motion.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I will return to the leave of the motion, but I will say that I understand the frustration of the member for Auburn. She is very hard working and is a great Labor member, and the punishment for being a great Labor advocate is to be benched. You serve as a shadow Minister and you help get Labor into government, and then Chris Minns picks up the phone and he says, "Thanks for all your efforts in helping me get to government. I am going to put you on the backbench because you stand up for Labor values, and that has no place in my team."

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Point of order: I ask that you bring the member for Hornsby back to the leave of the motion. This is the time to talk about the importance of our frontline health workers.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I remind the member for Hornsby that this motion is about emergency services workers. In an emergency, I would rely on the member for Auburn—but that is not what we are debating. The member for Hornsby will return to the leave of the motion.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** Indeed. I wish Chris Minns would rely on the member for Auburn and the member for Blue Mountains. The irony of the member for Blue Mountains standing up to defend Chris Minns benching people because they believe in Labor values is not lost on me. I acknowledge the outstanding work of the member for Blue Mountains. She is a true worker for her community, a true advocate for frontline workers and a true advocate for Labor values. What does that get you in the Labor Party? Nothing. You get sent to the back bench to wallow there for a long time.

I hope that the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Auburn keep standing up for Labor values, because that obviously has no place in a Labor administration—the same administration that wants to charge nurses for parking. While in opposition Labor called that a slap in the face but now, in government, it wants to actually charge them. The Government has not given nurses a pay rise in line with that given to the paramedics, despite saying and promising that it would legislate ratios. Now that Labor has the chance to actually do something, it is doing nothing. That is what Chris Minns is all about: doing nothing.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Point of order—

**Mr MATT KEAN:** We saw it this week with the GST, and we will continue to see it in New South Wales.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Leppington rises on a point of order, but the member for Hornsby's time has expired. I will hear the point of order.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** It is just the utter disrespect for the office of the Premier. Call the man by his title, which is the Premier—something that the member for Hornsby will never be. That is all.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I uphold the point of order. If the member for Hornsby were still in the Chamber, I would direct him to call the Premier by his correct title.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (14:45):** We have just had a lesson from the Young Liberal debating society textbook on how to turn a debate away from the actual topic. The motion was moved in a non-adversarial way to recognise our frontline workers in health. Let us get back to what is being done and the people we have to respect. In my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary, I have been honoured to meet personally with a great many of our frontline healthcare workers right across the health system. I have witnessed firsthand their tireless efforts on behalf of the communities they serve. In fact, these people are virtually my family. I have worked with them since I was an intern in 1981.

As the largest health system in the country, NSW Health employs more than 82,000 full-time equivalent doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals. Every single one of them is making a valuable contribution to the wellbeing and experience of patients, family and carers all over New South Wales. That is what we are recognising today, despite the diatribe from the member for Hornsby. It is the ongoing commitment and dedication of our frontline health workers to helping others that ensures communities right across New South Wales receive the care and support they deserve when and where they need it.

Of course, the demands placed on our health system and health workers, particularly in recent years, have been enormous. The New South Wales Government is committed to strengthening and growing the healthcare workforce. Underpinning that is the record investment in Health of more than \$34 billion as part of the 2023-24 budget. As part of the budget, more than \$2.5 billion has been committed over four years towards our frontline healthcare workforce. Our public health system continues to face heavy demand for its services, and this puts further pressure on our frontline health workers. With that comes the very real threat of workforce burnout. That is why, as a government, we are committed to better supporting healthcare workers.

We know we need to recruit more health workers and make sure that we do what we can to retain them. We made an election commitment to hire an additional 500 regional paramedics, and have already announced that 125 of those additional paramedics will arrive in regional, rural and remote communities by the middle of this year. We had a rather superficial argument about the difference between ratios, but our Government has worked with the nurses towards a safe hospital staffing levels taskforce, with representatives from the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association in agreement. We are progressing towards the implementation of this landmark initiative, which will benefit the health system, patients and NSW Health staff.

By providing minimum staffing levels for nurses and midwives on a shift-by-shift basis, we will not only deliver better experiences for patients but also help to share the workload amongst our existing nursing and midwifery workforce. While the initial focus of the taskforce is on emergency departments, it will progressively be rolled out into other areas, including intensive care units and wards currently covered by the existing methodology of nursing hours per patient day. The Minister for Health recently announced that Liverpool Hospital and Royal North Shore Hospital will be the first hospitals to see the implementation of safe staffing levels in their emergency departments.

On behalf of the Government, I extend my thanks to frontline healthcare workers, doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health staff, paramedics and frontline support staff. In particular I thank those from Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial, Lithgow, Nepean and Springwood hospitals, who worked during the festive season at a time when many in the Blue Mountains community chose to take leave. That is the basis of the motion, and I thank the member for Blue Mountains for bringing it to the House.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (14:50):** I thought that a member of the Opposition would speak before me, but I am happy to jump up, particularly following the contribution from the member for Hornsby. He seems to have not noticed that, under the previous Government, frontline health workers left in droves because the previous Government put a wage cap on them. The first way to pay respect to frontline workers is to pay them properly. This Government lifted the wages cap and paid frontline workers properly as soon as it got into government. Health workers do not do a nine-to-five job. The real bravery of health workers is seen in the middle of the night, at three o'clock in the morning. They work hard all through the night. Anyone who has not done shiftwork before would not understand the toll it takes on the body. It takes a tremendous toll on the body, and the thanks those workers got from the previous Government was to have their wages cut.

Members opposite cannot come into the Chamber and complain about parking fees. They were charging nurses, doctors, cleaners and security guards those parking fees. They took it away for the COVID period, and then put it back in. Members opposite cannot complain about parking fees when they did not pay frontline workers a decent wage. Those workers voted with their feet and left the New South Wales hospital system in droves. As usual, what happens with Coalition governments is that a Labor government then has to come back in and re-establish the workforce. That is why the Minister for Health, who is a terrific bloke—he is a real corker—has been adamant about getting more training and more subsidies to get more nurses on the floor. The Government cares about safety in hospitals.

As we heard from the member for Bega, who knows those hospitals extraordinarily well, the Government is introducing three nurses to every occupied emergency department bed. That will start in Royal North Shore Hospital and Liverpool Hospital. A lot of housing has gone into Liverpool and the population has exploded, and those people need the workers there. At night, they will have hundreds of workers going through. That is what Labor governments deliver. Those are the important things that the Government does. I also give a shout-out to our aged-care workers. People underestimate how important they are. In particular, I say a big thank you to the aged-care workers in WallSEND.

I note that today some boffin from City of Newcastle council attacked the member for Wallsend over her support of frontline health workers. There is no greater supporter of frontline health workers than the member for Wallsend. She stood shoulder to shoulder with aged-care workers in Wallsend in 2009 and made sure that facilities stayed open. When nurses were rallying out the front of John Hunter Hospital, who was there? It was not the CEO of City of Newcastle council. I am not sure what his name is. It could be Bath, it could be Neylon or it could be Neylan. He writes a lot of letters under a lot of different names. The member for Wallsend was there, standing shoulder to shoulder with health workers, because she understands how hard they work in regional areas like Wallsend, Broadmeadow, Maitland and Taree. We saw how hard it was on Taree hospital when Bulahdelah hospital was closed down. I suggest that this bloke gets back in his box. If he wants to help, he should get out there and support frontline health workers.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (14:54):** Paragraph (3) of the motion states:

(3) Thanks our frontline healthcare workers and allied health staff for their work throughout the festive season ...

If one wants to see how members opposite thank them, it is there on the opposite side of the Chamber. It is their time to speak, and no-one from the Opposition has turned up to speak about this important issue. It is a scathing example of what Liberal-Nationals Opposition members, if that is what you want to call them, think about frontline health workers. They could not be bothered to speak in debate on the motion. They stand condemned today. We should get the word out as soon as possible and let our frontline health workers know, let our allied health workers know, that that is what they think about them.

I thank the member for Blue Mountains for the motion today. I was not planning on speaking in debate on it, but here we are. No-one from the Opposition could be bothered to turn up and thank our frontline health workers for the work that they have done throughout the festive season and beyond. I give my personal thanks to the frontline health workers in my part of the world. My area was one of the most heavily impacted parts of the world during COVID. Those workers put their lives at risk day in, day out, and I cannot thank them enough. They have gone over and above despite the way they were treated by the previous Government. I give my thanks for what they have done throughout the festive season, but also well beyond that. I say a special thanks to the community health team at Hoxton Park in my electorate. I was out there on "Thank a Nurse Day", I think it was called.

**Ms Charishma Kaliyanda:** International Nurses Day.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** International Nurses Day. I am calling it "Thank a Nurse Day". I am renaming it. I gave those workers cakes and flowers and said, "Thank you for the important work you do." I know that when my firstborn was born some 16, 17 years ago, the workers from that particular facility came out to visit my wife and me to see how things were going because my daughter had a low Apgar score. Thankfully, she has come good and is thriving, but she probably would not have without the support provided by those frontline and allied health workers at Hoxton Park.

I also recognise the commitment of frontline health workers across the State. Once again, they put their lives on the line to save our lives and to make sure that we have a great health system and that we are being taken care of. No doubt, they would have noticed a dramatic change in the way that they are being treated by the Government in the past 12 months. After 12 long years of neglect, they finally have a government that will back them in, support them and make sure they are able to do the best job they possibly can. In closing, I reiterate my opening words and draw all members' attention to the benches on the opposite side of the Chamber. It is empty, with the exception of the member for Vacluse.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** On House duty.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** On House duty. Again, it is scathing. Members opposite stand condemned today. That is how they thank our frontline health workers: They do not turn up and, frankly, they do not care. It is disgraceful.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (14:57):** I speak in debate on the incredibly important motion of the member for Blue Mountains to thank our frontline workers. I see a few members of the Opposition shuffling into the Chamber now after being called out on their absence. To see the lack of respect from members on the opposite side of the Chamber would be disheartening for our broader community and the many frontline workers who rose up, put in hours of work and went above and beyond the call of duty during the pandemic to support the broader community. I note that during the public interest debate yesterday, the member for Oatley and the member for Holsworthy were happy to bandy about the previous Government's investment in bricks and mortar. They were happy to bandy about the development of Liverpool Hospital as a sign of their focus on south-west Sydney and as a sign of some form of investment in south-west Sydney.

But they did not highlight the number of complaints that my office gets about waiting times in emergency departments due to lack of staff because of how they treated our frontline health workers during the pandemic. As

was highlighted by my colleagues on this side of the House, our frontline workers voted with their feet. They left the public health system in droves because of the lack of respect, wages not keeping up with the cost of living and, frankly, the sheer lack of significance placed on the effort they put in every day to keep our community safe and healthy and to make sure that our broader community has what it needs to succeed. That is the difference between our frontline health workers and those opposite: The workers give a crap about our community.

The motion is not just about health workers. As a former health worker, I have a soft spot for health workers, but the motion is also about our emergency services workers. In my first few weeks in this place, I was approached by the hardworking crew of Busby Fire Station, who had been left without a home for the better part of six months until the Labor Government came in and fixed the mess left behind by the Opposition. It could not even be bothered to sign contracts to ensure that the much-needed redevelopment of that fire station was undertaken. Again, that is the lack of respect that the previous Government showed our frontline health workers.

As many of my colleagues have highlighted, as a government, we were elected on the platform of making sure that our frontline workers—whether they be in health or emergency services, whether they be school cleaners or teachers—are given the tools and resources they need to ensure that our broader community is supported effectively. In the 12 months we have been in office, we have made that the centrepiece of every decision we take. It is what people speak to me about as I walk through the streets of my community, because they see the difference. For example, they know that Liverpool has one of the largest hospitals in the Southern Hemisphere, which will be the difference that highlights the needs of that facility. We know that it is not just in the emergency department but in the general wards and other parts of the hospital—and in the community health sector as well—where people have what they need under this Government.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Order! The member for Terrigal will resume his seat.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (15:02):** In reply: We have spent time today discussing a fairly positive motion that does not say how fantastic the Government is. It could have been worded that way. We have taken the time to acknowledge the tireless efforts of our frontline healthcare workers; to acknowledge all the work of our allied health staff, doctors, nurses, paramedics and cleaners; and to acknowledge the contribution they make to our communities. I am always happy to talk about our frontline health workers, as any member in this place should be. For the duration of this debate, the Opposition benches have remained empty—except for the member for Vacluse, who is on House duty. I want to put that on the record.

Let's not forget a few facts. Under the Opposition, the elective surgery waitlist exploded to over 100,000, with more than 17,000 people waiting longer than clinically recommended. Let's not forget that the Liberals and The Nationals closed hospital beds that could have been used by patients but were bed blocked. No wonder patients were waiting longer than ever before for essential services under the Opposition, and no wonder the healthcare workforce left.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Order! The member for Terrigal will come to order. The member for Blue Mountains will be heard in silence for the remainder of the debate or members will be removed from the Chamber.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** On top of all this, the cap on wages under the Opposition made it harder to recruit and keep our essential nurses, paramedics and allied health workers in this State. Yet Opposition members left their benches empty for the duration of this debate and then had the gall to turn up and pretend to care. You are full of pretence, you lot.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Terrigal rises on a point of order.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** I ask that you instruct the member for Blue Mountains to direct her remarks through the Chair and not across the table in a quarrelsome manner.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** There are several quarrelsome members in the Chamber at the moment. The member for Blue Mountains, just like the member for Hornsby, will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** We must acknowledge the appalling record of the Opposition. Today we stand up and thank our frontline healthcare workers for the incredible contributions they make to our community. The

Minns Labor Government now needs to take steps to rebuild the system that the Opposition broke. I thank the member for Bega, the member for Auburn, the member for Leppington and the member for Liverpool for their contributions.

[Interruption]

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Members will allow the member for Blue Mountains to complete her contribution. She will be heard in silence.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** I will ignore the disrespectful diatribe from the member for Hornsby. We have all endured a decade of inaction; members opposite did not offer any progression. We are here to thank our frontline health workers and to put on record how significant they are to the essential wellbeing and good health of our communities. They do a tough job. I know—from a professional, a political and a personal place—how hard our frontline workers work for our communities. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### BACK TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:07):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the previous Government introduced the Back to School Voucher to help families purchase school supplies and provide cost-of-living support.
- (2) Notes that more than 3.4 million Back to School vouchers were redeemed in New South Wales before the program was cut by the Government.
- (3) Supports the continuation of the Back to School vouchers and calls on the Government to reinstate the program immediately to ease cost-of-living pressures for families. I welcome the opportunity to bring this motion before the House today. Central to it is asking the Government to have a heart. In that sense, I relay a meeting I had a few weeks ago at the Fischer Community Leadership Program, where I met Joanne Nicholson. I give a shout-out to all the participants at that leadership program—and particularly to Joanne, whose work with a charity called Tots2Teens is quite inspiring. Part of Tots2Teens is Joanne's program called Classy Kids. It is about giving schoolchildren what they need to go to school. On its website, Classy Kids speaks of providing children with opportunities to flourish in their primary years. When we talk about Back to School vouchers, we talk about providing support to families and young children as they go on that important part of their educational journey and giving them the opportunity to flourish. There are multiple levels of beneficiaries when we provide support to families for their children's education. Joanne Nicholson of Tots2Teens says:

The children will benefit from all being treated as equal, barriers will be dropped, and the expectation will be that everyone attends things, and no-one is left out.

The teachers will benefit with more engaged students, happy learners and all children being treated as equal. The schools will benefit by having greater retention rates.

Joanne makes the point that having that support for students makes disadvantaged families "feel more in control in a world where we need to come together as a village". People like Joanne Nicholson get it. They understand the importance of Back to School vouchers in supporting families. They appreciate the significant impacts of the cost of living. Data from Finder shows that around one-third of Australian families will struggle with back-to-school costs in 2024. Joanne gets it.

Other organisations in my community also get it. The FRRR Back to School Gift Voucher Program is delivered locally by Border Trust and supported locally by Hume Bank. In support of the Back to School Voucher program, Border Trust writes, "We have our own children,"—and I am sure some of those opposite have children—"we know how hard it is for families and we wanted to give everyone the best chance, because if they've got the right stuff they've got the confidence." Organisations such as Border Trust get it. NSW Council of Social Service Acting Chief Executive Ben McAlpine gets it. He has called for the \$150 Back to School Voucher program to be reinstated. He told *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

What New South Wales families need right now is more support, not less.

The Smith Family gets it. In the same article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, a spokesperson for The Smith Family said that at the moment, with the cost-of-living pressures and the cutting of the Back to School Voucher, "sometimes that means prioritising a meal on the table over a school excursion, or an electricity bill over a new pair of school shoes. With housing, food and power costs all rising rapidly, these impossible decisions are becoming more prevalent." As I said, it is about government having a heart and it is about recognising the importance of supporting our young children and families, particularly when one-third of them across the State, and across our nation, are impacted by cost-of-living pressures at this time. The former Liberal-Nationals Government got it as well, and that is why they had the Back to School Voucher in place.

**Mr Jordan Lane:** Who doesn't get it?

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** Who doesn't get it? I will take that interjection. We should all understand the importance of this support. In my electorate alone, at the start of January 2023—before the program was cut—there were 2,807 registrations and 14,000 vouchers issued, meaning over \$700,000 of support was going directly to families. At the end of the day, it comes down to appreciating the importance of that support to families and the opportunities that it provides for our young people, our students, to flourish. It is then a case of asking, as the member for Ryde did, "Who doesn't get it?". The Northern Territory Government—a Labor government—gets it. This year it boosted its Back to School vouchers from \$150 to \$200 for 2024.

**Mr Jordan Lane:** That's a Labor government to get behind.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** That is a Labor government to get behind. I accept that from the member for Ryde. The Northern Territory does not have a budget anywhere near the size of the New South Wales budget. We talk about New South Wales being a powerhouse and yet the Northern Territory Government, with its smaller budget, managed to afford support for families and students, and 95 per cent of Back to School vouchers were redeemed in 2023. The Minister for Education, the Hon. Mark Monaghan, said:

This is one of the things I remember as a teacher that goes to the heart of justice.

The Back to School Voucher program is about the Government having a heart. It is about supporting families. It is about supporting students, giving them opportunities to flourish, and having an appreciation of cost-of-living pressures. And who does not get it? The New South Wales Labor Government does not get it.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (15:14):** This is just another one of the Opposition's cheap attempts to politicise the cost-of-living crisis—a crisis those opposite fail to take any accountability for despite years of wage suppression that directly contributed to it. They fail to mention that the Back to School vouchers were a one-off initiative on the eve of an election in a desperate attempt to buy votes. On 21 June 2022 the Hon. Damien Tudehope, the then finance Minister, said it was, "A one-off, \$150 back-to-school subsidy for every child undertaking primary or secondary school in 2023." This is something that apparently those opposite do not get, because "one-off" is defined in the Oxford dictionary as, "Something done, made or happening only once". In the media release announcing the start of the program, then Treasurer Matt Kean said the program would run from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023.

So I ask the Opposition: Why are we here now? How can there be a continuation of something that, by design and by definition, happens only once? Clearly, this is an unashamed hyper-politicised attack with absolutely no substance—something those opposite resort to time after time. I remind them that this was a program that was not funded beyond a year. A one-off program is not funded beyond a year. I could go into the vast amounts of debt and budget black holes that the former Government handed over to us. However, I know that those opposite do not like hearing about their failures during government, so I will be nice. Instead, while they sit on the Opposition benches, they can hear what this Government is doing about the cost of living. We are alleviating it rather than adding to it.

We are a government that is focused on long-term reform to address the cost of living instead of one-off, cynical, vote-buying exercises. In less than one year, we have allocated a \$1.6 billion preschool relief package. We have initiated a \$650 million toll relief program benefiting over 700,000 motorists. We have implemented a \$1.3 billion package in conjunction with the Federal Government to provide energy relief and targeted energy bill relief for households and small businesses, and we have implemented a sustainable First Home Buyer program where five out of six first home buyers will pay no stamp duty or a concession rate. All of these cost-of-living measures work together to ensure that those doing it toughest during this time have the support they need. The main thing to note here is that it is targeted relief. This Labor Government is for equitable spending. For those opposite, that means the money goes to those who need it most, not to corporate mates and not to the electorates you pick and choose.

When it comes to education, this Government will not be lectured by those opposite. My electorate has the most students in the State, some of them in the most overfilled schools with some of the most overworked teachers. Who was responsible for this? It was the former Liberal-Nationals Government. In the past five years alone of their administration, those opposite sold off four sites that were deemed to be for education in my electorate. It is little wonder that almost every single school in my electorate is massively overpopulated. I mention two schools in particular: Riverbank Public School, which was designed for 800 students and in 2023 enrolled 2,087; and The Ponds High School, which shares the campus and was designed for 1,000 students and in 2023 enrolled over 2,100. There are, on any given day, almost 4,500 students on that campus. The teachers are required to stagger start and stop times to cater for this.

The Liberal-Nationals Government suppressed wages of teachers for 12 long years. When we came into government, we were facing record teacher vacancies and resignations. In fact, for the first time in the State's history, teacher resignations overtook retirements. The former Government showed that it did not care about State school infrastructure. It disregarded our teachers and students and then made a one-off payment on the eve of an election that it had absolutely no intention of reviewing, as demonstrated by the now shadow Treasurer. Ultimately, I find the continued attack on teachers from those opposite most disturbing. The Leader of the Opposition attacked the raise in teachers' pay as a "union pay deal". He suggested it should be scrapped, saying:

Chris Minns' union pay deal will cost the NSW taxpayer \$9.5 billion ... ; this could pay for the Back to School voucher program almost 50 times over.

Not one Liberal or Nationals MP has supported a significant pay rise for teachers, despite the cost-of-living pressures. What is the point of a back-to-school voucher if there are no teachers in the school? They continue to advocate for the underpaying of teachers.

We are not committed to one-off sugar fixes. We are committed to fixing the mess in education created by those opposite. We are dedicated to implementing long-term solutions to the cost-of-living crisis. I have already detailed some of the things that we have implemented under this Government. Lifting the wages cap has had a profound effect throughout our essential workforce and a knock-on effect in the private sector. The Opposition's one-off voucher schemes were designed to buy votes in a cynical attempt to cover up the mess it created in education, and then members opposite have the audacity to say, "Why don't you get it?" I do not understand why they do not get the concept of "one-off" or why they thought that after 12 years of destroying our education system they could say to the electorates on the eve of an election, "Here, we're going to give you \$150. That should bring you back to our side." That is exactly why they are in opposition now.

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (15:21):** I thank the member for Albury for moving this outstanding motion. Before I go into the substance of the motion, I reflect on the 15- or 20-minute diatribe before the motion was moved, when we were lectured by members opposite, complaining that we had walked out on frontline workers. Those same members have walked out on one of the most vulnerable cohorts in this great State, and that is children and their parents. Why do they hate children? Why do they hate their parents? The voucher program was an opportunity to support them, and they have walked out. I find that disgraceful.

I thank the member for Albury for talking about heart, because that is what is missing from this Government's agenda. The Government Whip has joined us in the Chamber. He could not find anybody else outside the Chamber, so he needed to come in and defend the team on his own. He has no reform ideas of his own, but he wants to lecture members on this side of the House who are putting forward ideas from opposition. That is a good idea for him. I will tell the House a bit about the Back to School vouchers. There were 3.5 million-odd vouchers redeemed in the last year of the scheme. It was an extraordinary contribution to families who are struggling with the cost of living in this State. But members opposite do not want to talk about that, despite the Premier seemingly being of the view that they would be continued in his term.

Members opposite talk about how the budget is only a one-year plan. But when they came into government, all of a sudden they became responsible for something. It is this thing called the budget. They are, indeed, able to appropriate funds for programs that the Premier believes to be worthwhile.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Leppington will come to order.

**Mr JORDAN LANE:** Where was the funding to continue the voucher programs for vulnerable children and their families who are struggling with the cost of living?

**Mr Matt Cross:** Missing.

**Mr JORDAN LANE:** I acknowledge the interjection. They are indeed missing. When I was first elected, I spoke about the elegance of vouchers as a policy approach. Government often gets in the way when it provides social support to the vulnerable whereas vouchers are an elegant, targeted and trackable way of assessing a policy's ability to make a difference. That is why vouchers have been lauded not only in the Northern Territory, as the member for Albury said earlier, but also around the world. Countries in other jurisdictions now look to New South Wales for leadership on vouchers, and this Government is lacking that leadership. The vouchers allowed people to buy school supplies for children. What is wrong with that? What is wrong with helping people who are struggling to put petrol in the car and keep the lights on by taking a bit of pressure off at that expensive time of year? Members opposite have over-promised. They are unable to afford—

**Mr Matt Cross:** They have underdelivered.

**Mr JORDAN LANE:** They have undelivered, as the member for Davidson says, and are unable to continue with these sorts of services. I speak about this issue in the context of education, but it is not just Back to

School vouchers that were cut. They have also cut other important services like Active Kids, Creative Kids and, importantly, First Lap vouchers, which were designed to help children how to swim. With an enormous proportion of our community living in coastal areas, what could be more important than teaching children how to swim?

**Mr Matt Cross:** Cage fighting.

**Mr JORDAN LANE:** That is right. There was a prioritisation of cage fighting. That is what this all comes down to—prioritisation. The Government could have prioritised an entire generation of children who could grow up to be the forward, academic, media leaders of the future, but it has disadvantaged them in favour of its priorities, including things like cage fighting. That goes very much to heart and compassion, or lack thereof, and lack of prioritisation and vision. That is why I proudly support the member for Albury in his motion and urge this Government to reconsider its approach. Vouchers work. They are targeted and we can track them. That is good public policy, and it is a shame that the Government has cut them.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (15:25):** Many members may not know that for many years I owned my own business. My business was an education business, and at one stage it employed upwards of 45 people.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** The party of small business.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** We are the party of small business. It became very apparent, as my business grew, that there are two ways to manage a budget. One is to increase incoming funds. In my case, it was to raise the fees of my students. The other way is to lower costs. There is a lot that we would like to fund. There are many schools that need to be built. The member for Leppington, the member for Heathcote and I know that there are lots of things that are desperately needed in our areas and that the Labor Minns Government would like to fund. But those opposite left us with \$188 billion of debt. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to have discussions about a one-off initiative that was not continued. The point of that one-off initiative was to put people back on their feet after COVID.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Order! Members are able to contribute to the debate by seeking the call, not by interjecting across the Chamber. The member for Camden will be heard in silence.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** At the end of the day, it comes down to what will be the most effective thing to help our students learn in the classroom. The number one thing that affects student learning in the classroom—the most critical resource—is teachers. When classes are split, when children are sent to the covered outdoor learning area for lesson after lesson—at one of my local schools, on one Friday, 78 classes sat in the playground due to the complete lack of teachers. In that case, teachers were leaving the system very quickly. That goes to show how out of touch the former Government was. It stripped bare what teachers were doing. It took us coming to government to raise teachers' wages and say to them, "We see you. We value you. We know what you do day in, day out." It is more than teaching reading, writing, maths or music, as the case may be. The thing we remember most about our best teachers is how they made us feel. At the end of the day, if you feel seen and heard and safe, you can learn. It is important to reiterate that no teacher or school would ever let a student go without a resource needed for learning. We have put our money where it would be most effective.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:29):** I thank my friend the member for Albury for bringing this important motion to the House. We on this side of the House will always stand up for families, and we will always back measures that take pressures off the household budget. Figures published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies show that the weekly costs of raising a child range between \$140 and \$170. Many of us as parents know that raising kids is not easy, and it certainly is not cheap. I have two kids myself: Hurricane and Tsunami.

From our and many parents' points of view, the costs for food, clothing, housing, sports, extracurricular activities, child care and school supplies can seem endless and enormous. This is why it is extraordinary that this mean and tricky Government during a cost-of-living crisis has cut the much-loved, much-used and much-needed Back to School vouchers. If there was ever an example of an out-of-touch government, it is this one. People in my electorate and surrounding electorates tell me time and again that they want a government to put people first. Instead, what we see from this Government is cuts, lies and broken promises.

The vouchers were introduced by the former Government for one important reason alone: We knew that families were doing it tough. We know that schooling costs can be a significant drain on the family budget, which is why ripping \$150 per child away from local families is cruel, out of touch, mean and tricky. During a time when families need it most, why go out and take \$150 away from our kids' education, of all things? Some 3.4 million Back to School vouchers were redeemed. I note that the member for Camden and the member for Riverstone are here. How many children in Riverstone used the vouchers? Over 47,000. I am happy to see the member for Camden too. Twenty-four thousand children in Camden used the vouchers.



I say today that we will remind every working family in the electorates of Government members of the cuts this Government has made to the budgets of working families. Millions of families across New South Wales are missing out on \$150 to put towards stationary, backpacks, lunchboxes, water bottles, books, laptops and much more. School kids should not have to go to school with holes in their shoes, old backpacks or broken laptops, thanks to the cruelty of this mean and tricky Government. It should bring back the school vouchers once and for all.

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (15:33):** It is a pleasure to contribute to this non-debate by summarising the key arguments. The hypocrisy of the other side is almost as great as its hyperbole. We have heard about the "global educational leadership" shown by the former Government in the education space through the Back to School vouchers. The top three countries and the Asian countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment will look at the vouchers as the world's best educational practice, surely! Members opposite should get a Nobel prize for educational excellence.

But the hypocrisy comes down to this: No matter how much they talk about how great the voucher program is, it was not in their budget. I was wondering why; I was a new MP, and it did not make sense to me. I thought maybe they had forgotten, that it was a victim of version control, that it was in version 2.5 but not in version 2.6 and the former Treasurer just hit "Accept all" and it just was not there. But I thought that even that level of incompetence could not be possible for the Opposition. We know the reason why: They never intended it to be there. It was always intended to be a one-off.

The second point I say in summary is that the Opposition's approach to the Back to School vouchers is a sign of its financial mismanagement. Of course, we would love to fund everything. But we cannot, because we must be financially responsible. As I have said before, we are in the middle of a financial turnaround job for the disaster we have inherited. I have talked before about the private equity leveraged by the model of running the New South Wales economy brought to us by Perrottet, Kean and associates, the wolves of Macquarie Street. Their fun model for running the economy was about selling off private assets, loading up the State's balance sheet with debt and suppressing public sector wages, including teachers' wages. That decimated the profession. That is exactly where the focus of the education policy of the New South Wales Government is now. The third point again goes to fiscal responsibility. We are not only in a cost-of-living crisis; we are also in an inflation crisis. What happens when you have a \$250 million untargeted cash splash? It is inflationary. So I will move an amendment to this motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting (2) and (3), inserting instead:

- (2) Notes this was announced by the former Government as a "one-off" subsidy with no funding allocated beyond 30 June 2023.
- (3) Notes the former Liberal-Nationals Government left New South Wales with record deficits and the biggest debt in New South Wales history, while leaving New South Wales families to rely on a "one-off" program that it had zero intention of continuing.
- (4) Supports the Minns Labor Government's cost-of-living relief measures for families across New South Wales, including the announcement of 100 public preschools and \$1.6 billion in preschool fee relief.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** I seek leave to make a contribution.

**Leave not granted.**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:38):** In reply: I thank all members who have engaged in the debate: the member for Riverstone, the member for Ryde, the member for Camden, the member for Oatley and the member for Strathfield. I note that the member for Terrigal and the member for Davidson have been gagged in this debate. And to the member for Oatley's point, we have come down today with a simple request: to recognise the impact of the cost of living on families in New South Wales. We are hearing from an arrogant and lazy Labor Government that calls supporting families a "cash splash". The member for Riverstone would have members believe that supporting families is cynical. They were his words. The Labor Government is targeting relief but it does not target families. The member for Camden has been quite candid. She said that Labor would like to fund the vouchers, but it will not because it has a host of election promises that it did not tell the community were unfunded.

