



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday 20 March 2024

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 20 March 2024

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Announcements

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

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

[Notices of motions given.]

Bills

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

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 14 March 2024.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (10:18): The Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024 is a long bill, containing 71 pages of new regulations, offered up to stakeholders and the Coalition with a short time for digestion. It is a bill in a hurry, and the reason is political. It is designed to respond to the asbestos contamination scare that started at the Rozelle interchange and spread to dozens of sites, including schools, train stations, parks and playgrounds. The common thread, according to the Environment Protection Authority [EPA], is one supplier of mulch. The bill primarily seeks to provide a political response to that through tougher penalties and it seeks to do that quickly so that anyone proven to have done the wrong thing will potentially face the new penalties, which will be the toughest in the country. Stakeholders that I have spoken to, while surprised by the extent of the increases, accept their inevitability and so does the Opposition. We support the bill. It gives the EPA increased powers to act on environmental crime as well as punishing those who do the wrong thing.

I welcome the opportunity to make some remarks and flag some issues that should be addressed in any further amendments to the Act and to correct the record on a number of statements made by the Minister for the Environment and by the EPA. I start with those penalties or offences that will double, in most cases, for wilful harm to the environment from disposal of waste or causing any substances to leak, spill or otherwise escape. The penalty is a hike from \$5 million to \$10 million for corporations and \$2 million for individuals. Before the changes, New South Wales already had some of the toughest penalties in the country—the highest for T1 offences and the second highest for T2.

It is disingenuous for Labor and the EPA to suggest, as they have in briefing papers and to the media, that this reform is required because "most New South Wales environmental penalties have not increased since 2005, including those for serious offences". The bill comes two years after the last significant environmental reforms that were made under the previous Liberal-Nationals Government to increase penalties, add new offences and expand the EPA's powers. The new maximum penalties will no doubt send a strong message to the public and to the New South Wales courts that there is a new standard against which future environmental crimes will be measured. Whether or not that will act as a deterrent to those wilfully doing the wrong thing is yet to be determined. Labor has not demonstrated the regulatory impact of increased fines and how much behaviour change is expected.

Imposing tougher penalties is a blunt-force approach to the problem. It does not address the root cause of supply chain contamination. If we want real change and we want to keep communities safe then the important work will come from tracing and tracking supply chain issues and looking at where contaminated waste is collected, where it is deposited and where it ultimately ends up. The bill does not fully address that. It does not go far enough yet. The Coalition requested a report by the Chief Scientist and Engineer on the management of asbestos, but it has been deprioritised by Labor. In light of the recent contamination scare, we continue to call for that report to be expedited so it can inform future policy development.

The bill also addresses other areas of environmental law. It gives the EPA power to issue recall notices to suppliers of substances. I note that any recall will require the approval of the Minister, which will be an important double test. It increases public awareness about persons and matters of environmental concern—"name and shame" provisions—and strengthens tools and powers to manage illegal dumping. It also gives the EPA the new ability to enter commercial arrangements in relation to carbon neutrality or achieving net zero emissions, including purchasing property for the purposes of, or in relation to, carbon neutrality or achieving net zero emissions. That reform responds to the successful civil case against the EPA by Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, where it was found that the EPA had a legal duty to take action on climate change.

Transition arrangements for stakeholders and industry will be very important. One key industry body, which was scrambling to get across the detail even as late as last night, said, "Whilst we also support all attempts to address waste crime and unlawful and unscrupulous operators, there is a real risk, given some of the provisions, that lawful operators attempting to do the right thing—and even shareholders—will be caught by some of these provisions, particularly given the strict liability and expansive approach being taken." The Coalition urges the EPA to support industry—those attempting to do the right thing—because sometimes the unintended consequence of tougher penalties is forcing worried businesses to cover up their mistakes rather than coming clean. We do not want to see that.

With the passing of the bill, we will have a stronger EPA better equipped to manage any future asbestos or contamination scares. However, the Opposition urges the Government to do more, not just by policing and punishing but by addressing the real issues that cause the illegal distribution and dumping of asbestos and other contaminated materials. We recognise that there is much more to do, but the Opposition supports the bill as a first step.

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (10:24): I speak in support of the Environment Protection (Stronger Regulations and Penalties) Amendment Bill 2024. I commend the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for the Environment, for her work in this space. The bill makes necessary amendments to increase penalties and strengthen protections for the environment. The recent discovery of asbestos-contaminated mulch across New South Wales has identified an urgent need to strengthen environmental laws to ensure that they remain effective to deter environmental crimes, to adequately protect human health and the environment, and to enable the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] to be a strong and effective regulator.

The bill makes changes to the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997, Dangerous Goods (Road and Rail Transport) Act 2008, Land and Environment Court Act 1979, Pesticides Act 1999, Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Act 2021, Protection from Harmful Radiation Act 1990, Protection from Harmful Radiation Regulation 2013, Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991, Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Regulation 2022 and Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Regulation 2014.

Most penalties in environmental legislation have not been increased since 2005, including penalties for the most serious environmental harm offences. The bill will increase maximum penalty notices, with daily penalties applied in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, Pesticides Act 1999, Protection from Harmful Radiation Act 1990 and Dangerous Goods (Road and Rail Transport) Act 2008. That includes amending the Protection of the Environment Operations Act to double the maximum penalty for corporations that have committed the most serious offences, known as tier 1 offences, from \$5 million to \$10 million. Increased penalties aid in deterring environmental crime and are commensurate to the potential harm caused.

Another proposed change pertains to the power to issue recall notices to suppliers of substances. While the EPA can issue a clean-up notice where it reasonably suspects a pollution incident such as the production and supply of asbestos-contaminated mulch, it cannot be used to address broadscale issues. The EPA currently lacks the regulatory power to recall material that may cause a potential risk to human health or the environment. The bill will amend the Protection of the Environment Operations Act to enable the EPA, with the approval of the Minister for the Environment, to issue a recall notice to any supply chain participant on multiple grounds, including if a substance or activity poses a potential risk of harm to human health or the environment. The bill also amends the Protection of the Environment Operations Act to allow the EPA to issue public warnings and statements about persons or matters of environmental concern. The amendment aims to increase public awareness about persons and matters of environmental concern. I note that public warning powers are already available under fair trading and food safety legislation to protect the people of New South Wales. Therefore, extending the provision to environmental protection legislation is only fitting.

The bill amends the Protection of the Environment Operations Act to empower authorised officers to better address small-scale illegal dumping using a new offence with penalties, verbal directions and improved clean-up powers. Household waste is the most common type of small-scale illegal dumping reported. It has increased from 59 per cent of illegally dumped waste in 2017 to 67 per cent in 2022. By introducing the amendment, authorised

officers such as local council employees will have improved tools to address the issue. The bill sets out various other amendments to clarify existing EPA functions and powers, reduce administrative burden, address known gaps in the EPA's investigative powers and close loopholes. Overall, the bill demonstrates this Government's commitment to ensuring that our environment protection legislation is fit for purpose. The amendments are crucial to protecting not only the environment but also the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:29): I speak briefly on behalf of The Greens in debate on the Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024. This significant reform will increase penalties, regulations and other matters in relation to the protection of the environment in New South Wales. I acknowledge that the Minister for the Environment has joined us from the other place to listen to the debate. Given the massive asbestos contamination issue in our communities in recent weeks, the introduction of stronger regulations and penalties to promote environmental protection in the State is long overdue and front of mind.

The Greens absolutely support the bill, and I offer our view that it is a very positive and long-overdue change. Under the former Liberal-Nationals Government, the complete failure to address the absolute need for environmental protection saw a continued loss of species, loss of environmental protections and loss of care for our natural environment, but also a continued push to approve climate- and environment-damaging planning processes, mining and other projects. While it is absolutely welcome that we are passing environmental protection legislation, sadly, the new Labor Government has not done all that it could to end native forest logging or to address the other climate-related disasters that we are seeing by continuing to pursue mining in the State.

Having said that, The Greens welcome the penalties in the bill and the suite of powers that it will provide for public land managers—including councils—to address small-scale dumping, as well as the "name and shame" provisions and other provisions that will drastically increase penalties for environmental damage. Specifically, I acknowledge that the increased penalties were a recommendation of one of the upper House portfolio committee inquiries into the health impacts of mining. I also put on record that, while this is a massive shift in environmental regulations and penalties, we need to ensure that the penalties are of a scale that makes the kinds of environmental crimes that are covered by the legislation unprofitable. The current penalties are not significant enough to do that, and we must ensure that, going forward, we are doing all we can to make them not just a slap on the wrist or a cost that companies can factor into their bottom line while still making a profit out of environmental damage.

Fines must be of a scale and level that make it completely unprofitable to engage in environmental damage. While tougher penalties and stronger fines are obviously welcome, the preference is always for the environmental damage never to happen, because the money paid back does not fix the environmental damage that has occurred. In many cases, the environmental destruction and damage that occurs is long lasting and the impact on our communities is significant, so we need to ensure that the penalties remain at an adequate level. That requires reviewing them regularly to ensure that they keep up with inflation and the profitability of that kind of action, that there is ongoing pressure on those who seek to destroy or cause damage and harm to our environment, and that there is no profitability in doing so.

Local examples show that developers often factor the fines and penalties into their bottom line. They will factor in breaches to construction time lines and other things because they know that they will make more money by paying the fines to council or paying for breaches under the regulations and then just going ahead. That is one point—the environmental impact on communities is real. But in this case, when we talk about damage to our environment, we are talking about long-term and in some cases irreversible impacts. Finally, I turn to the real challenges of asbestos contamination and recognise the massive-scale investigation currently being undertaken by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. I also acknowledge that for years community members have raised genuine concerns with the EPA and with people in this place about the risk of asbestos in major construction projects in the State.

During the WestConnex construction, people living in affected communities were ringing up the EPA, the relevant Ministers and me as a member of Parliament and saying that they could see sitting across their streets on vacant blocks of land piles of asbestos that had been pulled out during the tunnelling, digging and widening of roads. Asbestos contamination is real, and the failure of governments to create a strong enough public agency to oversee it is part of the problem. Decades of privatisation, contracting out and tendering for construction and road projects, and the consultancies that go along with that, mean private companies are more interested in delivering on the projects that they were contracted to do than in ensuring community safety. We cannot separate out the profit motive when we use private companies to deliver what should be public services in a way that is not in the interests of the community or the environment but instead in the interest of maximising company profits.

The Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024 makes some of those changes. There is still more to do, and The Greens definitely hope that we will continue to review

the penalties and regulations to ensure they are at a high enough level to prevent environmental damage from occurring and not simply punish people when they damage our precious environment.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (10:36): I make a brief contribution in support of the Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024. The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] is the State's environmental regulator, responsible for compliance, investigation and enforcement of environmental laws. The EPA administers the Act as well as a range of other legislation. The bill will make changes to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, 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.

The bill will make the most significant changes to the Environment Administration Act since the EPA was created in 1991. It signifies the importance that the Labor Government places on strengthening deterrence of environmental harms. It will also bring about better communication and public awareness of related concerns, bolster the powers of the Environment Protection Authority and establish the need to address climate change as a guiding objective in the conduct of the authority's operations. The bill increases penalties for environmental offences. Penalties for serious environmental offences have not changed since 2005. Offences under the Act are divided into tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3. Court proceedings can be brought by the Environment Protection Authority or other authorities such as police, NSW Maritime or WaterNSW. Authorised officers have powers to require information or records, to enter and search a premises, to question and identify people, and to order that actions be taken in relation to vehicles and boats.

The EPA also has a public register that includes prosecutions for environmental offences. Tier 1 offences are the most serious and include leaks, spills, ozone-depleting emissions and illegal disposal of waste. Tier 2 offences make up all other offences under the Act, including water, air, land and noise pollution. Examples include the emission of offensive odour from a factory, the unlawful transportation of waste and the failure to notify the authority of a pollution incident. Tier 3 offences can be dealt with by way of a penalty notice under the Act. EPA officers and certain other public authorities can issue penalty notices. The penalty changes proposed in the bill will include doubling the maximum penalty for tier 1 offences to \$10 million for corporations and \$2 million for individuals. Penalties for 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 are necessary measures. The need for such legislation has been highlighted by the recent discovery of asbestos in mulch at various locations in New South Wales. Environmental issues have had significant prominence among the constituents I represent. In my years of public service, I have never hesitated to bring attention to the plight of residents who have been adversely affected by the handling of hazardous materials or to noxious fumes impacting my community. I strongly support the bill because it will go some way towards advancing that cause. I have been at protest meetings with my community to draw attention to the handling of waste and asbestos, the discharge of air pollutants and the rest.

I am encouraged by some provisions in the bill, notably schedule 8, which removes the risk of personal liability for defamation for protected persons issuing certain statements, or fair reports or summaries of certain statements, pertaining to the environment, within the remit of the bill. This so-called "name and shame" provision is crucial because it permits closer scrutiny of actions that have the potential to cause environmental harm. The greater financial penalties that will be able to be imposed because of the bill are enhanced by the reputational loss that can result from violating environmental regulations. Businesses and individuals subject to the bill therefore will not only lose money or face applicable criminal charges but also very probably lose clients to competitors who carry out their work in a more environmentally sound manner. However, the bill retains proportionality. It does not treat an individual like a sole-trader gardener who applies pesticides as part of his or her work in the same manner as it does a corporate entity with ownership of a waste-to-energy processing plant.