Labor members said, "This won't cost anything," and there was no line in the budget; but then, after they formed government, they said, "There are costs. We have to do some cost-cutting." The member for Strathfield said that the Government will be financially responsible—by leaving families out in the cold. I come back to the simple point that the Northern Territory Labor Government understands but the New South Wales Labor Government does not: It is about heart; it is about supporting families; and it is about giving educational opportunities to young people so they can flourish. I commend the motion to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Albury has moved a motion, to which the member for Strathfield has moved an amendment.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: Under Standing Order 139, I ask that the amendment is ruled out of order.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I will seek advice from the Clerk. I will hear further from the member for Coffs Harbour.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Pursuant to Standing Order 139, the second, third and fourth paragraphs of the amendment exceed the scope of the original motion.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** It is not a matter of exceeding the scope; it is a matter of being in scope, which the amendment is. I rule that the amendment is in order.

The question is that the amendment of the member for Strathfield be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....49

Noes .....36

Majority.....13

#### AYES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, L  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Davis, D  
Dib, J  
Donato, P  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Hagarty, N (teller)

Hannan, J  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Holland, M  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kamper, S  
Kirby, W  
Li, J  
McDermott, H  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R

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

#### NOES

Amon, R  
Ayyad, T  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Davies, T  
Di Pasqua, S  
Griffin, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M

James, T  
Kean, M  
Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Marshall, A  
McGirr, J  
Perrottet, D  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D

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

#### PAIRS

Anderson, K

Hornery, S

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....50  
 Noes .....36  
 Majority.....14

**AYES**

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

Hagarty, N (teller)  
 Hannan, J  
 Harris, D  
 Harrison, J  
 Haylen, J  
 Hoenig, R  
 Holland, M  
 Kaliyanda, C  
 Kamper, S  
 Kirby, W  
 Li, J  
 McDermott, H  
 McKeown, K  
 Mehan, D  
 Minns, C  
 O'Neill, M  
 Park, R

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

**NOES**

Amon, R  
 Ayyad, T  
 Clancy, J  
 Cooke, S  
 Coure, M  
 Cross, M  
 Crouch, A (teller)  
 Davies, T  
 Di Pasqua, S  
 Griffin, J  
 Henskens, A  
 Hodges, M

James, T  
 Kean, M  
 Kemp, M  
 Lane, J  
 Marshall, A  
 McGirr, J  
 Perrottet, D  
 Petinos, E  
 Preston, R  
 Provest, G  
 Roberts, A  
 Saunders, D

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

**PAIRS**

Hornery, S

Anderson, K

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

*Bills*

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

**Returned**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment.

**Consideration in Detail**

**Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment.**

*Schedule of amendment referred to in message of an earlier hour*

**No. 1 Exemption regulations**

Page 4, Schedule 1, proposed Schedule 10, section 3(2), line 8. Omit "consult with". Insert instead "obtain the concurrence of".

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (15:57):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendment be agreed to.

I acknowledge and thank everyone in the other place who contributed to the amended bill for the cooperative approach they have taken. It was important to pass the bill in a form that would survive challenge, which I think we have been able to achieve, to determine that the Parliament has the power to legislate in the way that it has. I acknowledge that a lot of members made strong and sensible contributions to the debate on the amendment and suggestions regarding the legislation and the issue in general. The legislation implements the Government's policy for offshore mining and petroleum exploration and recovery. I thank the members of the Opposition, the crossbench and The Greens who have brought the bill to its conclusion today.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (15:58):** I thank the Minister for his time and for bringing the bill to the House with the amendment. I also thank the member for Pittwater for his work on a private member's bill that he introduced last year, and I thank the member for Manly for his advocacy. I thank those who are on the environment and planning committee with me. I am glad that we have reached this very important point in the process. The Opposition agrees to the amendment.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that the Legislative Council amendment be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** It being 4.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the petitions take-note debate.

*Petitions*

**RANDOM BREATH TESTING**

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

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (16:00):** I acknowledge the representatives of the NRMA in the gallery today: Sam Giddings, NRMA's Group Head of Government Relations; Dimitra Vlahomitros, NRMA's Road Safety Expert; and Rob Giltinan, NRMA's Group Director of Policy and Public Affairs. I particularly thank Mr Giddings for initiating this important petition in November last year. It is an honour to speak on behalf of the 25,083 people who signed this petition, bringing a critical issue to the attention of the House.

The number of people who have lost their lives on New South Wales roads has increased considerably, and drink driving continues to be a major factor in road crashes and deaths. Ensuring that we have highly visible policing on roads and significantly increased random breath testing [RBT] rates is strongly endorsed by the NRMA, but RBT rates are down 36 per cent from 2019, which was pre-pandemic. To achieve best practices and combat drink driving, the number of RBTs needs to be set at a minimum of 1.1 tests per licence holder per year. The petitioners now call on the Government to attract and retain police to ensure that visible policing is increased and that RBT rates are increased. In 2020 Austroads recommended the establishment of 1.1 random breath tests per driver per year as best practice.

One of the most difficult duties of a police officer, and one that never gets easier to do over time, is delivering what police refer to as a death message. As a former police officer, I am confident in saying that most police can identify with the feeling of anxiousness when knocking on the door of someone's home and delivering the tragic news to them that their loved one has died in a motor vehicle collision. Road trauma has a ripple effect that extends beyond victims and their families. Unfortunately, it has been well reported in recent times that the road toll has escalated noticeably on previous years. Why is that? Police visibility has a clear impact on driving behaviour on our roads. I think almost all members would agree that seeing a police vehicle prompts a driver to take their right foot off the accelerator and check the speedometer.

It is clear that an overt police presence has a positive impact on driver behaviour. So, too, does overt random breath testing. Other than the detection of drink drivers, this police function is also a strong deterrent. Unfortunately, to be effective, high visibility policing and RBT are reliant on sufficient police resources to perform these functions. It is concerning that in 2023 the ratio of police officers to population in New South Wales dropped to 20 officers per 10,000 population. That is the lowest it has been in the past 21 years. I accept that there have been challenges in police recruitment, which is an issue that predated this Government. I commend the police Minister for incentivising police recruitment, which we all hope addresses policing shortages.

The retention of police is equally important and, historically, has been overlooked and not properly addressed. However, the increasing responsibilities being placed on police and the decreasing relative numbers among their ranks have no doubt impacted on the frequency of RBT and the ability to perform overt proactive policing. The RBT data I have obtained shows that the rate of annual random breath tests per New South Wales licence holder has slipped from a high of 1.07 in 2019, followed by 0.5 in 2020 and 0.48 in 2021. Post-COVID, the statistics did not significantly rebound, with just 0.65 tests per licence holder in 2022. RBT data recently supplied by the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism in written response to this petition was that 3.5 million tests were conducted for 2023. Unfortunately, that maintains an unacceptably low rate for the approximate six million licence holders in New South Wales—well below the 1.1 threshold for best practice established by Austroads.

I turn to alcohol-related fatalities. In 2023 it is estimated that 57 people were killed where alcohol was involved in the crash, and 48 of those deaths were in the regions. With 36 people killed in 2022 where alcohol was involved in the crash, that represents a fatality increase of 58 per cent in 2023 over the 2022 figures. For the 12 months ending June 2023, there were 274 serious injuries where alcohol was involved in the crash. From 1 January 2024 to the end of February 2024, two people have been killed where alcohol was involved in the crash. That statistic will be significantly impacted by the alcohol-related data lag. These are more than numbers; they are people's lives. I want people to return safely from their drive home instead of police officers knocking on doors to deliver tragic news.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for Orange. As always, we thank him for his service in blue.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:05):** I thank the very passionate member for Orange for presenting this petition to the House. I acknowledge the presence of the police Minister in the Chamber. The member for Orange, being a former police officer, knows very well the importance of road safety. Road safety is something that impacts the whole community in one way or another and it is good to see it being recognised in this place today. I acknowledge the impact that the loss of lives and serious injuries can have, not only on families and communities but also on our first responders who attend fatal and serious injury collisions. The NSW Police Force does a fantastic job in keeping our community safe. They are out there 24/7 maintaining an active and visible presence on our roads and engaging with road users across the full breadth of policing responsibilities.

The NSW Police Force addresses a wide range of road safety issues, including speeding, driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol, driving while fatigued or distracted, not driving to the road conditions, and not wearing a seatbelt. The NSW Road Safety Strategy focuses on four key areas, which include safe speeds, safe roads, safe vehicles and safe people. As part of the safe speeds focus, police are maintaining a highly visible presence and conducting enforcement activities focusing on locations and individuals where police know risk is increased. Police are also focusing on repeat offenders, introducing vehicle and licence sanctions and undertaking targeted enforcement activities.

The NSW Police Force advises that speed remains the prevailing and significant contributing factor to serious and fatal crashes on our roads. Last year, police detected a staggering 638,600 offences on our roads, the majority of which were for speeding. According to NSW Police Force data, speeding is the most significant behaviour factor contributing to fatalities on New South Wales roads, followed by illicit drugs, with alcohol being the third highest behavioural factor. Random breath tests [RBTs] are important tools for road policing, and they will always form part of the NSW Police Force road policing approach. On average, our police are conducting around 9,500 RBTs every day. But RBTs are not a silver bullet. They are one of many tools that police have available to them to tackle the concerning behaviours which are contributing to fatalities and serious injuries on our roads.

The New South Wales Government is deeply committed to road safety, and it acknowledges that we need to come at this complex issue from all angles. The Government has been active in introducing new road safety measures, including the expanded use of mobile phone detection cameras that will this year begin enforcing the use of seatbelts. I share an example of one of the major road safety operations that police are running across the State to target alcohol and drug driving. Last month police shut down one of Sydney's biggest motorways to undertake a significant road safety operation, with RBTs blocking every exit of the M5 Motorway from Revesby to Menangle.

From Friday 9 February to Saturday 10 February 2024, the NSW Police Force ran Operation Nabbed, targeting drug and alcohol driving offences and general road compliance across multiple commands. During the one-day operation, police conducted 22,279 random breath tests, which resulted in 87 people being charged with prescribed concentration of alcohol offences. Police also conducted 1,105 roadside drug tests, resulting in 91 positive drug tests. There is no doubt that RBTs save lives and make our roads safer for all users. RBTs will

always be an important and effective tool to reduce the road toll. I once again thank the member for Orange and the 25,083 petitioners for bringing the matter to the attention of the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Before I call the member for Bathurst, I acknowledge that Katrina Hodgkinson, the former member for Cootamundra, is in the gallery. It is wonderful to see her again.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (16:10):** I also welcome the former member for Cootamundra to the Parliament of New South Wales. I acknowledge that the current member for Cootamundra is in the Chamber. I also acknowledge the members of the NRMA in the gallery. On behalf of the people of New South Wales, I thank them for their work in bringing the petition to this House to make sure that it is raised in an effective manner. I begin by acknowledging all members of the NSW Police Force for the incredible service that they provide to this State day in, day out. It has been 42 years since random breath testing was introduced in New South Wales. The introduction of RBTs has changed the culture of Australians. It is no longer acceptable to have a few beers and then drive home. It is no longer acceptable to say to mates, "Let's have one more for the road." Instead, plan Bs have become the new norm.

Since inception, RBTs have helped New South Wales police take over one million drunk drivers off our roads, saving countless lives from tragedy. It was a highlight of my time as police Minister to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of RBTs in New South Wales. Random breath testing has become a critical tool in detecting and deterring drink driving offences in this State. New South Wales was one of the first jurisdictions in the world to implement random breath testing, and the statistics speak for themselves. They have saved thousands of lives over that time. Going back to the 1980s, around 30 per cent of fatalities on our roads occurred because people were drink driving. Today that ratio has almost halved, but recent data from the NRMA shows that it is still not low enough. I think all members would agree with that.

People are still making the reckless choice to get behind the wheel of a car after drinking and, as a result, are causing traumatic crashes that usually result in the unnecessary loss of life. Despite its proven effectiveness, visible policing on New South Wales roads faces challenges, including resource constraints and staff shortages. Adequate funding and support from the Government is essential to addressing those challenges and ensuring that police officers are equipped to carry out their duties effectively. By investing in recruiting and retaining police officers, the Government can enhance the visibility of policing on roads and contribute to reducing drink driving incidents and fatalities.

Recent statistics regarding road fatalities in New South Wales paint a concerning picture. Last year 351 deaths occurred on roads in New South Wales, up by 80 compared with the previous year. That is almost one per day. It is a considerable increase, with drink driving emerging as a major contributing factor to road crashes and deaths. The NRMA's call for at least 1.1 RBT tests per licence holder per year is based on the idea that the more that drivers see them set up on the side of the road, the more likely they are to not risk drink driving. Given that drink driving is one of the top three causes of fatalities and serious injuries on roads in New South Wales, that may very well be a step in the right direction. Random breath testing and random drug testing is crucial to finding the solution to combatting drink and drug driving.

New South Wales police, including the traffic and highway patrol commands, are doing the best they can. They maintain a highly visible presence on our main highways, neighbourhoods and back roads all year round, as well as conducting "blitz" and holiday operations to target drink and drug driving at busy times of the year, like long weekends and holiday seasons. Their message is simple: Stop it or cop it. It is bizarre to me that in 2024 people still think it is okay to get behind the wheel of a car intoxicated. Reducing accidents also lies in taking responsibility for yourself, your family, your passengers and every other road user. The police will catch people, but we should be focusing on a change in attitude and behaviour from all drivers in New South Wales to not drive under the influence in the first place.

Road safety is a shared responsibility that requires a concerted effort from government agencies, police and the community. The increasing number of lives lost on New South Wales roads and the prevalence of drink driving highlight the urgent need for more RBTs and RDTs to occur. We know that highly visible policing and increasing random testing rates will deter drink driving, prevent accidents and save lives. That will ensure that everyone gets to their destination safely.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (16:16):** I, too, acknowledge the impact that the loss of lives and serious injuries can have not only on families and communities but also on our first responders who attend fatal and serious injury collisions. I thank the member for Orange for bringing the petition to the attention of the House, and I acknowledge the position of the NRMA. To reiterate previous comments, one life lost is one too many. We all need to work together when it comes to road safety. The NSW Police Force does a fantastic job. Police are out there 24/7 maintaining an active and visible presence on our roads and engaging with road users across the full breadth of policing responsibilities.

To reiterate what the member for Mount Druitt said, the NSW Police Force is still conducting a huge amount of RBTs every year, both as part of targeted operations and through general police duties. Last year the NSW Police Force conducted over 3½ million random breath tests and 160,000 roadside drug tests. That is a feature of the NSW Police Force "anytime, anywhere" approach to policing people driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Random breath tests are an important tool for police, but they are just one of many tools available to police and their road safety partners. As the member for Mount Druitt said, police are seeing a range of concerning issues on our roads, not just driving while under the influence of alcohol.

Our police will continue to respond to the spectrum of road safety issues, but we cannot lose sight of the responsibility that each road user has when they get behind the wheel of a car or on a motorbike. They have a responsibility to themselves, to their passengers and to their fellow road users. The police are on our roads 24/7 doing intelligence-led, targeted road safety operations, as well as general deterrence. But the simple reality is that they cannot be everywhere, which is why it is absolutely essential that road users take responsibility for their actions. Every road user has an obligation to themselves and their fellow road users to not speed, to not drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, to drive to the road conditions, to wear a seatbelt and to take a break if they are fatigued or distracted.

The New South Wales Government is acutely aware that it needs to recruit and retain more police. The former Government left us a Police Force that was 1,500 officers short when we took government. For years, we have seen too many police leaving the NSW Police Force, and it is no small task to fill the gap. In fact, on the South Coast, I have police stations that can no longer be manned. That is why, in October last year, the New South Wales Government made the historic announcement that, from class 362, which will commence in March 2024, student police officers will be paid to study while at the academy. The people of the South Coast are so happy about this. I have young people who have just left year 12 signing up for that course. That announcement is already having a major impact, with application numbers more than doubling compared with the same time last year.

As a regional MP, road safety is really important to me. A third of the New South Wales population resides in regional areas, but just over two-thirds of the State's road fatalities take place in our regions, including urban centres in regional areas. The impact of road trauma on regional communities is profound. Every time I hear of an accident on the highway, I think, "Do I know that person?" It impacts the community, and it also impacts the first responders who are showing up to those crashes. I will give an example of some of the major road safety operations that police are running across the State to target alcohol and drug driving.

The NSW Police Force's Operation Katana ran from 1 September to 31 December 2023 to target speeding, drink and drug driving, mobile phone and other traffic offences in response to last year's road incidents. Operation Katana saw officers conduct more than 1,137,000 random breath tests, with 4,339 people charged with drink driving, and 73,657 random drug tests, which returned 6,312 positive detections. I thank the member for Orange for bringing the petition to the House, and I recognise how important road safety is for our communities.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (16:21):** I thank the NRMA for bringing the petition forward and making it happen. As a proud NRMA member for over 30 years, I declare an interest, but this is the kind of advocacy I want to see from my membership and from my NRMA. I offer a sincere thank you to the member for Orange for bringing the petition forward and taking carriage of it. One of our roles in this Chamber is to show leadership, work together, work across the floor and create solutions. After talking to many police and local area commanders whom I am familiar with, I sincerely believe there are some very simple solutions we can very quickly work together on and put forward.

I offer an opportunity to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism to get together, put a timeline of 12 months on this and get some stuff done, because it is a serious issue. We know that random breath testing works. We know it is a critical part of road safety. It is key to road safety and saving lives, and we need to make sure we do not lose sight of that. I am offering the opportunity to work together on this and put a simple timeline on it, because there are some simple solutions. I cannot offer enough thanks to the uniformed police who do the work on this and to the NRMA for putting forward the petition and highlighting the issue. As members can hear, we all take it seriously. We all know there are solutions, and we want to get on with it and fix the problem. Again, I thank the member for Orange for bringing the petition forward.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (16:23):** In response: I thank all the previous speakers for their contributions to the debate. In particular, I thank the member for Orange for bringing the petition to the attention of the House, and I recognise his firsthand experience on the issue. As a self-described former New South Wales police officer, he will know better than most the role of police when it comes to road safety as well as the impact that road trauma has on our police and first responders. I too would like to acknowledge the impact that the loss of lives and serious injuries have on our communities and on our first responders. I acknowledge everyone who signed the petition. I know so many lives are touched by road trauma.

As the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, I speak firsthand to the deep commitment across the New South Wales Government when it comes to road safety. I acknowledge the leadership of the Minister for Roads, John Graham, and the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the member for Maitland. Much has already been said about the fantastic job the NSW Police Force do, but it would be remiss of me, as the police Minister, not to take the opportunity to thank members of the NSW Police Force for everything they do on our roads and beyond. As we have already heard, police are conducting a significant volume of random breath tests [RBTs] across New South Wales, employing an "anywhere, anytime" strategy. They are running significant operations right across the State targeting the full spectrum of road safety issues including speeding, drug and alcohol driving, heavy vehicles and vehicle safety.

RBTs form an important part of the police's approach to road safety enforcement, but, as driver behaviours evolve, ongoing research is required to ensure we keep pace with emerging trends and issues. I am very pleased that the NSW Police Force is working with Monash University to better understand what is happening on our roads. We heard earlier from the member for Mount Druitt, and fantastic Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism—I am sure to say that in the House—about the police approach to speeding, which police advise me is the most significant contributor to road safety. We heard from the member for South Coast, who is a passionate advocate for her community, about the steps the New South Wales Government is taking to recruit and retain more police—particularly in our regional areas, which we know are impacted by road trauma. We all have the same goal here: We want people to get home safely. We need to continue this conversation. My door is always open to members opposite and to the NRMA.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (16:26):** In reply: I thank all members who spoke in the debate: the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Bathurst, the member for South Coast, the member for Wakehurst and the police Minister. I also acknowledge a lot of other members who would like to have spoken but, due to the standing orders governing petitions, could not. They are the member for Murray; the member for Wagga Wagga, who wanted me to indicate that he has been an NRMA member for 40 years—I think he deserves a special badge—the member for Davidson; and the member for Castle Hill, who is a former police officer and said that he was working for the force back in 1980 when random breath testing [RBT] was introduced. I think George Paciullo, the former member for Liverpool, introduced RBT. I was only eight at the time, but I still remember. RBT has come a long way in those 40-odd years, and the culture has shifted in our communities.

There is still a lot more to do, and I thank the NRMA for its advocacy on the issue. When the NRMA approached me a couple of months ago about taking on the petition, I was only too happy to do it. It is an important issue affecting our communities. In my view, too many people are killed on our roads every year. As we heard from the member for Bathurst, we had nearly one fatality per day last year, which is too many. Regional members hear of it all too often in their local communities; fatalities are disproportionately higher in the regions. It is often someone we know in the community or, if we do not know them, there is one degree of separation and someone we know knows them. It is a prevalent issue that we must do more about. I commend the NRMA for taking the initiative and getting up the petition with 20,000+ signatures to allow debate on the matter. I commend the petition to the House.

**Petition noted.**

### *Bills*

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

### **Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment. With the indulgence of the House, I thank everybody involved. This is a good bill that will save lives. We do not know how many, but we know it will save and change lives. I thank members for their support for the bill.

## **ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (STRONGER REGULATION AND PENALTIES) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Trish Doyle, on behalf of Mr Jihad Dib, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:31):** On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.



The Government is pleased to introduce the Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024. This bill is the largest environment protection amendment bill since the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] was created in 1991. The bill makes urgent changes to protect the environment of New South Wales and the health of the State's people. It increases penalties for those accused and found guilty of environmental crime. The recent discovery of asbestos-contaminated mulch in New South Wales has been alarming and has triggered one of the largest investigations the EPA has undertaken in recent decades. To date this has included the deployment of 130 EPA staff, support from agencies like Fire and Rescue and testing of over 340 sites, costing into the millions.

While those investigations are still underway, it is clear that there are gaps in EPA legislation that need to be addressed. These gaps have been present for many years; the asbestos situation across New South Wales has made them starker. The Government went to the election with the promise of an EPA "with teeth". This is our first step in strengthening environmental regulation. This bill amends several environment protection Acts to strengthen environment legislation and ensure the EPA has the right frameworks and powers to deter environmental crimes and respond to pollution incidents. This includes increased penalties, new investigation powers and recall powers, improved protections for the public including a "name and shame" provision, and new offences and penalties to tackle illegal dumping. These changes will ensure that our EPA remains a best-practice environmental regulator.

I now turn to the provisions of the bill. The bill makes changes to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, or POEO Act; the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991; the Pesticides Act 1999; the Protection from Harmful Radiation Act 1990; the Dangerous Goods (Road and Rail Transport) Act 2008; the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997; the Land and Environment Court Act 1979; and the Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Act 2021. It also makes consequential amendments to other Acts and regulations to give effect to those changes.

I turn to increasing penalties. The bill proposes much-needed increases to penalties for environmental offences. Penalties for serious environmental offences have not changed since 2005. Some penalties no longer act as a deterrent to environmental crime and they lag behind other jurisdictions. Most importantly, many current penalties do not reflect the seriousness of the offences. Therefore, this bill will increase the maximal penalties in the POEO Act, the Pesticides Act 1999, the Protection from Harmful Radiation Act 1990 and the Dangerous Goods (Road and Rail Transport) Act 2008.

Changes include doubling the maximum penalty for the most serious offences, known as tier 1 offences, to \$10 million for corporations and \$2 million for individuals. Maximum penalties for important tier 2 offences will also increase. Tier 2 offences involving asbestos will increase from \$2 million to \$4 million for corporations and from \$500,000 to \$1 million for individuals. These increases are designed to ensure the maximum penalties remain fair and proportionate to the harm that environmental crimes can cause. The bill will also increase penalty notice amounts—tier 3 offences—to further deter individuals and corporations. Tier 3 offences, such as licence breaches and water pollution, currently have a \$15,000 on-the-spot fine for corporations and a \$7,500 penalty for individuals. These are simply too low to deter poor practices and are often factored in as the cost of doing business.

For common offences under the POEO Act, the bill will enable penalty notice fines to increase by 50 per cent in the case of second or subsequent offences. In December 2023 the New South Wales Legislative Council inquiry into current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales recommended increasing the maximum penalty for tier 3 offences under the POEO Act to ensure companies are held to account. We have accepted this recommendation and are making these changes through this bill.

Recent asbestos-contaminated mulch issues highlight that the current penalties for offences relating to resource recovery orders and exemptions are inadequate. With the current mulch investigation costs now into the millions, the current penalties of \$44,000 for failing to follow resource recovery orders do not reflect the potential for serious harm. Moving these offences from the Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Regulation 2014 to the POEO Act will enable increased penalties of up to \$2 million to apply, or \$4 million for offences involving asbestos. Daily penalties will also apply. The bill also introduces new penalty amounts for littering and small-scale illegal dumping.

The bill proposes the introduction of a power to enable the EPA to issue environmental recall notices. Currently the EPA lacks the regulatory powers to issue a broad recall of material that may be posing this risk. To address this, the bill will amend the POEO Act to enable the EPA, with the approval of the Minister, to issue recall notices to persons or businesses involved in a supply chain that have distributed substances that pose a risk to human health or the environment.

The bill will amend the POEO Act to give the EPA greater powers to warn the public about dodgy operators and matters of concern. Public warning powers are already available under fair trading and food safety legislation to protect the people of New South Wales, and it makes sense to extend this to environment protection legislation. For example, people hire waste removal companies to cheaply dispose of waste, not knowing these businesses or individuals have a record of illegally disposing of this waste on public land or that of innocent landholders. A "name and shame" power will allow the public to be notified of activities or people that are subject to complaints or have been involved in pollution incidents. This also helps to level the playing field for the majority of operators that are doing the right thing.

The bill introduces amendments to help strengthen investigation powers and support early incident response. The recent asbestos events have demonstrated the utility of proactive preliminary investigations to quickly test substances of concern and secure sites if concerns are identified. To ensure that the EPA can quickly identify if there may be a pollution incident, the bill amends the POEO Act to introduce a new power to issue preliminary investigation notices. The bill also introduces an offence under the POEO Act for failing to comply with a preliminary investigation notice. The bill also amends the authorised officer seizure power to make it possible for officers to do their jobs and seize anything that they reasonably suspect has the potential to present a risk of harm to human health or the environment.

The complexity of the matters that the EPA regulates often involves related incidents across multiple premises—for example, the stockpiling of more than 5,000 tonnes of hazardous soft plastics in over 15 separate stockpiles following the failed REDcycle collection program. To streamline the EPA's response to incidents occurring at multiple premises, the bill amends the POEO Act to make it clear that a pollution incident can relate to a single premises or multiple premises, including premises in more than one local government area.

To ensure that existing clean-up notices are used in the most effective way, the bill also expands the definition of "clean-up action" to include testing or environmental monitoring and providing results to the appropriate regulatory authority. The bill will also allow the EPA to apply to the New South Wales Land and Environment Court to prevent serial and serious offenders from applying for an environment protection licence. Currently, those who are unfit to hold an environment protection licence can still apply for a licence. The EPA must prove that the applicant is not fit and proper before their licence application can be rejected. This is simply an inefficient use of publicly funded resources. The bill will enable the New South Wales Land and Environment Court, when sentencing an offender that has a poor compliance record, to prohibit them from applying for a licence or any involvement in licensed activities for a specified period.

The bill takes stronger action on illegal dumping. Amendments will help public land managers to tackle the issue of small-scale illegal dumping. That is a significant and persistent problem for public land managers, particularly local councils, but also a range of government agencies. It occurs frequently and, due to its covert nature, is difficult to prevent and regulate, and costly to clean up. Councils are collectively spending in excess of \$20 million per year on managing illegal dumping. The bill proposes amendments to deter, prevent and clean up dumping. Illegal dumping is usually treated as a littering offence. However, the fines for littering offences are too low to deter small-scale dumping offenders.

The bill creates new offences specifically designed to target small-scale illegal dumping and introduces penalties appropriate to the harm. Maximum penalties will be \$50,000 for corporations and \$25,000 for individuals. On-the-spot fines can also apply. If the waste is dumped in sensitive places, such as national parks, State forests, parks, beaches, childcare centres, hospitals or schools, corporations could face maximum penalties of \$100,000 and \$50,000 for individuals. The bill introduces new powers for authorised officers and also expands the clean-up notice provisions so they can clearly be used for littering and illegal dumping. Local councils have called for reform to regulation of illegal dumping. The amendments in the bill answer those calls and extend these improvements to other public land managers.

Lastly, the bill proposes a range of smaller amendments to ensure that our environment protection legislation remains best practice. Amendments clarify the EPA's existing statutory duties and functions to regulate the threats of climate change, reflecting the recent court decision in *Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action Incorporated v Environment Protection Authority* in 2021. It increases the jurisdictional limit for prosecutions brought in the Local Court. It amends regulation-making powers to enable the EPA to make further regulations on specific issues, such as allowing the establishment of a waste classifier accreditation scheme. These proposals will help to clarify existing functions and powers, reduce administrative burden and fix loopholes.

The bill is just the first step in how this Government will strengthen environmental legislation. The passing of the bill will send a strong message to those who feel they can operate outside the law and reflects the commitment of this Government to protecting the environment and the people of New South Wales. We will hold environmental criminals to account and ensure that we have the most effective penalties and regulatory tools to do so. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Community Recognition Statements*

**ENGADINE DRAGONS RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (16:45):** Mental health is not always an easy subject to talk about, especially for younger members of our society. Fifteen per cent of young people aged 18 to 24 experience high or very high levels of psychological distress. That is why it is so fantastic to see the Engadine Dragons Junior Rugby League Club taking action to help open up those conversations and make sure that mental wellbeing gets the priority that it deserves. In 2021 the club launched Mental Fitness 4 Life—an initiative that adds education around mental fitness to footy skills. It has also included workshops on how boys and girls can look after their mates and themselves during tough times. The club registers players from two to 16, which is a crucial developmental stage for our young people in developing the mental resilience skills that they will be able to utilise for the rest of their lives. Young people of this age group are exactly the target demographic who need programs such as this. Congratulations, Engadine Dragons.

**IRENE CHEUNG**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (16:46):** I bring to the attention of the House an extraordinary local resident and volunteer in Marsfield, Irene Cheung. Irene and I had the pleasure of meeting some months ago upon my partner, Natalie, and I finding a stray kitten that we struggled enormously to rehome. Irene is part of a volunteer committee, the Mini Kitty Commune, that I have spoken about in this Parliament before. Irene represents the local Ryde area and beyond. She literally takes stray animals into her own home, cares for them and supports them until they are able to find permanent fosters to take them on and adopt them. It is an extraordinary service. It is something that I was not aware of until I had this experience. It is a real reflection of some of the wonderful work that happens—often under the radar—not just in my community of Ryde, but right across this great State. I thank Irene for the work she does—particularly with Henry, who I understand is now adopted successfully. Thanks, Irene.

**VIETNAMESE LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (16:47):** On 16, 17 and 18 February 2024 I had the pleasure of attending the Vietnamese Lunar New Year (Tet) Festival, which was well organised by the Vietnamese Community in Australia NSW Chapter [VCA-NSW] at the Fairfield Showground. The festival was a lively and vibrant event, offering a diverse array of experiences. Attendees had the pleasure of exploring numerous food stalls and information kiosks; enjoying live music, cultural entertainment and festival rides; and seeing firecrackers, fireworks, lion dancing and much more. On the second day, Saturday 17 February, at the official ceremony was the New South Wales Premier, Chris Minns, along with some of my State parliamentary colleagues, who included the member for Leppington, the member for Liverpool, the member for Parramatta and the member for Blacktown, and Federal MPs, who included Chris Bowen, Jason Clare and Tony Burke, as well as many local councillors and councillors from elsewhere in New South Wales. It was truly wonderful to witness the presence of notable figures enhancing the festive atmosphere and creating lasting memories for all in attendance. I congratulate President Dr Thang Ha and all the VCA-NSW team for successfully organising this community and cultural event.