The demand for the essential act of deterring damage to our environment and sustaining quality of life for people through strengthened penalties and other measures has been made abundantly clear. Again, this is particularly obvious with the present situation of contaminated mulch, but that is only one example of something that should have never been permitted to occur. The Government is fulfilling its duty to the people of our State by augmenting the authority charged with the task of protecting our environment and, by extension, improving the wellbeing of people who live within that very same environment. I thank the Government and the Minister for introducing the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (10:44): I fully support everything that has been said in debate on the Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024, and I support the Government's intention to tighten up some problems with contaminated substances such as fill and mulch that we

have seen in recent times. I also support my learned colleague the shadow Minister for Environment and back in the comments that she has already made. The Government has missed a number of issues in trying to prevent the illegal dumping of asbestos-contaminated material and has failed to address them the bill. It is one thing to impose a fine as a deterrent, but it is not the only deterrent.

I suggest that in all cases of contaminated fill there was a genesis, which commenced with the demolition of a property, the kind of knock-down and rebuild that we see across Sydney and the demolition of fibro homes and sheds that has gone on for many years. However, the problem is due to the unscrupulous actions of some people in failing to take asbestos-contaminated material to appropriate places to be disposed of, which I acknowledge is costly. But there has been a failure to track where contaminated material has come from, and I think that has been a great failing of the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. It has been a toothless tiger, because it is not hard to get back to the source.

I could cite dozens of instances within the area I represent on the rural periphery of the new growth areas of the north-west sector within the Hills shire. There are dozens of instances throughout the past 20 or 30 years in which thousands of tonnes of illegal and asbestos-contaminated material has been dumped on properties. But has the EPA chased that up to the full degree and prosecuted those people? No, sadly it has not. The EPA would say that it is difficult, and the council would say that it is difficult. But I will offer a couple of instances of how unscrupulous these people are.

Our rural properties consist of anything from five to 100 acres and upwards, in areas from Rouse Hill all the way to Wisemans Ferry. There is a lot of land and lots of properties come up for rent. Unscrupulous heavy-vehicle operators who move contaminated fill will rent a property, deposit hundreds of tonnes of contaminated fill on it and then just walk out the door, scrap the lease and move on. The landlords have to pick up the tab for that. Owners who have leased their property to some absolute criminal who has dumped material completely unbeknownst to them are ultimately faced with paying hundreds of thousands of dollars themselves to clean up the contaminated fill. I have seen people at the Hills Shire Council begging on their knees for the council to relieve them of hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs that are burdening their families for something that was never their problem. That is only one example. There are dozens more, and it has gone on for many years.

Ultimately, years later, when contaminated fill is discovered, the second, third or fourth owner has to pick up the pieces and pay either for removal or capping to deal with the problems, at huge expense, after already paying a massive amount for a rural property in the area. I suggest that there is a shortfall in tracking down the genesis of where the fill came from. It had to commence where the construction started. In that case, there must have been a development approval. Councils are aware of the properties that are being demolished and aware of the substances within those properties and the materials being removed. Ultimately, everyone must play a role until we stamp out the illegal dumping of asbestos-contaminated fill.

On the back of that, it is one thing to address asbestos-contaminated mulch in parks, as we have seen recently, but there is another big failure that I have raised for the past two or three years: The three worst types of asbestos—white, brown and blue—have been present at Castle Hill High School for decades. I have stood in this place many times and, quite rightly, condemned the Department of Education, because it is the owner of that school. It is not the teachers or the principals but the Department of Education that owns that asset, and it knows full well that 2,000 students walk through the doors of that school, with staff and parents, and face the very real risk of contamination. It is one thing to have contamination in parks where children, parents and other people go. Ultimately, that should be stamped out, and the bill is one way of doing that. It is good that we are imposing fines to try to stamp that out. But it is another thing to continue to turn our backs.

I am glad that after three years of investigation SafeWork NSW, which I have also condemned, is finally going to take the Department of Education to court. I am happy about that because, in the future—and God forbid it is the case—if people find illnesses because of what has been borne out of their children going to that school, they will have some recourse once the Department of Education is dragged to account for something that it has tried to cover up for years. We should never shy away from addressing the real issue of asbestos contamination. Turning our backs and denying that asbestos was in that school for years is an abhorrent practice. The Department of Education deserves every punishment it gets. I support the bill.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (10:51): On behalf of Mr Jihad Dib: In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Environment Protection Legislation Amendment (Stronger Regulation and Penalties) Bill 2024. I thank the member for Vacluse, the shadow Minister for Environment; the member for Fairfield; the member for Newtown, who spoke on behalf of The Greens; the member for Mount Druitt; and the member for Kellyville. As I outlined previously, the bill delivers important reforms to better protect the environment and communities. It will raise penalties, introduce recall powers and enable the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] to be a tough environmental cop on the beat by closing loopholes in current regulation.

It is the largest environmental regulation bill in 30 years and will put New South Wales on the path to having the strongest environmental protections in Australia. Further, I acknowledge that the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, was in the Chamber for a period of time today. On behalf of the State, I express gratitude to the Minister, to her fantastic ministerial office team and to the EPA crew and its leader, Tony Chappel, who also joins us today. I am proud to move the landmark bill on behalf of the Government. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

CONVERSION PRACTICES BAN BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 13 March 2024.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (10:54): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. Prior to the March 2023 State election, the then Premier, the member for Epping, was the first leader of either the New South Wales Liberal or Labor parties to announce that he would pass legislation to ban gay conversion therapy if he was returned as Premier. Then Premier Perrottet said he would "stamp out damaging gay conversion practices" and gave examples including electroconvulsive therapy and food deprivation. He committed to providing a balance in any legislation.

The Liberal Party's position at the election was based on finding a balance between banning harmful practices and protecting other important freedoms. Whilst the thrust of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill is, therefore, supported, the Coalition's approach to the detail of the bill is informed by scrutinising the bill to ensure that it is properly worded and balances the outlawing of conversion practices, while also protecting the autonomy of families to interact with each other and to raise their children with values that may or may not represent their multicultural background, including the values of any religious faith.

I note that it is not just people with a Judeo-Christian background that are interested in how the bill may impact upon them and their freedom of faith. Muslims, Hindus and those of other religions reflective of our rich multicultural communities have also shown concern that their cultural values, religious faith, teachings and practices are respected and that their belief should not give rise to criminal or civil liability under the bill, consistent with the commitments made by then Premier Perrottet and then Leader of the Opposition, Chris Minns, prior to the State election. Many non-religious community members are also interested in how their families and freedoms could be impacted by the bill.

If the Coalition was the first to lead on the issue, it has certainly not been invited to be part of the development of this piece of legislation by the Minns Labor Government. From the Government's point of view, any bipartisanship on the subject, and just about every other subject, ended after the State election. The manner in which the secretive consultation on the bill has taken place behind closed doors is unfortunate. The Minns Government's lack of transparency is starting to be seen in a number of different areas. It is not the only way to operate. For example, the member for Sydney introduced a number of private member's bills in August 2023, including a bill that covered the subject matter of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill. He then negotiated with the Government to obtain its support.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Members will take their seats quietly. The member for Wahroonga is speaking. It is an important bill. I would appreciate it if members showed respect.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The member for Sydney's conversion therapy ban bill lapsed at the end of 2023, in accordance with the standing orders, even though he sought and obtained a suspension of standing orders so that the equality bill did not lapse at the end of 2023. That bill, which was first released for public scrutiny in August 2023, will now be the subject of a parliamentary inquiry—at the request of the member for Sydney—which will not report back until August 2024. The equality bill will be on the public record for 12 months before Parliament is expected to vote on it. By contrast, at the time that the member for Sydney's conversion therapy ban bill lapsed at the end of 2023, the Minns Government announced that it would bring its own conversion ban bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): There is one minute until question time. Members will take their seats quietly.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Despite a lot of public interest in the member for Sydney's conversion therapy bill, as shown by the many emails sent to the offices of all MPs of all political persuasions, the Minns Labor Government chose to run what it calls a closed consultation process with hand-picked stakeholders considering a secret consultation document. Many people were not consulted during that process.

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

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to question time in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. We have a very full gallery. I welcome everybody to Australia's first Parliament. I extend a very warm welcome to Carolyn Greenwich as a guest of the member for Sydney, and I welcome members of The Queen's Club. I also welcome guests of the member for Liverpool, the staff and members of Codebreakers, a youth initiative project of the Western Sydney Community Forum. I acknowledge guests of the member for Charlestown, Holly Brock, Andrew Brock and Irene Brock—I will take a punt that you are all related. I acknowledge guests of the member for Riverstone, Indian Consul General, Dr Janakiraman; Australia Indian Business Council President, Irfan Malik; and two work experience students, Katarina Alexandrinous and Dion Kitsos.

I welcome guests of the member for Wakehurst from Manly Warringah Pittwater Community Care. I acknowledge staff from the Department of Education who are participating in training conducted by the Parliamentary Education and Engagement team. I also welcome to the gallery guests of the member for Gosford, members of the Central Coast Walking for Pleasure group. Just before question time I met our guests from the Australian Political Exchange Council, who are here on a study tour. I warmly welcome delegates from the Philippines who are visiting Australia as part of that program: Jennie Rosalie Mendez, Aldner Damalerio, Agatha Paula Cruz, Albert Alvin Antonio III, Kyle Jassel Salazar, Rosalinda Tuvilla II and Mr Norman Cualteros. Welcome to the Chamber. It was a great pleasure to meet you earlier today.

Question Time

NSW POLICE FORCE MEDIA ADVISERS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:07): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Ahead of the departure of Liz Deegan as Police Commissioner Karen Webb's media chief, did the Minister or her staff encourage or direct the commissioner to terminate Ms Deegan's employment?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:08): As I have said before, the Police Commissioner has the role of employing her staff in her agency, as would be expected, and no, I did not. Like every other department head in the State, the commissioner is entitled to select her own executive team. I am unsure why anyone finds this interesting or unusual but, given that I have been asked the question, it gives me the opportunity to tell the House exactly what we have been doing this year. Karen Webb is a Police Commissioner who is absolutely committed to implementing reforms in the NSW Police Force that will have better outcomes for every single officer in New South Wales.

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. I accept that the Minister began answering the question in a way that was directly relevant. But if a Minister starts an answer that way it does not give them licence to do whatever they like after that. They must remain directly relevant.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition. He will resume his seat. I will adhere to the practice that has been followed not only in my time in the chair but also during the preceding four years. I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition. Two minutes and 40 seconds into her answer, the Minister said, "No, I did not." I have ruled on this point a number of times. When Ministers meet the bar of direct relevance, they will be given some leeway in the remainder of their answer. Obviously, the answer must accord with the leave of the question, even if it is not directly relevant. The Minister is doing that. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I state in this place that Karen Webb has my 100 per cent support. In just under 12 months, we have addressed the critical shortfall in police officer numbers left to us by those opposite—1,500 officers short; I have said it again and again. By paying student police officers to study at the Goulburn

academy, we have seen five times as many recruits come on board. That is fantastic. We are also looking after our officers on the ground through the PULSE program, an innovative, groundbreaking program that supports the wellbeing of our police. We know retention is a problem, and that is something we are absolutely dedicated to addressing. In addition, there is Task Force Magnus. We have not spoken about it in this place for a while, but let me tell you what a wonderful success that taskforce was. In response to a spate of public shootings and nine horrific murders on Sydney streets, the police commissioner and I stood up Task Force Magnus. I have run out of time. I am sure I will be back at the lectern, Mr Speaker, so I will fill you in then. [*Time expired.*]

HOUSING SUPPLY

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (11:11): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on what action the New South Wales Government is taking to ensure that Sydney does not become "a city with no grandchildren", as warned by the Productivity Commission?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:11): I thank the member for Mount Druitt for his question. It is an important question for the future of New South Wales and the future of Sydney as well and in particular. The Productivity Commission unambiguously warned lawmakers across the political spectrum that unless we make inroads with housing supply in Sydney, this city will be one without grandchildren—without young people, without younger Australians writing their chapter in its history. So the Government is taking decisive action. In addition to changes to zoning and the transport oriented development [TOD] sites across metropolitan Sydney, the Government has made a decision to boost floor space ratio and height by 30 per cent for private developers that are aiming to put 15 per cent social housing within their development.

We have allocated \$60 million for a first trial on the North Coast and the South Coast for a build-to-rent program. Rental housing is particularly important in those two communities, which have to deal with an influx of population around the Christmas holiday season. We have made little-known changes that will have a major impact, like redeploying 350 staff from the Western Parkland City Authority to the Department of Planning and Environment, as well as bringing the Greater Cities Commission into the Department of Planning and Environment to speed up applications and allow developers, builders and councils to have someone inside government who can progress their application so we can boost housing supply in the State.

We have also set up Homes NSW, which we hope will bring together homelessness services and government to make the system more efficient and effective so we can deliver on-the-ground changes, particularly in communities that have been ravaged as a result of changes to the housing mix that have led to an increase in homelessness. There is a range of alternative policies out there. Quite a few disparate policies have been elucidated by those opposite, one of which was mentioned in a podcast called *Macquarie Street Matters*. The transcript of that podcast will soon be trawled over by defamation lawyers across Sydney. They will take a keen interest. It is by the member for Wahroonga and in it he asks why the Government is:

... putting so much development in an area of old infrastructure when we've invested billions of dollars in WestConnex and metros out to Bankstown in order for the new infrastructure to be around where we'd plan the housing to be?

Right, so "not in my area" but way out there. [*Extension of time*]

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order. The member for Parramatta will come to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: So "not in our area", but in the Bankstown area. Looking at the Greater Cities Commission targets for completions over the next five years, we see that Canterbury-Bankstown has to take—

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: —13,000 new dwellings, where Ku-ring-gai has to take just 4,000.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: That is 4,000 versus 13,000. We finally have an answer as to where the Coalition wants to put housing in a place like Sydney and, as always, the answer is "not in my backyard". But it does not stop there.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The member for Ryde got in on the act as well. An article in *The Daily Telegraph* states:

City of Ryde staff prepared a proposal – titled "Striking the Right Balance" – which suggested the authority allow ... new dwellings across the local government area, as an alternative to the Minns Government's proposals ...

But at Tuesday's council meeting—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

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

Mr Alister Henskens: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. The question is about what action the New South Wales Government is taking. The Premier's comments seem to be quite removed from the question.

The SPEAKER: I appreciate that the Premier is not being directly relevant, but I have addressed this point before. The Premier has ticked the box; he has been directly relevant. As long as he does not stray from the subject completely then he is given more leeway.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: As a matter of decency and honour, the member for Wahroonga should withdraw the allegations he made in this Parliament—

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order—

Mr CHRIS MINNS: —or substantiate them with some kind of facts, for goodness sake. The hide of you, jumping up. Give us some information that you have already said publicly that you hold.

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Hornsby rises on a point of order.

Mr Matt Kean: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was clearly with regard to—

Mr Edmond Atalla: It's my question. What would you know?

Mr Matt Kean: —the Government's role in helping grandchildren in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Government members will come to order. I would so like to uphold the point of order, but, based on my previous ruling, I cannot.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: In any event, the member for Ryde was quoted as saying:

We didn't endorse the staff plan, and we didn't endorse the government's plan either ...

Effectively, there is no plan in Ryde. At the end of the day, the cat is out of the bag. And speaking of cats, in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 17 March there was an article that read:

Jordan Lane loves his cat Oscar so much that he wheels it around in a pram.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: He wheels it around in a pram.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: It continues:

The Liberal MP has even posted pictures ...

We are a government that pushes housing; they are an opposition that pushes cat prams—and conspiracy theories.

The SPEAKER: The member for Ryde will come to order. We may well applaud the member for Ryde for being on three calls to order. I am not inclined to have members removed from the Chamber but I will do so if that sort of behaviour continues. I called the member for Ryde to order twice. He shouted over the top of not just Government members but also the Speaker.

Mrs Leslie Williams: What about them, Mr Speaker?

The SPEAKER: The member for Port Macquarie will not interrupt me while I am explaining my ruling. I am not inclined to have any member removed from the Chamber, but in that circumstance I had to act.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mrs Leslie Williams: It is about comments just made in the Chamber.

The SPEAKER: I will hear the member for Port Macquarie on a point of order.

Mrs Leslie Williams: During that answer the member for Parramatta consistently made catcalls from—
[Government members interjected.]

I do not know why that is so funny.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I am not aware of that behaviour. Members will come to order or they will be removed from the Chamber.

[A Government member interjected.]

Mrs Leslie Williams: I don't know why you think that is so funny.

The SPEAKER: The member for Port Macquarie will direct her comments through the Chair. I have dealt with the issue of catcalling in the Chamber before. It is totally unacceptable. I did not hear it on this occasion, but it is completely out of order. Members should be very careful about engaging in such behaviour.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I fully recognise that catcalls are not allowed, but I think this was in reference to a genuine cat—that of the member for Ryde. It says here that he shared a meal with the cat.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will resume his seat. His additional guidance was not helpful. Members will come to order. I have asked the member for Parramatta twice to cease her disorderly conduct. It does not help the situation. I advise the member for Port Macquarie that, because I cannot contextualise the behaviour, I will take no further action.

Mrs Leslie Williams: The unparliamentary behaviour in the Chamber has been condoned by the Premier. That is shameful.

The SPEAKER: I have heard the member's point of order. I do not accept that characterisation. But I have made it clear that it will not happen again. If it does, I will take action. I could only hear the member for Ryde. I cannot deal with every act of disorder in the Chamber. Members will come to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The cat's name is Oscar.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will cease interjecting. It is not helpful. The member for Port Macquarie has made her point.

NSW POLICE FORCE MEDIA ADVISERS

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (11:21): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Did the Minister, her staff or any other ministerial office encourage or direct police Commissioner Webb to engage Steve Jackson in the over \$300,000 per annum role of media chief?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:22): I knew I would be back. But I will save some for number three, just in case. We apologise to those in the gallery.

Ms Jenny Leong: It is a serious question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: And I will answer it seriously.

Mr Paul Scully: Just like you did before.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Exactly. Just like I did before.

Ms Jenny Leong: Because \$300,000 is a lot of money.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Just like I did before.

The SPEAKER: The Minister and the member for Newtown will cease having a conversation across the Chamber. The Minister will answer the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As I said in my previous answer, like every other department head in this State, the commissioner is entitled to select her own executive team. The police commissioner's office and my office work very closely together. That is why we have been able to achieve so many positive outcomes, looking after the wellbeing of every police officer in this State.

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

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Of course the commissioner's office and my office discuss matters like this. It goes without saying. But I will say it again: The police commissioner employs her staff, and I employ my staff. I have been saying that for several days. I will now speak about the wonderful achievements that the police commissioner and I have been able to achieve together. As I said earlier, we saw a spate of public shootings in Sydney last year.

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Task Force Magnus related to organised crime.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order. The Minister will resume her seat.

Mr Mark Speakman: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. This is different from your previous ruling, Mr Speaker, where the Minister directly answered the question and then strayed. She has not answered the question. Your previous ruling does not apply.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition. I uphold the point of order. I listened closely to the Minister. She has not achieved direct relevance at this stage. The Minister will answer the question directly. The Minister has the call.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will say it again: The police commissioner's office and my office work very closely together, and of course the commissioner's office would have discussed matters like this with my office. I am answering the question. Back to Task Force—

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order: The question is very specific. Did the Minister or her staff encourage or direct? The Minister is saying she conversed. Did she encourage any movement in this—

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Dubbo. The Minister has the call.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In relation to the organised crime that we saw on our streets, with nine horrific deaths, I can report that all the principal culprits have been arrested and are in jail awaiting trial.

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: What wonderful police work by the fantastic New South Wales police officers.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order.

Mr Paul Toole: I seek additional information.

The SPEAKER: I will consider granting an extension of time. I advise members and visitors in the gallery that a protest is underway outside Parliament House. I make that comment not to excite the Opposition but so that people understand there is no imminent threat or danger. I grant an additional two minutes.

[Interruption from gallery]

I direct the attendants to remove from the public gallery the people who are interjecting. The broadcast will be stopped. I ask the special constables to assist the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove those people from the public gallery.

The broadcast will be turned back on. I advise members that it is my intention, depending on how we proceed with questions, to reinstate some time on the clock. The member for Bathurst asked for the Minister's time to be extended and I granted an additional two minutes. The Minister has the call.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will repeat that figure because it is critically important that everybody has the opportunity to know it. We have had nine horrific murders on our street and all of the principal culprits have been arrested and are in jail awaiting trial.

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order. The Minister will resume her seat.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have answered.

Mr Mark Speakman: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. Mr Speaker, the Minister is flouting your ruling. What interference with the police commissioner are you hiding?

Mr Ron Hoenig: To the point of order: First, it is disorderly for the Opposition leader to yell across the Chamber like he did. Secondly, the Opposition asked for an extension of time and as soon as the Minister started to answer the question, the Opposition took a point of order. We are on the clock anyway. Perhaps the Minister might consider that she has completed her answer and we can get on with questions.

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides of the House will come to order. The Minister has concluded her answer.

WILLYAMA HIGH SCHOOL

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (11:31): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Can the Deputy Premier update the House on what action the Government is taking to support students and staff at Willyama High School after the discovery of mould at the school earlier this year?

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:31): I thank member for South Coast for her question about the Willyama High School. At the outset, I acknowledge the school communities of Broken Hill—particularly the staff, students, teachers and parents of Willyama. It has been an incredibly challenging few months, especially the past few weeks. I thank everyone for working together on what has been an incredibly difficult situation.

I call out the member for Barwon for his leadership; he has been really strong in the community. When the member for Barwon and I were in Broken Hill together, it was really clear that he is right in there, sticking up for his community when things get really tough—like it has been at Willyama. I have said time and time again that protecting the health of staff and students is our top priority. That is ground zero for us. That is why yesterday we announced the Government's decision to rebuild Willyama High School after receiving the independent hygienist report, which made clear that we really did not have another option.

The report clearly stated that there was a significant amount of condition 3 mould, which is the most severe type of mould, and that it was extensive and dangerous to human health. According to the report, full remediation would have been difficult, and it would not be able to rule out that the mould would recur. Obviously, that put us in a very difficult situation. We cannot send students and staff back into an environment where mould may regrow, as terribly disappointing as that is for the community. It is too high a risk and is not a risk that we are willing to take.

I make really clear that the mould was identified during the school summer holidays during Christmas and New Year. Students and staff were not at school. There is no evidence that the mould was present before the holidays. Of course, we acted as soon as the mould was identified in early January. The independent hygienist was on board as soon as possible. The school was fenced off and plans were put in place for students to learn across three other Broken Hill school sites. I say thank you to the leadership, staff and existing students at Broken Hill High, Morgan Street Public School and Broken Hill North Public School. This is not the beginning of the year that they expected, but they took it in their stride and they came together. *[Extension of time]*

They came together so that the Willyama kids could learn somewhere in the best situation possible in a less than ideal set of circumstances. From term 2, which is only a couple of weeks away, all Willyama students will come together at a separate pop-up school on the Broken Hill High School site.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Which none of them want. None of them want it.

Ms PRUE CAR: That is not true. The Leader of The Nationals is spouting mistruths about this particular issue.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Well, I have spoken to them.

Ms PRUE CAR: I have been consistently speaking to teachers, students and staff, as has the member for Barwon. The best situation possible is that we put a pop-up at the Broken Hill High site, not a pop-up on the site where we are demolishing an unsafe school. We are demolishing an unsafe school.

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

Mr Dugald Saunders: What about opposite it?

Ms PRUE CAR: We have just heard from the Leader of The Nationals and the shadow Minister who presided over an absolute debacle at Wee Waa.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: In a very similar situation, people were sick for years and years from mould. It took them nine years to act. That is the difference between our Government and his Government.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Are you going to act on Hastings Secondary College?

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

Ms PRUE CAR: The member for Port Macquarie knows we are building Hastings.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: The member for Port Macquarie brings it up every single day, but the truth is this is a very significant issue for the Willyama community. We have acted straightaway. From term 2, there will be a pop-up at Broken Hill High School. We are committed to rebuilding the Willyama site for the students, staff and community at Willyama, acting on professional hygienist advice for the benefit of that community.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (11:36): My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. As the person uniquely positioned with the power to refer the development known as Wallum in Brunswick Heads to the Federal environment Minister, will the Minister exercise that power so that the Federal environment Minister can consider the impacts of the development on matters of environmental significance as the law intends?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:36): I thank the member for Ballina for her question. Wallum Estate is the subject of an approved development consent for a subdivision of 131 lots at 15 Torakina Road, Brunswick Heads, which is within the Byron Shire Council area, as the member would be aware. The application was approved in May 2023 by the Northern Regional Planning Panel, which relied on an assessment undertaken by Byron Shire Council. I am advised that the panel was satisfied that it met the requirements under the New South Wales Biodiversity Conservation Act. I also understand that both the council, as part of its assessment report, and the Northern Regional Planning Panel considered biodiversity impacts, including submitted conservation management plans and the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's section 34A certification. Further, I am advised that the panel and Byron Shire Council met all requirements under the New South Wales biodiversity conservation legislation.

Following the approval, the community and Sue Higginson, who is a member in the other place, raised concerns with the redevelopment and compliance with the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. As the member would be aware, an approval under the New South Wales Biodiversity Conservation Act does not replace the Commonwealth Act requirements. In fact, the Commonwealth Act places an onus on the proponent landowner to seek separate Commonwealth approval for a controlled activity under that Act. The Commonwealth Act is administered by the Commonwealth and there is no responsibility on New South Wales to refer an application under that Act or to ensure compliance. In regard to the policy of referring regionally significant development applications to the Federal environment Minister under the Commonwealth Act, the onus is on the applicant to refer a proposal that will, or is likely to, have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance for approval.

I am aware and can inform the member that the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has been in discussions with the proponent and that the compliance unit of the Commonwealth department is also aware of those activities. My department has also been advised that the Commonwealth was aware of the Wallum Estate development and was in discussions with the proponent in the requirements and their responsibilities under the Commonwealth Act. This matter is now with the Commonwealth, which can complete its own assessment as to whether a controlled action has been carried out and, if it was triggered, undertake compliance action where there is an identified breach. With that in mind, I have asked my department to engage regularly with the Commonwealth on this matter. [*Extension of time*]

I understand that this issue has a long history in the community, since a concept approval was granted and grandfathered, I think, around 2013. In that vein, I will update the House on another matter, because the issue of zombie development applications or zombie planning approvals is seen around many of our electorates. Historical development consents that were approved many years ago have not physically commenced or substantially progressed or completed. The planning Act says that a consent will lapse after five years unless building, engineering and construction work has physically started. Such development consents, which have been lingering for decades in some instances, remain lawfully valid if they have physically commenced before that lapsing date.

I am pleased that the Legislative Assembly's Committee on Environment and Planning has started work, at my request, on this issue. I acknowledge the work of the member for Cessnock. I heard him on ABC Illawarra this morning, talking about this issue. It is a challenging inquiry into these historical consents, and that inquiry will examine the challenges of the planning system and make recommendations to address the problem. As I have said consistently before, the planning Act allows councils to overturn decisions, because they have generally made them in the past. To the best of my knowledge, no council has acted upon that, but that option remains available. Councils can deal with it, and they should be looking to do that. I acknowledge that the zombie development applications are a challenge. The committee is looking at it. The former Government, including the member of the walking dead, the member for Wahrenoonga, had 12 years to resolve this issue, but they left it alone.