**TRIBUTE TO GEORGE CRAVEN**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:48):** The Central Coast has sadly lost one of its few remaining World War II veterans with the recent passing of the wonderful George Craven at the age of 99. It was Anzac Day 2015 when I, as the newly elected member for Terrigal, first had the pleasure of meeting George. George was only 18 years old when he enlisted and proudly served in the Australian Army from 1943 to 1948 as a member of the Royal Australian Engineers in the Pacific Islands as part of the 2/11th Battalion. It was during this time he married his sweetheart, Joy. He went on to raise a family of three and enjoyed many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and even great-great-grandchildren. George also gave his time generously to his community as a dedicated justice of the peace and 30-year volunteer with organisations such as Meals on Wheels, Daycare, the Smith Family and Terrigal Neighbourhood Watch. George was universally loved and respected by all—family, neighbours, the Terrigal Uniting Church community and RSL members. We will never forget Sergeant George Craven and his incredible service to our nation, and his significant contribution to our community. He will be deeply missed by me and so many at this year's Anzac Day Terrigal Dawn Service.

**HAYDEN SAYERS**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (16:49):** I congratulate Hayden Sayers from Revesby for his selection to the Australian men's under-20s national ice hockey team, who competed at the 2024 International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship. The tournament took place in Belgrade, Serbia, in January this year.

Australia competed against Belgium, China, Taipei, Iceland, Romania and Serbia. I congratulate Hayden and his team, who placed fourth overall in the competition. Hayden is a passionate and enthusiastic advocate for the sport. He was part of last year's under-20s team, which placed first at the 2023 world championship, held in Finland. Hayden learned to hone his skills at Canterbury Olympic Ice Rink, where he completed his junior career before the rink closed for repairs. He currently competes in the Australian Ice Hockey League, playing for the Central Coast Rhinos, and coaches junior teams in Liverpool. I thank Hayden for his contribution to the sport of ice hockey and wish him the very best of luck as he continues his career.

#### MEGHAN BASSETT

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (16:50):** Today I commend Meghan Bassett, a Marist Catholic College teacher from Beacon Hill, who received a world teachers' recognition award from the Teachers' Guild of New South Wales, for her commitment to and excellence in teaching. Meghan works with both students and teachers, to help them harness their best qualities. She applies differentiated teaching strategies to extend the knowledge, skills and capabilities of all students in every class and helps teachers to master their craft. Early last year, Meghan was diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, because Meghan's cancer was caught early, her prognosis is very positive, and Meghan is recovering well from her treatment. Meghan would like to raise awareness of the critical importance of early detection, which not only saves lives but also reduces the duration and impact of the treatment process. I share Meghan's passion for raising awareness for early detection and thank her for her passion in helping her students and fellow teachers.

#### PAUL HUTCHINSON

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:51):** Riverstone has gone through rapid development over the past few years, losing much of its characteristic native bushland charm. Faced with the potential loss of clusters of sapling gum trees during the earthworks of the Riverstone West precinct, local resident Paul Hutchinson had an idea to save these trees. Paul approached the developer, Sakkara, to highlight the significance of the trees and advocate for their preservation. Rather than mulching the trees, a plan was hatched to relocate them. After placing a classified ad, on Gumtree of course, Paul and Sakkara could not keep up with the demand, with local schools and businesses jumping at the opportunity to grab the already established trees. Through his dedication and collaborative spirit, Paul was able to rehome over 100 young gums throughout our district. These saved trees are more than just retained greenery; they symbolise the power of individual initiative and the impact of collaboration. Paul's dedication reminds us that even small actions can grow into meaningful change. On behalf of the community, I express our deep gratitude to Paul. His commitment to environmental responsibility has left a lasting impact, ensuring a greener future for coming generations.

#### MANDAEAN COMMUNITY

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (16:52):** Today I congratulate the Mandaean community in Sydney for observing Bronaya, a five-day religious festival in the Mandaean calendar. The festival celebrates the five days when Hayyi Rabbi, the Great Living God, created the angels and the universe. Madaeans across the world, including in the electorate of Holsworthy, celebrate this sacred period through baptism, which can be conducted only in fresh, natural flowing water. Holsworthy is the home of the only mandi for the Mandaean community in Australia, who regularly conducts baptisms along the Georges River. As we acknowledge the significance of Bronaya, we also recognise the profound contributions of the Mandaean community to our multicultural tapestry. Madaeans' commitment to preserving their ancient traditions while contributing positively to our society enriches us all. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Mandaean community in Sydney and around the world as it observes Bronaya. May this auspicious occasion bring joy, peace and blessings to all. I thank the House.

#### RESILIENCE TO RECOVERY

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (16:53):** Resilience to Recovery is more than just an organisation; it is a beacon of hope for those navigating disabilities in our community. Since its foundation in 2018, Resilience to Recovery has improved the lives of more than 300 people with disability. One highlight of the organisation is helping a young man to achieve his dream of driving. He is now driving on our roads in his own car, holding a provisional P2 licence, no longer reliant on NDIS support. Resilience to Recovery's recent International Day of People with Disability celebration showcased its genuine commitment to inclusivity and recognition. Behind the scenes, the dedicated team worked tirelessly to make the event unforgettable for its clients. I thank the founder and director, Ms Fida Hamed, and all the volunteers for their work in making others smile. Well done.

#### CHELSEA SIMAC

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (16:54):** I congratulate and commend Chelsea Simac, graduate of St Benedict's Catholic College in Oran Park, who is the recipient of a \$20,000 scholarship from the Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong to put towards her education degree along with a guaranteed permanent

teaching position after graduation and employment as a school support officer while she studies. Chelsea was awarded her scholarship, which was a result of her academic excellence, at a ceremony held in February this year at the Catholic Education Office in Wollongong. The Step Into Teaching scholarship program was introduced in 2020 to encourage more high performing secondary school graduates to consider a career in teaching. Now in its fourth year, this program has supported a pipeline of 53 students at various stages of their degree. I congratulate Chelsea on her academic success in attaining this scholarship and I wish her continued success in her studies and career.

### **BELLA MA**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (16:55):** Bella Ma grew up watching her grandfather and older brothers play ice hockey at the Liverpool Catholic Club Ice Rink. Just five years after joining in the fun herself, the Ashcroft High School student debuted for the Australian under-18s girls ice hockey team at the world championships in Scotland in 2023. At just 15, Bella has had a far from smooth path to the national team. To ensure she could take her place on the world stage, Bella's home club, the Liverpool Catholic Club Saints, set up a GoFundMe and organised fundraising events. Bella only received her first passport a couple of weeks before the tournament. After previously bringing home bronze and silver medals, the Aussies beat Latvia to bring home gold in Bella's first outing and for only the second time ever. I congratulate Bella on her achievements and on recently being named Liverpool Council's Young Person of the Year for 2024.

### **YOUNG SHOWGIRL ZONE FINAL**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (16:56):** I congratulate four outstanding young girls I met last weekend who competed in the Young Showgirl Zone Final hosted by the Maclean Show Society. Stella-Grace Dean represented the Casino Show Society, Montana Teare represented the Grafton Show Society, Elora Ardey represented the Maclean Show Society and Stella Harley represented the Kyogle Show Society. I was joined by Gae Masters and Rosemary Hill as judges. We met four wonderful outstanding young girls. Being a judge was a tough gig. I congratulate Stella-Grace Dean, who was announced runner-up, and Elora Ardey, who was announced the zone one junior winner. It is almost show time in my electorate, with the Maclean and Grafton shows coming up and the Casino show later in the year. I congratulate everyone and will see them at the show.

### **AUSTRALIAN EGYPTIAN FORUM COUNCIL HSC HIGH ACHIEVERS AWARDS**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:57):** As the convenor of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Egypt, I was pleased to host the Australian Egyptian Forum Council [AEFC] HSC High Achievers awards at Parliament on 22 February 2024. The awards celebrated the outstanding student achievements from the Australian Egyptian community in the 2023 HSC. Over 70 students were acknowledged from St Bishoy College, St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College and Al-Faisal College. The students are the future community leaders in Western Sydney. Alongside my colleague Edmond Atalla, member for Mount Druitt, it was great to hear from retired Royal Australian Navy officer Captain Mona Shindy, CSC; Robert Ishak, Principal at William Roberts Lawyers; and AEFC president Amir Salem. I congratulate all students on their academic achievements, inspiring leadership and enduring community spirit. I also congratulate parents and teachers, as well as the Australian Egyptian Forum Council on a successful event.

### **CASTLE HILL LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (16:58):** I recognise the Local Woman of the Year for Castle Hill, Melissa Monteiro. Melissa was born in Mumbai, India, and grew up in a working-class suburb. Melissa earned a bachelor's degree and master's in social work, and in 2000 migrated to Australia with her husband. For the past 24 years, Melissa has managed the Community Migrant Resources Centre [CMRC], a not-for-profit organisation providing settlement services to refugees and humanitarian entrants in Western Sydney. Melissa is currently involved in empowering migrant communities settling in Australia. Melissa exhibits great passion for the needs of migrant and refugee women, humanitarian resettlement and social justice issues. Through her role as the CEO of CMRC, she has made a significant and long-lasting positive impact on the lives of thousands of immigrants and refugees. Melissa is also a published author, having published *The Girl From Mumbai: A Migrant Story* in 2021. She values the dignity and the worth of every person, compassion, respect, the right of self-determination, empathy, tolerance and active listening. I believe Melissa exemplifies those values and is an exceptional member of the community. She is highly worthy of being awarded the Local Woman of the Year.

### **SALMA KAREEM**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (16:59):** On 7 March 2024 Salma Kareem, a year 10 student from Strathfield Girls High School, won a New South Wales International Women's Day award under the Ones to Watch at a ceremony at the International Conference Centre at Darling Harbour. Through her baking and fundraising by selling brookies—something I have now learned are made by combining brownies with cookies—Salma has

raised funds for various charities with part of the proceeds of sales going towards causes including Red Nose Day, the Starlight Children's Foundation, Mahboba's Promise and Pink Stumps Day. Following the tragic 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquakes, Salma raised over \$800 for victims and their families. More recently Salma has raised over \$600 for the Gaza Children's Fund supporting children and widows. I am pleased to recognise the contribution of Salma and young women like her from Strathfield.

#### **KIAMA AND DISTRICT BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:00):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Kiama and District Business Chamber, which hosted the Business Connect event on Thursday 29 February 2024, which I had the privilege of attending. I acknowledge and thank Padua Solutions for hosting that wonderful networking event in Kiama. It was also wonderful to see past president and chamber life member Marie Beikmanis, who has just celebrated her ninetieth birthday. Happy birthday! Marie has been well known and respected for many years as the owner the florist Lush Flowers and Gifts in Edessa Arcade in Kiama. I also acknowledge the Kiama and District Business Chamber president, Cameron McDonald; secretary Rachel Edwards; vice-president Cathryn Lyall; treasurer Michael Emmett; and chamber directors Michael Cains, Greg Langford, Anthony Hourigan, Tanya Emmett and Cameron Thomas. I look forward to supporting the Kiama and District Business Chamber at future events throughout 2024 whilst also encouraging local residents to buy local to support our local shop keepers, entrepreneurs and small businesses, many of which are family operations that employ local young people.

#### **HSC DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVERS**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:01):** On Thursday 15 February I had the pleasure of attending the 2023 HSC Distinguished Achievers ceremony and what an incredible night it was. I congratulate all students who received a band 6 in their 2023 HSC. The turnout this year was massive, with band 6 students coming from Camden High School, Elderslie High School, Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Mount Annan High School, Oran Park Anglican College, Mount Annan Christian College, St. Benedict's College and Magdalene Catholic College. All the students should be proud of their achievements. I congratulate all of my former students who were there on the evening. I give a special shout-out to Hannah, who got a band 6 in music—as she so proudly told me on the night—singing a song that I suggested for the HSC. I wish them the best of luck this year as they journey into the world of adulthood towards university, TAFE or full-time employment. Once again, congratulations.

#### **CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (17:02):** On 13 February 2024 I visited Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School in St Ives to mark Shrove Tuesday. The purpose of the visit was to meet and congratulate the 2024 year 6 student leaders, to speak with students and to serve pancakes at recess. I thank the member for Vacluse for joining me on the visit. Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday that officially commences the Lenten season for people of the Christian faith. The member for Vacluse and I very much enjoyed serving pancakes to the students, for a bargain price of 50 cents each. I recognise the new year 6 student leaders: school captains Fleur Kelly and Chloe Sit, and vice captains Juliyana Beltran and Oliver Pemberton. I congratulate and thank them for their public service to their school community. I recognise principal Jayne Wheen and her dedicated staff, including year 6 teacher, Penny Delmage. It gives me great and immense pride to represent Corpus Christi together with the school's students and their parents in the Parliament of New South Wales.

#### **BULLI HIGH SCHOOL AND SURFBOARD DESIGN PROGRAM**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:03):** The Heathcote electorate is well known for being a world-class destination for surfers. The picturesque beaches of the northern Illawarra and Royal National Park are the envy of the rest of the State. The electorate can add surfboard design to its claim to fame through the design program of Bulli High School. The program is empowering students to work with AkuShaper, a world-leading surfboard design organisation, to teach students about design and shaping of boards. The partnership is already bearing incredible fruit, with some amazing designs being produced by the students. The program adds to Bulli High's deep connection to the beach. The school intends to produce a world champion surfer and I know that the integration of surfing into the education curriculum through this program will only bring that dream another step closer to being realised. I congratulate the staff, students and community of Bulli High on this incredible program. I am sure that it is only the beginning for the young designers and surfers of Bulli.

#### **NICKY APOSTOLOPOULOS**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (17:04):** I sincerely congratulate Nicky Apostolopoulos, the multi-award-winning designer and powerhouse woman behind couture bridal and evening wear brand Velani. Nicky is a local business owner and centrepiece of the Five Dock community, having operated her atelier for over 20 years. On Monday Nicky's stunning couture was in the international spotlight once again, this time on show

on the Oscars red carpet. Nicky designed a show stopper for Belinda Bromilow, partner of Australian director, playwright and screenwriter Tony McNamara, who was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay for his film *Poor Things*. Belinda rocked a stunning black gown adorned with Velani's signature ruffles and bows. All of Nicky's gowns are dreamed up, sewn and fitted on Great North Road in Five Dock with Nicky and the team of seamstresses working on gowns in the engine room upstairs. I congratulate Nicky. She regularly does my community proud as we see her gorgeous creations on TV and social media and on red carpets all over the world.

#### AUSTRALIAN AIR LEAGUE MOOREBANK SQUADRON

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (17:05):** The Australian Air League Moorebank Squadron is a cadet group that plays a crucial role in nurturing young boys from south-west Sydney. With 45 active members aged eight to 18, the squadron engages young people through a diverse weekly program, including band training, ceremonial drills and marching, education and aviation theory, as well as physical and sporting activity. Beyond this, the award-winning squadron band represents south-west Sydney across the State, demonstrating their eagerness and commitment to representing my region with pride. I congratulate squadron officer commanding Raymond Bell, OAM; squadron second in command Lachlan Hyde; along with officers Martin Sauer, Francisco Trostel, Jonathon Mayorga, Harrison Taranec and Carlos Munoz. I thank them for helping to shape a better future for our kids.

#### BERNIES DINER MOSS VALE

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (17:06):** I recognise Joannis Benardos and Bernies Diner, which has operated in Moss Vale since 1925. Founded by Emmanuel Benardos from Greece, following his death in 1954 his wife Mirsini and their four children continued to run Bernies Diner until 1958 when they sold the business. Fifty-five years later, in 2012, Emmanuel's grandson Joannis reopened Bernies Diner. Joannis embarked on his career in hospitality at the Double Bay Ritz-Carlton and then the Four Seasons, before his career pathway saw him appointed to roles in a number of five-star hotels in Canada and England. Joannis moved back to Australia after marrying in Canada and began work redesigning Bernies Diner, bringing in decor from 1950s America. Bernies Diner is an absolute institution. I congratulate Joannis on all that he has done with the business and wish him well in his future endeavours.

#### SEINI AFEAKI

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:07):** Seini Afeaki was recently named a community hero finalist at the 2024 NSW Women of the Year Awards. Seini is a former commissioner of the New South Wales Community Relations Commission and chair of the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre in Liverpool. Seini helped to establish community organisations, including Tongan community support services, and spearheaded the Pacific Mental Health Initiative at CORE Group, which researches mental health in Pasifika communities and employs four Pasifika mental health educators. More recently, Seini has been involved in the partnership between the Pacific Women's Professional and Business Network and TAFE NSW to encourage Pasifika women to try construction trades, breaking down stereotypes and changing lives. I extend my sincere appreciation for Seini's many years of leadership and commitment to south-west Sydney and I congratulate all the women recognised in this year's Women of the Year Awards.

#### PAUL ROGERS, OAM

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:08):** I acknowledge Mr Paul Rogers of Kurrajong, who was awarded an Order of Australia Medal on Australia Day for service to the community through a range of organisations. The award recognises Paul's many years of service to the community of Kurrajong, the broader Hawkesbury district and beyond. Paul served as a councillor in local government in the mid-1990s. He was an active participant in Tourism Hawkesbury and a community member on the council's local planning panel. Paul has contributed to the Parramatta Community Justice Clinic, Western Sydney University, Rotary, the community board of advice at the Hawkesbury Health Service, the Hawkesbury Scouts, Bendigo Bank, the Kurrajong Community Forum, the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust and dragon boat racing. He was also a member of the Naval Reserve Cadets from 1968 to 1984. Paul Rogers, OAM, has an exemplary record of community service. I congratulate him on this stellar achievement.

#### DOGGIE DATES

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:09):** I congratulate Doggie Dates on being awarded highly commended in the Community Group of the Year category at the Central Coast Council 2024 Australia Day Awards ceremony. I have been fortunate enough to attend Doggie Dates with my dog, Gruff, on several occasions and have been impressed by the inclusivity of the group, including of community members with mobility issues and their dogs. The group provides a regular social space that allows members and their pets to build friendships and to exercise, which in turn aims to improve mental health and reduce social anxiety. I commend Te're Melrose,

The Entrance electorate Woman of the Year for 2023, for starting Doggie Dates in 2015. I look forward to attending further dates with Gruff and my community.

#### TRIBUTE TO TREVOR BALLANGARRY

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (17:10):** Gumbaynggirr Elder, local councillor and Nambucca Valley native Trevor Ballangarry departed peacefully on 1 March 2024. In December 2021 Mr Ballangarry was elected to the Nambucca Valley Council. Trevor was a fervent and informed supporter of acknowledging and preserving Aboriginal culture and tradition. He was also committed to providing opportunities for all Nambucca Valley residents by fostering job growth and assisting neighbourhood businesses. After spending over 40 years in local government, he was well versed in the workings of the system and considered himself an authority on bulldust—referring to both untreated rural roads and political jargon. With the unwavering support of his wife, Janice, Mr Ballangarry's commitment to the community went well beyond his civic leadership as a member of Nambucca Valley Council. He worked as a sports coach, a director of the Community Transport Company and was a volunteer for organisations like the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Mr Ballangarry was an ardent advocate for the numerous rural residents who face struggles. Everyone in the Nambucca shire will mournfully miss Trevor Ballangarry. Vale, Uncle Trev.

#### CENTRAL COAST REPAIR CAFE

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:11):** I am often in awe of the amazing work that our community members do to enrich each other's lives. I draw the attention of the House to the fabulous Central Coast Repair Cafe at Kariong Community Hall on the third Sunday of every month. Inspired by the War on Waste campaign, Central Coast Repair Cafe is one of the many repair cafes popping up across Australia to give a second chance to homewares that would otherwise be tossed into landfill. The repair cafe also allows people to experience a fun day of clothes swapping with other participants. The beloved cafe is run by a group of passionate volunteers, and they adapt permaculture principles that amplify their purpose of minimising the number of items unnecessarily going into landfill. Creating a welcoming environment, the organisers allow participants to simply come and have a cuppa even if they have nothing to be fixed. It moves me to see the repair cafe not only saving our environment but also building community connections that are crucial for our mental health. I wholeheartedly applaud the Central Coast Repair Cafe team for their wonderful work. We are very lucky to have them in the Gosford electorate.

#### SOUTHLAKES INCORPORATED

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:12):** I acknowledge Southlakes Incorporated, which operates weekly foodbanks on the Central Coast. Southlakes Incorporated was founded by Christine Mastello, a 2023 Australian of the Year finalist and Australia Day Ambassador on the Central Coast in 2013. Southlakes manages two walk-in food banks with three home delivery areas, and supplies breakfast clubs at six schools. Every week Southlakes hands out hundreds of hampers, pre-cooked meals and essentials, including clothing. In 2023 Southlakes started a free community sit-down meal service every Monday evening at Tuggerah Lakes Community Centre in Bateau Bay. The service provides not only a meal but also a space for social interaction and the opportunity for a free haircut through the Community Hair Project, also founded by Christine. I am sure the House will join me in congratulating Christine on her continued commitment to assisting those in need and building a stronger community on the Central Coast.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### TRANSPORT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (17:14):** I speak again about the Minns Labor Government's Transport Oriented Development Program, or the TOD, which is a State environmental planning policy that will commence in a matter of weeks. It will be open slather for property developers to significantly change the upper North Shore that I represent, and our State more generally, for the worse. It is now five weeks since I stood in this Chamber and raised the fact that I had credible information that a senior official from the planning department had used confidential information to corruptly purchase a property within an area designated by the Minns Government to have its zoning changed from two-storey houses to six- or seven-storey apartment buildings.

At the request of my source, I did not name the person or give other specific details, but good old-school investigative journalism by *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* brought to light both the name of the planning official and the location of the property. I can confirm the property in question was purchased in August 2023 for \$3.8 million within 400 metres of the Gordon railway station. There were two purchasers: Ms Joyner and her partner, Mr Gary Boyd. Shortly after Ms Joyner and Mr Boyd moved into the property in or about November, they started talking to neighbours about grouping together in a syndicate to sell their houses to a property developer. This is odd behaviour, having regard to the fact that Ms Joyner and Mr Boyd had just paid



\$3.8 million to move into the neighbourhood. In a neighbourhood WhatsApp message sent on 13 December 2023 by Ms Joyner, she said:

I am happy to share what information I can (verbally) as the information is due to go in the NSW Dept of Planning website by the end of this week.

People usually want to speak verbally to ensure there is no record of their actions. It is a way of concealing conduct they know to be wrong. If Ms Joyner was prepared to convey confidential government information in her possession to neighbours, it can be inferred that she would have had no qualms using confidential information to buy her house inside a TOD area before the area became public information.

Ms Joyner then tried to convince neighbours that they should jointly write a letter to the planning Minister, Paul Scully, to obtain even greater heights for developments in their neighbourhood. Ms Joyner drafted a letter to the planning Minister with a view to the neighbours signing it. The draft letter was posted for discussion on the neighbourhood WhatsApp group and made the assertion that the heights within 400 metres should be much higher, like 12 to 15 storeys. Of course, that assertion was wrong, and Ms Joyner only suggested it so that she and any other residents who agreed to join her would make much more money selling their properties to a developer.

There are more matters now to be added. Firstly, the co-owner of the property with Ms Joyner, Mr Gary Boyd, was not a passive actor. I am told he had conversations with neighbours about the neighbourhood syndicate development plans and used his status as a national director of WT quantity surveyors to argue for the need for greater heights to make developers interested in the neighbourhood syndicate and increase the price of the land sold by the neighbours. WT has done and continues to do work on significant New South Wales Government projects.

Since the Gordon acquisition came to light, the Ben Fordham show has revealed that Katie Joyner has another property in Belmore and, in 2022, unusually injected herself into meetings between the planning department and Canterbury Bankstown council about the Bankstown master plan without disclosing that she held a property impacted by the work they were doing. We still have not had confirmation about the extent of Ms Joyner's access to information about TOD sites before they were publicly announced. Today, when Minister Scully was asked about that in question time, he said, "I refer the member to the earlier testimony in the budget estimates hearing that said she did not." Nobody was asked that question in the budget estimates hearings, and nobody said she did not.

Ms Joyner has been stood down on full pay and there has been a reference to the ICAC, but five weeks later the following questions are still unanswered: Why has the planning Minister not conducted a full independent investigation into his department of the kind that I previously called for when I first raised these matters? Did Ms Joyner disclose her property acquisition in Gordon to the department in August? Have other planning officials purchased houses within 400 metres of TOD sites prior to the policy being announced? Should the fact that the TODs will commence shortly and that Ms Joyner is being paid large sums of money by taxpayers not justify an urgent investigation? Will Mr Boyd be stood down from government work pending an investigation? There is a government cover-up going on here, and these important questions deserve urgent answers from the Minns Labor Government.

## ASIAN LANGUAGES EDUCATION

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (17:19):** Last week the 2024 special summit of ASEAN—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations—was held in Melbourne. Amid a fast-changing world, the importance of how Australia connects with our neighbours has never been so crucial. South-East Asia alone accounts for 7.2 per cent of global GDP, with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation accounting for over 60 per cent of global GDP. The economic, cultural and strategic opportunities for Australia are immense.

Key to the success of our nation's engagement with our region is the learning of and proficiency in Asian and regional languages. Currently, only around 10 per cent of students in New South Wales take a language for the Higher School Certificate, with the five most popular being Japanese, French, Chinese, Italian and Spanish—in that order. The number of students sitting the HSC in Indonesian peaked at 526 students in 1997. In 2023 it totalled a dismal 82 enrolments. This as Indonesia, a next-door neighbour with over 273 million people—the largest Islamic nation on earth—ascends to being the sixteenth largest economy in the world by GDP and the seventh largest in the world when measured by purchasing power parity. It will only continue to grow.

Other regional languages are also not heavily studied. In 2023 there were only 110 HSC enrolments for Vietnamese, 29 for Hindi and 12 for Khmer. The better performers for regional language uptake in New South Wales for the HSC included Korean at 228, Chinese at 677 and Japanese at 1,380. The numbers of total students learning an Asian or regional language were much higher than those taking a language for the HSC; however, overall, we are still languishing behind other developed nations. For instance, in Australia just under 5 per cent of

all school students are learning Chinese, whereas in the United States 93 per cent of secondary schools are offered some form of Spanish language education.

How do we do better, particularly as numerous policy levers appear to have already been pulled? As well as government support to get more students learning regional languages in our schools, we need to ensure that the curriculum aligns with our goals. Studying an Asian language should be integrated into the curriculum from an early age. Teachers need to be recruited and equipped to teach the languages that will shape Australia's interactions with our region for the future. We should explore further incentivising good Asian language educators and supporting professional development for teachers.

Promotion and engagement across the community needs to improve to change cultural norms. It should be considered the norm for students in New South Wales to learn a regional language, just as it is normal for students in America to learn Spanish or for students in France to learn German. Finally, partnerships and collaboration with educational institutions, government and non-government agencies as well as multicultural community groups need to increase. Corporate Australia, too, has an important role to play as business provides fertile ground for cultural exchange. As Kathleen Turner wrote in the Asia Society Journal *Disruptive Asia*:

Education policy should be linked to international business engagement. Overall, the language deficit in Australia, if not tackled, is a threat to our competitiveness, influence and standing in the world, as well as to our citizens' ability to play a meaningful role in the global economy ...

I would like to see Australia rise to our potential and make the most of the opportunities we have at home and in our neighbourhood. How well we seize these opportunities will influence our future prosperity and success.

### MARGARET HOLLES

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:23):** I pay tribute to an extraordinary individual whose impact has been felt deeply within the Waterloo community, particularly in the realm of education. It is with a deep sense of gratitude and admiration that I pay tribute to Margaret Holles, the former principal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel [OLMC] Catholic Primary School at Waterloo. Margaret's journey in education spans over 16 years. Prior to her time in my electorate, she made significant contributions in the Canberra-Goulburn and Wilcannia-Forbes dioceses. Margaret took up the role of principal at OLMC in 2020. During her four-year tenure in that role, she well and truly exemplified dedication, compassion and innovation, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of students, staff and families alike. She has been such an impressive educator.

Deeply rooted in her faith, Margaret's leadership style strives to reflect the religious teaching characterised by compassion, integrity and a humble commitment to service. I have always known her to lead by example and embody the values of authenticity and grace in all of her interactions. That caring attitude made for the perfect partnership between her and the school community, where most of the students come from nearby public housing and Indigenous backgrounds, presenting both unique challenges and opportunities for growth.

Her leadership extends far beyond the confines of the school walls. Her primary goal has always been to create an inclusive and nurturing educational environment where every student feels valued and inspired to excel. In the face of a global pandemic, Margaret's leadership shone brightly as a beacon of hope and generosity. Like most principals, she ensured that learning never ceased for the students of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, even amidst the uncertainties of lockdowns and remote schooling. Unlike most principals, however, Margaret went above and beyond to personally deliver study packs to students' homes to ensure that every child had access to educational resources.

Moreover, her thoughtful gesture of organising morning tea packs for students during the school's planned Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event showcased her unwavering commitment to nurturing not only their minds but also their spirits. In that way, Margaret's time at Our Lady of Mount Carmel strengthened the school's ties with the local community and elevated the quality of education and pastoral care provided to her students, some of whom are the most needy in the community. Her passion for literacy and educational leadership has been evident throughout her career, inspiring countless students and colleagues along the way. As she herself said when she first arrived at Waterloo, "Children have one go at education. We must interrogate and use data wisely, along with evidence-based practices, in order to make a difference for every single child."

Under Margaret's guidance, Our Lady of Mount Carmel underwent significant transformations, both physically and philosophically. The recent upgrades to the school, announced under the leadership of Margaret and Father Paul, will undoubtedly leave a lasting legacy and provide students with modern amenities and learning spaces that foster growth and innovation. From improved site accessibility to new community spaces and playground makeovers, Margaret's vision for the school's future is one of inclusivity and excellence. It is that steadfast dedication to her students' education and welfare that earned Margaret the esteemed title of Heffron Local Woman of the Year in 2022.

Her tireless efforts and selfless service have not gone unnoticed, and our community is richer for her contributions. As Margaret embarks on a new chapter at St Philip Neri Catholic Primary School in Northbridge, her impact will continue to reverberate within our community. Her legacy of compassion, dedication and excellence will serve as a guiding light for future generations of educators and students alike. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Margaret Holles for her outstanding contributions to education and her unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of our community. May her journey continue to inspire the communities she has touched as we strive to build a better and brighter future for generations to come.

### GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (17:28):** Looming on the minds of many on the Mid North Coast is a monumental decision that will determine the survivability of flora, fauna and industry. The decision regarding the proposed Great Koala National Park does not belong to a single voice but should involve many voices, mostly from the Mid North Coast. The Labor Government is attempting to blindfold us. Rather than using its chance to engage in authentic discussion with the community, it chooses to undermine us by including carefully curated elitists pretending to be our community representatives. In November last year, the Premier outlined the process to establish the Great Koala National Park, stating there are three critical components. One of them is establishing a community advisory panel. It makes sense, doesn't it? When we reach out to the community, we are reaching out because we are seeking local opinions from local people. We want local expertise with a well-rounded understanding of what is suitable for their home and what is not.

So why then, in the middle of a history-defining decision-making process, did those invitations find their way to Greater Sydney? History often repeats itself. The Government that we trusted to provide community involvement has turned its backs on regional voices again. If the Minns Government is serious about developing the footprint of the Great Koala National Park with "a comprehensive assessment and engagement process", then it needs to be serious about representing local views. After all, on 12 September 2023 the Minister for the Environment boasted that "the Government is taking serious steps towards its creation and will work closely with the community."

Perhaps the House should remind the Premier and the Minister that community consultation begins at the grassroots. It is not inviting people to vocalise their thoughts on a region foreign to them—those who live within the concrete walls of Greater Sydney and are seated on a board as chair or listed as a campaigner for a not-for-profit. Almost one-quarter of the community panel does not live on the Mid North Coast. I have no doubt that those people are experts in their fields, bringing decades of conservation research to the table. But I respectfully ask why their merits and achievements put them on the community-orientated panel instead of the industry panel. Why have we robbed local experts of a spot to share their input? If this panel is about community, then 100 per cent of its participants should be from our area.

I have always stated that the Great Koala National Park and the native hardwood timber industry can coexist in harmony. I stand before the House not to persecute this park but to argue against the incredulous and unfair system that is alienating our community from being involved in its creation. The Minister invited specific participants of her liking, and the lead agency stands to benefit from the park's inception. I can responsibly say that I am supportive of both conservation and our remarkable hardwood timber industry. But what of those cherry-picked Sydneysiders on our community panel? No way.