PLANNING SYSTEM

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (11:42): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister outline to the House any recent allegations about the integrity of the planning system and what any independent assessments may have concluded?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:42): That is an excellent question from the member for Fairfield, who has investigated his fair degree of issues and complaints around rigour and integrity in the past. The Minns Government has introduced planning reforms to deliver more well-located homes near jobs, services and amenities. In developing those reforms and determining the best sites for future housing growth, the Government went through a rigorous process. We did not just stumble upon those sites and point to some points on the map. The department, with other agencies, examined 305 transport stations across Sydney, the Hunter, the Central Coast and the Illawarra. We identified those locations that had enabling rail, water and wastewater capacity near transport stations.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I will come to the member for Wahroonga in a minute. We analysed land fragmentation, landownership, location and councils' recent planning decisions, as well as bushfire and flood risk, among other things. It was a rigorous assessment. Importantly, the whole process was overseen by a probity adviser. But, even with that level of transparency and rigour, voices in this place have suggested there has been some sort of massive cover-up by the Government. Apparently, the whole Government and the private sector have been complicit. The member for Wahroonga stood in this very place late into the night and talked about those claims. He claimed to have credible evidence of corruption and documents to verify it. He admitted that it was a circumstantial case but said it was incredible that there were no probity processes put in place. But there were.

One would think that in New South Wales the first thing anyone with those sorts of allegations would do is refer them to the ICAC. That is exactly what I did. But the member made no such referral. Let us focus on that. The shadow Attorney General, the alternative first law officer of this State, decided to hang onto claims of corruption that he claimed to have credible evidence on, instead of referring it on. But the ICAC delivered its findings quick smart. And it did so using the facts, not circumstantial evidence. It said it was "satisfied there is no evidence that Ms Joyner"—that is the planning official subject to the member's allegations—"or any other person engaged in corrupt conduct, and has accordingly determined to close its investigations." What can we conclude from that? First, the member for Wahroonga made claims that even he admitted were circumstantial but were in his view credible, but he did nothing about it. Second, he is not only a terrible judge of the facts; he also willingly ignores the facts altogether. And, third, the Leader of the Opposition now faces a choice. *[Extension of time]*

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 73. If the Minister has direct suggestions he wants to make, he can do it through substantive motion. He cannot stand in the House and lecture us.

The SPEAKER: Actually, he can. I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister could move a substantive motion, but he is not out of order at this stage.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I do not know that the Opposition really wants a motion against the member for Wahroonga, because he might have to explain himself and justify his actions, which I think will be found seriously wanting. The member made a direct attack on the probity and integrity of the planning system, but that attack was found to have no basis in fact. The important thing is that, in clearing Ms Joyner, the ICAC made no recommendations for improvement of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, even though the secretary expressly asked the ICAC to opine on them. But this incident is not about only the member for Wahroonga. All members opposite sat and watched silently while this rubbish was pushed around. That is as defining of the Opposition as it is defining of character of the member for Wahroonga. The Opposition shredded the reputation of a planning staff member and refused to release the evidence to the ICAC to investigate it.

Another Scully once said, "The truth is out there, but so are lies." The *X-Files* reference does not stop there. Who was the member for Wahroonga's famous source? Was it the smoking man? Was it the sewer monster? Was it an alien? Or did he just make the whole thing up? No-one will know, because he will never come forward and show us the evidence. In this instance, the ICAC found the truth. There is no case to answer. And so the people have found out that the New South Wales Opposition and the member for Wahroonga have failed the most basic tests of integrity. The Leader of the Opposition cannot stand by and take no action. He is a former Attorney General himself. He knows the level of integrity needed for that office. He knows also that the member for Wahroonga does not have it.

Mr Tim James: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Tim James: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 73. It is abundantly clear that the Minister is making imputations of improper motives or otherwise in respect of the member, and he knows he must do so by substantive motion. It is a flagrant breach of the standing orders.

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: The question was about the integrity of the planning system, and this response from the ICAC is about the integrity of the member for Wahroonga and the integrity of the entire Opposition—every single member of it.

FIREFIGHTERS INDUSTRIAL AWARD

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (11:48): My question is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Leighton Drury, the secretary of the Fire Brigade Employees' Union of New South Wales, recently told the media, "Our firefighters feel insulted. They feel like they've not been taken seriously. We need to get the Government to the table to give us an offer." The sirens have spoken. When will the Minister's Government stop insulting firefighters and engage constructively towards a new award negotiation?

The SPEAKER: Members, particularly Government members, will come to order so that we can hear the Minister's response.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (11:48): I thank the shadow Minister for the question. It has taken 360 days since I was sworn in to get a question on the emergency services, so it is really good to see that there is an interest now. I will address a couple of things. The personification "the sirens have spoken"—we heard them. I find it really insulting and quite ironic that that comes from a party that established the wages cap.

[Opposition members interjected.]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I love that, all of a sudden, members opposite have remembered the workers. They spent 12 years putting down the workers.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. I call the member for Goulburn to order for the first time.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order: The Minister has spent at least one minute making introductory remarks. The question was specifically about what his Government is doing, not the previous Government.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Minister understands that his answer must be directly relevant to the question. The Minister has the call.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I will get straight to the answer. The Government is in negotiations at the moment. I have answered the question. What is interesting is that the shadow Minister is crying crocodile tears, because last year he moved a motion in which he called on New South Wales Labor to put families before union bosses. All of a sudden, he is thinking about the workers. The member should think about when he did that. What is interesting, and everyone knows—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr JIHAD DIB: He asked the question and I have given the answer, but I need to give it context. The party that stood over workers for 12 years established a wages cap. The Government is working on mutual interest agreements at the moment. What is impressive is that we are continuing to work with members opposite. Fire and Rescue NSW and the Fire Brigade Employees Union are in discussions at the moment. We have mutual points of agreement.

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

Mr JIHAD DIB: The previous Government promised to employ a thousand new nurses but did not tell the industry that they were not funded for more than six months. I will not be lectured by the former Treasurer on what to do and how to treat people. Members opposite have no idea how to treat workers, so this Government, led by the industrial relations Minister and the Treasurer, is working on mutual interest agreements to produce an

award that is modern, fair and sustainable. That is the way it should be done. It is not done by saying, "You're going to get that and that's the end of it." I take it there is no extension of time.

TAXI INDUSTRY

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (11:53): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on the actions taken by the New South Wales Government to make the taxi industry better for passengers and more sustainable into the future?

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:53): I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport for her important question. The vast majority of taxi drivers are hardworking men and women who are working in a tough environment to earn a living so that they can look after their families and assist their passengers. I was pleased to open the conference of the NSW Taxi Council last Sunday at their annual gathering at Rooty Hill. I thank Nick, Geoff and the members for having me there. They know how important their job and their industry is in supporting passengers. However, there are rogue drivers in the industry who, unfortunately, persist in breaking the law. It is a small percentage of drivers but they are doing the wrong thing. That is why this Government is standing up for passengers.

Last year the Government increased the fine from \$300 to \$1,000 for drivers who do not turn on the meter to protect not only passengers from being ripped off but also the jobs of taxi drivers who do the right thing. We need to make sure that drivers who do the wrong thing cannot keep switching between different taxi operators and getting away with the illegal behaviour. I am pleased to inform the House that I have asked the Point to Point Transport Commissioner, Commissioner Wing, to strengthen the existing centralised database, the Driver Vehicle Dashboard. The Government will expand the checks that taxi operators can run on their drivers and give the dashboard more teeth. It already works incredibly well. It provides real-time updates to operators about safety offences and assists operators with overseeing their businesses. It makes perfect sense that extending it to fare-related offences will ensure that the minority of rogue drivers and operators are dealt with.

I am sure all members in this House are appalled when they hear the stories of people, particularly of young women in the middle of the night trying to get home, being confronted by demands for inflated fixed fares or demands to pay cash. That is simply not acceptable and it poses dangers to passengers. It exploits a vulnerability and it shows that illegal fare gouging is simply outrageous. Those practices hurt passengers and the good reputations of the majority of taxi drivers. [*Extension of time*]

It hurts the industry overall. It also hurts the reputation of our city as a great global city. That is why our Government is closing loopholes to protect the rights of passengers and cracking down on those dodgy practices. The Government also wants to make it easier and safer for taxi drivers to pick up and to drop off passengers, particularly in the Sydney CBD. It is important that taxi drivers can come into the CBD and be part of our transport system. We absolutely need them. We need them in the evening, late at night, early in the morning and also when the rest of our system is under pressure. Improving taxi ranks to make it easier to pick up and drop off passengers just makes sense.

The responsibility for taxi zones is shared among different parties including local councils and, in this instance, the City of Sydney. Transport for NSW will lead a process with the City of Sydney, the Point to Point Commissioner, the industry, the Taxi Council and Business Sydney to improve taxi ranks in the Sydney CBD. The Government is also considering "Taxis Excepted" signs and there are already some in the CBD. They allow for a pick-up and drop-off of one minute. They are working well, but the Government will examine where more zones might be needed to improve the experience for passengers and drivers and make sure it is safe for everybody.

Those are just some of the latest changes that our Government has made to the industry to make it better for passengers. We on this side of the House have mandated that Taxi Fare Hotline stickers be displayed in every cab in New South Wales. Refunds are on the rise for people who cop a dodgy taxi fare. There has been a massive spike in the calls to the hotline and we have more authorised officers on the beat than ever before to catch rogue drivers. We will continue to work with the taxi industry for a better deal for them and a better deal for passengers across Sydney and New South Wales.

REGIONAL YOUTH CRIME AND EDUCATION

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:58): My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Local communities in regional and rural New South Wales have been calling for a whole-of-government response to rural youth crime. Why were education initiatives not included in the Government's Moree pilot program?

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:59): I thank the member for Albury for the question, and I acknowledge that

it goes to the heart of the challenges that we face in regional New South Wales. It is a huge challenge for this Government and was a huge challenge for the previous Government. Many government agencies are working on the issue together because it is a whole-of-community set of challenges. Many of the challenges that we face can be addressed by getting to the heart of the issue through the provision of quality education—100 per cent. In fact, the evidence is clear about things like the link between quality preschool education and incarceration rates. In every regional community I go to, local principals talk with me about the need to invest in education in those communities as a way to put our young kids on the right track. I acknowledge that education is doing that every day.

In every public school throughout rural, regional and remote New South Wales, principals and teachers go above and beyond what one would expect to be in their position descriptions to get kids inside the gates, to have eyeballs on kids who are at risk and to make sure that there are family supports around those children to ensure that they can come to school and participate in learning. That is happening every day through the principals and teachers—through their work with home school liaison, through their work with local community service providers and through their work with local police. That happens each and every day because schools do not operate in a vacuum; they are in their local communities. In fact, the school is often the safest place in the community, full stop.

Investing in rural and remote education is a priority for the Government. The recent evaluation of previous strategies found that they just did not work. We are putting more resources into rural, regional and remote education, but of course we can always do more. Only two weeks ago I held a principals round table in Dubbo, and we thrashed out quite a number of ideas that we can work on for the local schools in that community, which speaks to the heart of what the member for Albury has raised. We will work on them with the department and with each of those principals in every school in rural and remote New South Wales, because education is the key to getting to the bottom of a lot of this stuff.

[Interruption from gallery]

The SPEAKER: Order! Stop the broadcast. The Serjeant-at-Arms will remove the protester. He is out of order and will leave the gallery in an orderly manner. The broadcast will recommence.

WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (12:03): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's efforts to improve access to health care for women?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:03): I thank the member for Blue Mountains for her question and her advocacy for the women's health centre in the area she represents, as well as her strong advocacy for the upgrades to the fantastic hospital in the Blue Mountains. It is an important issue, and the Government is making landmark investments in women's health services across New South Wales for the very first time. Women's health centres, for instance, have never seen those types of investments before.

Most members have a strong relationship with the providers who operate our women's health services across New South Wales. They know that the Minns Labor Government is investing a record \$34 million in upgrades to services that are provided through women's health services. Recently I had the opportunity to visit the Leichhardt women's health centre with the Premier and the Minister for Women. We made our commitment and they talked about what a game-changing moment it is for those centres. They often deal with very vulnerable women in our community, and they are a key part of primary care for women who may not always be able to access it. We had a good discussion with a woman called Gillian. We talked about how the health service at that site had made an enormous difference to her health and wellbeing after she received health care.

I acknowledge that many members across this place have been strong advocates for their women's health centres. The member for Shellharbour has been a very strong advocate for our centre in the Illawarra. We have also announced a \$2 million upgrade for a first-of-its-kind trauma recovery centre, which is up and running. I acknowledge that advocacy, but we are also doing a lot more. We are also rolling out an additional 29 McGrath breast cancer nurses—those very special individuals who help women navigate what is a very challenging and difficult diagnosis to receive. The member for Blacktown, the Premier, the Minister for Women, the Minister for Industrial Relations and I recently met with Tina in Blacktown to talk about the difference those nurses have made to her care and wellbeing. They are truly remarkable individuals. The first eight nurses are in place and we are leaning into that investment with funding of \$18 million to roll them out across New South Wales. *[Extension of time]*

Those investments are important. When we invest in women's health, we invest in the health of families and the community. It is very personal to me. We can make a big difference in this space and we can provide health care to some of the most vulnerable women in our community who may not always be able to access health care in the same way that others do. I thank those people across the New South Wales health system and the NGOs who are working in that space, working with women and working with others in the community. They are doing a remarkable job. This Government is prepared to back the work they are doing every day, whether it is our very special and gifted McGrath nurses or those working in our women's health services. When we adequately fund those centres and services, we know that women in the community benefit.

People in the gallery may have heard a lot this week about the Premier and the Treasurer arguing vigorously on behalf of team New South Wales to get our fair share of Commonwealth health funding. That is what we expect and that is what the community expects. Ironically, I am due to have a discussion around the national health agreement, a huge funding agreement. That discussion is due to take place on Thursday evening and then a ministerial meeting on Friday. Despite feigning membership of team New South Wales, this lot opposite have prevented me from going down and engaging in those discussions that will potentially cost the State billions of dollars. I do not want to hear anything more about fighting or standing up for New South Wales. The only people who are standing up for the people of New South Wales are those in the Minns Labor Government.

NSW POLICE FORCE MEDIA ADVISERS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:08): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Today the Minister acknowledged that there were discussions between her office and the police commissioner's office regarding the engagement of Steve Jackson in the role of media chief, worth over \$300,000 per annum. Did those discussions involve an encouragement to engage Mr Jackson?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (12:09): No.

REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:09): My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on action taken by the New South Wales Government to increase accessibility on regional trains?

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (12:09): I thank the member for Lismore for her ongoing advocacy for public transport in the regions. She is a great advocate, not just for her community and not just on transport and roads but on so many things that affect regional New South Wales—

Mr Paul Scully: And plenty of other things.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: —as the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces knows. The Labor Government is determined to deliver more inclusive and accessible train services in regional New South Wales. We know that transport is a social determinant of health, education, opportunity and jobs, and is vital for social inclusion and community resilience. We understand that for many people, including those with disabilities and senior citizens, simply getting to or even around their local train station can be a challenge. Inaccessibility of train stations is one of the most significant barriers to safe and accessible transport.

The Minns Government is committed to removing the barriers that can stop people with disabilities getting onto trains, particularly in our regions. That is why we have announced today that nine new regional New South Wales train stations are on track to receive upgrades thanks to our new \$800 million Safe Accessible Transport [SAT] program. That means that communities can look forward to new ramps, accessible toilets, tactile indicators for people with vision impairment, improved lighting, CCTV and other enhancements, such as kiss and ride zones for those with prams, scooters, bikes or heavy luggage.

Train stations set for upgrade include Yass in the Goulburn electorate, Wingham in Myall Lakes and Sawtell in the Coffs Harbour electorate. I know the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Clarence will also be pleased that Kendall and Urunga stations are earmarked for upgrade. I am delighted to inform the member for Oxley that three of the nine regional stations we are upgrading are at Nambucca Heads, Kempsey and Macksville in his electorate. We are delivering for those communities. The member for Monaro will be pleased about the upgrades at Kingston in Canberra, as we know that people from Monaro access that station to get to Sydney and other places.

To ensure that we are meeting each community's needs in a targeted way, Transport for NSW will now set about consulting, designing and planning for the upgrades. The projects announced today build on the Minister

for Transport's initial pledge to deliver upgrades at Griffith, Queanbeyan and Moss Vale stations in the initial stage of the Safe Accessible Transport program. Those projects are shovel ready. [*Extension of time*]

I am delighted to advise that of the 23 station upgrades we have announced across New South Wales in the SAT program, 12 of them—more than half—will be in regional cities and towns. That is what the Government is doing. The Labor Party is the party of country people. It is the party of the regions. This Labor Government will deliver what members opposite could not deliver in their 12 years in government. Government members want everyone to share the benefits of public transport. It should not matter where one lives or what one's ability or mobility is like. Everyone should be able to get on the train. Unlike those opposite, who pork-barrelled their way through train station upgrades, we will deliver according to need to give those communities the opportunity to go forward. We want everyone to share those benefits.

It is about jobs and getting to communities. We are really pushing in on this. We want education, health care, jobs and opportunities to be accessible to everyone in the regions. This program is quite literally opening up new pathways. I know that those opposite have a few issues going on. A fight is brewing in the Bathurst and Orange electorates. Regarding trains and accessible transport, Wendy Hastings, referring to an article in the *Western Advocate*, noted, "Unless regional towns such as Orange, Bathurst and Lithgow move beyond fighting each other and work collectively to enhance services such as trains, nothing will improve." There is a message in there for the member for Bathurst: Work with the member for Orange. The members need to work together. The Government will do things that members opposite could not do because they are too busy fighting each other all of the time. [*Time expired.*]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:15): My question is directed to the Minister for Health representing the Minister for Homelessness. The former Liberal-Nationals Government introduced the Inner City Local Allocation Strategy, which bans people with drug-related charges or convictions in the past five years from living in public housing in Redfern, Waterloo, Surry Hills and Glebe. Organisations including Homelessness NSW, the Community Restorative Centre and the Tenants' Union of NSW have highlighted the disproportionate impact of the policy on local First Nations communities. Will the Government commit to abolishing this discriminatory policy?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:15): I acknowledge the question from the member for Newtown. I also acknowledge that she has a high concentration of social housing in her electorate, as do other members in this place. I have had an opportunity to get some advice from the fantastic Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness in the other place. The Minister, who is a real advocate both around the Cabinet table and in the community, advised me that the CEO of Homes NSW is conducting a review into the allocations policy. That policy acts as a barrier to prevent a concentration of those with criminal backgrounds living in and around the inner city.

We have to get the balance right. I understand the member's reference to the disproportionate impact that policy may have on Aboriginal people. The Minister in the other place wants to make sure that we get the balance right. She has made it clear to me that she is willing to work with the member for Newtown and others to get the balance right as part of the review that the CEO of Homes NSW, Rebecca Pinkstone, is undertaking. That is important work. There are other barriers around social housing and access to social housing, as members know. Likewise, we do not put people who may be subject to an apprehended domestic violence order near someone who is a potential victim of that person. We have to balance those things. We have to balance not separating people from country with keeping the community safe.

Do we have the balance exactly right? We will look at the findings of the review being undertaken by Homes NSW. But I can assure the member that the Minister has made it clear that she and her office and the department are willing to work with the inner city members on this issue and in this space to make sure that we get the balance right. That is important for all of us. Those are the sometimes difficult and challenging decisions that public officials have to make about the allocation of housing, particularly for people with criminal backgrounds. But, at the same time, we understand the dislocation that Aboriginal people can feel when they are away from country and how that can make their therapy and their recovery challenging. We must get the balance right. I am confident that we can work together with the hardworking, energetic, passionate and accessible Minister in the other place—across the Parliament but particularly with those members representing the inner city electorates—to make social housing allocation fairer for everybody.

TAFE NSW FUNDING

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (12:18): My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is investing in TAFE NSW after 12 years of underfunding by the previous Government?

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (12:19): I thank the member for Prospect for his question and for his interest in TAFE. Those opposite left the Government with a maintenance backlog of over 54,000 items, including leaky roofs, walls with peeling paint and internet that had not been upgraded since 2009. There is a host of problems that the Government needs to fix, which is why it is investing \$300 million this year to upgrade TAFE facilities. The Government knows how important that is for the future of New South Wales. The neglect of those opposite is unforgivable for skills development in New South Wales. It was deliberate and ideological, and the Government is fixing it.

Documents

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 20 March 2024.

Committees

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS

Reports

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: As Chair: I table the report of the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics entitled *Interim Report: Adequacy of Current Procedures to Protect Parliamentary Privilege (Law Enforcement and Investigative Bodies)*, report 2/58, dated March 2024. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:21): I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday 21 March 2024 to give precedence at 2.30 p.m. to a general business motion, notice of which was given by me earlier today, relating to the Tripoli Way bypass.

There has been a lot of debate in this Parliament about housing and housing growth, but there has not been much debate about the delivery of infrastructure. One such project is the Tripoli Way bypass in my electorate, which will alleviate significant congestion. To the former Government's credit, it was funded to the tune of \$20 million. Yesterday the member for Shellharbour moved a motion attacking councillors on the local council, who do not have the opportunity to speak for themselves in this place, rather than talking about the issue itself. I make it clear to members of the House that I am seeking to acknowledge that growth pressures are causing enormous traffic congestion in Albion Park, Tullimbar and Calderwood.

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

Mr GARETH WARD: The motion is commending Shellharbour City Council for getting on with the job of delivering the project, acknowledging the former Coalition Government's \$20 million contribution towards the project and calling on NSW Labor to commit to stage three of the Tripoli Way bypass project. If the Government genuinely believes in growth and infrastructure, it will support the suspension of standing and sessional orders so that the Parliament can debate the issue that was raised by the member for Shellharbour yesterday. The member has a great opportunity to support the motion if she wants to debate the issue.

If she votes against the suspension of standing and sessional orders, the member for Shellharbour and the Labor Party are saying that they do not care about Albion Park, Tullimbar or Calderwood. They are saying they do not care about the largest growth area in New South Wales outside of south-west Sydney and that they will walk away from debates about the delivery of infrastructure. Yesterday the member for Shellharbour said she wanted to debate the motion. I am giving you the opportunity. I am helping you. You just have to vote for the help I am trying to provide.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: The member for Kiama has repeatedly spoken across the Chamber to the member for Shellharbour. I ask that he direct his comments through the Chair.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. I was tempted to intercede myself. The member for Kiama has the call.

Mr GARETH WARD: I am seeking to assist my good friend the member for Shellharbour, who is bound for greater things. I have no doubt that she is bound for a ministry. Before she shuffles off to a ministry, I want to make sure that she can debate and state, for her community's benefit, the Labor Party's position on important local infrastructure that generates the opportunity for growth. The Minister talks about growth in the regions, but they do not talk about infrastructure in the regions. It is an opportunity, if the Labor Party wants it, for Labor to defend its position on this. This is the party that voted against the largest single investment in the history of the Illawarra, the Albion Park rail bypass. Those opposite voted against that infrastructure. If they have a plan, now that they are in government, we should talk about it. Let us see what their position is. Let us see if they will commit to stage three of the project. Most of the work was done for them prior to coming into government.

If those opposite believe in these projects, as they say they do, if they stand up for the Illawarra and for infrastructure, they will vote in favour of the motion. Let us have the debate. Let us use our time to talk about local infrastructure that would bust congestion in Albion Park. I make no apology for fighting for my electorate and putting the issues of my electorate first. The project is within a council area that I share with the member for Shellharbour. Let us see whether the member for Shellharbour has any pull to get her party to talk about the Illawarra or if those opposite just want to talk about Sydney.

This Government is quickly becoming very Sydney-centric, focused only on Labor electorates and not delivering infrastructure in the regions. The Tripoli Way bypass project is incredibly important to my electorate. A member in the other place issued a taxpayer-funded flyer saying that the funding was cut by the former Government, but the former Government helped deliver the project. If this Labor Government believes in its rhetoric, it will have the debate and not run away scared. Let us talk about the issues that matter and suspend standing and sessional orders in this House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:26): I have enjoyed the tension between the member for Shellharbour and the member for Kiama over the years. It always makes for some entertainment. I have never been able to work out whether or not there is any reality in that tension; nevertheless, I know that the member for Shellharbour always finishes on top.

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

Mr RON HOENIG: Ordinarily, although it is not usually the style of the member for Kiama, common courtesy dictates that a member seeking to suspend standing orders would consult with the Leader of the House to see whether or not that is convenient. The Leader of the House consults with the Manager of Opposition Business on these matters. Although it may not be apparent from the debate, that is the way that these matters are dealt with. I cannot indicate that I would have given the motion any positive consideration, so I do not use it as an excuse, but I am disappointed that the member for Kiama did not consult with me. In any event, I did not move that the question be put. I gave the member for Kiama his five minutes, but that is enough. The Government does not support what the member proposes. The member for Kiama cannot dictate the processes of this House or the general order of business or queue-jump other members of the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:28): In reply: I make it clear that any member of the House can seek to suspend standing orders. It has been done multiple times before. In fact, the Leader of the House does it virtually every day of the week. I am seeking to use the rules of Parliament to bring forward issues that I believe are important to my community. I could have given the Leader of the House six months notice and he still would have voted against it. It would not have mattered what I had done.

Ms Anna Watson: That's true.

Mr GARETH WARD: I'm glad you said that's true. To be clear, I do not think it would have mattered how much courtesy I had given. I am doing what any member of this House is entitled to do, which is to move a suspension to bring on a debate about infrastructure. One of the Government's own members raised it. Chances are that, like a lot of notices of motions, it will fall into the ether. I am seeking to use the time of the House to debate issues that are important to the people of the Illawarra and to allow the Government to put forward its position on the Tripoli Way bypass stage three and on future infrastructure projects in the Illawarra. The Illawarra often gets ignored, particularly because Government seats are so safe in the Illawarra that it simply ignores them. The Government now has an opportunity to focus on it.

Ms Anna Watson: Yours isn't.

Mr GARETH WARD: I just remind you that you were the only member on the Labor side who had a swing against you at the last election—a 40 per cent swing to the Independent over here.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kiama and the member for Shellharbour will cease debating across the table.

Mr GARETH WARD: Let's just see where the Labor Party goes on this issue. Will it put the interests of the Illawarra first? Does the member for Shellharbour have any pull? Does Labor want to hear from local communities like ours that are struggling with infrastructure congestion and that want to see investment, or is it just a pro-developer and pro-growth party? Labor is only interested in its white shoe brigade mates. If that is what the Government is about, it can keep on ticking off all of those development approvals with no real reform and without talking about infrastructure. It seems that this Government is repeating the mistakes of the former Government: no infrastructure, just more development approvals and ramming people into communities without any planning.