We have a panel member representing the Australian Climate and Biodiversity Foundation. The organisation outlines it was founded "to advocate for the protection and restoration of Australia's native forests from key threats such as logging and land clearing". Yet this non-local has taken to *The Australian* to share their anti-hardwood sentiments. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW managed to nab a spot on the panel. It is nice to see its office in Surry Hills. It openly states that it is "campaigning for an end to native forest logging". Its idea of a representative is a Sydney-based, self-professed "forest campaigner". The Deputy Secretary for the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water made the panel. They were also the former chief executive at the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, "the world's largest private owner of land for conservation". Sydney-based Outdoors NSW and ACT also took a spot.

Does anyone think that those city organisations have our community in mind? No. Does anyone think that those who outright campaign against harvesting will follow science? Will they listen to anything other than their ideology? No. Will they be balanced? No. Should we have allowed the Minister for Energy to send invitations to city organisations and not to our locals? No way. It begs the question: Why have these specific individuals been invited? Is the Minister trying to shut down forestry because of her activism? Real community members should be the first picked for a seat at this table. If the Minns Government wants the voices of activists, campaigners and not-for-profits, there should be another panel curated to their skill set. It is time to take this Labor-forced blindfold off and look at what is happening. This is not locals looking out for our community, Premier. Transparent? I think not.

## REGIONAL ACADEMIES OF SPORT

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:33):** Whether it be watching the Australian Open with an ice-cold beer in hand, cheering our Parramatta Eels on to victory with thousands of screaming fans or a game of backyard cricket with the family, sport is an integral part of our Australian culture in the Prospect electorate. Emma McKeon, Cathy Freeman and Steve Waugh are incredible athletes who worked tirelessly to achieve their Olympic and Cricket World Cup dreams. But we must also remember the coaches, team managers, club presidents, canteen staff and family members, whose all-round support helped our star athletes reach their full potential. It is imperative that we continue to support our local sporting clubs and coaches, as they help develop our next generation of sporting heroes.

The Regional Academies of Sport network is a peak representative sport body, helping to develop athletes across the nine regional academies of sport in New South Wales. From Western Sydney and south-western Sydney to the Central Coast, Hunter, Illawarra, North Coast, northern inland, southern and western regions, the network provides an integral home for community and regional sports. Through training, competitions and events, it offers holistic pathways to excellence for our communities. It was great to attend the recent Regional Academies of Sport awards dinner at Wentworthville leagues club in the electorate of Prospect on Tuesday 27 February to celebrate its important role across New South Wales.

Representing the Hon. Stephen Kamper, the Minister for Sport, I was pleased to see so many emerging stars rewarded for their excellence and perseverance in sports. Celebrating the achievements of athletes, coaches and volunteers alike, the awards shone a spotlight on the invaluable work the network does in our communities. The Regional Academies of Sport offers training programs, services and events to help pre-elite athletes prepare for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. In 2023 alone, the network offered programs across 100 local government areas, resulting in the talent identification of some 3,855 athletes. An outstanding 33 of those athletes commenced an Olympic cycle.

The Regional Academies of Sport also provides fun and inclusive hubs to connect individuals and build skills on and off the track and sporting field. By creating opportunities for teamwork, healthy competition and shared objectives, the Regional Academies of Sport fosters community cohesion. Last year the network connected some 1,276 community organisations, 674 volunteers and over 410 coaches. It contributed over \$25 million to the New South Wales economy to benefit our regions and communities directly. By expanding performance supports, recruiting quality coaches and transitioning from volunteerism to paid employment, the Regional Academies of Sport is reinforcing sports programs throughout regional New South Wales in a cost-effective and community-centric manner.

By partnering with meaning, the network, along with the Minns Labor Government, is helping athletes overcome barriers to participation. Scholarships and pathway supports from the Regional Academies of Sport and the New South Wales Office of Sport are enhancing the accessibility of local sports. By incorporating disability provisions in mainstream programs, promoting non-mainstream sports and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent identification opportunities, they are giving every athlete an opportunity to play not only in the electorate of Prospect but throughout New South Wales. By funding local clubs, sporting organisations and our regional academies, we can help our communities develop healthy habits—and not just in the sporting arena. Participation in community sports supports a reduction in childhood and adolescent obesity, suicide rates and road trauma.

It has also been shown to improve physical literacy and decision-making and support a lifelong love of physical activity, which is vital to this generation adopting long-term healthy lifestyles. Teaching endurance, leadership, teamwork and the pursuit of excellence, the Regional Academies of Sport network is fostering New South Wales's future athletes and our future leaders too. As a government, we must continue to recognise the holistic role sports play in our communities and support those hardworking academies to help youth in our communities reach their full potential. We must continue to invest in the wellbeing of our communities and support our local athletes to succeed.

## TRANSPORT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (17:38):** One of the most pressing issues for policymakers and parliamentarians right now is how we rebuild the home ownership dream for a modern Sydney, and how we create more flats, apartments and houses so that our children and their children and new Australians arriving in this country can have a place to build their dreams, create financial security and call home. We are facing a significant housing and rental shortfall in this city. That we can all agree on in this place. But tonight I want to talk about why the Minns Labor Government's planning overhaul will scar communities in my electorate and other electorates, why it will not create affordable housing in the east—why it will do the reverse—why a one-size-fits-all approach will fail our unique city of cities and why the Coalition would do it very differently.

I represent an electorate with one of the highest populations in the State. Almost 80 per cent of Vacluse is already medium to high density. As a community on a peninsula, with effectively one road in and one road out, with no train station past Edgecliff, which is at the very city end of the electorate, no light rail, highly unreliable buses that are overcrowded and that move with great difficulty along our very choked roads, we are a beautiful, condensed community that goes nowhere in a rush. I am sorry to say it is about to get much worse due to the Minns Government's new highly centralised planning laws. Described as the biggest rezoning in Australia's history, it is important that we talk about it.

The key threat to our community in my electorate of Vacluse comes with the changes to the State environmental planning policies for mid- and low-rise housing. Within 400 metres of a town centre—I am talking about Rose Bay, Double Bay, Edgecliff, Bondi Junction and Bondi Beach—flats and apartments which currently go to around two storeys can now go up to six or even eight storeys if they have affordable housing components. People who live within 400 to 800 metres of a town centre—the majority of my electorate—can expect increased heights of up to six storeys. That is not just in the business districts but in low-density zones in areas of heritage significance, and the detail is sparse. Both Waverley and Woollahra councils have modelled what that could look like, and it is dire. It will change the character but also, importantly, the functionality and mobility of our communities.

With all that proposed development, there is no provision for nor consideration of funding for infrastructure upgrades—none. There is no talk of road improvements, of upgrades to ageing water and sewage systems, or of extra schools to account for the thousands of new families. There is no guaranteed protection for heritage significant sites, conservation sites or environmentally sensitive land. This is roughshod planning, and it is coming to almost every street in the eastern suburbs and beyond. The Liberals and The Nationals support more development but have a considered and more sophisticated plan that does not insult Sydney's differing suburbs. We want to work with communities to identify suitable locations for increased housing, with access to transport, schools, hospitals and essential services.

We want to engage with Canberra to reduce Australia's record immigration, to reduce pressure on rents and improve housing affordability. We want to remove the burden of stamp duty on young people by reintroducing our First Home Buyer Choice program, provide stamp duty exemptions for older people looking to downsize and free up their homes for younger families, and we want to incentivise local councils to work with communities to meet and beat their housing targets. That is what we have been doing in the east for decades.

Every electorate in Sydney has its unique characteristics driven by history and by topography—by where we sit within the fingers of Sydney Harbour or the mountains or Parramatta River—and that topography has created a city of cities. We are different, we are unique and that is why we need planning laws to suit those unique attributes. Labor's plan is a one-size-fits-all approach to planning that puts us in the same box, and it was done without consultation. This is something big; it is going to be generation impacting and we need to talk about it. Waverley Council has warned that the rezoning changes will lead to a major increase in land values and drive prices up. It is doing the reverse of the intent, so we need to have this conversation. People in my electorate were not afforded that opportunity before it was introduced, by stealth, before Christmas. I urge them to speak up now and have their say.

## WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (17:43):** Last year I had Carter O'Connor, a current student at my former high school, Figtree High School, undertake some work experience in my office. At the end of the week, I asked him to put together some reflections on the future of Wollongong from his perspective as a young person. I would like to share it with the House. Carter wrote:

I am an avid enjoyer of politics, rugby league, history and the emerging sport of gridiron. I attempt to put myself out there as much as possible which is evident with me applying for work experience here rather than for a trade. During my work experience, I have been able to see complaints and questions Mr Scully and his staff are asked and the way they try to resolve these issues. I can envision Wollongong as being a trailblazer for renewable energy in Australia with the recent discussions around the wind farm that would be located 10-15 kilometres off the coast along Wollongong.

I see many people being sceptical about this idea and rightly so we have only seen offshore wind farms in other countries mainly in Europe. Some individuals have highlighted that it could disrupt marine life in the local area as the area is native to many wonderful sea creatures such as whales and dolphins.

Some individuals believe it could kill them as it could run into them but the kind staff assure that the dolphins and whales would not die if they do run into these wind farms.

People are also concerned about the natural beauty of Wollongong. The staff again assured that these wind farms are to be around 300m tall and would be 10-15 km off the coast making them visible but ruining the view is a bit of a reach.

People of Wollongong have also expressed their concerns regarding their power bill and whether it will affect it. The staff stated that if it was to change it would be less than your average power bill at the moment.

I find that total reliance on coal for such a large and growing population is insufficient, ancient and not forward-looking at all.

As we know coal is a finite fuel source meaning we only have a certain amount of it while wind power is of course an infinite source of power. Wind farms are also closer to being carbon neutral than coal burning is.

The addition of skilled workers and job opportunities in a very competitive market is also a positive that doesn't come to many people's minds. Although I am concerned about the way we dispose of the fans that do break. The way other countries dispose of them is they chuck it in with the rest on the land fill with the rest of the unwanted rubbish.

I believe that Wollongong could find a better alternative like creating technology to recycle them and make a new fan or possibly use the materials for more sustainable materials for public use.

There is also a very promising future for teenagers in Wollongong as we are undergoing many large-scale projects creating jobs, an amazing university and tafe that bring international attention and an amazing culture that combines the positives of being close to the city and close to rural communities we are also home to many of the best beaches you can find in NSW.

I also find that the public services of Wollongong are amazing but they could be improved quickly with a bit of funding. My future career would greatly benefit from funding from the NSW Parliament as they all rely on its funding to stay afloat.

Again to reinstate the implementation of wind farms but also the focus on making the Illawarra to be more walkable and bikeable further promoting a healthy lifestyle and less reliance on private transport.

We also have something to aim too and something to wait for keeping people in Wollongong. This demonstrates how Wollongong constantly strives for better and we are never happy to do nothing; this gives the community faith in the people representing us.

The University of Wollongong is a world-renowned university that is respected on an international level so much that large quantities of its students have come from overseas to study.

It has state-of-the-art facilities that are often used by professional sporting clubs and local schools. UOW is a contributor to the local community giving out scholarships and tours to students who are interested in enrolling.

I have attended a couple of these events and thoroughly enjoyed myself. I do plan to study there after high school in social science with a major in criminology or law with a major in criminology depending on my atar results.

Wollongong is in the category where we are in the balance of being classed as a city and a rural community.

Of course, we can identify the "city" of Wollongong as being a city but you can travel as little as 25 minutes down the M1 motorway heading south and reach dairy farms and large private properties on the outskirts of Albion Park. The M1 also is mostly surrounded by the natural flora.

We also have reserves that can be found as close as Figtree which are inhabited by native flora and fauna. The beaches that can be found along the coast are popular spots to hang out with friends during the summer with some of the most notable ones being North Beach, Kiama and Port Kembla Beach these help Wollongong's tourism sector keep afloat.

I will conclude with his words:

I plan to work in the police preferably as a prosecutor or a detective, in politics or as a high school teacher teaching history preferably later in life. All three career paths utilise state government money.

I believe that all the recent pay rises are suitable for the current cost of living but it will need a constant increase as the cost of living get higher and higher.

Thank you for listening to Mr Scully present the promising future of Wollongong and its future-proofing it populus for the years to come thank you. I would also like to thank Mr Scully for providing a voice that is not often heard in parliament.

I thank Carter for his insights and wish him good luck in the future.

### **BROADWATER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (17:48):** I take this opportunity to update the House on flood recovery in my electorate of Clarence. I note that the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, who was the previous speaker, has been most helpful to date in that rebuild process. I genuinely thank him for making his time available any time that I have reached out. I may need to reach out again next week to the good Minister for his support.

As members of the House would know, the two-year mark from Australia's most costly disaster has just passed. It was most costly in not only monetary terms but also socially and environmentally. It has been a long, stressful two years for everybody. The community has been patient, and its goodwill has been noted, but I fear that its goodwill is starting to run out. It is time for serious action on flood recovery. To date, the goodwill has been evident in my community, and there has been goodwill everywhere, I must say, not only through the departments but also from governments and members of this House and the other place. The families are recovering and roads are being returned to what they were before the flood. This week, Richmond Valley Council has started on Naughtons Gap Road, which on its own will cost almost \$16 million to repair. Coraki Road is still under construction, with betterment funding, but it has been slow.

Tonight, though, I highlight the families of the lower Richmond valley who have been waiting for over two years for their school to be rebuilt. As I said earlier, the families have been patient, but their goodwill about the rebuilding of Broadwater Public School is running out. It is not the biggest school in New South Wales by any

stretch of the imagination, but it is extremely important for the village and the community in and around Broadwater. Broadwater Public School has around 52 students and was completely submerged during that catastrophic event two years ago. Sadly, there has been no action on the rebuilding, and the students are still not back in their school. They are guests of Evans River K-12 School, which has accommodated them in a small section of the playground.

It is time for Minister Car to take control of this situation and intervene to get this mess sorted out. It has been two years, but it seems that the bureaucrats are fumbling their way through unnecessary processes to rebuild the school and get the students back into the classroom. The project could be built in just eight weeks, but for some reason the department has lodged a development application [DA] with Richmond Valley Council, which is absolutely unnecessary. Governments, as we know, do not require development consent from councils for schools, hospitals, ambulance stations, police stations and much more, but the bureaucracy has lodged a DA that will take up to nine months to get approval. The normal process is through a review of environmental factors. It does require development consent from the Government but, once the Government gives consent, the school can be rebuilt.

I am told that it is about an eight-week rebuild and it is possible to have students back in their school by the middle of this year, so I urge the education Minister to override the bureaucracy and make sure that the students are back in the school. I am proud to support the P&C Association's petition calling on the Minister to do something to ensure that the kids are back at school. If the Government is truly prioritising their welfare and education, it would get on with rebuilding Broadwater Public School as a matter of urgency.

### **DON HEARN'S CABINS**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (17:53):** I inform the House about the fight to preserve Don Hearn's historic cabins at Cunjurong Point on the South Coast. Don Hearn's cabins were built in 1961 by Don Hearn, a returned serviceman who served in Papua New Guinea and Libya during World War II. Needless to say, Don Hearn returned to Australia as a staunch pacifist. Don built the cabins on a recreationally zoned patch of Crown land, a site nestled between the headland of Lake Conjola and Bandalong, and the cabins became well known for housing conscientious objectors during the Vietnam War and surfers wanting to surf the world-renowned surf break of Green Island.

Over the years, the legend of Don Hearn and his cabins grew until the park became one of the most popular holiday destinations on the South Coast. In 1991, with the passing of Don Hearn, Lexie Myer took over the stewardship of the holiday park. With old-fashioned rope clotheslines and an outdoor toilet block, the six sleeper cabins have maintained their modesty while all around them Airbnbs and caravans have gradually changed the character of the New South Wales South Coast. Visiting Don Hearn's cabins is like stepping back in time. There is no internet and little phone reception in the area. Visitors can just stop, breathe and reconnect with themselves, one another and nature, and it has always been a place that people can afford to come to.

When Lexie Myers took over the Crown Lands lease from Don Hearn, the lease still had approximately 10 years to run. At the time, she was assured that the lease would be renewed for another term. Around the time that the lease was due to expire, there was a push by Crown Lands to end many small leases that had this style of cabin on the South Coast. Pebbly Beach, Depot Beach and North Durras cabins immediately spring to mind. There was a huge community push to retain those historic affordable beachside cabins, and thankfully common sense prevailed and the leases were renegotiated. Since then, those cabins have been renovated and, to this day, continue to provide affordable family accommodation.

Unfortunately, Don Hearn's cabins were not given the same consideration as those other historic cabins on the South Coast. For the past 22 years, Lexie Myers' lease has been on a month-to-month basis, living 30 days at a time, despite her efforts to obtain a long-term arrangement. That is 22 years of not knowing if she can take bookings for next Christmas or even the following month; of not being able to obtain bank finance to renovate the cabins; and of uncertainty, stress and bureaucracy. In December last year, Lexie Myers received the news that Crown Lands intended to evict her. While the department understood the cabins had been a part of the coastal community for many years, they did not meet current building standards.

While the historic coastal cabins located at Pebbly Beach, Depot Beach and North Durras have been upgraded over the years, I am not sure how Lexie Myers was supposed to upgrade Don Hearn's cabins to current standards when she has been on a month-to-month lease for the past 22 years. I do not think any fair-minded person would think that is an acceptable situation, which is why I have advocated on behalf of Ms Myers. Ms Myers has now been granted an opportunity to submit a business case to Crown Lands before a decision on her eviction is finalised. As the character of the South Coast has slowly changed with our fibro shacks razed and replaced by large footprint weekenders, Don Hearn's cabins have maintained a sense of modesty and sensible pricing. Prices still start at \$50 a night, which allows equitable access to an increasingly expensive slice of coast.

Let us preserve this tiny slice of the South Coast of the past, where time stands still and younger generations can go back in time to when life was simpler.

### TRANSPORT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:57):** I speak on an issue that is of great interest to my electorate of Balmain, and that is Labor's plans to change local planning rules to encourage more housing development across the Six Cities region. That is of great interest, given that the Bays West precinct in Balmain has been identified as one of the first eight stations to be rezoned as part of the Transport Oriented Development Program, and given that a large majority of my electorate will be captured by the diverse and well-located housing plan to up-zone from four to six storeys. The Government points out that the State is in the midst of a housing crisis and that we all need to get on board to address it. That is the impetus behind proposing the broad changes to planning laws.

I will come back to that, but our community, and all communities across New South Wales, deserve to live in well-planned suburbs with houses people can afford to live in, public and accessible green spaces, and reliable social infrastructure. I acknowledge, as I am sure all reasonable people do, that building more housing is an important part of how that will be achieved. There are many social and environmental reasons why it makes sense to build our cities up rather than out, and the Government should be working with communities and local councils to build consensus as our communities grow in the future. However, the plan is being imposed upon local communities, causing anguish for residents, who are understandably concerned about what the plans will mean for the communities in which they live.

So it is even more important that the Government consults with communities, works to build consensus, and undertakes that process thoughtfully. Alas, so far that is not the approach the Labor Government has decided to take. Details of Labor's planning changes have been slowly drip-fed to the public with little or no opportunity for communities to consider them or to respond. That is why last month I organised two public meetings in my electorate of Balmain, in areas that will be hugely impacted by the proposed changes. I want to make sure my community knows what the proposals are and how they are likely to be affected. The meetings were attended by more than 400 people and I have had hundreds of follow-up calls and messages since, which shows the level of interest in my community. I was briefed by planning experts from the two councils that cover my electorate as well as the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

In preparing for the meetings I also looked through several independent expert submissions from local councils across Sydney, leading architects, affordable housing advocates, heritage consultants and the like. I discovered an alarming trend: Despite near universal support for the idea of increasing supply as one of the measures needed to meet our communities' housing needs, every single one of the submissions raised serious concerns about Labor's approach. That is, the very organisations that the Government needs to bring with it to be able to increase housing supply are sounding the alarm.

They are concerned about the lack of consultation and the incredibly short time frames that they have been given to make any considered contribution to the Government's plan. They are concerned that the proposals lack evidence and are unstrategic, winding back a decade's worth of work towards well-considered, place-based planning. They are concerned that the proposals will lead to bad planning outcomes and increased litigation. They are concerned that Labor's approach will interfere with plans to deliver housing that is genuinely affordable, like in the case of the City of Sydney. But instead of listening and looking for ways to work together, this Government shrugs them off and claims they are standing in the way.

The housing crisis is nothing new. For as long as I can remember, the high cost of housing in our State has left society's poorest out in the cold. There are 60,000 applicants on the social housing waitlist at the moment. Advocates and experts have been offering us solutions to the crisis for years but governments continue to ignore them. We need to ensure public and affordable housing is prioritised and provided for in every new housing development. We need to fix our unfair renting laws and we need to take on the structural issues in our tax system that have baked inequality into housing over generations.

When I asked the Premier yesterday about what the reforms will do to property prices, he conceded that he could not answer. He pointed instead to international examples such as Auckland, where significantly increasing the supply of private housing has somewhat slowed the rate at which rents have increased. Now that might be pleasing to some, but it is hardly a solution to a housing crisis. We cannot rely on the private market alone to solve this crisis. There are real things that the Government can do right now to make housing more affordable, so let's get on with it.



## RAMADAN GAZA CONFLICT

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:02):** I speak today about the significant month of Ramadan, which is observed by Muslims around the world, including many in my electorate. Riverstone's Muslim community is thriving and growing rapidly. According to the census, the number of Muslims doubled between 2016 and 2021 and, with our electorate's overall population continuing its meteoric rise, that trend is likely to continue.

Ramadan is an immensely spiritual month for adherents and while fasting is an important element of Ramadan, prayer and charity also play a significant role. An aspect of Ramadan I particularly appreciate is the innate sense of community and solidarity. Family and friends come together for the pre-dawn meal suhur, for iftar for the breaking of the fast at sunset or for the night prayer taraweeh, which all foster a sense of unity and social connection. Charity, or zakat, also plays a significant role during the month with a strong emphasis on giving to people in need. Zakat is either a monetary or material blessing that aims to create an equitable society through acts of kindness, compassion and forgiveness. Ramadan is a time of heightened spirituality, self-discipline, community and devotion for all Muslims. Its observance is a cornerstone of Islamic faith and practice, promoting virtues such as empathy, compassion and piety.

While there is a festive element to Ramadan through the communal breaking of fast and prayers, when speaking with constituents, it is clear that this year's atmosphere has a more sombre note. Ramadan is the epitome of empathy. The gruelling periods of fasting—without food and water—allow adherents to step into the shoes of those less fortunate, if only for a day at a time over the course of a month. Yet hunger or thirst is seldom mentioned. Rather, Muslims reflect on people from around the world who experience hunger and thirst not of their own volition but because of their circumstances—those who cannot break their fast every day, those who do not know whether they will live to see another day, and those whose worlds have been ravaged by war or natural disaster.

Recent and continuing events around the world have impacted my Muslim constituents particularly hard. Speaking with them, it is clear that their hearts ache for their brethren—a pain that is sometimes compounded by a lack of understanding and support from those around them. For perspective, the death toll in Israel since the Hamas October 7 attacks stands at 1,139, with dozens still held captive. By comparison, at least 31,000 Palestinians have been killed and a further 73,000 injured in Israeli attacks on Gaza. That is over 100,000 people killed or injured, and millions more have been displaced. The conflict has caused mass civilian deaths and reduced urban districts to wasteland. Even deliveries of food and medical aid in residential compounds have been targeted by the Israel Defense Forces. This is not a war, it is a massacre, and it must be stopped.

A manufactured famine, the deliberate targeting of women, children, hospitals and refugee camps, refusing aid and denying a people's right to self-determination are abhorrent and should have no place in this world. Some may find it hard to understand the strong sense of connection between Muslims around the world. It is as strong as the connection many people have to family members who live just around the corner. When Muslims see news reports and images showing the horrors occurring in Gaza, it can be unbearable. When I see news reports and images of attacks on innocent civilians, it makes me sick to my stomach—as it should for anyone, regardless of their religious beliefs. An immediate ceasefire—or, better yet, a total cessation—must be achieved. However, as a member of the New South Wales Parliament, there is little I can do to affect global affairs.

What I can do—indeed, what I am elected to do—is work towards providing the residents of the Riverstone electorate, my community, with the support they need. I can empathise and I can show compassion. It is my responsibility to ensure all members of the community feel welcomed and valued, regardless of where they were born or what religion they follow. I am not able to end conflicts between nations, but I am always willing to break bread with my community and listen to their concerns. I again take this opportunity to wish everyone, especially the Muslim community, Ramadan Mubarak. May this month be filled with spirituality, charity and community. My door is, and always will be, open.

## COVID-19 VACCINE MANDATES

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (18:07):** I reiterate my call for an end to COVID-19 vaccine mandates in all spheres of life in New South Wales, including to access employment and medical care. In August 2021, when the New South Wales Government first announced COVID-19 vaccine mandates would apply to construction workers in my community, I began to speak out against that assault on individual freedoms, bodily autonomy and to highlight the discrimination affecting my community. I stated:

Workers in western Sydney are being forced into vaccinations for fear of not being able to provide for their families. The policy of "no jab no job" is an attack on my community and the people of NSW. No citizen should be forced or coerced into having any medical treatment or procedure for fear of being discriminated against.

To that end, I announced draft legislation to prohibit blanket COVID-19 vaccine mandates and to ensure that nobody would be discriminated against based on their COVID-19 vaccine status. At that time there was no support for the legislation. Worse still, I was personally attacked for that legislation from people both inside and outside this place. Now, 2½ years later, we are witnessing court cases ruling that vaccine mandates are unlawful, both here in Australia and in other jurisdictions. Two weeks ago the Supreme Court of Queensland determined that COVID-19 vaccine mandates imposed on police and healthcare workers were unlawful. I said from the beginning that those mandates were wrong. I called on the then Premier to stop the mandates, but the mandates kept being announced by government, businesses and organisations. All the while, the former Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, stood by and claimed that Australia had a free and voluntary vaccine program.

I also draw attention to the case of a former youth support worker who recently won a case in the South Australian Employment Tribunal against the South Australian Government in which it was ruled that an employer enforcing a vaccine mandate and threatening employment consequences if the vaccine was not administered meant that an adverse reaction to the vaccine was work related and, as a result, compensable in workers compensation law. Even during the pandemic, the Fair Work Commission overturned a private sector vaccine mandate imposed at a BHP site. I was also horrified to learn of a young girl in Newcastle who was denied a lung transplant by St Vincent's Hospital partly due to her refusal to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

The COVID-19 pandemic was declared over by the World Health Organization on 5 May 2023. It is well past the time to remove vaccine mandate barriers for all citizens, given that most people have natural immunity to the virus, vaccine uptake has reached over 95 per cent and variants have become less severe. I also remind members that we now know that being jabbed with a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine does not stop one from contracting the virus nor transmitting the virus, so why do we still demand that people have this jab for their employment?

I draw to the attention of the House the decision by the Queensland Government in September 2023 to end COVID-19 vaccine mandates, even for health workers, by the end of that month. The Queensland Health Director-General at that time, Michael Walsh, said that all health workers who had been dismissed or had resigned due to vaccine requirements were welcome to reapply for roles in Queensland Health from that time, yet in New South Wales nurses and allied healthcare workers can still be locked out of employment because of their COVID-19 vaccine status. How many additional frontline workers would be employed supporting their colleagues and our communities if they were allowed to work again? Where are the Labor Party members fighting for those workers? In debate today in this House Labor offered its full support for frontline workers except those still locked out of employment because of their COVID-19 vaccine status.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw unprecedented government measures to try to protect Australians, including lockdowns, mandatory face masks, travel restrictions and the cancellation of events. While all of those restrictions have ended, vaccine mandates remain for some. For those locked out of work due to vaccine mandates the coronavirus pandemic is still not over. I call on the Government and all other agencies and organisations to end mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations before our good citizens suffer any further.

### **LITHIUM ION BATTERY FIRES**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (18:12):** In the early hours of Thursday 29 February a tragedy occurred in the suburb of Teralba in Lake Macquarie. At around 4.00 a.m. a fire broke out at a townhouse complex on Railway Street, claiming the lives of two people. Although I understand the victims are still to be formally identified, they are believed to be Therese Harris of Teralba and Patricia Kerr of Dudley. Ms Harris and Ms Kerr were much loved mothers, grandmothers and friends. Their passing has left a huge hole in the hearts and lives of their families and their communities. I offer my condolences to Ms Harris and Ms Kerr's families and loved ones. Their lives were tragically taken too soon.

Approximately 50 firefighters attended and battled the fire, which was reported to be volatile and intense. I express my gratitude to the firefighters, police and emergency services personnel who attended the scene. The attending firefighters, as they are often called to do, put their own lives in danger by entering the burning building to try to locate the residents believed to be inside. Unfortunately, as internal structures began to collapse around them, the firefighters' ability to access the unit was impeded. While two residents were able to escape, tragically two bodies, believed to be Ms Harris and Ms Kerr, were later recovered. While an investigation is underway to identify the cause of the blaze, Fire and Rescue NSW has stated that it appears to have been a lithium ion battery fire. If that is the case then they are New South Wales' first recorded deaths due to a lithium ion battery fire.

Concerns around the risks of lithium ion batteries have been building for some time. According to Fire and Rescue NSW statistics, there have been 45 fires related to lithium ion batteries in New South Wales this year. That is more than five per week. I acknowledge that the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety is currently

conducting an inquiry examining the management of the safety risks arising from electric and hybrid vehicle batteries. I look forward to its report.

In October 2023 the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] produced a report on lithium ion batteries and consumer product safety. The report acknowledged the growing market for lithium ion batteries, both in Australia and globally, fuelled by the growth in demand for consumer electronics. Consumer electronic devices, including electronic scooters and bikes, do not appear to fall within the current terms of reference for the joint standing committee.

The ACCC report made a number of recommendations, including for coordinated incident data collection, consumer guidance and community education. Importantly, one of the recommendations related to regulatory frameworks for electrical consumer products. The regulatory system for consumer electrical goods is understandably complex, yet I was surprised to find out that there appears to be no single mandatory safety standard for lithium ion batteries and products in Australia. I was also surprised to learn that in most States extra-low-voltage lithium battery operated products, including some e-bikes and e-scooters, fall outside of the electrical equipment safety systems in place.

Several Australian and international standards-making bodies publish voluntary standards, but it can be very unclear to consumers what the standards mean or which standard is the most appropriate. We live in a truly global consumer market, so it does not make sense that each State in Australia would have a different electrical safety framework. New South Wales consumers should have confidence in the testing and certification of the Australian lithium ion battery products they purchase. One would be hard pressed to find a New South Wales household that does not have a lithium ion battery or product in this day and age—e-bikes, e-scooters, electrical gardening equipment, cordless tools, laptops, phones and cars. They are now a ubiquitous part of modern life. While such products absolutely improve our lives, it is apparent that they also increase the risks to households and to our emergency responders.

Today I call for more community education about the risks of lithium ion batteries and products and how those risks can be managed in New South Wales homes. I also call for the ACCC recommendations around the harmonisation of the State regulatory framework for electrical consumer goods to be investigated and implemented as a matter of urgency. Two avoidable deaths in New South Wales from lithium ion batteries is too many. We must do everything we can to ensure that the tragic deaths of the victims of the Teralba fire are a catalyst for improvements in our regulatory framework for electrical consumer goods in New South Wales.

#### OASIS CARAVAN PARK

**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) (18:17):** My private member's statement tonight speaks not against development or against increasing densities in appropriate suburbs, but about the effects that some of the proposals may have on average Australians who are really battling. Recently in my electorate office I met with Billie, William and Steven, who are residents at the Oasis Caravan Park at Kanwal. That site has been bought by a company called Vivacity, and this is certainly no criticism of that company.

Under the previous Government there was an expression of interest to find sites across the State where it was appropriate to increase the density to provide much-needed housing, and I supported that process because it is absolutely necessary. People who visit my electorate will know that we are knocking down a large number of trees to build new suburbs, which is really important, and so upscaling the density in some already-developed areas is absolutely essential. But there are some really stressful human stories connected with that.