[Interruption]

If the Leader of the House wants to interject he has an opportunity to vote for the motion and have the debate tomorrow. I am happy to have the debate. He can yell and scream across the Chamber, but let's debate the substantive issues. Let's bring it on.

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

The House divided.

Ayes36
Noes53
Majority.....17

AYES

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

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

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

NOES

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
Greenwich, A

Hagarty, N (teller)
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Hoenig, R
Holland, M
Hornery, S
Kaliyanda, C
Kamper, S
Kirby, W
Leong, J
Li, J
McDermott, H
McGirr, J
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

Motion negatived.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

Snowy Mountains Highway

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to urgently assess the damaged section of the Snowy Mountains Highway from Talbingo to Inspiration Point for faults and substandard features, and conduct forthwith any repairs deemed necessary, received from **Dr Joe McGirr**.

*Bills***PROPERTY NSW AMENDMENT BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

Second Reading Speech

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:40): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Property NSW Act 2006 to clarify the functions of Property and Development NSW having regard to its role as the State's central property agency. In particular, the bill makes various miscellaneous amendments to the Property NSW Act to reflect the broad range of services provided by Property and Development NSW to the Government and government agencies; improve efficiencies in the operations of Property and Development NSW by clarifying the scope of its functions; and enable Property and Development NSW to better manage the Government's vast property portfolio.

The types of changes proposed by the bill are not controversial. The aim is to improve the operations of Property and Development NSW by reducing red tape and eliminating unnecessary delay in the delivery of services and the realisation of benefits to the Government and its agencies. The Government recognises the important work done by Property and Development NSW. To ensure that its work can continue, the bill amends the Property NSW Act to, among other things, clarify the functions of Property and Development NSW.

Property and Development NSW is a statutory corporation established under the Property NSW Act. The principal objectives of Property and Development NSW are to improve operational efficiencies in the use of property of government agencies, particularly generic properties such as offices, warehouses, depots and carparks; to manage properties of government agencies in a way that supports the service delivery functions of those agencies; to provide advice and support within government on property matters; and to operate at least as efficiently as any comparable business, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development and social responsibility for the community, including the Indigenous community.

Property and Development NSW is the State's central property agency and regularly acquires, holds, manages, maintains, repurposes and disposes of property for the Government and government agencies. It also carries out, manages, coordinates and participates in the development of the property of government agencies, and arranges for the sharing of facilities and premises by government agencies. Its work is, therefore, vital to the Government and its agencies. The Government recognises this important work. I also acknowledge the great work of Leon Walker, the deputy secretary leading Property and Development NSW.

In light of the many responsibilities of Property and Development NSW, the bill proposes various changes to the Act to improve the operational performance of Property and Development NSW. Those changes include simplifying the vesting process—that is, the process by which property is transferred to Property and Development NSW; clarifying the status of land subject to a lease under the Crown Land Management Act 2016 on the vesting of property in Property and Development NSW; reducing the administrative burden associated with the valuation of land by providing that a valuation of the current market value of land must be prepared in accordance with any direction from the Treasurer and with any applicable policy of the Secretary of the Treasury of New South Wales; and providing Property and Development NSW with the power to establish "wholly owned subsidiary corporations" if the need is identified.

The bill also amends the Act to provide Property and Development NSW with the following functions: to acquire property and to carry out development, including development that is environmentally sustainable and

applies innovative environmental building and public domain design; to acquire, hold and manage contaminated land for various purposes, including the remediation of that land; to design workplaces for use by the Government or government agencies, including the fit-out of the workplaces; to acquire land by agreement or by compulsory acquisition in accordance with the Land Acquisition (Just Terms) Compensation Act 1991; to develop, hold and manage information technology relating to land use analysis or the management, maintenance or improvement of land, including ensuring the benefits of that technology is available for use by government agencies and the people of New South Wales; and to enter into agreements with government agencies or other persons, in relation to property vested in or otherwise held or managed by Property and Development NSW.

These changes give Property and Development NSW the tools it needs to continue to provide services to the Government and its agencies, now and into the future. More importantly, these changes respond to issues experienced by Property and Development NSW in the performance of its functions, particularly in relation to acquisition of land for specific purposes. It is appropriate to briefly identify those issues. One such example is the provision of services related to the remediation of contaminated land at the site of the former waste oil refinery operated by Truegain Pty Ltd. Truegain operated the waste oil refinery for several years. It later entered into liquidation and the site was effectively abandoned. The New South Wales Government was forced to step in to resolve, long term, the risk of contamination at the site creating health and environmental issues, requiring it to compulsorily acquire the land from its liquidated former owner who failed to remediate the land.

As the central property agency for the State, the burden to remediate the land fell upon Property and Development NSW in combination with several other government agencies. However, because Property and Development NSW did not have the power to compulsorily acquire land, it needed to rely upon other agencies to acquire the land before it could provide essential services for the remediation of that land. This resulted in unnecessary delays and additional costs, impacting the ability of the Government to remediate the land as quickly as possible. The bill remedies this issue by giving Property and Development NSW the power to acquire land, either by agreement or by compulsory acquisition in accordance with the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991, and therefore avoids the need for Property and Development NSW to rely on other New South Wales government agencies to acquire land before it is able to provide its services for the remediation or the use and development of that land. This will better enable the Government to respond in the future to issues such as those experienced at the site of the refinery, should they arise again.

A further example relates to the capacity of Property and Development NSW to lease its land to non-government entities. Under the Act, Property and Development NSW is permitted to enter into agreements with government agencies for various purposes, but its ability to enter into agreements with the private sector for the use of land vested in or managed by Property and Development NSW is limited. That reduces the ability for Property and Development NSW to lease vacant or underutilised space or lease to tenants required for the development and management of a successful precinct.

The bill rectifies that issue by allowing Property and Development NSW to enter into agreements with the private sector where it is appropriate to do so—for example, by allowing a third party to operate a cafe in a building owned by Property and Development NSW. Those are just some examples that highlight the importance of the reforms. The bill in its entirety is aimed at improving the capacity of Property and Development NSW to more effectively manage or otherwise deal with the Government's vast property portfolio, a task that I am sure we all agree requires the right tools in order to be performed efficiently and effectively.

I now turn to the specific provisions of the bill. Schedule 1 [1] changes the name of the Act from the Property NSW Act 2006 to the Property and Development NSW Act 2006. That change better reflects the role of Property and Development NSW and the fact that the Act authorises the corporation to carry out development in the appropriate circumstances. Schedule 1 [2] amends and inserts definitions for the purposes of the Act. Schedule 1 [10] and [18] make consequential amendments related to that change. Schedule 1 [3] to [6] make various amendments to change the legal name of the corporation from Property NSW to Property and Development NSW. The corporation currently operates under that name, so the change is intended to avoid confusion for stakeholders. Schedule 2 to the bill makes consequential amendments to update references to the corporation and name of the Act in other legislation.

Schedule 1 [7] makes a minor amendment to the definition of "authorised person". That change modernises the language of the provision and therefore avoids confusion with respect to the scope of the provision. Schedule 1 [9] provides that any function of Property and Development NSW may be exercised by a wholly owned subsidiary corporation. Schedule 1 [8] amends the heading to reflect that change. I will further explain the need for wholly owned subsidiaries later. Schedule 1 [11] provides that it is a primary objective of Property and Development NSW to promote development of property that accords with best practice environment and planning standards, is environmentally sustainable and applies innovative environmental building and public domain design.

Schedule 1 [12] to [15] specify the functions of Property and Development NSW as including: to design workplaces for use by the Government or government agencies; to develop, hold and manage information technology relating to land use analysis or the management, maintenance or improvement of land; to enter into agreements with government agencies and non-government entities in certain circumstances; to acquire property for development; and to acquire, hold and manage contaminated land, provide services and do other things in relation to contaminated land for certain purposes. Those amendments in particular are important because they provide Property and Development NSW with the flexibility it needs to deal with government and non-government parties, especially in relation to agreements for the use of land vested in, or otherwise held or managed by, the corporation.

The amendments are also important because they enable Property and Development NSW to share information technology that it has developed and maintains, such as the Land iQ system. Land iQ is a world-first data platform designed to improve the planning system by helping New South Wales government agencies make faster, smarter decisions about the use of land. It uses smart technology to speed up planning processes and help unlock more homes for people by identifying barriers and exploring opportunities to provide practical solutions to development issues across the State. The bill allows Property and Development NSW to make that service available to government agencies and other persons, thereby reducing duplication and costs relating to the consolidation of existing datasets and methodologies. The ability to share this information is aimed at improving planning outcomes across the State.

Schedule 1 [16] makes it clear that Property and Development NSW may compulsorily acquire land in accordance with the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991 for the purposes of Property and Development NSW's functions, and clarifies that a private subsidiary corporation, as opposed to a wholly owned subsidiary corporation, cannot compulsorily acquire land. The amendment will reduce the time and cost involved with the compulsory acquisition of land by eliminating the need for Property and Development NSW to rely on other agencies to acquire land on its behalf and then transfer that land to Property and Development NSW. It essentially removes red tape within government.

Schedule 1 [17] inserts new provisions to clarify the status of land subject to a lease under the Crown Land Management Act 2016 on the vesting of property in Property and Development NSW. The effect of those provisions is to make clear that a lease under the Crown Land Management Act 2016 over land that is to be vested in Property and Development NSW ceases to be a lease under that Act and instead becomes a lease between the lessee and Property and Development NSW on the same terms that existed before the transfer of the property to the corporation.

Importantly, although the lease ceases to be a lease under the Crown Land Management Act 2016, the same terms and any existing rights, including native title rights, will remain in place as they were immediately before the transfer of the property to the corporation. Schedule 1 [17] also allows Property and Development NSW to, with the approval of the Treasurer, establish wholly owned subsidiary corporations for specific purposes. The creation of such subsidiaries will allow for the separation of assets held by Property and Development NSW, such as properties held long-term for the New South Wales Government as part of the Government's workplace portfolio versus other assets held short-term for adaptive reuse, and support greater focus on the adaptive re-use projects and separate strategies and reporting.

Schedule 1 [21] simplifies the vesting process under the Act to allow the Minister for Lands and Property, by order published in the *Government Gazette*, to transfer property specified in the order to Property and Development NSW. Schedule 1 [20] to [23] and [28] make consequential amendments related to that provision. The amendment provides that, as is currently required, the Minister needs to approve any transfer, and removes the requirement for a separate approval from the Governor. The amendment is aimed at reducing the administration for what is practically an internal government process.

Schedule 1 [26] provides that Property and Development NSW may ask the Valuer General to provide advice on the details in the land register under the Act or conduct a land valuation and provide the valuation to Property and Development NSW. That item also provides for the process that Property and Development NSW must follow to request such a valuation. Schedule 1 [27] makes consequential amendments. The change will ensure consistency in relation to land valuations and ensure that Property and Development NSW can fulfil its obligations to maintain the government land register.

As I have already mentioned, these changes will enable Property and Development NSW to better manage the Government's vast property portfolio, including the workspace portion of that portfolio, which has a rent roll of approximately \$611 million per annum. They are designed to improve operational efficiencies and reduce costs related to the administration of the Government's property portfolio. The bill does not in any way undermine the important work of Property and Development NSW; rather, it provides the corporation with the tools it needs to better carry out that work. The bill demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to improving processes

and removing red tape in the administration of property owned or managed by Property and Development NSW. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Committees

MODERN SLAVERY COMMITTEE

Reports

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (13:00): As Chair: Modern slavery is an ongoing issue in New South Wales and Australia. The extent of it is significant. The Modern Slavery Committee was particularly concerned to learn that an estimated 80 per cent to 98 per cent of victims-survivors remain unidentified out of a possible 16,400 cases each year in New South Wales. The Modern Slavery Act 2018 is therefore an important piece of legislation that was enacted to address the issue of modern slavery by requiring New South Wales government agencies, local councils and State-owned corporations to report on how they are addressing modern slavery risks in their supply chains and providing for the establishment of the New South Wales Anti-slavery Commissioner, which is the first such position in any Australian jurisdiction. The Act also creates modern slavery offences.

The *Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018* examined whether the Act is adequately addressing modern slavery risks and whether the commissioner is effectively equipped to do so. While the committee strongly supports the Act and its objectives, it is clear from the evidence the committee received that there are areas where the Act can be strengthened, particularly in relation to the detection and exposure of modern slavery, compliance and enforcement, support for victim-survivors and the role of the commissioner. However, a central theme that emerged in the review was the importance of centring the expertise of people with lived experience in the response to modern slavery. Accordingly, the committee considers it is vital to receive input from people with lived experience expertise before making further recommendations about how to improve the Act.

The committee had limited time available to conduct this consultation. It was required by the terms of the original Act to complete the review by the end of 2023. We did complete the review by the end of 2023 as required by the Act. However, as I have pointed out, it was felt that the review that we undertook did not take into account sufficiently the input from people with lived experience expertise, and the committee formed the view that that was central to appropriately reviewing the Act and indeed to moving forward. The committee will continue to review the Act in 2024, specifically seeking evidence from people with lived experience expertise of modern slavery, and of course the committee will also consider the evidence already received in this review.

The Anti-slavery Commissioner has been very active in this space. I note a recent publication entitled *Guidance on Reasonable Steps* regarding the management of modern slavery risks in operations and supply chains, upcoming webinars and annual forums on modern slavery. There is no doubt that the Anti-slavery Commissioner is acting to widen recognition of this problem in New South Wales and that New South Wales is indeed leading the way for Australia. We can see that in the evidence from the Federal Government's review. It is an important area and our committee will continue to review the Act and its suitability. Importantly, the committee will gain benefit from the lived experience expertise from those who have experienced modern slavery.

In conclusion, I note there are many stakeholders across the Government and non-government sectors, including the Anti-slavery Commissioner, who are committed to addressing and preventing modern slavery. The committee wishes to acknowledge the work of all those stakeholders and appreciates the time they took to inform us of their work and their recommendations about how the Act can be improved. I sincerely thank the inquiry's participants, whose evidence will be valuable during the committee's continued review of the Act. I have commented already on the work of the Anti-slavery Commissioner. To be honest, I view his role as being a leadership role for Australia, not just for New South Wales.

I thank members of the committee for their contributions throughout the review and their commitment to addressing modern slavery in New South Wales. I understand this is the only jurisdiction in the world—certainly in the Commonwealth—that has a committee addressing this issue, so there is a great responsibility on the committee in its functions and in demonstrating how it can be effective. I believe the committee members have genuinely engaged to demonstrate that. In particular, I thank the deputy chair, the member for Newtown. She has been a very active and strong contributor to the work of the committee, not just in the preparation and at meetings but in the interim in terms of providing advice around the conduct of the review and working with me and the Anti-slavery Commissioner. I acknowledge the role of the member for Newtown in that regard and thank her for her support and input. Finally, I thank the secretariat and the Hansard staff for their professional support.

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (13:06): I participate in debate to comment on the tabled report of the Modern Slavery Committee entitled *Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018*. In 2018, New South Wales adopted some of the most advanced anti-slavery legislation in the world. At the heart of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 and the subsequent Modern Slavery Amendment Act 2021 is a commitment to anti-slavery in public procurement. The purpose of this inquiry was to review and determine whether the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and whether the terms of the Act remain appropriate for securing the objectives. For the benefit of the House, I will address what members may have been wondering about: how, given the purpose of the inquiry, we ended up with a report with limited recommendations.

Our committee recognises that it is crucial to hear from people with lived experience of modern slavery when creating or reviewing modern slavery legislation for several reasons. The first reason is for insight and perspective. Individuals who have directly experienced modern slavery possess immense, unique insights and perspectives that cannot be gained from other sources. Their firsthand accounts provide invaluable knowledge about the realities of exploitation, the tactics used by traffickers and exploiters, and the vulnerabilities that make individuals susceptible to exploitation. The second reason is for understanding impact. Hearing from survivors of modern slavery helps lawmakers and policymakers to understand the profound and lasting impact that exploitation can have on individuals and communities. It is only by listening to survivors' stories that we, as policymakers, can gain a deeper appreciation of the human cost of modern slavery and what effective legislative measures to combat it entail.

The third reason is to inform policy solutions. Survivors of modern slavery can offer valuable input and feedback on proposed legislative measures, highlighting what has worked well, what needs improvement and where there are gaps in existing laws and policies. Their firsthand experiences can inform the development of more effective and survivor-centred approaches to prevention, protection and prosecution. The fourth reason is to ensure accountability. The involvement of survivors in the legislative process helps to hold lawmakers and governments accountable for their commitments to combat modern slavery. By actively engaging with survivors and incorporating their input into legislative initiatives, policymakers demonstrate a genuine commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of those affected by exploitation.

The fifth reason is empowerment and participation. Providing survivors with a platform to share their experiences and perspectives empowers them to become agents of change in the fight against modern slavery. It allows survivors to reclaim their voices, advocate for their rights and contribute to shaping policies and practices that affect their lives and the lives of others. The last reason is to build trust and collaboration. By actively involving survivors in the legislative process, policymakers can build trust and collaboration with affected communities and stakeholders. Listening to survivors' voices fosters a sense of inclusion, respect and partnership, strengthening the overall response to modern slavery and enhancing the effectiveness of legislative efforts.

In summary, we cannot turn a blind eye to this injustice. We cannot pretend that it does not exist within our communities. Hearing from people with lived experience of modern slavery is essential for developing comprehensive, survivor-centred legislation that effectively addresses the complexities of exploitation and upholds the rights and dignity of survivors. Their voices must be heard, respected and prioritised in the legislative process to ensure that policies and practices reflect the realities of those most affected by modern slavery.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (13:10): As the deputy chair of the Modern Slavery Committee, I contribute to this take-note debate on the report entitled *Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018*. I acknowledge the Chair's and committee members' comments about the inquiry. The report made perhaps the least number of recommendations and findings imaginable. That indicates to me just how powerful the inquiry process was. During the inquiry, we heard clearly about the need to ensure that people with lived experience and survivors of modern slavery were involved and able to contribute to the review of the Act.

The clear finding of the report was that the committee needs to involve people with lived experience and expertise in its review of the Act before making further recommendations. The committee recommended that the review continue by specifically seeking evidence from people with lived experience. The finding and the recommendation indicate a willingness within the committee and a huge shift in how we approach our work on modern slavery: by recognising the leadership, expertise and role of people with lived experience, rather than following a model that seeks to have saviours coming from outside to help people without actually empowering them to drive the change they believe New South Wales needs to help those facing modern slavery.

In New South Wales only about 120 to 230 cases out of a possible 16,000-plus cases are reported each year. In addition to that, 80 to 90 per cent of victim-survivors in New South Wales may remain unidentified and unsupported. We heard serious concerns about many survivors also having complex histories of abuse, trauma, domestic and family violence, homelessness, financial insecurity, migration and visa issues. These are drivers to people finding themselves in modern slavery. From the submissions received and evidence heard throughout the inquiry, it is clear that the establishment of the Anti-slavery Commissioner and requirements on State-owned

corporations were having a powerful impact. It is clear from the Anti-slavery Commissioner's work that the issue has huge engagement, advocacy and connection locally and at State, national and global levels. But there is still more work to be done.

The Chair of the committee and I attended a workshop in Kenya on modern slavery supply chains, organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I acknowledge particularly the survivors from the Azadi resource centre, which was founded by survivor-leader and CEO of the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery Sophie Otiende, who participated in those discussions. Their participation indicates clearly the global drive to reshape the narrative so that survivor-leaders are driving the change and demonstrating what needs to be done by us legislators and by those providing support. I acknowledge people's incredible contributions to the inquiry and reassure them that all of those contributions were captured and will form part of the next stage of the process, as we engage with people with lived experience to develop legislation in New South Wales to do all that we can to protect people's rights and strengthen the Modern Slavery Act 2018.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:15): As Chair: It is with great pleasure to take note of *Legislation Review Digest No. 11/58*, which the committee tabled yesterday. The committee examined eight bills introduced during the last sitting week. It also reviewed three regulations and statutory instruments, which it did not comment on. Those instruments are listed in part 3 of the digest. As members are aware, the committee has the important role of reviewing all bills introduced and all statutory instruments tabled in Parliament. The committee's scrutiny of legislation informs members of both Houses and the community about the potential impact of legislation on personal rights and liberties and any potential inappropriate exercise of government or legislative power.

I now draw members' attention to some of the key issues raised in the digest. The Bail and Crimes Amendment Bill 2024 will amend the Bail Act 2013 to temporarily change the test for granting bail to young people by inserting new section 22C into the Act. The provision would affect young people aged between 14 and 18 and was described by the Attorney General in his second reading speech as establishing an additional threshold for young people who are charged with relevant offences they are alleged to have committed while on bail for another relevant offence. The relevant offences include motor theft offences and serious breaking and entering offences. For relevant young people, a bail authority could grant them bail only if it had a high degree of confidence that the accused would not commit a serious indictable offence while released on bail, subject to any proposed conditions.

The committee commented that the amendment would extend the circumstances where an accused young person might be denied bail based on a discretionary threshold, which would lie with the bail authority. The committee noted that the amendment may, therefore, impact a young person's right to the presumption of innocence, as well as their right to liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention where they are denied bail because the bail authority did not have the requisite high degree of confidence. While the committee acknowledged the temporary nature of the amendment, with a 12-month expiration period, it has referred this matter to Parliament for consideration.

The committee also reported on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, which would create a new Act to ban conversion practices—that is, practices that are intended to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill also establishes a civil complaints scheme, which would provide for an avenue and process for the victims of conversion practices to make a complaint. The committee considered the new criminal offence for providing or delivering a conversion practice to an individual, which would be established by the bill. To be convicted of that offence, the conversion practice must have caused mental or physical harm to an individual that either endangers that person's life or was substantial.

The committee commented that this harm element of the offence is widely defined and noted that the bill did not appear to have any provision that would define or narrow what might amount to substantial harm. As a result, the committee considered that this widely defined harm element may make it difficult for someone to understand the scope of the offence. The committee acknowledged that the provisions are intended to protect the rights of LGBTQIA+ people and to protect them from discrimination. However, given some of the elements of the bill that it considered, the committee has referred the matter to Parliament for its consideration.

The committee reported also on the three private members' bills introduced last week: the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024, the Independent Commission Against Corruption

Amendment (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill 2024 and the Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2024. In reviewing the bills, the committee noted that their provisions were similar in substance to the 2023 iterations of the same bills that were commented on in the 2023 digests. I encourage all members to read the Legislation Review Committee's eleventh digest, which is available on the committee's webpage. I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions to the digest and the secretariat for their ongoing support. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:19): I update the House on the ongoing work of the Legislation Review Committee and on the digest that has been tabled entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 11/58*. As always, I thank the chair for her leadership of the committee and the secretariat, which amazes me. Despite the number of bills that are brought before the House, the secretariat can provide really in-depth legal advice for our consideration with a short lead time, so I give all credit to that team. It would scare me if it was left to the likes of me or even the member for Cessnock to give legal advice on the bills brought to this House. The committee is very thankful to the secretariat.

Eight bills and six sets of regulations were brought for consideration in the current period. The Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2024 was identified as having no issues on review. The other seven bills were identified as having some issues, but two of those bills were assessed as unlikely to have any practical issues that engaged with sections 8A or 9 of the Legislation Review Act. They were the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024 and the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill 2024. The committee makes no further comment, and nor does the Opposition, on those.

The five remaining bills raised some potential issues. The first was the Bail and Crimes Amendment Bill 2024, which raised issues regarding the right to the presumption of innocence, liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention, and the requirement for granting bail. It raised an issue regarding disciplinary actions without convictions and the elements of an offence for a performance crime. The committee noted:

... it is unclear from section 154K proposed by the bill whether an accused person can be convicted of the performance crime offence without the need to establish the fault element of the base offence, or whether a person must merely commit an act or omission of "motor theft" or "break and enter" regardless of whether there was intent or fraud.

Issues were also raised regarding the extraterritorial application and the retrospectivity of the laws in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment Bill 2024. With respect to the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 an issue was raised regarding the widely defined harm element of the offence. The committee noted:

... that there does not appear to be any provisions in the bill which would define or narrow what may constitute "substantial" physical or mental harm. Therefore, the bill may create an offence that includes a widely defined element of harm that could capture a broad range of potential physical and mental harms.

Some other issues were raised regarding the wide investigative powers of the president of the Anti-Discrimination Board. Finally, there were also some access to voting and right to participation in public elections issues raised under the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2024. I encourage members to read the digest and thank everyone involved in its production.

Report noted.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): Pursuant to the resolution of the House of 19 March 2024, we will now proceed with the moving of a condolence motion for the Hon. Brian Langton, former member for Kogarah.

Condolences

THE HON. BRIAN JOSEPH LANGTON, FORMER MEMBER FOR KOGARAH AND MINISTER OF THE CROWN

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): I welcome to the gallery family and friends of the former member for Kogarah Mr Brian Langton. I give a special welcome to Elizabeth Langton, Brian's wife; Davina Langton, Adele Langton and Celia Langton, his children; and Celia's husband, Elliott Hamann. I also welcome Luca Murray and Remy Murray, Mr Langton's grandchildren. I also welcome former Minister and member for Mount Druitt Richard Amery, former Government Whip and member for Rockdale George Thompson, former Deputy Government Whip and member for East Hills Alan Ashton, and former member for Kogarah Cherie Burton. I also welcome to the gallery a guest of the member for Mount Druitt, Cheryl Samuels.

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (14:34): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Extends its deepest sympathies to the friends and family of Mr Brian Joseph Langton, who passed away on 17 October 2023.
- (2) Acknowledges Mr Langton's years of service, including as:
 - (a) the member for Kogarah from 1983 to 1999; and
 - (b) Minister for Transport and Tourism, and Minister for Fair Trading and Minister for Emergency Services.
- (3) Recognises his significant contribution to the State of New South Wales over many decades.

Brian was a man of lifelong public service, as the Minister for Transport in the Carr Government, as the member for Kogarah for 16 years and as the mayor of Kogarah before that. To those of us who knew him, Brian was a generous friend, a mentor, a volunteer in the community, a man of energy, a man of action and, through it all, a warm and loving family man. The Parliament offers its deepest condolence to his friends and his family who are in the gallery today, and particularly to Elizabeth and to Brian's three daughters, Davina, Adele and Celia.

It was said at Brian's funeral that he was one of those rare people for whom contributing to his community was as natural as breathing. Rare as it might be, that mentality of service was always there from Brian's youngest days. After leaving school he joined the St Vincent de Paul Society, and before long he was serving as the president of its jail visitation program. That meant that every weekend Brian would get into the car and, instead of going to the beach or to the movies, he would drive to one of the State's prisons. Members will know that the prisons are often in regional communities in far-flung corners of the State. Brian offered company to the lonely and listened to the inmates. He helped family members survive on the outside. Later, he would make those extraordinary visits with Elizabeth, his future wife—which seems like a bit of a crummy first date, to be honest! Brian adored Elizabeth and they enjoyed a long, supportive and happy marriage for almost 50 years.