A group of people living at Oasis Caravan Park bought their van or transportable home, and they pay about \$150 per week to rent the land that it is on. As part of this development, they will have to move. It is a really difficult situation because some of those residents have been living there for 23 years. It is their home. They are real Aussie battlers. They are salt of the earth and have never done anything to hurt anyone. They live in that area because they like to live there. It is close to things and a great place for them to reside. It is a place where they can afford to live and call their own.

Through the process, they will be offered an amount of money to sell their current residence so that this development can occur. However, in today's market, the value of the small piece that they call their home will go nowhere close to what they will need to purchase somewhere else. It just will not happen. Whether it is the Government or the company doing the development, we have to work hard to find people either a new place to live or a place to live in the newly developed area. That may mean the property is discounted. These people should not be penalised for simply choosing to live in a particular place and doing nothing wrong.

It is a really difficult situation and an incredibly stressful time for them. Some of them have chronic diseases like cancer. Some of them have disability. But it is a real little community, and it is hard to hear their stories about how they will become displaced. When this happened at another caravan park in the electorate, we were able to provide help through the Department of Communities and Justice and the Central Coast Council to relocate all of those residents. But it was a hard process, and it came down to virtually the last day when they had to be out of where they were. The whole process was really stressful. These people now cannot go to the open market to try to sell their property—their relocatable home—because it basically will be demolished. Their only course of action is to accept the offer that is given to them.

I have committed to help them through the process and do everything I can to make sure they are looked after. But when we have big projects and are focused on building more houses because we need them, we must have places that are affordable for people. We also have to understand that there is a consequence for people who already live there, and we have to look after them as well. I will certainly talk to the planning Minister and the Minister with responsibility for the Department of Communities and Justice to make sure that these people are not left out. As I said, they are salt of the earth. They are good people who have done nothing wrong. They should not be run over in the name of progress.

### DEE WHY PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:22):** Dee Why Public School is a unique and inspiring primary school in my electorate of Wakehurst. It is led by an exceptional principal in Mark Chaffer, who is a dedicated, effective and charismatic leader. With 69 per cent of the students coming from non-English speaking backgrounds across 38 different cultural groups, the school is unusually multicultural for the northern beaches. Dee Why Public School has experienced the most rapid growth of any school in the Wakehurst electorate, with a 166 per cent increase in student numbers since 2011. The catchment area for the school is predominantly medium- and high-density apartments, and it continues to grow today. In this context, I am pleased to recognise Dee Why Public School and thank all the staff for the harmonious, inclusive and rewarding learning environment that they provide to all the Dee Why kids. I particularly express my support for calls from the Dee Why Public School community for an additional landscaped playground area for use by the school and the local community.

The school site spans both sides of the busy Fisher Road. The western side of the road includes a large vacant grassy area that is already temporarily used by the kids on and off but could be significantly improved to make the most of the land for the children's use. Through a combination of grant money, fundraising and school contributions, an initial playground redevelopment for the site is at an advanced stage of planning and will be built, which is great. However, this initial investment will deliver barely half of the school community's vision for the site, so I am championing stage two of this project: An additional \$150,000 would allow installation of multipurpose play courts, additional landscaping and seating.

Community support for this project came through loud and clear in the Wakehurst schools survey that I ran last year. I was very pleased to have so many responses from parents and staff at Dee Why Public School in particular. I thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey. By far, the top request for that school was for more outdoor play facilities and seating to better utilise the vacant area on the western side of Fisher Road. One parent provided this comment:

It would be great to see more outdoor play area for the children of Dee Why Public School. As the school has grown in numbers the outdoor areas are shrinking! ... The current state of the area, with no green spaces and a reliance on 15 demountable classrooms, does not provide an adequate or sustainable environment for our community and especially our children.

Furthermore, there is an unused site across the road that presents a valuable opportunity for development. It could be transformed into a multifunctional space that benefits both our educational needs and the overall quality of life in Dee Why.

I am particularly passionate about this project because of its potential broader public benefit for families living in Dee Why. The site would be ideal for use by the community on weekends and school holidays under the Share Our Space program—an excellent initiative of the former Government, and local member Rob Stokes in particular, that opened up public schools and assets for use by the public for recreation on weekends and during school holidays. The site is highly visible, right on the main road and fenced. I am sure it would quickly attract kids, parents and grandparents as a standalone drawcard park. It is right across from the highly used PCYC.

With many now raising families in apartments, access to high-amenity outdoor spaces that are exciting and inspiring to kids is more important than ever. Even a cursory review of the considerable research on the topic reveals the deep, enduring benefits for child development of playing outside in nature. The physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and social benefits of outdoor play are established beyond doubt. Outdoor play has been shown to improve communication, risk management, decision-making and negotiation skills. Mr Speaker, it sounds like we need to spend time on the monkey bars! I jest, but providing greater access to quality green spaces for children to get them away from their screens and outside is seriously important.

My office recently met with the principal to learn more about the project, and I have written to the Minister for Education and Early Learning to explain the potential and ask that a funding allocation be considered for this year's budget. I am committed to helping to bring Dee Why Public School's full vision for an engaging, well-designed playground on the Fisher Road site to fruition. All we need is for the Government to match the hard-earned funds raised by parents and thus deliver stage two.

### COOGEE CO-EDUCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:27):** I update the House on an incredibly important issue for the electorate of Coogee in the eastern suburbs: the new co-educational public high school that the New South Wales Labor Government announced last year. I provide some background information for context. The Government made an announcement that it would build a new co-educational public high school in Randwick. The decision to do so was based on years of community consultation as well as huge amounts of advocacy from groups like CLOSEast. For years and years, people in the eastern suburbs have been absolutely crying out for a new co-educational public high school for our children. I acknowledge the advocacy of groups like CLOSEast that have been advocating for years for this school to be built.

The New South Wales Labor Government announced not only that it would build a new school but also that it would put in an additional \$42 million to ensure that the school is fit for purpose, for now and for future generations. That is a really important piece of investment to ensure that our young people have the best education. The teachers at Randwick Girls' High School and Randwick Boys High School are absolutely amazing, but we know that those schools desperately need the upgrades so that the facilities can match the wonderful teaching that is happening inside those walls.

It is incredibly clear that the New South Wales Government made the right decision to build Randwick high school. I say that because last week the school held its first ever open day, and it was packed to the rafters—there was only standing room—with future students and parents lining up to go to the school. That result highlights that the Government should listen to the community. The decision made by the New South Wales Government last year was the right decision. I cannot emphasise any more how important it was. In 2018 community consultation began and people said that they wanted a coeducational public high school, but the then Liberal Government ignored it and said no.

CLOSEast had been doing years of consultation and had been calling out for this new school, but the former Liberal Government ignored it. When we came into government, we knew that this school was a priority. A consultation had already been put in place by the previous Liberal Government, so three consultations had to happen. When the results of that consultation came back, the overwhelming message from the community was that they wanted a coeducational public high school. Our government has done what is right—it has listened to the community and it is giving them exactly what they want. The open day last week demonstrates that this is what the community wants, and they are turning up.

We have not only made the commitment to build this new school but also made the commitment to invest an additional \$42 million to ensure that it is fit for purpose. It is important that the school community is consulted on the building of this infrastructure, particularly the current teaching staff. They work in the schools and know what the students need. They are experts and they should have a seat at the table. The teachers are being asked to be a part of the curriculum redevelopment, which is fundamental to ensure that the school is fit for purpose. It is important that the teachers are allocated time so they can make sure the new school has a curriculum that is fit for purpose. We are working with the department to ensure that the teaching staff are allocated additional time to give the school the resources that it needs.

### CENTRAL COAST SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:32):** On the Central Coast we are fortunate to have many beaches on our doorstep. As such, we have a strong surf lifesaving community. With 15 clubs—seven within my own electorate—and 8,332 members, the previous 2022-23 season saw the staggering completion of 604 rescues and 42,600 preventive actions. Those 604 rescues are people that went back home to their loved ones because of the great work of our volunteer surf lifesavers. So far the 2023-24 season has been extremely busy, with locals and tourists flocking to our beaches over the recent holiday period.

It is estimated that this season in excess of 1.2 million people will have visited Central Coast beaches, protected by our council paid guards and the thousands of wonderful surf lifesaving volunteers who give countless hours to keeping people safe. Recognising the invaluable contributions made by members, clubs and branches is extremely important. We thank everyone involved in our local surf lifesaving clubs for keeping our beaches safe and for their contribution to our community.

The Central Coast boasts some of the most beautiful beaches in the State if not the country, but also some of the most dangerous. Sadly, there have been three reported drownings this season. It is a timely reminder that everyone needs to swim at patrolled beaches and always within the red and yellow flags. One of the tragic drownings occurred at Copacabana Beach, which is another reason why it is important that we continue to invest in the necessary infrastructure for all our surf lifesaving clubs. Continued investment will ensure the equipment and facilities to adequately provide this crucial lifesaving service for the thousands of people that enjoy our region's beaches every year.

Whilst they are beautiful, dangerous beaches such as Copacabana cannot afford to miss out or lose any awarded funding. It was recently brought to my attention that the Copacabana Surf Life Saving Club is at risk of losing \$176,083.76 of the \$386,554 worth of funding secured under the 2022-23 Surf Club Facility Program. Due to factors outside of the club's control, it became necessary for the club to request a building works timeline extension, which has subsequently been denied. The timing of the denial has precluded the club from applying for the 2023-24 funding round, with no guarantee that the club will be successful in the 2024-25 funding round. Building will be delayed until 2026, in any event.

The Office of Sport and the Copacabana Surf Life Saving Club are working closely together towards a positive outcome. I thank the Office of Sport for its assistance. I have made a ministerial representation to the Minister for Sport, reiterating the importance of the renovations. I ask the Minister to take serious consideration of it, because the money goes to funding an important part of the surf lifesaving community. A successful resolution will ensure that the surf club's renovations and its project to expand the active recreational and training programs, emergency patrol and first-aid services go ahead, which will benefit the community enormously.

I acknowledge the new CEO of Surf Life Saving Central Coast, Michael Hyslop, for his great work and hitting the ground running with the outstanding branch that he has under him. I thank and acknowledge all of my local Surf Life Saving club presidents, including Craig Sheppard from Killcare Surf Life Saving Club, Tom Tseng from Copacabana Surf Life Saving Club, Stuart Harvey from Avoca Surf Life Saving Club, Kim Findlay from North Avoca Surf Life Saving Club, Alison McNeill from MacMasters Surf Life Saving Club, Glenn Bowles from Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club and Adam Phillips from Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club. I thank them and their volunteers for the great effort and service they continue to provide in keeping our community and beaches safe for everyone across the Central Coast to enjoy.

Last season there were almost 100,000 hours of volunteer time put into Surf Life Saving clubs on the Central Coast alone, which is why it is so important that the Surf Life Saving facilities grant funding be made available to ensure that it continues to upgrade those incredible facilities for our volunteers. Every season our volunteers give up time with their loved ones to protect people that they have never met. Our clubs deserve all the praise we can give them. They are truly outstanding. They are all heroes in their own right, with the great work that they do keeping people safe every season.

I acknowledge the incredible Kim Findlay, who is the president of the North Avoca Surf Life Saving Club. I was delighted to attend an evening with Bonnie Hancock as part of the women in sport grant last year. Bonnie is coming back to the North Avoca Surf Life Saving Club on Saturday 6 April for another truly inspirational speech. I wish everyone a great night at the North Avoca evening with Bonnie Hancock and congratulate all of our Surf Life Saving clubs on their great work.

#### ST PATRICK'S DAY

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (18:37):** The date 17 March is well known throughout the world, and not just because it is the wedding anniversary of the member for Lismore. On Sunday 17 March 2024, the people of Camden will be celebrating St Patrick's Day. St Patrick's Day became a feast day in the early seventeenth century, so we think we would have just about got it right by now. Some of the celebrations include public parades; festivals; céilí, which is Irish dancing and folk music; wearing green; and displaying shamrocks, symbolising the idea of three gods within one that Saint Patrick taught. That idea of Trinity has prevailed, and I am proud to say that the idea of a shamrock showing three gods as one is still being taught in Catholic schools in Australia to this day. St Patrick's Day is also a day of great joy because, traditionally, it has meant a lifting of lent and restrictions, which has led to it having a somewhat spurious significance of being a day of drinking.

But it is a special day because it really represents how much the people of the world love the Irish, and how much Irish traditions and ideas have spread throughout the world. In Camden, we are very proud that 10 per cent of our population is of Irish descent and that nearly one in three Camdenites is Catholic. St Patrick's Day is a massive day, with festivals happening at Camden Valley Inn and Camden Sports Club. We have a St Patrick's College in Campbelltown that many people from Camden attend. On 20 March they are having their St Patrick's Day feast mass, and they are also commissioning their new principle, Mary Leask. I take this moment

to welcome Mary to our community. I had the fantastic opportunity to meet her last weekend. She is a fantastic leader and this is a very exciting opportunity for her.

On 24 November last year, I attended the farewell for St Patrick's previous principal, Sue Lennox. Sue is an amazing educator and had an incredible impact on the students of St Patrick's College. She was an incredible leader and a strong, confident and calm mentor for many of the girls. As I said to Sue on the night, she will never know the impact that she has had on the many girls and young ladies who attended St Patrick's. I take this moment to thank Sue for what she has done for the young women in Camden who attended St Patrick's under her patronage, not only as the member for Camden but also as the mother of two daughters who grew and blossomed under her tutelage. Mary Leask will have very big shoes to fill, but I am sure she is ready for the job and raring to go. She seems extremely keen and we are excited to see what she has to offer.

Wearing green is a very simple way to celebrate St Patrick's Day. Many people in Camden will attend mass on Sunday not only because it is the fourth Sunday of Lent but also because it is a great opportunity to talk about all the wonderful things St Patrick did. He was an Englishman who brought religion to Ireland and neither the English nor the Irish ever let anyone forget that. It is important to think about the amazing things that are happening in our communities to celebrate the heritage that comes with us. I will now attempt to speak Gaelic. I apologise to everyone who speaks Gaelic, and if I get it wrong a lovely lady named Aileen from Camden South will take the blame. I wish everyone in the House and across Camden lá fhéile pádraig sona daoibh go léir. Happy St Patrick's Day, everyone.

**The SPEAKER:** Right back at you!

#### **THE HILLS POLICE AREA COMMAND**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (18:42):** May I say to the member for Camden that, being married to a Catholic primary school teacher from Ireland, I fully understand the weekend that she is facing. I enjoy it too.

Tonight I speak about the importance of community safety and the great work being done by the police men and women in the Winston Hills electorate. I recently had the opportunity to meet with the superintendent from one of our local area commands to discuss the current issues facing our community and the way that we need to respond to create a safer environment. As members of this place, we hold a large responsibility in supporting the safety of our constituents and promoting a prosperous community. In the Winston Hills electorate, three police area commands operate across our suburbs. They are Parramatta, Blacktown and the Hills. Each of those area commands are faced with different challenges.

In the past week we welcomed new probationary constables from Class 361. The Winston Hills electorate welcomed nine new probationary constables, with three at Blacktown, three at Parramatta and three in the Hills district. These new constables will continue their studies and on-the-job training in the local areas for the next 12 months before becoming constables. I congratulate all of the new probationary constables around the State, including the nine locals. I wish them all the very best for the years to come.

The local area commands have evolved their responsibility within our local community in recent times by offering their services through education and learning opportunities. Last weekend, the Blacktown Police Area Command visited the local Hammerbarn in Blacktown, Seven Hills. The Speaker may wish to know that Hammerbarn is the new name for Bunnings in the Blacktown, Seven Hills area. Officers met local residents and they heard about their concerns and spent time with the children who attended on the day.

Simple acts like that promote a good relationship between law enforcement officers and the community, which I believe goes a long way in supporting community harmony and proper functioning. It was great to see the next generation dressing up as policemen and policewomen and getting involved in the many activities that were occurring. As members of this place would be aware, there is a growing demand for more police officers in our communities to support law enforcement and community safety. It is great to see police officers are visiting local schools and offering educational programs to encourage a future generation of law-abiding citizens and, hopefully, more police officers in our Police Force.

I commend the team at the Parramatta Police Area Command for the terrific work they do visiting local primary schools and high schools for educational purposes. It is important that our Police Force is visible and present in our society. The Parramatta command has been doing a fantastic job through Western Sydney University by having stalls at open days and answering questions from students during forums. The Parramatta Police Area Command attended Campion College in Toongabbie for its annual fete to engage with members of the community on crime prevention whilst handing out goodies to the kids related to staying safe.

The Hills area command has been doing a fantastic job attending community events and having officers available for consultation. It has been great to see the work that the Hills Police Area Command has been doing

via social media in promoting messaging regarding school safety zones, traffic conditions and missing persons, and highlighting double-demerit time periods. However, it is disturbing to see the upward trend in crime in recent times. The most recent reports from 2023 demonstrated that nine of the 13 major crime categories showed a significant upward trend since 2022. The categories include robbery, domestic violence, breaking and entering, and theft.

Of those statistics, one of the most concerning is the spike in youth crime and assaults. Having spent 25 years in the State's Police Force, I have learnt that many crimes committed, particularly by youth, can be reduced by offering activities within our communities. That is why I was particularly proud of the investment made by the former Government into local reserves such as Sue Savage in Toongabbie, which received a BMX track for its youth. That type of investment supports an environment in our local community for youth to have fun and, importantly, remain safe and off the streets.

Similar investments have been made by Blacktown City Council in recent years, including for a skate park in Glenwood, which has been a resounding success for local residents in the community, including a young person in my family. Every time I visit the area, there is a growing sense of community around the local shops and skate park. It is important for members to assume our role and take responsibility for supporting safety in our community, working with our local police commands and welcoming the investments that will make our communities safer places. I look forward to working with the superintendents and the Government to ensure that Winston Hills remains a safe place to work and play.

### CONNECT NORTHERN RIVERS

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:47):** I would like to talk about a program that is working extremely well in my electorate of Lismore to keep vulnerable young people from falling through the cracks. Connect Northern Rivers has been delivering Get Back in the Game in different forms since 2013. The program supports young people aged 15 to 19 who are not currently engaged in education, training or employment. Those young people have left school early and would be at risk of heading into entrenched unemployment—or sometimes incarceration—were it not for this intervention. Instead, the young people receive one-on-one mentoring and support to re-engage with school, enrol in training or start employment. The program assists with everything from ID to work clothes, referrals to specialist housing and mental health services, and career and transition pathway planning.

During 2023 Connect supported 627 young people through the Get Back in the Game program. Seventy-seven per cent of participants successfully engaged with a placement in training, employment or education. Of those, 46 per cent engaged with a training course; 45 per cent obtained employment, including traineeships and apprenticeships; and 10 per cent re-engaged with high school. Participants who did not land a job or start training during 2023 began to address barriers getting in the way of their engagement through case management and wraparound support. The need for the program has only grown in the past few years, especially due to the lasting impacts on young people of schooling from home during COVID and the devastating effects of the catastrophic floods in our area in 2022.

Funded places were nearly doubled in Richmond-Tweed after the flood to meet increased demand. This year the program reached 80 per cent capacity within the first six months and funded places again had to be increased, this time in Richmond-Tweed and Coffs-Grafton. Despite increasing demand, the program continues to deliver successful outcomes for vulnerable young people. Take, for example, Alex, who was referred to the program at age 15 after finding it difficult to adapt to the high school environment when the school changed locations after the flood. Concerns about learning difficulties and a mental health diagnosis contributed to his disengagement from school. Alex expressed an interest in metals to his case manager, and was supported to enrol in and complete his year 10 equivalent through TAFE, including a statement of attainment in welding. Alex's case manager helped him identify and apply for welding opportunities, and he landed a job with a local welder.

The vast majority of referrals to the program come from the local high schools, which recognise that young people are struggling and need external support to succeed in their transition from school, especially when they disengage and leave school early. Schools have never been structured to meet the complex needs of young people in isolation, particularly in areas outside of the school walls, such as family economic hardship, housing instability, and mental health concerns. Part of this program's success lies in the partnerships between the schools, the local service providers delivering Get Back in the Game, such as Connect Northern Rivers, and other specialist services. Apart from increasing demand for support for these early school leavers, another worrying trend is that the age for referrals is going down. Across the State, 75 per cent young people referred to the program were 15 and 16, with students as young as 14 disengaging. These young people are not eligible for mainstream-funded TAFE courses, and we know that many employers are reluctant to take on employees younger than 16 in full-time employment due to a lack of maturity and experience, and because of licensing restrictions.



This program is vital to helping these young people bridge the gap between schooling and their next steps in training and employment. Up until this point, the program has rolled from short-term contract to short-term contract, with new regions coming on board, and different funding sources, with no certainty about the future of support for our most vulnerable young people. We need to provide that certainty and secure ongoing funding for this essential service—and I am backing them in. Programs like this are only successful when we bring together local knowledge and community-wide support. We need to foster ongoing, trusting relationships between government, providers, local schools, families and other specialist services by backing these programs in the long term and providing certainty. Our young people are too important not to provide them every opportunity for success. I thank the wonderful staff who run this program and have done so since 2013. I commit here in this place that I will do everything I can to support them to support our young people.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:52 until  
Tuesday 19 March 2024 at 12:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

**MELANIE SUITOR**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate Melanie Sutor on being a worthy recipient of the Senator Alex Gallacher Road Safety Award. After joining Parkes Shire Council in 2002 as the Roads and Safety Officer, Ms Sutor progressed to Road Safety and Injury Prevention officer, adding Forbes and Lachlan shires to her territory. One of the state's longest-serving road safety officers with more than 22 years in the role, Ms Sutor has implemented many initiatives which have helped improve the road culture in her community. The 'Hey Kids Protect Your Lids' helmet campaign, free car restraint checks, the load restraint project and mock crash are a few of those programs, with Mock Crash a standout as it addresses young people before they get behind the wheel. Since it began 10 years ago there has been a 26 per cent reduction in accidents involving young drivers. Awarded by Safer Australian Roads and Highways, 'Alex's Award' recognises former South Australian Senator, the late Alex Gallacher, a tireless campaigner for road safety. Rural communities rely on the road network to keep communities connected. The work Ms Sutor does to help keep drivers safe is invaluable and I thank her.

**SPACE ACADEMY**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to commend the excellent work the One Giant Leap Foundation is doing to set kids on a path towards a career in the science and technology fields through its Aerospace Academy. During the January school holidays this year I was lucky enough to be invited by Jackie Sim and Jackie Carpenter to the Aerospace Academy held at Orange's James Sheahan High School and it was great to get a first-hand look, with the kids attending, at what's on offer during the three-day course. Aimed at 12 to 15-year-olds, Aerospace Academy shows the kids where the STEM subjects, that is science, technology, engineering and maths, can lead them within the aerospace field. These careers are only constrained by their imagination – designing spacecraft, mining asteroids, farming on mars The exploration of the universe and a better understanding of our own solar system is a rapidly growing field, and the recruitment of a workforce starts now. Planting the seed in the imagination of youngsters with an affinity for STEM subjects is critical. I congratulate the NSW Government on its support of this initiative and look forward to attending future workshops in my electorate.

**KOBY READ**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to recognise the budding rodeo career of Forbes' Koby Read, who is rapidly carving out a reputation in the sport. Koby, who's dad Troy was also a bull rider, contested the Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association's finals at Tamworth in January, where he was one of the top fifteen 14-18 years riders in Australia. This was a great learning curve for Koby, who has just turned 16, yet held his own against a strong field. Since that event, Koby continues to hone his skills, travelling most weekends to contest rodeos in the 14-18 steers and opens, where he is gaining podium finishes. That's lead to a breakthrough win at the Milton Rodeo in both events, but just as importantly helped amass points towards making next year's finals. Koby is planning to expand his skills in 2024, looking for a saddle to start riding saddle broncs now he has turned 16. With Forbes on the verge of opening its own equestrian and rodeo centre, it is vital young people continue to be involved in the sport, which is endemic to rural Australia. I congratulate Koby on his commitment to the sport and wish him well.

### SENIORS WEEK AWARDS

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I've received so many worthy nominations for the Seniors Week Awards, and would like to take the opportunity to celebrate some of the outstanding individuals we are lucky to have in our community. Retired school teacher Colleen Cunningham is currently the International Officer of the Picton CWA, is a Special Religious Education volunteer and a member of the Nangaran Landcare Group. An active member of the Bargo History Group, Colleen assists with research and is an administrator on The Bargo History Group Facebook Page. Shonagh Moore, at 85 years young, epitomizes community engagement through her monthly singalongs at Mittagong Uniting Church, fostering social connection and active participation among the seniors and disability groups that attends. Her weekly knitting group, "Knitting for others," donates handmade items to aged care facilities and organizations like the Flying Doctors. John Bicknell is a published author, poet, and community advocate. As a youth mentor at Picton High School, volunteer firefighter, and historian, John's commitment to community welfare and engagement is unwavering. Well done Wollondilly nominees, you are an inspiration to us all.

### HARBISON'S NURSE PRACTITIONERS

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Harbison Aged Care has again lived up to its logo of "heart and home" with its latest initiative. Under the direction of CEO David Cochran, Harbison's in-house Nurse Practitioners clinics allow it to better serve its residents with intermediary preventative care to alleviate pressure on the health system. Advanced nurse practitioners are able to assess the history of a patient and interpret the results of different investigations in order to make a diagnosis to plan and deliver care. They are often able to offer a complementary alternative to GP visits and hospital admissions, and can help to relieve pressures within primary care teams. Harbison was founded in 1956, and for close to 70 years has provided a high quality aged care service that is making a difference to the lives of older people in the Highlands. With two locations, they are leaders in their field, and prove what can be achieved when best practice and residents are put first. Harbison has indicated that its nurse practitioner service is expected to increase in both demand and capacity, and the residents will benefit from the accessibility to quality, individualised medical care.

### LOCAL DANCE ACADEMY SHINES

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—The Bloc Dance Academy of Bargo recently represented Wollondilly at the Showcase Australian Dance Championship, the largest dance event in Australia. Traveling to the Gold Coast to compete against dance studios from around Australia and New Zealand, the Bloc's dance troupes dazzled in all genres that they competed in, including jazz, lyrical, contemporary hip hop and tap dance. The dance groups secured several placings of first, second and third. With ages ranging from under 6 up to 16, these young dancers show what can be achieved with dedication, hard work and team spirit. They were backed by the support of parents and families, as well as local sponsors. The Bloc is an inclusive and creative space where the youth of Wollondilly can develop their confidence, self-expression and leadership skills, while reaping the benefits of a physical pursuit. Their caring teachers encourage the students to be the best they can be, and to have fun. Their placings at the Dance Championships speak to the hard work and dedication of the academy, and are a well-deserved result.

### INDIAN AUSTRALIA DIASPORA FOUNDATION, INAUGURAL FRIENDSHIP DINNER

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On 22 February 2024 I joined members of my own community at the Inaugural Indian Australian Diaspora Foundation [IADF] Friendship Dinner held at Granville. The relationship between India and Australia is strong but we cannot understate the importance of continuing to build upon our friendship and connection with the Indian Diaspora. Australia is well known for its multicultural social demographic, and the Indian community is one of the larger groups in the country. Indian Australians are one of the largest groups within the Indian Diaspora, with 783,958 persons declaring Indian ancestry at the 2021 census. The Friendship Dinner was attended by His Excellency Gopal Babley, High Commissioner of India, The Hon Dr S Janki Raman, Indian Consulate General, many members of Federal and State Parliament, Councillors, and many members of the business community. I commend with great enthusiasm the efforts of the IADF including Prof Nihal Agar AM, Mr Prakash Mehta, Mr Vasu Ramyavaram, Mr Jay Shah, and Mr Rahul Jethi. Events such as the Friendship dinner build on and strengthen the mutual interests of our shared communities. Thank you to the IADF for your commitment to our shared values.

### THE HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL, NEW YEAR LANTERN FESTIVAL

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On Saturday, 24 February 2024 I joined with the Castle Hill community at the first Hills Shire Council Lantern Festival. The Lantern Festival was held at Arthur Whitting Park, Castle Hill. The Hills Community packed out the park for what was a fantastic cultural festival. The festival included staged entertainment including Chinese dancing from S2 Dance Studio and The Hills Chinese

Association, lion dancing including the traditional dotting of the eyes; The Family Martial Arts Show and much more. I joined with the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor to hand out red envelopes, (also known as "hongbao" in Chinese) to some wonderful children to symbolises good luck and prosperity. As well as entertainment there were food trucks and activities for all. The Park in the evening was a sea of red with red lanterns on displayed throughout the park. I commend the Council for organising such a wonderful Chinese cultural festival. Lastly, I recognise and commend Anna Hu, Rose Wang and the team from The Hills Chinese Association for partnering with Meg and Bosco Wong and Council for this wonderful community event.

### **BAULKHAM HILLS HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTATION EVENING**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On 22 February 2024 Baulkham Hills High School held its Presentation Evening. The Presentation Evening recognises students who excelled in academic and sporting achievements during 2023. Congratulations and recognition is given to those students who excelled during the year. There were many awards given on the evening. I recognise the following award recipients: Awards for HSC State Ranking: Syed Ahmad, Grace Charosensri, Melissa Gao, Isabella Ha, Kuval Lamba, Hannah Park, Krithika Raghupathi, Trisha Roy, Christina Yang and Yoel Yoffe. Dux of Year 12: Justin Dos Reis Falcao, Ananya Garg, Danny Kong, and Yoel Yoffe. Ampol Best All Rounders Kevin Zou. Reuben F Scarf Award for Commitment which was presented by Deputy Mayor Mitchell Blue: Abigail Tang. The Hills Shire Council Award for Citizenship which was presented by Councillor Jessica Brazier: Shayan Bidiwale and Tasmai Alia. Rotary Award for Citizenship: Jesse Vella and Grace Xia, Macquarie University Award for Leaders, and Achievers: Manav Jain and Yujing He. Coleman Greig Lawyers Award for Excellence in Legal Studies: Trisha Roy. University of NSW Award: Danny Kong. Australian Catholic University Award: Mohijit Singh. Australian Defence Forces Award: Than Khisa and Sunya Arnold. I congratulate all award recipients.

### **PHIL WILKINS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Phil Wilkins for a lifetime dedicated to sports journalism. Phil's recent autobiography, "Hell for Leather," captures his extraordinary journey. Phil's career spans decades, marked by a passionate commitment to covering the nation's sporting triumphs and trials. From his humble beginnings in Broken Hill to his tenure with prestigious publications like the Sydney Morning Herald, Phil's narrative unfolds with captivating anecdotes and insights. His pursuit of truth led to ground-breaking stories, leaving a mark on the sporting landscape. Phil is a Walkley award winner, which is the highest honour in Australian journalism. AFL, boxing, races, football (soccer), tennis, rugby league, Phil covered them all for major publications. Beyond his professional achievements, Phil's contributions to the community are immeasurable. His dedication to local rugby, evidenced by his role in establishing the Forster Tuncurry Dolphins Rugby Club, shows his commitment to promoting sporting excellence at grassroots levels. Congratulations Phil and thank you for your contributions within our community and beyond.

### **GEMMA STYLZ**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Gemma Stylz for her curated exhibition titled 'Vocation' at Gloucester Gallery. Gemma, an incredibly talented artist herself brought together a display of art from professionals working in visual art and media industries to demonstrate possibilities and inspire creative careers. The exhibition included a behind the scenes look at the design process of print on demand, e-commerce, and creative merchandise. Among the featured local artists were Linda Titow, an oil artist and ceramist who creates stunning organic pieces, Shelley Kurtz, a graphic designer, illustrator and author who has combined her skills to publish a colouring book, Leigh Hooker, a mixed media artist whose layered works are in a style of abstract realism and Gemma who focuses on figurative art, offering a range of services, from realistic portraits in traditional oils and pencils to digital design for merchandise, prints, and web ready graphics. The exhibition's opening was further elevated by a live DJ set by Dougie Stylz and a book signing by Shelley Kurtz. Congratulations Gemma, on putting together such a unique and successful exhibition, allowing a range of artists to showcase their work.

### **CIRCARTUS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to congratulate Circartus – a Wingham-based community circus school, on presenting their first stage production at the Manning Entertainment Centre. The show, titled 'Creatures', is an original work created by director Jill Watkins and her performance troupe. There were 4 shows over one weekend and each were a full house! It featured stilt creatures, such as the Manning River turtle, bower birds and flying foxes, aerials, groundwork, and physical theatre to showcase the skill of the artists, aged from five years old to late 50s. Congratulations Circartus on putting together a professional, creative and well-choreographed performance, we are so fortunate to have such talented, locally performing artists.

### CAMDEN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—On Tuesday February 20th, I was privileged to attend Camden Council's latest Citizenship Ceremony. At the ceremony we welcomed more Australian Citizens to the Camden area. It was fantastic to hear stories from the new citizens about how their journey arriving to where they are today and live in the Camden area. It was lovely to hear the resounding pledges and robust singing of the National Anthem by our newest citizens, proud to call Australia home and be a one of the millions of people that are lucky enough to call themselves citizens of the country. Congratulations to all who attended and all the new citizens in the Camden area.

### CHLOE PAILTHORPE - MONARO LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2024

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)**—When I first received a nomination for Chloe Pailthorpe as Monaro's Woman of the Year, it was a bit of a no-brainer, she was more than deserving of the title. Chloe and her husband Mike moved to Bungendore 10 years ago, since then, have become pillars of the community. When a fire ripped through nearby Carwoola in 2017 destroying 8 homes, three-and-a-half-thousand hectares of land, and injuring 2 firefighters, community members donated food, clothing, and household items to help rebuild. Born out of this, Chloe and other community members decided to open an op-shop and food hub to provide for people doing it tough in Bungendore and Captains Flat. Seven years later and Chloe and her 50+ team of volunteers are going strong. They run a Christmas hamper appeal as well as the free breakie club at the local school. It's people like Chloe and her team that embody community spirit. They work hard and ask for nothing in return to make Bungendore and Captains Flat such amazing small towns. It's this reason I'm proud to congratulate Chloe on her title of Monaro Woman of the Year 2024.

### ANNUAL 10TH GLAPD GET TOGETHER HARMONY DAY

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Harmony Week 2024 in March is focused on Australian multiculturalism and is celebrated in the week that surrounds the 21 March, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination I was delighted to attend the 10th Annual Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development Get Together Harmony Day! The event is always a vibrant tapestry of cultures that reflects the rich history of the Great Lakes region of Africa and the enduring spirit of its people. It's also a tribute to the incredible contributions African Australians make to our community. We heard inspiring words from our community leaders and guest speakers. Their messages will remind us of our shared history, resilience, and the importance of working together for a harmonious future. This Get Together is a testament to the power of community. Let's celebrate our diverse heritage, ignite curiosity about each other's cultures, and build a foundation for a future filled with understanding. Let the spirit of this day extend beyond the festival grounds and into our everyday lives. Let's be ambassadors for our cultures and create a more inclusive society. Thank you for the kind invitation to attend.

### REBECCA MATTHEWS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—It was my honour and privilege to recently meet Coolamon local, Rebecca Matthews, known as Becky, at the Matong Australia Day Celebrations. Becky was nominated for this year's Young Citizen of the Year award for her invaluable voluntary contributions to her local community. Becky willingly gives her time and talent to many different activities across the Coolamon Shire; these include Coolamon Central School bake sales and barbecues, Bunnings barbecue fundraising events, Allawah Lodge, runs Lego sessions at Coolamon Library, participates and runs youth week activities, and is the photographer and first-aider for the Hume and Hovell ultra-marathon. Becky is a remarkable young woman; her local community is extremely fortunate for her willingness and involvement and her contribution to the success of the program and activities she is involved in. Congratulations again, Becky, on being the Young Citizen of the Year nominee for the Coolamon Shire. It is a remarkable achievement to have been recognised with this prestigious award for the incredible contributions you are making to your local community.

### ARIAH PARK PEDDLER POWER

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Five cyclists from Ariah Park have helped raise funds for research into Motor Neurone Disease. They joined over 120 riders who recently completed a six-day cycling and fundraising event in Tasmania, PedalCure 4 FightMND. Allan Edis, Peter Harper, Amanda (Kursh) Writer, Joel Fairman, and Phil Davey, along with their volunteer support crew Glen Bell and Terry Walker, Jamie and Kate Gordon, helped get the fantastic five across the line and ensure they had enough supplies for the journey. The Ariah Park riders were joined by the neighbouring communities of Cootamundra, with Peter and Jeremy Lott and Andrew Tough from West Wyalong. Sadly, two people every day in Australia are diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease, with approximately 2,100 people across Australia living with this disease. The disease effects messages from the brain to the muscles via the spinal cord via the nerve cells known as 'motor neurons.' Congratulations to

everyone who participated in such a great cause, and well done to the Arian Park riders who have incredibly raised over \$42,000 to support further research into Motor Neurone Disease.

#### **COOTAMUNDRA REPRESENTS AT THE ABCRA NATIONAL FINALS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to congratulate five local Cootamundra rising stars in the sport of rodeo. These young champions have recently returned from the competing in the National Finals Rodeo conducted and held by the sport's governing body, the ABCRA (Australian Bushmens Campdraft Rodeo Association). Over 200 competitors vied for top titles across both junior and senior events which coincided with Australia's largest country music festival, the Tamworth Country Music Festival. The finals represent the culmination of a year's hard competing in regional rodeo's in places such as Coonamble, Gundagai, Bendemeer, Geurie, Singleton, Dungog and all across the country. To have five finalists from one community represents the strength and depth in this sport and is to be highly commended. The event was held at ALEC (Australian Equine Livestock and Events Centre) and represented another level from community rodeos for the competitors. Undeterred and certainly not overawed Cody Holston, Brayden Oddy, Macey Bryant, Beau Oddy and Koby Bryant, all performed amazingly, and The Cootamundra Rodeo Committee was announced as the ABCRA committee of the year. A huge thanks and congratulations must be extended to all the volunteers who make this sport happen.

#### **SUE BRANNOCK - CRONULLA SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Sue Brannock of Caringbah on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards. Sue has been a member and hardworking volunteer of Wanda Surf Life Saving Club for 25 years. From 2005 to 2018 she was deputy president of the ladies auxiliary committee and she is currently the secretary and deputy chair. She was elevated to life membership of the auxiliary committee in 2018 for her exceptional commitment and dedicated contribution to the club, the community and surf lifesaving. Sue has also made a huge contribution to the club's major annual fundraiser, the Sutherland to Surf, over 28 years and is still an active member of the organising committee. Sue looks after two key areas, the design, ordering and distribution of the merchandise, entrant medals and ribbons; and coordinating the volunteers and management of the registrations and race bib collections. Wanda President Fiona Sutton says Sue's enthusiastic and friendly personality always ensures many Wanda members volunteer year after year to assist with the very busy and sometimes demanding aspects involved with the race event.

#### **DAPHNE LEE - CRONULLA SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Daphne Lee of Miranda on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards. Daphne was nominated for her work as a volunteer the Gymea Anglican Mobile Community Food Pantry truck, which operates fortnightly in partnership with Anglicare. The mobile food pantry service provides a wide variety of pantry staples and bathroom essentials to anyone who attends to help stretch the budgets of those who are struggling with the cost of living. She has been part of this community service since it started nearly five years ago. Daphne is the friendly welcoming face when people arrive, and she checks them in and calls each person when it's their turn to go to the pantry. Daphne also continues to give her time across Gymea Anglican, being on the organ roster for their traditional church service twice each month and also plays for other events at the church. The church also appreciates Daphne's flower arranging regularly for church services and her willingness to visit people in aged care.

#### **RON LUCAS- CRONULLA SENIOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Ron Lucas of Gymea on being a finalist in the 2024 Cronulla Senior of the Year Awards, nominated for his work as a volunteer for Kids Hope at Grays Point Public School. Ron is in his eleventh year with Kids Hope, which provides one-on-one mentoring to help transform the lives of vulnerable children. Ron was nominated by Grays Point Public School Principal Narelle Smith, who said Ron's commitment to Kids Hope and supporting children at the school has been a significant contribution to the wellbeing, social and academic success of students. He works one-to-one as a mentor with students with complex needs and his dedication and emotional support has changed lives. Students and their families have remained in contact with Ron to share their life successes, well past primary school. Ron formerly lived in Grays Point. He has a long history of volunteer work including secretary of Grays Point community church for 14 years and a coach and trainer with local cricket and basketball, along with being part of the Grays Point Public P&C in the 1960s and 1970s.

#### **A VISIT TO SOUTH CREEK SCHOOL**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—I rise to commend the students and staff of South Creek School in Riverstone, which I recently visited with Minister for Education Prue Car. I would like to thank relieving principal Courtney Valele for taking time out of her day to show us around the campus. Her enthusiasm and commitment

to the school and its students was amazing to see. I would also like to commend some students; Kingston Salatielu from Year 2 and John Selda and Jacob Piscopo from Year 6. They showed such enthusiasm for their learning and were immensely helpful in showing us around. The school was amazing, with well-designed classrooms, a beautiful playground, including a bike track, and a sensory garden that the students love to maintain, growing a large variety of fruits and vegetables. They also host and allow the students to interact with several rescued farm animals that included ponies, ducks, chickens, goats, sheep, rabbits, and guinea pigs. Once again, I commend the staff and students at South Creek School for their incredible efforts and enthusiasm.

#### **ROUSE HILL ANGLICAN COLLEGE 2024 SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt congratulations to Charlize Sawyer and Benjamin Fitzsimons on their successful election as school captains at Rouse Hill Anglican College. 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 Rouse Hill Anglican 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.

#### **THE PONDS HIGH SCHOOL 2024 SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Mr Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt congratulations to Derell Akrong and Leeya Aves on their successful election as school captains and to Lachlan Boyd and Ana Zastavnikovic on their appointments as vice-captains at the Ponds 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 The Ponds 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.

#### **BOWLS NSW AWARDS EVENING 2023**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—Attending the Bowls NSW Awards Evening on 8 November 2023 at my local Cabra-Vale Diggers Club was truly a noteworthy experience. Notably, it was revealed that this occasion marked a significant milestone as it was the first time the women's and men's awards were amalgamated. This strategic decision not only symbolized inclusivity but also reflected the commitment to fostering equality within the sport. Equally remarkable was the choice of venue for this special event – Cabramatta, a testament to the organizers' dedication to spreading recognition and celebration beyond traditional spaces. The decision to bring the awards to Cabramatta was an acknowledgment of the local community's role in the success of the sport. Taking a moment to extend heartfelt congratulations to all the nominees and winners is paramount. Their dedication, skill, and sportsmanship have undoubtedly contributed to the thriving bowls community. By amalgamating the awards, the event not only recognized individual achievements but also emphasized the collective strength of the Bowls community. This ground breaking event not only celebrated excellence in the sport but also set a precedent for future events, inspiring inclusivity and unity within the Bowls NSW community.

#### **CABRA-VALE DIGGERS CLUB**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the 19th of December 2023, I had the privilege of attending the "Topping Out" Ceremony hosted by the Cabra-Vale Diggers Club. The ceremony marks a significant milestone of the Cabra-Vale Digger Club's Masterplan, which is to turn the Club into a 4.5 star hotel and entertainment complex. The masterplan is a \$117 million multi-stage redevelopment project. The topping out ceremony is an age-old tradition that signifies the completion of the structural phase of a construction project. It can be traced back to the ancient Scandinavian religious rite of placing a tree atop a new building to appease the tree-dwelling spirits displaced in its construction. The evergreen of the tree is believed to bring good fortune, good luck to future inhabitants, continued growth and safe jobs. I extend my heartiest congratulations to the President Mr Walter Robinson, the Vice President Mr Ronnie Moore, all the Directors, the General Manager Mr Michael Foulkes and the Management Team, the Construction Team and everyone involved in reaching this remarkable milestone. I look forward to the Grand Opening Day.

### **LAO COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT COOPERATIVE NSW 2023 CHRISTMAS PARTY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I was delighted to join the Lao community in celebrating Christmas on the 23rd of December 2023 organised by Lao Community Advancement Cooperative NSW [LCAC]. LCAC is a prominent community association and has played a key role in the Lao community since the settlement of the Lao refugees in the 70s. I commend the LCAC leaders and team for their selfless effort and commitment to providing support and assistance to Australian Lao communities over the years. I take this opportunity to thank LCAC for the tremendous help they have offered across many different areas, spanning from English language tuition, assistance with accessing public housing, health and childcare education to trauma, relationship and domestic violence counselling. I had a wonderful time with the LCAC leaders, including the current President Mr Bountham Vongsaya and the former President Mr Deth Sysengrath, and the Managing team and guests. We had meaningful discussions, fabulous Christmas entertainment and celebrations on the night. I extend my gratitude to the LCAC for their warm hospitality, and congratulate them on organising a very successful event.

### **TENTERFIELD TALKS: COMMUNICATING IN CRISIS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I commend The Tenterfield Star newspaper's Editor Jacob McMaster and his editorial team on their campaign, Tenterfield Talks: Communicating in crisis. The Tenterfield Star has launched an innovative partnership between local media and natural hazards experts, which encourages residents to share their experiences of communication during the 2019 bushfires, and awareness of and preparedness for natural disasters. The paper is running a special series around these issues, which speak directly to my dual roles as State Member for Lismore and NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery. Having been at the fire fronts surrounding Tenterfield, Torrington and Drake, and other parts of my electorate, during 'Black Summer', and dealing with the onslaught and aftermath of the catastrophic floods of early 2022, it's clear that having more effective lines of communication in place can save lives and property, and hopefully reduce trauma. A research project, funded by Natural Hazards Research Australia and led by a team from Deakin University, this Saturday, 16 March, is inviting locals to share their experiences and knowledge at a community forum in Tenterfield. And while we have had valuable major inquiries into bushfires and floods, this research will add to our arsenal.

### **FRIENDS OF THE KOALA DEDICATED TO SAVING KOALAS IN THE WILD**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—NSW Environment Minister Penny Sharpe and I recently visited Friends of the Koala Incorporated in East Lismore to deliver one of my key commitments – a \$110,000 grant which will be used to vaccinate 300 koalas against chlamydia and to develop a koala database. Friends of the Koala or FOK is a fantastic organisation; highly professional and boasting compassionate and competent volunteers. A FOK spokesperson welcomed the announcement, saying the licensing and funding to administer the chlamydia vaccine to koalas marks a significant leap forward in safeguarding our local koala population. The spokesperson said FOK had recently seen a decline in community and corporate donations. It will take all levels of government, corporate and philanthropic support to help this organisation save this iconic species in the wild. Minister Sharpe and I watched a koala joey named Maleny receive her vaccination. She was rescued last December when her mum was found dead at the bottom of a tree. I thank FOK President Aliison Kelly, General Manager Silva Everaers, Veterinary Clinical and Research Director Dr Jodie Wakeman and Assistant Veterinary Nurse Liz McLeod for educating us about the challenge they face daily.

### **SAMSON CHALLENGE HELD IN HOT AND HUMID CONDITIONS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I joined Lismore City Mayor Cr Steve Krieg to kickstart proceedings at the 14th annual Samson Challenge, an intense teams fitness event aimed at raising funds for the OurKids charity. The first of 102 teams got underway at 7am, a starting time which was decidedly cooler than the brutal hot and humid conditions experienced as the day wore on. The winning team was the Boaty Boys from Lennox Head in a time of 1:11.33 from runner-up Curtis Fitness Training Woman #10 in 1:13:48 and third placed Jetts Elites #70 in 1:14:57. On the Friday night prior, an individual competition was held with Jack Toddhunter crowned Samson Solo Male Champion and Serena Smith taking the Female Champion title. Congratulations to Our Kids founder Dr Chris Ingall, Our Kids Fundraising Coordinator Rebekka Battista and the entire team on raising between \$20,000 and \$25,000 to purchase much-needed medical equipment for our sick kids. Hats off to the 450 competitors from the Richmond, Tweed and Clarence valleys who pushed themselves to the limit by lifting, carrying, running, swimming and doing burpees before finishing. The Samson Challenge is one of those events which brings our community together.

### **RHIANNAN IFFLAND**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Rhiannan Iffland for her outstanding performance at the 2023 Red Bull

Cliff Diving World Series held in Auckland, New Zealand. Rhiannan secured her seventh consecutive world title at the recent World Series, showcasing her formidable talent, and commitment to cliff diving. It is incredible to watch Rhiannan's continuous growth and success as a cliff diver as she makes her Lake Macquarie community proud. Rhiannan has also furthered her diving skill and prowess outside the competitive arena with being the first person to ever dive out of a moving hot air balloon. Congratulations Rhiannan on your incredible achievement and career in cliff diving.

#### **ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DAVID LEWIS**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Assistant Commissioner David Lewis for being awarded an Australian Fire Service Medal in the General Division for his distinguished and remarkable service to Fire and Rescue NSW [FRNSW]. Assistant Commissioner Lewis has served 34 years in Fire and Rescue NSW, providing his expertise and leadership at state, national and international levels. He has showcased commitment, bravery and compassion for his nation and community in battling countless fires and emergency incidents. Assistant Commissioner Lewis has further been deployed to Christchurch, Samoa and Vanuatu to provide aid and assist in Urban Search and Rescue missions. He is globally respected for his integrity and unwavering assistance to the international community. Assistant Commissioner Lewis was a recipient of the 2024 Australian Fire Service Medal on Australia Day. This medal is a significant achievement in recognising the exceptional dedication Assistant Commissioner Lewis has given to his field. It is an honour to have a compassionate and brave leader in our community. Congratulations Assistant Commissioner Lewis on your Medal, thank you for your service.

#### **DHARMINI CHAUHAN - OAK FLATS RATS CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I take this moment to congratulate Ms Dharmini Chauhan of the Oak Flats Rats Cricket Club on her well-deserved selection to participate in the Sydney Thunder Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team. The Cricket NSW Foundation, a component of Cricket NSW, has orchestrated this event where Dharmini and her team will compete against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sydney Sixer team in a T20 Format. It is indeed a wonderful opportunity for Dharmini to represent not only herself but also her mob, culture, family, and community on the cricket pitch. I extend my best wishes to Dharmini and all individuals involved in this commendable initiative. My hope is that their collective efforts result in a victorious outcome, bringing pride and acclaim to the Sydney Thunder Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team.

#### **BEN THURGAR**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Ben Thurgar, from Flinders, for being awarded the Coach of the Year at the Shellharbour Community Awards which were held on 17 January 2024 at the Civic Centre, Shellharbour City Centre. Ben has coached the Shellharbour Junior Football Club's Women's Youth Grade for over eight years. His ongoing support, guidance and encouragement has led the team to many successes including winning the Champion of Champions Tournament in 2022 and 2023. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Ben on his award and wish him well in his future endeavours.

#### **TALEHA URSZULAK - OAK FLATS RATS CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I extend my congratulations to Ms Taleha Urszulak of Oak Flats Rats Cricket Club for her well-deserved selection to participate in the Sydney Thunder Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team. The Cricket NSW Foundation, a branch of Cricket NSW, has organized this esteemed event where Taleha and her team will compete in a T20 Format against the Sydney Sixer team representing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It is truly heartening that Taleha will have the opportunity to showcase her talents and proudly represent her mob, culture, family, and community on the cricket pitch. I express my best wishes to Taleha and all those involved in this endeavour, and I sincerely hope that they emerge victorious, bringing glory to the Sydney Thunder Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team.

#### **FINAL CITY2CITY RUN OR WALK**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Hume Bank and all the volunteers who generously gave their time and effort to support the Final City2City Run/Walk on February 18, 2024. For the past decade, the City2City event has brought together community spirit and unity, with individuals from all walks of life participating in a day of fun and fitness. An added degree of poignancy this year was that this might be the final time this community event is run. Ten successful years, with the 2024 event raising more than \$160,000 in donations which will go towards supporting Albury Wodonga Health. The event trail commences at the QEII Square in Albury at 7.45am and concludes at Junction Place in Wodonga. The City2City Run/Walk offers participants a choice of four events over three distances, a 10 kilometre or 15-kilometre fun run or walk, something for everyone to enjoy. As we bid farewell to the City2City Run/Walk, we are left with



memorable moments and share experiences whilst promoting health, wellbeing and community engagement. There are many happy memories and a hint that we end 2024's run with a hopeful adieu and not goodbye.

#### **NEW PRINCIPAL HAS A WORLD OF EXPERIENCE**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Mr. Mark Hemphill, the distinguished new principal of The Scots School, Albury, who has taken over from interim principal Vicki Steer and who commenced his role on Wednesday, January 31. Mr. Hemphill brings a wealth of experience, which includes teaching and leadership roles in various locations from Leeton, Ballarat and Sydney to Zurich and Hong Kong, showcasing his wealth of experience. Mr Hemphill's enthusiasm for a life and career in education was evident from his childhood days. After high school he studied to become a teacher, majoring in history and religion. I warmly welcome Mr Hemphill and look forward to the valuable contribution he will make to The Scots School. May his leadership inspire and guide our students, teachers and community towards new heights of learning and achievement. Fide et Literis.

#### **SIGHTS ON RACING CAREER**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Josh Loy (17), who recently completed year 11 at Albury High School, and who has decided to follow his dream, and pursue a career as a jockey. Born to a former jockey and trainer Norm Joy, Josh is the youngest of three sons. His brothers Brodie and Rylie also are part of the equine racing world, and mother Natalie has had a stint in local training ranks, showcasing the family's commitment to the equestrian realm. As Josh takes the initial steps towards securing his jockey's licence, I extend my gratitude to Martin Stein and Simon Miller for providing Josh with the invaluable opportunity to commence this career as a jockey. Josh's work ethic has not gone unnoticed, demonstrating his determination to learn and grow. Josh, best of luck to you as you pursue your aspiration to become a champion jockey, as well as adding another chapter to the Loy family's enduring legacy in the world of racing.

#### **JADE BASSETT AND THE RTHS WOMEN IN STEM PROGRAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Jade Bassett is a beloved teacher at Rutherford Technology High School who is dedicated to inspiring young women into STEM careers. Jade established the school's Women in STEM Program, fostering curiosity, highlighting robotics, business modelling and enterprise skills in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Late last year Jade gathered talented, high achieving women who work in science, technology, engineering and maths together at Rutherford Technology High School for an event aimed at mentoring the next generation. The women representing engineering, civil construction, health, electronics, manufacturing, maritime, aerospace and academia fields and they shared with students their learnings, career pathways and experiences in a speed mentoring session. Jade describes the program as the catalyst for transforming aspiration into reality, empowering students not only to dream big but also to turn those dreams into action. Jade's journey from a student to an inspiring leader in STEM education is testimony to the impact and importance of dedicated STEM teachers and highlights the critical role of teachers in shaping the future of STEM.

#### **DICK ROWE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—As a doyen of the Australian bus and coach industry, Dick Rowe has celebrating his 100th birthday. Dick started his business back in 1942 as an enterprising 18-year-old. With just one car operating a passenger service between Rooty Hill Station and Plumpton, and a hardworking service ethic, the company began as Rows Bus Service and grew. Under Dick's guidance, then the stewardship of his sons Stephen and Richard, and today his grandson Byron, Busways is now the largest wholly-Australian-owned bus operator. At 100, Dick says he could not have imagined the changes he would see with new, safer, stronger buses and the use of technology. He says he has always tried to invest locally and repay something back to the community. Dick has been a member of the Bus & Coach Association (NSW), now BusNSW, since 1947 and served for many years on the executive. In 1984, Dick was honoured with a Certificate of Life Membership by then Bus & Coach Association (NSW) president Jim Bosnak in front of 100 industry colleagues. Happy birthday Dick and I thank you for your contribution to the industry.

#### **95 YEARS OF THE CWA MAITLAND BRANCH**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—On March 8th I had the pleasure to celebrate 95 years of the Country Women's Association Maitland Branch. The Country Women's Association [CWA] was formed in 1922 when country women were fighting isolation and a lack of health facilities. Within the first year, the Association was a unified, resourceful group that was going from strength to strength. The combined advocacy of CWA branches across the country have directly to improve conditions and welfare of women and families especially in rural areas. These improvements include seatbelts in cars, baby health centres, photos on licences, fog lines on the side of the road, school crossings, drought relief,

fluro strips on trains, house numbers on side of the road for large properties, labels on prescriptions, reflective road signs, alcohol limits for drivers, missing people's photos on milk cartons and so much more. It was wonderful to celebrate with so many strong local women in Maitland on International Women's Day. Congratulations to the Country Women's Association Maitland Branch for their amazing contribution to our community.

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES 2024**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate our newest Australian citizens, particularly those who now call the Badgerys Creek electorate their home. On Australia Day, I had the honour of attending the Penrith City and Camden City citizenship ceremonies and welcoming over 200 new citizens to our diverse Australian family. It was a pleasure to join with so many dignitaries across government and fellow community leaders to share in this significant occasion in the lives of so many. I witnessed a great sense of pride and joy amongst our newest citizens and their loved ones throughout the ceremonies. The Pledge was declared and our anthem was sung loud and clear. They now join in our fortune of being citizens of the greatest country on earth and Australia and the Badgerys Creek community are enriched by their inclusion. Congratulations to all our newest members of this great country, Australia. The community of Badgerys Creek welcomes them as Australian citizens with open arms.

#### **BAILEY COLLINS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend Orchard Hills local Bailey Collins for taking home the gold medal for Australia in the 54kg Division at the WBC Muay Thai Festival held in Thailand last month. The extraordinary challenge and achievement required Bailey to weight cut four times in three days, prior to winning all three of his fights to win the gold. In doing so, Bailey fought against fighters much older than himself. I'm excited for Bailey's prospects and future successes. To take home the gold at such a young age, in what would have been exhausting physical and mental circumstances, on top of the skills required, reflects Bailey's great capabilities and inner strength. Bailey is somewhat new to Muay Thai, having been fighting for only two and a half years for a total of 14 fights. I extend my congratulations to all who support Bailey and play a role in his Muay Thai success and I look forward to hearing of many more gold medals in the future.

#### **MULGOA VALLEY PHYSIE**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate Mulgoa Valley Physie for what was a very successful 2023 and to offer my best wishes to them for the year ahead. 2023 saw Mulgoa Valley Physie mark its 10th anniversary with many outstanding achievements, such as a National Championship, two second places at Nationals and a National third place for the Ladies Team. Mulgoa Valley Physie caters for all ages, abilities and experience and is an important part of the fabric of our community, with all physie enthusiasts welcome to join, whether for fitness and friendship or to elevate their skills. I recognise the club's welcoming nature and the efforts of its teachers in challenging members to achieve their best in what is an incredible discipline. I congratulate Mulgoa Valley Physie on an extraordinary 2023 and thank them for doing our region proud. I wish them even greater success in 2024 and beyond.

#### **VALE PAUL BARBER**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Today I honour the memory of Paul Barber, a dedicated public servant and former Lord Mayor of Parramatta. Mr. Barber passed away recently at the age of 70. Growing up in Parramatta, Mr. Barber developed a deep love for his community. This passion led him from a career at the Shell Oil Refinery to local politics. He served on the former Parramatta City Council for many years, advocating for workers' rights, Indigenous welfare, and local heritage preservation. His time as Lord Mayor in 2007 and 2008 saw significant achievements. He championed initiatives like the Parramatta Artists Studio, the Parramatta War Memorial Pool restoration, and the introduction of the free Parramatta CBD shuttle bus service. I served with him on Parramatta City Council and know he was a man of strong character, loyalty, and a love for family. My deepest condolences go to his partner, Leanne, and his family. Parramatta has lost a true gentleman and leader. Mr. Barber's memory and contributions will forever be a part of the city's history. May he rest in peace.

#### **MARONITES ON A MISSION RAISES OVER \$100K FOR THE HOMELESS**

**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 Maronites on a Mission group for the astonishing work that they have put into raising \$100,000 for the homeless who live within Sydney. Around 80 young volunteers braved a cool autumn night to help understand homelessness and, in the process, raised \$96,000 for those who sleep rough on Sydney streets. The fundraiser on 12 April at the St Nemetallah Maronite Catholic Church in Appin was such a success that it is hoped it will become a feature each Lenten season. Around 1000 people sponsored the young adults who swapped their warm beds for a simple meal and a layer of cardboard and a tent, for a night out in the open. The Maronite volunteer group is run by young adults and feeds hundreds

of people each week around the city. It also runs two international missions each year, including a medical assistance mission to the Philippines. Once again, I would like to thank Maronites on a Mission director, Charbel Azzi and the Maronites on Mission group for their hard work in helping the less fortunate in the Bankstown electorate.

#### **EARLY LEARNING CENTRE RAISES \$37,200 FOR AID**

**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 Ghada Diab, owner of Squiggles and Giggles Early Learning Childcare Centre for raising \$37,200 to support charities who are on the ground in Gaza assisting them and providing aid to the residents. Squiggles and Giggles and 19 other early learning centres united with Community Care Kitchen and Merciful Group to start an emergency relief fundraiser, which raised over \$90,000, for the people in Palestine. Within a two-week timeframe, Ms Ghada Diab and the other schools raised as much as they could which they did by selling raffle tickets, with Oxford Greens Early Education Centre families donating the prizes. I am so happy to see that the amount that was raised showed how the children's families were ready to support their sympathetic endeavours. Collaborative relationships are fundamental to achieving such an incredible outcome and raising this amount of money in such a short time. I am very grateful and value what Squiggles and Giggles have done for our community as it's essential to achieving quality outcomes for the children in their care, families, the community and in this case, the international community.

#### **BEVERLY HILLS NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**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 Beverly Hills North Public School, students and parents for hosting me and my colleagues on the launch of Walk Safely to School. It was lovely to see the students excitedly welcoming us to their school. The NSW Government announced the \$10 million Active Transport to School program to encourage children to safely walk, scoot or ride their bike to school. This program will deliver upgrades to footpaths, safer crossings, and new street trees over the next two years. No matter how our kids get to school, we are committed to making sure that students in our community can do so in the easiest and safest way possible. This annual event encourages all primary school children to walk and commute safely to school. It is a great opportunity for schools and families to encourage safe road user behaviours, not just one day but every day. Safe, active travel is encouraged by the department to help develop positive attitudes towards health and safety. Once again thank you Beverly Hills North Public School for being a part of showing our community the importance of the Walk Safely to School.

#### **LYDHAM HALL**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—Lydham Hall, built in the early 1860s, is one of the oldest homes in the St George area and has a rich history. Built from sandstone on the highest ridge in the area, it boasts commanding views of Botany Bay. Lydham Hall was originally part of a 67-acre estate known as 'Lydham Hill' and had several owners until it was purchased by Rockdale City Council in 1970 to be used as the Headquarters for the St George Historical Society. The building closed in 2020 for renovations, remaining closed during the COVID-19 lockdown. It re-opened to the public in February 2024 with a wonderful day of celebrations. Lydham Hall is the only building in the Bayside Local Government area which is dedicated as a museum. This volunteer-run museum holds local history archives, photographs, memorabilia and an extensive collection of furniture, objects and fine antiques. I am certain the Museum will become a great attraction for the area, and I hope the community embraces this heritage listed museum.

#### **SHOALHAVEN MULTICULTURAL GROUP**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Shoalhaven Multicultural Group which hosted its special 25 Years Community Celebration event on Saturday 2nd March 2024 at the Nowra School of Arts. It was a fantastic community gathering with lots of entertaining performances, music and dance. I acknowledge and thank Jan Frikken, the co-facilitator of the Shoalhaven Multicultural Group and Eurobodalla Multicultural Group. Jan has made an enormous and distinguished contribution to our local Shoalhaven region over many years now as a strong and determined local advocate and has organised many community functions and events. At the 25 Years event on Saturday 2nd March in Nowra, Jan also talked about the amazing history of the Shoalhaven Multicultural Group. The Shoalhaven unites to celebrate cultural diversity during Harmony Week 2024 which takes place from 15th March 2024 to 21st March 2024 with the message that everybody belongs. 21st March 2024 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Harmony Week is always celebrated in the week that surrounds 21st March and is focused on promoting Australian multiculturalism. As the son of a migrant, I always enjoy celebrating these events with our community.

**PHYLLIS COWELL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Kiama's latest centenarian: Phyllis Cowell who celebrated her 100th birthday on 19th December 2023. Phyllis (or Phyl as she's known) moved to Kiama in 1992 with her husband Walter from Mollymook after he became ill, and the couple found it too difficult travelling back and forth between Sydney to meet with doctors. Phyl was born in Sydney at Bondi and spent her early years in Bronte before attending Sydney Girls High School. She went to Business College for two years and entered the job market, where she worked until she got married at the age of 20. The couple had two daughters and five grandchildren. Phyl has kept active in her senior years, being a member of the local Probus and Gardening Clubs until recently. She was still driving her car up until she was 99, and still cleaned her when she was 97. She still cooks all her own meals and attributes her love of "good tucker" for her long life. But the real secret of living a long life, according to Phyl: "Keep smiling!" A huge congratulations and well done to Phyllis Cowell.

**RON MCKINNON**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Tomerong's Ron McKinnon who was recently presented with a medal, recognising his years contributing to the Nowra Show. The medal was officially presented to Mr McKinnon by Royal Agricultural Society Councillor Ron Smith and NSW Governor Margaret Beazley during the official Nowra Show Reception which was held on Friday 9th February 2024. Mr McKinnon said the award was an absolute honour to receive and he is extremely deserving of this official recognition. For many years, Mr McKinnon kept a family tradition alive on his 120-hectare farm at Tomerong. He is one of the last bullockies in Australia and also served as President of the Australian Bullock Drivers' League. It has a handful of members across Australia and is dedicated to keeping alive the tradition of bullock trains. Ron's father and grandfather did the same thing. It was the end of an era back in April 2021, when Ron and wife Ruth McKinnon closed down their South Nowra business RRReal Power Tools after 46 years. Congratulations and well done to Ron McKinnon on receiving this recognition for his decades of service to the Nowra Show.

**DENILQUIN NORTHSIDE SCHOOL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today, I would like to recognise and commend the staff and students of Deniliquin Northside School for their outstanding recent achievement in raising \$6,105.10 for CanAssist. Their innovative approach was a movie night, hosting a screening of "Johnny English Strikes Again". A dedicated group of 30 students and countless staff members worked tirelessly selling raffle tickets, food, drinks, and glowsticks. Thanks to the generous contributions of many small businesses in Deniliquin, the mini activity stalls and raffle prizes were a resounding success. This wouldn't have been possible without the work of Maria Muldoon and her coordination of donations and raffle prizes. I would also like to commend student support officer Anna Suckling and her student committee, including George Bull, Chad Suckling, Henry Campion, Rocky Szejman, Bella Knox, and Tom Bull, for their invaluable contribution to this cause. Congratulations to everyone at Deniliquin Northside School for their remarkable dedication, teamwork, and compassion in serving the needs of our community. Your efforts serve as an inspiration to us all, and we are immensely proud of your achievements."

**CR STEPHEN HEYWOOD - WENTWORTH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge the sad passing of Councilor Stephen Heywood of Wentworth Shire Council. Cr Heywood was a strong and passionate advocate for all rural issues, but always based his decision-making on what was best for Wentworth Shire. He was first elected to council in September 2016, and re-elected in December 2021. Cr Heywood represented the council on the Murray Darling Association, the Wentworth Showgrounds User Group, the Pooncarie Sporting Reserve User Group, the annual Roads Congress, and NSW Water Management Congress to name a few. I offer my condolences to his family, friends, his fellow councillors, council officers and to all who knew him.

**JENNIFER ROSE**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Jennifer Rose for her tireless work in the community and as the long serving, much-loved Community Health Sister for a large area of the Western Riverina. From 1963, Jenny, based in Hillston, travelled enormous distances giving reassurance and practical advice to many young mothers in isolated area. In 1996 Jenny started a local branch of Can-Assist in Hillston as President then secretary up until October 2022, now Assistant President and Patient Liaison Officer. When the local Uniting Church was unable to secure a minister, Jenny has taken the church to the people, bringing the local community together. Jenny is an advocate for pastoral care and end of life support to families going through difficult times. She has delivered hundreds of funerals with a personal touch, including raising funds for those who are destitute. Always empathetic to the vulnerable in the community, Jenny helps in finding

accommodation and access basic groceries and clothing. Jenny is respected in her wider community for the love and care she has bestowed on so many families.

#### **NEW ZEALAND CYCLE CHALLENGE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I commend the fundraising efforts of Michelle Love from Port Macquarie who will embark on a five-day mountain bike ride raising funds and awareness of the charity Melanoma Patients Australia. Michelle's journey to New Zealand is inspired by her husband Matthew who was diagnosed with an aggressive melanoma in 2015. His story of tragedy and resilience has spurred Michelle's determination to find better treatments and ultimately a cure for melanoma. The five-day ride will take participants along the Otago Central Rail Trail and newly created Lake Dunstan trail, comprising of spectacular views, swing bridges and steep mountain heights in a cycle stretching 152km. To date, Michelle has raised over \$3,200 for Melanoma Patients Australia, a charity that aims to support, connect and advocate for Australian's affected by skin cancer. Almost 18,000 Australian's will be diagnosed with melanoma each year with one person to die every six hours from the disease. There is hope however, that if detected early, 90 per cent of cases are treatable. Eight years on, Matthew's prognosis remains positive with medication. Michelle is with her husband all the way and hopes their personal story and the funds raised will save a life.

#### **INAUGURAL REFLECTIONS CADET CUP**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Congratulations to everyone involved in the inaugural Reflections Cadet Cup which attracted over 80 grooms to Bonny Hills to compete against the best teenage surfers in New South Wales. Crowds of junior surfers, parents and onlookers watched on at Rainbow Beach for the inaugural weekend of surf competition with boys and girls fiercely competing in the Under 12s, Under 14s and Under 16s categories. Contest organiser Ian Bell and Surf Coordinator Warren Smith were instrumental in the event proceedings which saw the winners from North Avalon, Boomerang Beach, Merewether, Coffs Harbour, Crescent Head, Hat Head and Port Macquarie compete and take out the major award categories. Showcased on the weekend of the 10th and 11th February, the two-day event is a partnership between Reflections Holiday Park and the renowned Surfest - Australia's largest surfing festival. Congratulations to the winners: Maverick Macgugan (Under 12 Boys), Coco Wolley (Under 12 Girls), Hamish Harrigan (Under 14 Boys), Mali Adam (Under 14 Girls), Joey Silk ( Under 16 Boys) and Chelsea Darling (Under 16 Girls). I thank and commend all the organisers and sponsors for the inaugural Reflections Cadet Cup in Bonny Hills.

#### **ASIA PACIFIC GOIT INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Congratulations to the five Year 8 students from St Columba Anglican School Port Macquarie for representing Australia in the Asia Pacific GoIT Innovator of the Year Awards. Excelling in the fields of innovation and science are students Sienna Barber, Peyton Cooper, Mia Loiacono, Chantal Massoud and Olivia Trethewey who were recently selected to represent Australia against seven other teams in the Asian Pacific region. The end result saw Australia face off against Japan, Malaysia and Thailand for the prestigious title with the girls proudly finishing Runners Up to a very formidable and experienced Malaysian team. In 2023, these talented, young women designed and prototyped a mobile phone application as part of their Year 7 Technology lessons. Awestruck by the effectiveness of the program, the girls competed in the Australian leg, taking out the first place and securing a spot to represent Australia. I applaud the girls for setting a benchmark to be revered in innovative technology and congratulate them for finishing as Runners Up in the Asia Pacific Innovator of the Year Awards.

#### **THERESA MITCHELL**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Congratulations to Tweed resident Theresa Mitchell, the 2024 Regional NSW Woman of the Year. Theresa is an extremely worthy recipient of this prestigious award, being a well-known and integral member of the Tweed community. Theresa founded Agape Outreach Services in 2009, a service that assists those in need with food and hot meals, clothing and essentials, laundry and bathroom facilities, mental health support, case management support and much, much more. Since founding Agape, Theresa has assisted countless people in need with 150 people currently seeking assistance each day. Agape is based in Tweed Heads South and homelessness and cost-of-living pressures remain two of the most pressing issues in our area. Theresa's incredible dedication and commitment to assisting the most vulnerable members of our community is invaluable. Thank you Theresa for all that you do and congratulations on being awarded the 2024 Regional Woman of the Year Award.

#### **LITTLE CREEK CHEESE**

**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 local business Little Creek Cheese based at Wyong who received 9 awards at the 2024 Sydney

Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Awards. The award entries come from far and wide, and the small family owned and operated cheese factory saw all nine of the cheeses it entered took out an award. Owners from Little Creek Cheese Russell and Sue Parsons and their son Alex Nelson received one gold, three silver, and five bronze awards. The business has been operating for 13 years and originally started out as a hobby between the 3 of them. The Little Creek Cheese opened their doors at the heritage listed Wyong Milk Factory and today they still receive good results for the old fashion handmade flavours.

#### THE FOOD FARM

**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 The Food Farm at Wyong for being named a finalist for the Royal Agriculture Society's President's Medal. The six finalists located across Australia will be present at the Royal Easter Show on March 27th for the winner to be announced. The annual President's Medal recognises a business viability by exploring its economic, environmental and community impact. The medal is the only competition in Australia that can judge a pork producer against a dairy or even a beer producer. The Food Farm owned by Tim Eyes and Hannah Greenshields are first generation farmers who use regenerative methods to produce 100 per cent grass-fed, grass-finished beef and pasture-raised organic chicken and eggs. Tim and Hannah are passionate about reconnecting people with the source of their food, they hand deliver meat boxes directly from their farm to the customers front door, so it's as fresh and as local as can be. The Food Farm holds stalls at Carriageworks Farmers Market every Saturday and Gosford City Farmers Market fortnightly on Sundays. I wish Tim and Hannah all the best at The Royal Easter Show.

#### ENVIRO AQUA

**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)—** I welcome new business Enviro Aqua and directors Adam and Amy Hatahet to the Central Coast. The Wyong business celebrated their new premises located in Amsterdam Circuit, by cutting the ribbon for the official grand opening to their showroom on Thursday 7th March. Local businesses, retailers, family, and friends joined in on the day to congratulate Adam and Amy on their new journey. Enviro Aqua is a family-owned business running for 6 years selling water dispensers, toilets, vanities, mirrors, taps and pressure tanks to wholesalers and customers and recently we made the move from Sydney to the Central Coast to continue operating. When new businesses open on the Central Coast, they create jobs for locals and encourage economic growth. I wish Adam and Amy all the best in their new endeavour.

#### ILUKA CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – JOHN CALDWELL 2024

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—**I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the Iluka Citizen of the Year for 2024, Mr John Caldwell. An event organised by Iluka Woombah Rotary Club saw local residents gather at the Iluka Community Hall on January 26 to celebrate Australia Day. Long-time Iluka local, Mr John Caldwell was awarded the 2024 Citizen of the Year by Clarence Valley Mayor, Peter Johnstone. Mr Caldwell is a proud resident who deserves such an award. Mr Caldwell has spent many years volunteering in the Iluka community to better the town for both locals and visitors. His proud family joined in the celebrations and joined his wife and delighted locals who congratulated Mr Caldwell for his service to the community. Those who attended the celebration enjoyed a delicious morning tea provided by the Iluka CWA. Mayor Peter Johnstone proudly spoke about how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful free country and wonderful community in the Clarence Valley. I thank Mr Caldwell for his invaluable contribution to our community.

#### MAREE DONALDSON

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—**I would like to congratulate Richmond Valley Council Volunteer of the Year, Ms Maree Donaldson. Ms Donaldson is a proud volunteer broadcaster at Casino's Own Wireless (COW FM). Her music program, 'Maree's Country' has brightened the Richmond Valley community every weekend for twenty-one years. Ms Donaldson's passion and commitment is evident in all she does at COW FM. Ms Donaldson joined COW FM in June 2002, aged 21 and her continuous contribution to the station over the years is significant. Ms Donaldson's listeners appreciate her knowledge of Country music; her talent at programming a fresh, interesting selection of songs each week; and the passion and enjoyment she conveys in her presentation. Ms Donaldson assists at fundraising and awareness raising events, street barbeques and taking part in the Beef Week parade and functions, and volunteering throughout the inaugural two day 'Casino COW Country Music Muster' in 2022. COW FM is a proud equal opportunity station, where Ms Donaldson's is one of the 22 per cent of volunteers with a disability. Her commitment to work is an example to others, that with passion and commitment, a leadership role is achievable. I thank Ms Donaldson for her invaluable contribution to our community.

### **PUTTS 'N' PARS - GRAFTON GOLF CLUB**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Grafton Golf Club has a terrific reputation for supporting various charities, late last year, the club held 'Doing it for Jarrod' day! An event to honour the life of Jarrod Lyle, who had returned to play professional golf, prior to the third recurrence of his illness. On the day, Grafton golfers played an 18-hole Stableford for both men's and women's competitions, with everyone taking part being encouraged to wear something yellow, in honour of Jarrod. "Challenge" along with the PGA of Australia, united to create an annual nationwide fundraising campaign that is enjoyed by the entire golfing community. All proceeds raised from the day are forwarded to "Challenge"-supporting kids with cancer, a continuing project honouring Jarrod Lyle. With Jarrod's passing, his gift to "Challenge" was to raise ongoing funds to support children and families living with cancer. Well done to Grafton Golf Club and players for your participation and supporting such a worthwhile charity event, while honouring Jarrod Lyle.

### **MILEO'S EUROVISION DREAM**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Son of a Norwegian father and Australian mother, singer-songwriter and producer from Waratah, Mileo (aka Miles Curtis Sesselmann), took the stage on January 20 in the semi-finals of the Melodi Grand Prix, a prestigious Norwegian song contest in Oslo. This contest determines the artist to represent Norway in Eurovision 2024. He was the first Australian/Norwegian to compete for Norway. Mileo's song "You're Mine", performed with uber-theatricality, featured choreography by the iconic Mona-Jeanette Berntsen, a spectacle in true Eurovision style, with Mileo even singing upside-down! He has been writing and producing music in Norway since signing with Sony Music International in 2013, his first national charting song coming in 2017. Mileo passionately explores his quirky pop identity which was fostered through his family's love of music, and education at the Hunter School of the Performing Arts. He understood early on the importance of writing and producing his own songs which embody a seductive, exaggerated sensibility, darkly vibrant humour with horror and anime tropes and synth-driven production. Well done, Mileo. I wish you continued success and many more hits. Hopefully we will see you at Eurovision one day!

### **PROFESSOR NATHAN BARTLETT**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Virologist and pioneering medical researcher from UoN and the Hunter Medical Research Institute, Professor Nathan Bartlett, who led the pre-clinical development of a nasal spray that aimed to stop respiratory viruses in the nose, was named Newcastle Citizen of the Year on January 22, 2024. The US Department of Defence awarded \$13m to further develop the drug, including preparation for large-scale manufacture. Professor Bartlett has devoted more than 20 years to the care of his community and also teaching and mentoring the next generation of medical professionals and biomedical researchers. He desperately wanted to contribute something when the pandemic hit and focussed on developing a treatment that might be useful late in the pandemic or which might be available for the next one. By sharing facts, he became a voice of reason for the Hunter amongst disinformation around COVID. Professor Bartlett got into this area of research because highly transmissible, disease-causing viruses are a threat to our way of life, knowing that "soldiering on" is not a solution, and that our behaviour must change as we continue to live with COVID. Congratulations on your well-deserved award.

### **DR CRAIG MILLER**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Dr Craig Miller, a Junior Medical Officer [JMO] at Calvary Mater Newcastle, is the worthy recipient of the first Bec Mullen Wildflower Award, presented in November, 2023. Dr Rebecca Mullen was killed, along with nine other people, in the Hunter Valley bus tragedy in June 2023. Her memory continues to inspire her hospital colleagues to be kind, compassionate, and to seek help if needed. So, the hospital, Mullen family, her fiancé Sam and JMO Manager Brad McDougall worked together to find a way to honour her legacy. Nurses were tasked with nominating JMOs for the award, using categories of leadership, compassion and clinical excellence. The award comes with financial support for the winner to spend on their mental wellbeing. Dr Mullen's family has pledged to continue to do what they can to support JMOs. Dr Miller feels honoured to win this award, saying that starting work as a doctor is overwhelming and it was special to have learned from "Bec" Mullen, who looked after him and brought out the best in others, always going the extra mile to get to know her patients. Congratulations, Dr Miller.

### **JO MARSHALL**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Jo Marshall. Jo was recently nominated for the Goulburn Electorate Local Woman of the Year Award for her outstanding contribution to the local community and recognition of the multiple roles she undertakes to sustain, improve, and develop community well-being and knowledge. In her role as the CEO with the Australian Agricultural Centre, she has brought agricultural education to the region for farming communities, seeing the first full year of programs being delivered

in 2023 to a large number of students and adults. Jo's altruistic attributes have seen her volunteer her time with the International Women's Day Committee, who work to bring better health prospects for rural women and gave of her time during the devastating Curraweela bushfires. Jo is also a Councillor with the Upper Lachlan Shire Council, where she works tirelessly to build an enriched community spirit. I commend your highly motivated spirit and leadership within the community.

#### LEIGH POLLACK

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Leigh Pollack. Leigh was recently nominated for the Goulburn Electorate Local Woman of the Year Award for her significant work in establishing Usshers Lane Food and Children's Pantry in Goulburn. Leigh works fulltime while managing and coordinating the pantry from her home, which is open seven days a week from 9:00am – 5:00pm. The Pantry was established in November 2022, providing freshly cooked meals, groceries, and hygiene products for people in need. The Pantry has a Facebook Page which currently has nine hundred and twenty members. Posts on this page alert members as to what is needed, so donations can be dropped off. Those in need are advised as to what is available and they can come and collect without having to identify themselves. Leigh liaises with local businesses and sporting groups and currently has twenty-two businesses who donate to the program. Donations include groceries, meat, vegetables, bread, and toiletries. There are two cooks who cook on a voluntary basis, using the goods provided. It is with sincere commendation that I recognise Leigh's significant contribution to those in need within the community. I thank you for your tireless undertaking on behalf of the community.

#### LIZ BRAY

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Liz Bray. Liz was recently nominated for the Goulburn Electorate Local Woman of the Year Award for her outstanding contribution to the Sutton Community Garden (Waterwise Garden). The Sutton Community Garden was established several years ago, aiming to provide information about wise plant choices for Sutton residents and visitors alike. Unfortunately, the Garden fell into disrepair, until Liz, alongside a small number of other volunteers, formed a group to re-establish the Garden in 2016. The re-establishment of the Garden was an enormous task requiring a lot of time and effort, which saw Liz not only attend every session, but evoke a contagious commitment to others in the group to complete the task at hand. Liz has not only generously given of her time, but shared her considerable knowledge of native plants and the choice of suitable replacement plants, leading to improved garden design. Liz has also donated many new plants for the re-establishment of the Garden. The Garden is now an outstanding feature of the Sutton community and admired by those attending the monthly Sutton Markets. I commend your highly motivated spirit, contribution, and leadership within the community for many years.

#### STEPHEN JACKSON

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Stephen Jackson lived a life full of love, adventure and community that was tragically cut short last month. Stephen was well known in the Bathurst running community bringing parkrun to Bathurst and establishing the annual Mount Panorama Punish. He volunteered at running events across the state. There was nothing Stephen couldn't do, whether it was skydiving at the North Pole, completing over 70 marathons, writing submarine warfare codes for the Defence Force or establishing Marathon Health – a local mental health service. He had lived a various lives in one, all across the globe landing here in Bathurst. He has been described by the local community as having a very beautiful way of making people feel they were heard and important and he was in their corner 100 per cent all the time. Athletics Australia have described Mr Jackson's role as "pivotal" and said his "contacts, knowledge and skills were crucial in the delivery of the World Athletics Cross Country Championships, held in Bathurst in 2023. Leaving behind a family, fiancée and community in grieving Stephen will be remembered as a community minded man who made things happen. He left a positive impact wherever he went.

#### BROOKE MCFADDEN

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Brooke McFadden is an outstanding young woman who is helping children understand and overcome big emotions. One of life's most important skills to learn growing up is to understand how we are feeling and develop techniques to conquer any emotion. Being a teacher and educational therapist Brooke is helping young children in Bathurst and beyond to do just that through learning to read, write and express themselves. And if that wasn't enough, Brooke has been inspired by her niece to turn her learnings into a children's book called 'Baby Gnowch'. Brooke is also working on another two books she hopes to release in the near future. The response to her first book's release has been so overwhelming that Brooke will be opening an educational therapy business next month which has been booked out before even opening her doors. The business will focus on children and adults who are experiencing issues with learning to read, write and spell. Brooke is helping people in the Central West to develop critical lifelong skills that will see the next generation



prosper. Congratulations on your success so far Brooke, the community is looking forward to your next endeavours.

#### **BATHURST GOLF CLUB**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Recently the Bathurst Golf Club hosted the Women's NSW Open Qualifier Pro-Am. Locals and visitors from across Australia and internationally travelled to Bathurst to compete in this three-day event. Sixty-three players competed in the regional qualifying event. Bathurst was the most participated regional qualifier out of the six events held. This event was made possible by a \$15 million investment by the previous NSW Government to bring these internationally renowned sporting events to regional NSW. Local golfers gave the visitors a run for their money on the greens and the consensus from those competing was that they were blown away by the high quality of the greens, beautiful landscape and professional hospitality put forward by the Bathurst Golf Club. Brad Constable and his team went out of their way to ensure each travelling golfer had a billeted home to stay in and experienced the very best of the Central West. Congratulations to everyone at the club who was involved in this exceptional event. It was a tremendous success, and you made the Bathurst community proud.

#### **FATHER ATANASIO GONELLI CHARITABLE FUND – 2024 CHARITY LUNCH**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Sunday 3 March 2024, I attended the Italian-Australian Community Charity Lunch, hosted by Father Atanasio Gonelli Charity Fund. The Father Atanasio Gonelli Charity Fund Inc continues the work of Father Gonelli, an Italian Catholic priest who came to Australia in 1950. Along with his pastoral care in Sydney's "Little Italy" district, he became known as the spiritual father of the Australian Italian community. Father Gonelli hosted an Italian radio program and founded Italian newspaper La Fiamma and several Italian language schools. In 1996 he was made a Knight of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy by the Italian Government. The Father Atanasio Gonelli Charity Fund continues to raise funds for several medical, educational and other charities. I recognise Chairman Felice Montrone OAM and his fellow Board members for their tireless charity work. I look forward to supporting the Father Atanasio Gonelli Charitable Fund well into the future.

#### **MARONITE CATHOLIC SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA – ANNUAL GALA DINNER 2024**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Friday 23 February 2024, I attended the Maronite Catholic Society of Australia Annual Gala Dinner at Doltone House in Pyrmont. I recognise members of the Maronite Church, who arrived in Australia from Lebanon starting over 150 years ago. They are an integral part of Australia's vibrant multicultural society. The Maronite Catholic Society of Australia has a long and proud history of providing pastoral care and guidance through a wide range of community services, including family and youth counselling, mental health support, aged care, youth services and disability and special needs services. The annual gala dinner provides an opportunity for everyone to come together to celebrate the good works of the Maronite Church, and to raise much needed funding support to continue these works. I recognise President Joseph Mekary and Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay for their guidance and enthusiasm in leading the Maronite Catholic Society and Maronite Church in Australia. I look forward to supporting this wonderful cause well into the future.

#### **INTEGRICARE CHRIST CHURCH ST IVES PRESCHOOL**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Friday 1 March 2024, I accepted an invitation to visit Integricare Christ Church St Ives Preschool. It was a wonderful visit – in particular when I joined the students in song. I was very impressed with their facilities, and their focus on sun protection by making sure all students wore hats and sunscreen. The Preschool is not-for-profit and is a partnership between Integricare and the Christ Church St Ives Anglican. They welcome students and families of all cultures and faiths. In 2023, the Preschool received a rating from the NSW Department of Education of 'Exceeding National Quality Standard' in relation to all seven quality areas – educational program and practice, children's health and safety, physical environment, staffing arrangements, relationships with children, collaborative partnerships with families and communities, and governance and leadership. I recognise Centre Manager Lauren Kelly and her team of educators. It gives me great pride to represent the students and families who attend Christ Church St Ives Preschool. I look forward to visiting again in the near future.

#### **SYDNEY ROOSTERS 2024 SEASON LAUNCH**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaocluse)**—It was a pleasure to join Chairman Nick Politis AM, Head Coach Trent Robinson, and Captain James Tedesco at the launch of the Sydney Roosters 2024 Season. As one of the four clubs to represent the NRL in Las Vegas for Round 1 of the 2024 season, the men did not disappoint. They came away with a convincing 20-10 win against last year's Grand Finalists, the Brisbane Broncos. With some new additions to the team, they are well positioned to make a deep run into the finals. The NRLW team will look to

go one better this year under the leadership of John Strange. With a wealth of representative experience, they will be hard to beat. Good luck to both the NRL and NRLW teams on their exciting season ahead. Easts to Win!

### **BONDI OUTRIGGER CANOE**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to recognise Bondi Outrigger Canoe Club [BOCC] on the success of the Sydney Harbour Challenge from 1-2nd March, 2024. This was the 10th instalment of the race out of the Woollahra Sailing Club, and they had over 125 teams racing over the two days. The compelling culture of outrigger canoeing is one of respect. To respect the environment, our sea, harbours and rivers; to respect the equipment which keeps us safe; and naturally respect the people we paddle with physically, spiritually; and against! Crews came from across Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Hawaii to complete. Over 2000 competitors and supporters joined the fanfare. There was some fierce competition, and I was privileged to congratulate the winners at the medal presentation for the Inaugural Sydney Harbour Mini Challenge. I'd like to make special mention of the Bondi crew that finished second in the Open Mixed category on Friday and the Bondi crew that finished third in the Open category on Saturday. I look forward to supporting BOCC in the future.

### **THREE VILLAGES COMMUNITY GROUP**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise The 3 Villages Community Group, who was a recent joint winner of The Community Group category of the Central Coast Council 2024 Australia Day Awards. Formed in July 2019, The 3 Villages Community Group is a local based group working for and on behalf of the Yattalunga, Saratoga and Davistown communities. The group aims are to listen to the ideas and dreams of residents and strive to make enhancements to public spaces and social engagement through working proactively with other local groups, residents, and businesses to apply for funding and grants for projects to benefit their communities. The group has successfully delivered many projects including: the replacement of park furniture and shade shelter, the supply and installation of sun and the creation of an accessible concrete pathway surrounding play spaces to name a few. The groups advocacy on behalf of their communities is providing real enhancements for the whole community to enjoy. I applaud 3 Villages for working collaboratively with all levels of government and for their ongoing commitment to ensuring that residents have access to well-maintained and enjoyable open spaces. Congratulations on this well-deserved award.

### **CHARLI EATON**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to recognise the inspiring actions of one of my younger constituents Charli Eaton who is primary school student at Terrigal Public School. Charli recently took the plunge to cut off 27cm of her luscious locks to donate to Wigs 4 Kids who make wigs for children going through treatment for cancer. When Charli found out it costs \$2,750 to make just one wig for a child, she was determined to fundraise to not only help relieve the financial burden for families but for her donated hair to be turned into a wig to bring a smile to a child in need. Thank you Charli, for thinking of others and encouraging your community to donate and help the families that have a child suffering cancer. Your kindness is contagious, and I applaud your efforts which are a great example of how one person, regardless of age can make a difference in the lives of others.

### **STAN EVANS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—The Central Coast has lost a wonderful community member with the recent passing of Stan Evans. For much of his life, Stan served the community, not only as a Salvation Army Officer but also as a Rotarian. Because of the various postings throughout Australia by the Salvos, Stan had been a member of at least 9 Rotary Clubs, the last one being Erina Rotary Club which he joined in 2002. Stan always made himself available for fund-raising projects which included BBQs and the Century Challenge Cycle Tour. He was also the Erina Rotary Welfare Officer and Sergeant at Arms and encouraged all to be involved in the Salvation Army annual Red Shield Appeal every year. In 2018 Stan was recognised for his 40th anniversary of Rotary service where he was presented with a Sapphire award to his existing Paul Harris Fellow, and not only that, but also an NSW Community Service Award presented by local member Adam Crouch MP, along with a letter of congratulation from the then Premier Gladys Berejiklian. Stan will be missed and remembered for his untiring contribution, sense of humor, and his irrepressible grin. His contribution to our community will certainly not be forgotten.

### **WILLOUGHBY LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR – SOLVEIG COULON**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I would like to warmly congratulate Ms Solveig Coulon the 2024 Willoughby Local Woman of the Year for her significant work in and for our community. This honour is richly deserved. Since immigrating from France a decade ago, Solveig has embraced and given back to our community, organising the bustling Le Marché Willoughby markets as well as various other French markets across Sydney. Through her contributions, Solveig has continued to enrich the already vibrant cultural fabric of Willoughby,

making it an even better and more empowering place for women to thrive, work and enjoy. I believe that Solveig is a success story of leadership, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit. Her continuous efforts towards the advancement of our community have helped shape our society into an even better place. Receiving this Award on the eve of International Women's Day, Solveig serves as an inspiration for women from all walks of life aspiring to realise their potential, and in so doing, to make lasting contributions to their communities.

#### **THE LITTLE MERMAID – WILLOUGHBY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Sunday 10 March, my family was treated to yet another outstanding performance by the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra with their rendition of Disney's animated classic, The little Mermaid. Performed at The Concourse Concert Hall in Chatswood, this much-loved film score featured songs and score by Oscar winning composer Alan Menken and lyricist Howard Ashman. With unforgettable characters, thrilling adventures, and soaring Academy Award winning music, this performance provided invited all the family to join Ariel the Mermaid and her magical world 'under the sea'. The audience revelled in the performance of iconic classics of Under the Sea, Part of Your World and Kiss the Girl. I would like to congratulate the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra for staging such a wonderful event. This event was part of Chatswood Culture Bites, Willoughby City Council's innovative program of music, theatre and comedy. I commend Willoughby City Council for their support and look forward to enjoying many more brilliant productions by the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra.

#### **WELCOMING NEW RECRUITS TO NORTH SHORE POLICE AREA COMMAND**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I am so grateful for the tremendous work the police do in my local community to maintain law and order and keep our people safe. On Tuesday 5 March, I had the pleasure of congratulating three new Probationary Constables who started with the North Shore Police Area Command in Chatswood. It was a pleasure for me to meet and chat with James, Liam and Adrian to wish them well in their policing careers. I was most interested to hear about their policing journey so far and some of the hopes and expectations they have as they embark on their new, exciting stint with the Police Area Command in Chatswood. I have no doubt that they will be a great asset to the local police force and our community. The constables who work around the clock at Chatswood police station do incredible work to keep all of us safe and their service, hard work and sacrifice is deeply appreciated.

#### **REGIONAL ACADEMIES OF SPORT – AWARDS DINNER**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—I was pleased to address the Regional Academies of Sport [RAS] Awards Dinner at Wentworthville Leagues Club on Tuesday 27th February 2024, representing the Hon. Steve Kamper, Minister for Sport. RAS represents nine member academies, including the Western Sydney Academy of Sport and South West Sydney Academy of Sport, which covers over 100 Local Government areas and provides support services for over 2,000 athletes across New South Wales. It is the delivery arm of pre-elite athlete development programs, working to prepare our athletes for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games. This year's dinner recognised excellence in five categories, including Athlete of the Year, Athlete Leadership, Coach Leadership, Indigenous Athlete of the Year and Athlete with a Disability Athlete of the Year. It was inspiring to hear the opening address from Sarah Ryan OAM, 4 x 100m Freestyle Olympic Gold Medallist, and keynote from Emma Tonegato OAM, Rugby Sevens Olympic Gold Medallist and 2021 Rugby League Women's World Cup Champion. I extend my congratulations to all Academy partners, volunteers, coaching staff, athletes and parents, and wish them all the very best for the 2024 season.

#### **SYDNEY MURUGAN TEMPLE – MAHA KUMBABISHEKAM RE-CONSECRATION CEREMONY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On 22nd January 2024, local worshippers of Sydney Murugan Temple Mays Hill celebrated Maha Kumbabishekam. Maha Kumbabishekam is celebrated by our Hindu faithful across the globe. It is a ritual reverentially performed to re-energise the spiritual powers consecrated into places of worship. Maha Kumbabishekam carries a powerful tradition, as a pinnacle ritual believed to homogenize, synergize and unite the wondrous powers of the deities protecting Temples. The Sydney Murugan Temple brings devotees from all walks of life to experience the richness of Hinduism and supports our migrant community to learn about their cultural heritage. Vibrant festivals honouring sacred events, daily Pooja and regular services create opportunities for our diverse community to celebrate and share their faith. Facilitating community education workshops, a youth circle and even a WhatsApp channel, the Sydney Murugan Temple are helping to foster connection for new and established members of our migrant community. Thank you to our local Tamil Diaspora for connecting our Western Sydney community through these inclusive festivities. Thank you as well to Mr Sabaratnam Ketharanathan President of the Sydney Murugan Temple and Easan Ketheesan, Director of Cultural Activities for organising these vibrant festivities.

### BIENNALE AT WHITE BAY POWER STATION

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—I draw to the attention of the House the 24th Biennale of Sydney, which opened at the White Bay Power Station last week. The sold out opening night saw the White Bay Power Station – once labelled a "graveyard where thought bubbles go to die" – brought to life in spectacular fashion. It was a fun filled night of lights, music, dancing and above all, the grandeur of this iconic building finally on display for all to see. White Bay Power Station was constructed between 1912 and 1917 to power Sydney's trams, then the rail network and from 1958 the power grid, until it closed in 1984. It is one of the most significant landmark buildings in Sydney's inner west and was listed as a heritage item in 1999. Late in 2020 then Treasurer Dominic Perrottet suggested it should be torn down. Thousands joined Jamie Parker's campaign to put this incredible state-owned building to community use as a creative and cultural centre. I want to thank the community of Balmain for your vision and advocacy. The Biennale's opening night was just the beginning. Get along to see an exhibition or a performance in this remarkable space as soon as you can.

### CONGRATULATIONS SOPHIA MARKHAM

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Sophia Markham of Armidale Secondary College for being successful at the Region 4 Youth of the Year final recently, winning both the Public Speaking and Overall Youth of the Year at the event which was hosted by the Guyra Lions Club I congratulate Sophia on this impressive achievement and wish her every success in the next stage of her journey with the District final hosted by the Armidale Dumesque Lions Club to be held on the 6 April 2024. I commend Sophia for her hard work and commitment to her community. I thank both the Armidale Dumesque and Guyra Lions Clubs, her family and her school for playing an important role in Sophia's development and providing support through every step of the way with great pride.

### RECOGNITION OF GIANN JANSEN

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Giann Jansen for being selected to represent Australia in Spain, playing with the Australian Raptors Rugby Academy. The players will play multiple rounds of competition at Barcelona, Villajoyosa and Madrid over a 12-day period. I congratulate Giann on this selection, for taking up the challenge to further develop her skills, to demonstrate her talent and to elevate her career to an elite level. I commend all involved in bringing this event to fruition for Giann, including the support received from her family and the broader Moree community. Special thanks also to the Australian Raptors Rugby Academy for this amazing opportunity and support given to Giann.

### MICHAEL TAYLOR AND BEN POSCHELK WIN SCHOLARSHIPS

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Michael Taylor of Kentucky and Ben Poschek of Glen Innes, for being awarded scholarships as part of a \$1.6million Future Drought Fund [FDF] investment. The scholarships are through Nuffield Australia and were recently announced by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. They are designed to help farmers increase their knowledge of new tools and practices to respond to changing climate conditions. I congratulate Michael and Ben on their respective careers in the agricultural industry, along with their commitment to support farmers and the industry, to respond to climate change and to prepare themselves and their communities for future dry conditions. I commend Michael and Ben on this achievement, Nuffield Australia and the FDF for their support to build drought resilience expertise, adapt innovative technology and practices from overseas, which in turn, allows this learning to be shared to advance Australian agriculture.

### WORLD'S LONGEST CONTINUOUS NUTELLA PIZZA

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—On Sunday 21 January 2024, to secure a world record, local eatery The Home Grounds in Five Dock made a 100-metre Nutella pizza. They not only achieved the world record for the longest Nutella Pizza, they also raised over \$35,000 for the Starlight Children's Foundation to grant kids a special Starlight wish. The team cut and served more than four-thousand free Nutella Pizza slices for locals on the day prepared by Italian-born pizza master, Giuseppe Santoro. I would like to recognise Mr Domenic Moio, and his children Pierre Moio and Rosemary Moio, the passionate family behind The Home Grounds who planned this wonderful community event. I know that it was a highlight for the community and was a fun family event that raised funds for a worthy cause, close to the heart of many. I want to thank the community for its generous support. I would like to recognise the tremendous efforts of The Home Grounds for bringing everyone together for an amazing cause. I recognise the Moio family, staff of The Home Grounds, friends, family, volunteers, and the many celebrities who gave of their time on the day. Congratulations and well done!

**WENDY SCHMID**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I take this opportunity to acknowledge Wendy Schmid, a long-time volunteer and dedicated member of our community. Wendy is the former President of the Rotary Club of Breakfast Point, and a passionate volunteer and talented embroiderer at the Embroiderer's Guild at Concord West. Wendy has helped fundraise for many local causes. In 2023, as Rotary President, Wendy organised the Breakfast Point Art Show which raised funds for the Foundation for A Bloody Great Cause, supporting blood cancer clinical research trials at Concord Cancer Centre. Wendy's enthusiasm for her community and her love for sharing the craft of embroidery is felt every time I speak with her. Wendy is dedicated to lifting those around her and through her contributions to the community, she has established a lasting legacy. Recently, I had the great pleasure to acknowledge her contributions with a Drummoyne Community Service Award. I would like to sincerely congratulate Wendy. She is a very deserving recipient and is to be commended. I know that her husband Ron, her family and friends are very proud of her. I wish Wendy all the very best.

**RITA TORNARI**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I take this opportunity to recognise Mrs Rita Maniaci Tornari, a longtime volunteer, who dedicates her life to the service of others. Rita is on the executive committee of the Isole Eolie Association, a wonderful community organisation which encourages Aeolian Australians to celebrate their heritage, culture and traditions. The Association recently raised funds for Dementia Australia at their Annual Ball. Rita is also involved with the Gruppo Dell'Amicizia (Friendship Group) in memory of Enrica Inglese which provides scholarships to students wanting to learn Italian language and culture as well as awarding research grants. Recently, I had the great pleasure to acknowledge her contributions with a Drummoyne Community Service Award. I would like to sincerely congratulate Rita. She is a very deserving recipient and I know that her husband Armando Tornari, her children, grandchildren, family, friends and the entire Italian community are very proud of her. Rita is to be commended and I wish her all the very best.

**GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS AND CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, Australia Day is such an important time of the year for the thousands of people across the State. Each year, we join to celebrate the successes of local champions, whilst also presenting certificates of Citizenship to new Australian citizens. I had the opportunity to take part in these celebrations at Georges River Council's Australia Day Awards and Citizenship Ceremony. It was incredible to see 500 residents of the St George celebrate becoming Australian citizens. I believe that our diversity is our strength, and nowhere is that more clearly displayed than right here in the St George area. We are fortunate to live in one of the most multicultural, multifaith places in all of New South Wales. It was a special occasion for everyone who received a certificate of citizenship, but even more so for our community, state and nation, who had the privilege of welcoming our new citizens with open arms. I would like to thank everyone from Georges River Council, Mayor Sam Elmir, Ms Amanda Rose and the Councillors for hosting a wonderful event. I look forward to continuing these celebrations next Australia Day.

**COBBERS GROUP – 2ND ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, there a range of community organisations in my Electorate that work incredibly hard for our community. I'd like to recognise one such group today – the Cobbers, who are celebrating their 2nd anniversary. Two years ago, a few local seniors got together to hold a men's BBQ at Peakhurst. Two years later, the group is celebrating their 2nd anniversary and have achieved some incredible things during that time. The group has grown to over 30 members and has proven quite popular. This is thanks in part to the work of Lyndon Mitchell, a wonderful volunteer and member of our community who has devoted himself to serving others. Seniors' groups such as the Cobbers play an important role in not only our community here in the St George, but communities across the State and country. They ensure that Seniors in our community are able to stay connected with each other. This is especially important in combatting social isolation and loneliness in our community. I'd like to once again congratulate the Cobbers group for reaching this incredible milestone. I look forward to continuing to work alongside them into the future.

**VIC AND CELSTINA VITTORIO – 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, it is my honour and privilege to recognise two individuals within my community who are celebrating a very significant occasion this year. Vic and Celestina Vittorio are celebrating 60 years of marriage – what a wonderful achievement! The Mortdale couple were married on the 5 February 1964 in a small village in Sicily, Italy. When they migrated to Australia soon after, through their tireless efforts, they carved out a niche for themselves in our little community. Vic and his wife operated the fruit shop on the corner at Penshurst for over 40 years and became incredibly well-known figures locally. Their dedication to their business mirrored their commitment to each other and the locals they served. I have no doubt that over the years, Vic and

Celestina have shared some very happy memories together. The date of their anniversary was also Celestina's 82nd birthday – a double cause for celebration! I would once again like to pass on my warmest congratulations to Vic and Celestina as they celebrate this wonderful achievement. May it be a time filled with joy and reflection.

#### **LOUISA SANGHERA**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I acknowledge an exceptional member of the Pittwater community, Louisa Sanghera. The owner and Principal Broker of Zippy Financial, Louisa is a successful and respected businesswoman. After 25 years in the banking sector, Louisa noticed the broking industry was generally lacking in empathy and genuine client-focussed care. She decided to use her expertise to found Zippy Financial Group, a firm absolutely dedicated to providing exceptional service to its clients. Over the years, Louisa and Zippy have been named as finalists in over 30 industry awards and named winner of 15 awards including Australian Broker of the Year 2022. But Louisa's service of the community extends far past her work with Zippy. In 2014, Louisa Founded "Connect For Success" with the vision of supporting and connecting local business owners across the Beaches. Connect For Success run a range of initiatives from mentoring groups with business coaches, discussion groups, social gatherings, and networking events with speakers. I recently had the opportunity to attend a Connect For Success event. It was amazing to see and hear how beneficial these events are for our local business community. I thank Louisa for all her efforts to ensure our local business community thrives.

#### **BAHA'I TEMPLE**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to visit the Baha'i House of Worship in Ingleside. Opened in 1961, it is the only Baha'i House of Worship in Australia and just one of 13 currently standing in the whole world. The Temple is a prominent and beautiful landmark high above Pittwater and the Northern Beaches, with its distinct dome and nine sides symbolising unity. The Temple is a beautiful and meaningful gift to the Australian people, it is open to people of all backgrounds and beliefs to visit and enjoy. The Temple is also home to phenomenal native gardens and is surrounded by natural bushland providing a tranquil environment for visitors to pray, meditate, contemplate and reflect. Thank you to Natalie Mobini, Dr Fiona Scott, Roya Shahgholi and Andrew Blake for showing me around the Temple and grounds, and for all your efforts making a safe and welcoming space for people of all faiths, particularly through your weekly multifaith service.

#### **ROBERTA CONROY OAM**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I acknowledge a phenomenal servant of the Northern Beaches community, Roberta Conroy OAM. Roberta served on the Committee of the Bayview Church Point Residents' Association for over 10 years, including as President from 2016 – 2018. Roberta is actively engaged with our local council, serving on several advisory committees, reference groups, panels and working groups, strengthening each of these bodies with her experience and community expertise. An arts teacher for 17 years, Roberta has volunteered with Manly Art Gallery and Museum and supported the Pittwater RSL Sub-branch as a museum curator. Roberta has also made extensive contributions in the environment space including as Director of Pittwater Environmental Foundation, Expert Environmental Advisor to Council and the NSW Department and volunteer with the World Parks Congress. In addition to her community service, Roberta has an impressive professional resume including as an executive director, project manager, centre manager at Pittwater Council and a counsellor. I am pleased that acknowledgement of Roberta's momentous contributions to our community is now preserved in the records of the oldest parliament in our nation.

#### **DOCTOR MICHAEL DAVIS**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I offer my sincere condolences on the passing of much-loved Alstonville doctor, Michael Davis. Survived by his wife Georgina and three young children, Michael is remembered as a gentle, deeply caring, and compassionate man, husband, and father. His passing has deeply shocked our community and I take this time to recognise the kind and dedicated light Michael Davis shone. In 2016 Michael relocated and joined Alstonville Clinic as a registrar, becoming a Partner in early 2023. During his time at the clinic, he was a respected colleague, an admired and supportive mentor, and a truly valued and empathic healer to the many patients he treated and cared for. His untimely passing on Monday February 5, 2024, from a brain aneurysm has left us all shocked. I would like to commemorate Doctor Michael Davis and the incredible presence he was in our community and extend my deepest condolences to his family and friends, colleagues and patients who mourn this tragic loss.

#### **BULLINAH ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the extraordinary achievements of Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service. The service opened their doors in 2008 with the vision of a strong, empowered, and healthy Goori Community and 16 years later they continue to deliver holistic and culturally appropriate health care to people within the Northern Rivers region. Bullinah works with their community and members to expand

the definition of health beyond the physical to encompass the idea that the spiritual, social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing of the individual is paramount and fortifies the wellbeing of the community. By offering a range of health focused and community building programs, Bullinah works to highlight events, address issues, and enhance the capacity for self-governance and community resilience. Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service go over and above for people in our communities, and I congratulate and thank them for their dedication to better health outcomes and truly closing the gap in health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### **ROCHELLE OLSEN**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Rochelle Olsen on her recognition as the Brave Rising Star through the Women with Altitude Awards. These awards honour achievements of individuals and businesses, across a wide range of sectors, including individual achievement and contribution to community. Rochelle, who is The Baby Loss Mentor, says that this award will spur her on to continue to be brave and open conversations about baby loss in the community and holding a space for those impacted. Having organised and hosted the inaugural Walk to Remember in collaboration with Red Nose Australia and completed the Bush Blossoms Community Events, this recognition is very well deserved. This award is a testament to Rochelle's commitment to her role and will serve as a reminder that she is on the right path. 2024 will be a big year for Ms Olsen; she has now been offered a permanent office in Dubbo which will allow her to provide personalised support to small businesses, community organisations and industry leaders in a much bigger way. Well done Rochelle! The future is looking bright.

#### **ROSALYN BUCKLEY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise the incredible 50-year career of Nurse Rosalyn Buckley. Affectionately known by her maiden name, 'Shippy', to her colleagues, Ros started her nursing career in October 1973 and completed her final shift at Dubbo Hospital on the 10th of December 2023. Rosalyn was born and raised in Dubbo. She attended Dubbo Central School, and then Dubbo High School, and as a young woman, was an avid swimmer and hockey player. Ros completed her first shift in the maternity ward, where she spent the first 12 months of her nursing career. Ros then spent the next six years working across various wards in Dubbo. Between 1979 and 1990, Ros worked as the ward clerk in the male ward at Dubbo Base Hospital. During this time, she married her husband Stephen and welcomed her children Grant and Megan and is now a proud grandma. Ros incredibly worked on night duty for 32 years, a feat alone that would warrant a happy retirement and a well-deserved rest. Thank you, Ros, for your years of service and all the best for a happy retirement.

#### **SARAH YEATES**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Sarah Yeates on being recognised by the Mudgee Wine Industry. Ms Yeates was awarded the Young Achiever award for her contribution to the industry. Sarah is not only a part of the Yeates Wine team, but also the secretary for the Mudgee Grape Growers and Wine Association. Sarah also represents Mudgee when attending the Australian Grape and Wine Association and Wine Australia forums. Despite being an Occupational Therapist with her own business, Tread Lightly, Sarah is also involved in her family's vineyard and cellar door and if that wasn't enough, she is now also undertaking a diploma in Viticulture to support her family's business. As part of the Mudgee Wine Association, Ms Yeates is focused on networking creative solutions to current industry challenges: the lower consumption of local wine in Australia and worldwide, the increasing cost of production. Sarah is very passionate about the production of local goods, and wants to encourage city & regional restaurants, bars, and tourist hotspots to favour regionally produced wines. Congratulations on this achievement Sarah! All the best for the future.

#### **DR JOHN VALLANCE OAM**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to congratulate Dr John Vallance who was awarded an Order of Australia Medal on Australia Day for significant service to education, to library services and programs, and to the arts. Dr Vallance was Headmaster of Sydney Grammar School from 1999 to 2017. He held the positions of State Librarian and Chief Executive, Non-Executive Director of the Library and Trustee of the State Library Foundation. Dr Vallance held senior roles at the National Arts School, Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Australian String Quartet. Dr Vallance taught at the University of Cambridge and the University of New South Wales. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities and Royal Society of New South Wales. Dr Vallance is an accomplished author in philosophy, science and medicine. Thank you Mr Speaker.

#### **QUEENSWOOD CLASS OF 2023**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, I congratulate the class of 2023 from Queensland School in Mosman for their outstanding academic achievements in the HSC. We know that the HSC can be a difficult time for students and the pressure of achieving can sometimes be intense. However it seems that nothing

can phase the girls of Queenwood and it shows from the fantastic results they received. Over 48 percent of the cohort of the 119 students achieved an ATAR of 90 or higher placing them in the top 10 percent of New South Wales. Additionally 25 percent attained an ATAR of 95 or higher, ranking them in the top five percent of the state. The exceptional accomplishments of these young women stand as a testament to the unwavering support of their teachers, parents and the broader community. Congratulations to the class of 2023 from Queenwood School, your success is truly commendable, and we wish you continued excellence in your future endeavours.

#### **SENIOR SCOUT LEADER NAMED MOSMAN CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, on Australia Day at the Mosman Citizen ceremony, local Scout Leader Matthew Brownlie was named as the 2024 Mosman Citizen of the Year. Matthew was recognised for his many years of service volunteering with the 1st Balmoral Scout Group where he has served as leader since 2008 and has played in key roles such as the local annual Sirius Cup Regatta and a range of camps, hikes, and canoeing expeditions across Australia and internationally. It is estimated that he has completed more than 80 camps as Scout Leader, which totals 250 nights in a tent, run more than 500 scout nights and logged more than 450 hours in a canoe. It certainly is no mean feat especially when you consider that Matthew was responsible for a group of young Scouts. I want to extend my congratulations to Matthew for being awarded as the 2024 Mosman Citizen of the Year and for his tireless dedication and devotion to our local Scouts. Congratulations Matthew.

#### **NEUTRAL BAY SOCCER TEAM GO FOR GOAL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, I congratulate the Stage 2 boy's soccer team from Neutral Bay Public School at the recent Sutton Cup Soccer Gala Day. Their unbeaten streak is a testament to not only their exceptional skill on the field but also their outstanding sportsmanship, embodying the true spirit of the game. Throughout the tournament the boys not only showcased their prowess in soccer but also exemplified kindness and camaraderie. They cheered for opposing teams, lent assistance to injured players, and even volunteered for cleanup duties reflecting the values of teamwork and community, values that are cherished by Neutral Bay Public. As a well-deserved reward for their triumph the boys will be offered a Sydney FC experience later in the year. Congratulations boys on an outstanding effort and to everyone who contributed to this memorable success.

#### **SUTHERLAND STRIKERS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the launch of the 'Sutherland Strikers' by the Sutherland Shire Football Association on 16 February 2024 at the Pavilion Performing Arts Centre. The Sutherland Shire Football Association is a sporting powerhouse that is on track to reach 20,000 participants in 2024. Female participants make up 36 per cent of the Association's playing numbers meaning we proudly have more female participants in the Sutherland Shire than any other association in Australia. With the representative football program now rebranded, the Sutherland Strikers will participate in Football NSW representative programs including the League 1 Women's, the Boys and Girls Youth Leagues and the Boys and Girls Skills Acquisition Programs. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the Sutherland Shire Football Association's hardworking Executive Committee members. I recognise Laura Cowell, Russell Marsden, Keith Ward, Mick McGovern, Chris Gallo, Jeff Stewart, Cherie Donoghue, Jim Hankins, Chris Lockwood, Marty Manns, Karen Traynor and Mark Williams for working tirelessly to promote and advance football in the Sutherland Shire. I extend my best wishes to all involved in the Sutherland Strikers and look forward to following their success throughout the season.

#### **TOM EVANS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I recognise Tom Evans of Jannali, on being nominated for Citizen of the Year at Sutherland Shire Council's 2024 Australia Day Awards. The Sutherland Shire Australia Day Awards recognise the unsung heroes and community organisations who give their time and expertise to help others, not seeking recognition but leaving an indelible mark on our community. Tom has left such a mark, having been involved with baseball in the Sutherland Shire for over four decades. During this time, Tom has served in a range of roles at the local baseball association using his talents as a coach, representative and team manager to develop the next generation of Shire baseball stars. He currently serves as the President of the St George Minor League Baseball Association and the Bonnet Bay Baseball Club – affectionately known as the Beavers - who play at his namesake Tom Evans Field at Bonnet Bay. I congratulate Tom on receiving this nomination and thank him for his ongoing contribution to the growth of baseball in the Sutherland Shire.

#### **AMY LLOYD**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I recognise Amy Lloyd of GyMEA, on being nominated for Young Citizen of the Year at Sutherland Shire Council's 2024 Australia Day Awards. The Sutherland Shire Australia



Day Awards recognise the unsung heroes and community organisations who give their time and expertise to help others, not seeking recognition but leaving an indelible mark on our community. Amy is an inspiring woman whose unwavering commitment to service coupled with her passion for mental health advocacy has made her a role model for many in our local community. She has dedicated countless hours to volunteer work, contributing her time and energy to several organisations such as 'Enough is Enough', the Michael Marslew Foundation, Headspace and the Sutherland Shire Council Youth Reference Group. Amy's work to drive change is a testament to her selfless passion for mental health advocacy and her support of vulnerable people in our community. I congratulate Amy on receiving this nomination and thank her for her ongoing contribution to the mental health advocacy and young people in the Sutherland Shire.

#### **PARRAMATTA WOMEN'S CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Parramatta Women's Cricket Club is going from strength to strength. Their latest feat is claiming victory in the Under 15 Margaret Peden Shield which was played at Blacktown International Sports Park on Sunday 21 January. They not only took back-to-back titles defeating Manly Warringah but did so on a day that was a whopping 39 degrees. The Club is now based at "The Green" thanks to 6 new turf pitches completed by Property and Development NSW. At its opening and saw how thrilled all our cricket players were. The restored cricket pavilion provides shelter and a wonderful backdrop to enjoy this beautiful heritage spot. As Tina van Domburg, the Margaret Peden Manager for 2023/24 told me, the team is "built on the rich and diverse talents of 12 players with genuine futures in the game and a commendable love for team and nurtured by dedicated families from diverse cultural contexts forever connected by good cricket and great food". I congratulate the players for their hard work and am looking forward to seeing their names in future Australian teams. I thank coach Suresh Madala and Julien Prem, his assistant, for their commitment to the team.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY NICM HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Western Sydney University NICM Health Research Institute [NICM] is right in the heart of Westmead and yet most people are not aware of the incredible work occurring on this Westmead campus of the University. NICM has launched a state-of-the-art small-scale Good Manufacturing Practice [GMP] facility that will produce clinical trial batches to aid researchers and industry. The manufacturing facility will support small and medium sized enterprises to market test and provide essential good manufacturing practice training in herbal medicine. It was a pleasure attend the institute on Tuesday 5 March with the Minister for Medical Research, the Hon David Harris, the Chancellor of Western Sydney University Professor Jennifer Westacott AO and Vice Chancellor, Professor Barney Glover AO to be a part of a very special moment when Dr Marcus Blackmore AM of the Blackmore Family Foundation announced a donation of \$10 Million. This wonderful philanthropic act will strengthen NICM's research capabilities and support research targeting high priority chronic disease areas where complementary medicine promises the most impact.

#### **LIVERPOOL CITY HOCKEY OPEN DAY**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Earlier this month I attended the Moorebank-Liverpool District Hockey Club open day, which coincided with the reopening of the upgraded Kevin Flack Field. The open day marked the beginning of the hockey season with prizes, fun activities, a jumping castle and, of course, a sausage sizzle! There were also trial games for new players to test out their hockey skills and learn more about the sport. As one of Sydney's most successful hockey clubs, Moorebank-Liverpool caters for a wide array of junior and adult teams, with many players going on to compete in state and national competitions. With the upgraded facility, the club can expand the scale of the events they host. It was great to chat with President Damon Brooks and Secretary Tan Le, as well as executive and club members about their exciting vision for the clubs' future.

#### **LIVERPOOL QUOTA IWD BREAKFAST**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—On Friday 8 March, I attended the Liverpool Quota International Women's Day Breakfast at the Holiday Inn in Warwick Farm. Liverpool Quota is part of a network of global organisations to empower women through service, originating in Buffalo, New York in 1918. As part of the morning, we heard from Claire Pearson, the CEO of Little Wings. Little Wings provide free flight and ground transport services for seriously ill children in rural and regional Australia. It was inspiring to hear about Claire's journey as a working mother. As always, women from across the Liverpool community turned out to celebrate International Women's Day. I make particular mention of the many Liverpool schools who attended the breakfast, including Miller Technology High School, All Saints Catholic College, and Ashcroft High School. I thank the many Liverpool Quotarians responsible for putting this fantastic event together, including President Julie Percival, Secretary Kerrie Oxlade, and June Young. I look forward to working with them for the years to come.

### SALLY ATKINS

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I am so excited to recognise and celebrate Liverpool's 2024 Local Woman of the Year, Sally Atkins. The NSW Women of the Year Awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding contributions made by women across our great state. We come together to celebrate the local champions who make our community a better place. Sally is a visual arts teacher at Miller Technology High School. Her dedication to going above and beyond for the students at Miller and her commitment to empowering girls and women in Liverpool make her a worthy recipient of this recognition. On many occasions, I have seen first-hand how Sally leaves no stone unturned to ensure her students have access to opportunities, role models and pathways they may not otherwise be aware of. She does this after school, on weekends and during holidays. She genuinely cares about the success of her students. Additionally, Sally is a digital access campaigner and has served on the board of Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. I congratulate Sally and thank her for all of her work for the Liverpool community.

### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - CORRIMAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Nyla, Matteo, Emily and Noah who have been named as the 2024 Corrimal 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 Nyla, Matteo, Emily and Noah on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at primary school.

### BACKPACK DELIVERIES BY OUR COMMUNITY CARES PENRITH

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—Our Community Cares Penrith is an amazing organisation that serves families within my electorate of Londonderry. Their mission is to support people within the Penrith Local Government Area who are doing it tough. We all know that the beginning of the school year can be financially difficult for parents and carers. Our Community Cares has made several backpack deliveries to local schools to support students throughout the new school year. Werrington Public School, Orchard Hills Public School and Jordan Springs Public School, among others, have been the recipients of backpacks which are filled with essential items needed for students to start the school year off right. The efforts made by the volunteers at Our Community Cares Penrith is vital to families within my electorate. Thank you for your hard work and generosity, you are an asset to our community.

### COLLEEN HEPBURN

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I'd like to commend Colleen Hepburn for many years of service and contribution to the community. Colleen is well known in her local precinct for her frankness and steadfast commitment to the fair treatment and protection of public housing tenants. Colleen has been a long serving volunteer tenant representative on the Surry Hills Neighbourhood Advisory Board, using her voice to bring issues to the attention of government departments, local police and community service agencies on behalf of people who may not be able to advocate for themselves. Colleen was also a member of the Surry Hills Public Tenants Association and held the role of Chairperson. In these roles Colleen has made sure the needs of vulnerable or older tenants are heard and considered in relation to safety, access to public amenities and important community engagement programs. I have appreciated Colleen's forthright and practical approach to understanding what matters to people and working on achieving positive outcomes. As Member for Sydney, I congratulate and thank Colleen for her ongoing efforts to represent her community and advocate for improved living conditions for social housing tenants and for the Surry Hills community.

### SPORTS PERSON OF THE MONTH

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The Kempsey Macleay RSL Club are passionate in encouraging young people to pursue their dreams in the sport they love. This month Rylah Hopper-Buckland has been named the Kempsey Macleay RSL club sports person of the month for February. Rylah has been recognised for the amazing talent within the water. Rylah has had some great ability on display with NSW Country Surf Life Saving Club Championships in Warilla, where he took second in the surf swim and third in the individual events. Previous to this, He dominated his swimming events at the Coffs Harbour Summer Carnival, taking home eight first-place medals. But it doesn't stop there, at the Mid North Coast Brand Surf Life Saving Championships Rylah won the iron person series, board race, and surf swim. On top, he made a splash at the school swimming carnival, setting

six records, and winning the senior boy championship for his Crescent Head Primary School. Rylah has proved himself to be an amazing athlete in the water and has a bright future ahead of himself. Reach for the stars kiddo and keep gliding with grace and speed.

#### **MARY'S NEW BUSINESS CLEANING UP WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM VERTO**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—A necessary career change following an unexpected injury has been a blessing in disguise for Crescent Head resident Mary Scott. Called Fresh as a Daisy Cleaning Service offers all cleaning services. Mary previously worked as a support worker but got injured and had to look for other job options. As there was no laundromat in Crescent Head it seemed like the perfect career option for Mary. Mary admitted she didn't know a lot about running a successful small business so she turned to VERTO Self-Employment Assistance Team for help. Mary loves the flexibility of being her own boss, it's not a 9 to 5 job she can work around her commitments, and she knows she's supplying a much-needed service to the Community. Mary is the perfect example of how you can bounce back from any kind of setback and with a little support and guidance she has become a successful small business servicing her community. Congratulations on your achievements Mary Scott we wish you well in your cleaning business "Fresh as a Daisy Laundry Service".

#### **NAMBUCCA HEAD NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S DAY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Each year we commemorate the service of those who were called up to fulfill their duties to our country under National Service. I rise today to recognise and honour the memory of those in Oxley who served the nation under this program and those who paid the supreme sacrifice. The National Service Act 1964 required 20-year-old males to serve in the Army for two years followed by three years in the Reserve and was amended in 1965 that conscripts could be obliged to serve overseas. In 1966 it was announced that National Servicemen would be sent to Vietnam to fight in units of the Australian Regular Army. Of some 63,000 who were conscripted, over 19,000 served in Vietnam with almost half of all Australians killed in action being Nashos. In 1973 the Act was amended to abolish the obligation to undertake National Service. Gathering at the Nambucca Cenotaph on the 14th of February I had the pleasure to join those of the Nambucca Heads National Servicemen's Association in camaraderie and reflection. Lest we forget.

#### **BIYANI HOUSE WOMEN'S SHELTER – MARCH FOR THEIR FUTURE**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—Congratulations to Revesby's Biyani House for its inaugural 'March for their Future' challenge to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March. Biyani House invited the community to walk 10,000 steps a day for seven days in the lead up to IWD and raise funds to transform the lives of women at risk of homelessness. Biyani House took a novel approach to fundraising by also encouraging people take up the challenge in their own way; either by reading 10,000 words or riding 10,000 metres if walking wasn't appealing. Sadly, one in six women has experienced at least one incident of violence by a partner in her lifetime. Tragically, as we have seen in recent news, violence against women is becoming more prevalent in our community, with domestic violence being the main driver of homelessness among women and children. Biyani House supports and empowers women experiencing domestic violence and homelessness to build a better future for themselves and their families. Biyani's 'March for their Future' campaign raised \$22,500 between the challenge and the IWD event. Thank you to Biyani House for this worthy initiative and to all participants in the challenge.

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