At the end of the day, Brian believed in social justice. That conviction carried him into politics, where he ran for Kogarah council as a 23-year-old. At the time the sitting member for Kogarah was Bill Crabtree, who had held the seat for almost three decades. Bill was a smart man, smart enough to know that Brian was a real threat—so much so that he decided to appoint his wife as the chair of the Kogarah electorate credentials committee. She is a neighbour of mine. What followed was a series of strange bureaucratic coincidences, in the finest traditions of the Labor Party. Applications were lost in the mail and signatures were struck down on arcane technicalities, with the result of blocking Brian's membership to our great party for a long time.

Luckily, Brian Langton was a determined man, and after three years his membership of the local branch was finally approved. Very soon after that, he was preselected as the candidate for Kogarah. He was then elected to Parliament on 22 October 1983, which was an auspicious day for the Labor Party because four by-elections were held on that day. Brian, Richard Amery—who is in the gallery today—Andrew Refshauge and Bob Carr were all elected on the 22nd. All four became Ministers in a future Labor Government, and all four left a lasting legacy in the State of New South Wales.

Brian brought many gifts to public life. He had a quick and versatile mind, a way with words and a knowledge of the business world, all backed up by immense energy and an enormous work ethic. To rise to those positions, particularly from Opposition, you need to work hard. It made him an extremely effective member of the Parliament. In opposition, Brian campaigned on behalf of rail workers who had been laid off by the Greiner Government. In a newspaper column at the time, Coalition Ministers anonymously nominated the one member of the Opposition frontbench they would like to poach for their own team, and the answer was Brian Langton.

After Labor's victory in 1995, Brian joined the Cabinet as the Minister for Transport and Minister for Tourism. He was very proud of the work that he accomplished in this place, particularly in expanding access for people with disabilities to the State's public transport system. He was instrumental in growing the fleet of wheelchair-accessible buses in the State, and he took enormous satisfaction, quite justifiably, in correspondence he received on those reforms.

One letter was from a man named Kevin Byrne. Kevin lost the use of his legs as a teenager, and he contacted his local member one day to say, "Brian, I just got public transport to work for the first in my life." He was 16 years old. He went on to say, "It was only you who did it—accessible buses, accessible bus stops and an accessible railway station here at Kogarah." Friends, at the end of the day, that is what public life is all about—getting a letter from an individual like Kevin and knowing that you made a difference in this Parliament and in your community. As Brian said from this lectern in his last speech in Parliament, he was in politics to represent:

... the poor, the sick, the needy, the downtrodden, and those who are - for whatever reason - unable to fend for themselves, and embracing those who can contribute.

Brian was one of those contributors in our community over many decades, in both a public and a private capacity. He fought for a new cardiac ward at St George Hospital, and that unit continues to save lives today. He volunteered at the St George School, the St George AFL club, Calvary Hospital and the St George cancer centre. He gave his time to Lifeline and the Wayside Chapel. When I was preselected to run for Kogarah, I was aware of the kind of footsteps that I would be walking in—people who had not just been selected as MPs or Ministers but had become pillars of our community. I also came to learn, over time, that many of them were still around and active in Labor Party politics. Like many of the people I have come through politics with, such as Ryan and Jo and many others, I have been lucky enough to learn and receive support and advice over that journey from people like Brian Langton and Richard Amery—and Brian's daughter Davina and Brian's successor as the member for Kogarah, Cherie Burton.

Brian was a character. He was fantastic company. He was fun to be around, and he was extremely funny. Once, Bob Carr—a famously healthy man, for those who do not know, and devoted to his steel-cut oats—told his transport Minister that a sensible man should be having some fruit for breakfast. Brian replied that he did: He just knocked off a Cherry Ripe. He was irreverent, but it was underscored by an essential good nature. He was passionate. He cared about other people. He will be missed by the Labor Party and by this State, and his family has lost a beloved father and grandfather.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:40): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Opposition to pay tribute to the former member for Kogarah, Brian Joseph Langton. The St George area has a tight-knit community. Anyone who has had the honour of representing the area in local, State or Federal politics knows this. My first interaction with Brian was as a young chap when I joined the Young Liberals in 1994. In the lead-up to the 1995 State election I would volunteer after school each afternoon for the Liberal candidate for Kogarah, Margaret Dombkins. I understand that she actually joined the Labor Party at a later stage.

Mr Nathan Hagarty: There is still time.

Mr MARK COURE: There is still time for me, I am told. That clearly demonstrated Brian's persuasive abilities. Perhaps I should take a leaf out of his book and recruit some of my Labor opponents to the Liberal Party. It was during that formative period of my teenage years that I first witnessed Brian's dedication and passion to public service and the community he cherished so dearly. Brian's long career in politics spanned many aspects of our political system. He was first elected as an alderman to Kogarah council and later served as mayor from 1979 to 1980.

As the Premier mentioned, Brian went on to represent the good people of Kogarah in this place from 1983 to 1999, marking the start of what was to become an extraordinary 16-year political career. Brian became a Minister when Labor came to power in 1995, serving at various times as the Minister for Transport—in fact, he took the train to Parliament—Minister for Tourism, Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Emergency Services. From his early days as a young alderman on Kogarah council to his tenure in this place, Brian's passion for public service never wavered. He approached every role and every enormous responsibility with compassion, gusto and an unwavering dedication to the people he represented.

Beyond his political career, Brian's dedication to community service knew no bounds. He continued to give back to the community long after leaving office, volunteering his time and talents to organisations such as the Wayside Chapel, Lifeline, Meals on Wheels and St Vincent de Paul. His selfless devotion to helping those in need was a true reflection of his compassionate spirit and generous heart. He was also a champion of the St George Hospital Cancer Care Centre, assisting numerous times in fundraising to support those in need. Brian never failed to stand up for those in their time of need, always ensuring that he had the backs of those who needed his help most. In addition to his contributions to the community, Brian was also deeply involved in the world of sports, particularly AFL. For two decades he served on the New South Wales AFL judiciary, and he was a proud president of the St George Australian Football Club. Members of that club still speak highly of his wonderful contributions. His love for the game was matched only by his passion for his community, and his presence will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Brian's journey was truly one of service and dedication, marked by a steadfast commitment to making a difference in the lives of others. Even in his last years, I personally continued to witness this dedicated and talented spirit as every month I would sit next to him at our local council traffic committee meetings. Brian, as the Premier's local representative on that committee, would demonstrate his local knowledge by strongly pointing out why the council's plans were just not going to work, sending them back to the drawing board and keeping them on their toes. There was a wonderful partnership between the two of us on the local traffic committee for just over 12 months. I would approve anything he wanted, and of course he would approve anything that I wanted. It was a great combination.

Throughout his more than 28 years of public service, Brian was a fierce advocate for his constituents, fighting tirelessly to champion their interests and concerns. Whether it was lobbying the former Premier Neville Wran to fund the cardiac unit at St George Hospital, which is still running today—and his campaign to save that cardiac unit is still talked about, mentioned only recently by Professor Horton, who assisted in that campaign—or whether it was alongside Phil Bates, initiating the annual cycling promotion at Carlton, Brian's dedication to the St George area never wavered. His legacy of public service will endure for generations to come, a testament to his unwavering commitment to the betterment of our community. On behalf of the Opposition, I extend my deepest condolences to Brian's beloved wife of 47 years, Elizabeth, his daughters, and the entire Langton family. May he rest in peace, and may his life of dedication, passion and commitment be remembered for many more years to come. I will miss Brian at the local traffic committee.

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (14:46): I also express my condolences to the family of the late Brian Langton, the former member for Kogarah and former Minister for Transport. I offer those condolences to his wife, Elizabeth, his daughters, Davina, Adele and Celia, and his seven grandchildren. Brian was a man who brought good cheer to this place over many years—not a tribute that can be paid to many, I fear. As we have heard, he was held in very high regard by the Premier and the other former member for Kogarah, well known to many of us here, Cherie Burton. He was known to many members of this place, past and present, and made lasting friendships across the aisle. That was reflected in enormous attendance at his funeral. Many former Ministers and Premiers of broad political persuasions were in attendance.

Brian was larger than life. Those who served with him remember a man who was generous to others and always thoughtful to those who sought his advice and assistance in this place. While speaking to people in preparation for this motion, I discovered that Brian was well known for entertaining colleagues in the caucus room during late parliamentary sittings. He would play his guitar and sing hits from the '60s. I cannot imagine that happening now. I was told country and western rated highly, but he had quite a repertoire. To the delight of many, his voice and booming laughter would echo around the Parliament.

He was always generous with his advice to young and inexperienced backbenchers. I know how meaningful that would have been to many new MPs. I was also told that his quick wit was never really personal. He was king of the interjection, but it was always used to disarm, and he elicited a smile from many an Opposition member. His service to the people of Kogarah was exemplary, as the Premier said. He served in that role for over 15 years, which is quite a contribution. I am sure others will also recall that he had a long and positive involvement in public transport as shadow Minister and then Minister. He was instrumental in a campaign to remove tolls from roads around New South Wales. That may seem familiar to members of this place. In particular, the M5 cashback scheme, which was particularly important to the people of Kogarah, was championed and achieved by Brian Langton. He initiated the purchase of wheelchair-assisted buses and ensured that many a transport project included local manufacturing. Some things stay the same.

After he left Parliament, he served as an independent board member of BusNSW from 2005 to 2012 and also in the role of chair. The private bus industry in New South Wales was not always a friend of the government. As always, Brian opened up avenues of communication that achieved better outcomes for the people of this State and the bus industry. He was masterful in bringing differing parties together. In 2008 the transport Minister, John Watkins, appointed Brian Langton to the position of chair of Sydney Ferries. I am told it was a position he relished, constantly riding ferries and getting to know staff. Whilst in that role, patronage grew, safety improved, reliability and customer satisfaction increased, operating costs reduced, and staff voted in favour of a groundbreaking single maritime agreement. Importantly, the improvements led then Premier Kristina Keneally to reject an independent inquiry recommending the privatisation of Sydney Ferries. Even now, the then Minister boasts that Brian undertook the role with enthusiasm and great intelligence.

His extensive involvement in his local community was an extension of his gregarious nature, as was his involvement in politics and the great Labor family. He offered support and advice to many an up-and-comer in his local community. He served as president of St George Australian Football Club, was involved in St George Hospital and volunteered at the St George School—a beautiful school for specific purpose in the Kogarah area. The school is for students with intellectual, physical and multiple disabilities. It is a big contribution to make. It is hard to imagine that a personality as big as Brian's is gone. His beliefs, and mine, assure me that Brian continues to look out for his beautiful family. Hopefully, the memories of this incredible man will be ever remembered in the intelligence, thoughtfulness and legacy of public service that now rests with his three daughters and his beautiful grandchildren. I offer my deepest condolences to Elizabeth and the entire Langton family. Vale, Brian Langton.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:52): I speak about the Hon. Brian Langton. First, I offer my wholehearted condolences to Elizabeth and her family. I met Brian a number of years ago. To set the scene, I was

a manager at the Georges River Sailing Club. I started working there in 1976 and had the pleasure of knowing the Hon. Billy Crabtree and his wife, Alice. Until the Premier's contribution, I was unaware about the issues that were occurring behind the scenes. Brian used to appear at the Georges River Sailing Club on a regular basis, and we had good rapport with one another. I always remember Brian as a bit of a larrikin; his smile and quick wit would break me up.

I lost track of Brian after I left the sailing club and went to the Revesby Workers' Club. I then ended up as the chairman of the local tourism board in Tweed Heads and, lo and behold, my good friend Brian Langton was the tourism Minister, so he visited several times. He once visited for the North Coast regional tourism awards, and I was in awe that somebody I knew was a Minister of the Crown. I was fairly young in those days. We were waiting for the awards announcements. Unfortunately, Brian and I had a bad habit in those days. He came sliding up to me and said, "Where can we go for a smoke?" I said, "Minister, I just had one near the fire escape around the back where no-one can see you." He said, "Good. We will go there." Right at that moment somebody from Tourism NSW, as it was known at the time, said, "Minister, you need to start the awards right away." He said, "Madam, leave me alone. I am talking to somebody of importance. We shall be ready when we are ready." As we walked out, he said to me, "Did you like that?" I said, "Minister, that is pretty cool. I liked that."

I tell a funny story about Brian. When I was a duty manager at Revesby Workers' Club, we had a fundraiser evening for the local Labor Party. There were lots of prizes and we did everything right. Brian and a few others came up to me and said, "Mr Provost, you should buy some tickets." Back in those days we did not have ATMs, so there was nowhere to get money out. A middy was 35¢ and a schooner was 45¢, so we did not need a great deal. I said, "Brian, I have only got a few dollars." I had to run into the safe and write an IOU for \$25, which was a fair whack. I bought the tickets and won a \$2,000 painting, which is still hanging in my house today. Thank you, Brian. I really appreciate it.

In later years I used to run into him around the corridors of Parliament House and we would talk about the old times. My father was the deputy principal at Carlton South Public School, which is across the road from St George Leagues Club, so I have a real bond with the area. Brian always showed me a great deal of respect. In many regards, even though we did not have a great deal of time together, he was sort of like an older brother to me. He kept saying to me, "You should join the Labor Party. You would be good at this." We used to laugh about it when he came to Parliament and I saw him at members' functions. Elizabeth and her family have experienced an enormous joy by knowing Brian. I know that today is a sad day. We look back and reflect, but we also need to look at the joy that he brought us. In the short time that I knew him, he brought me a great deal of joy and laughter. I wish I had his wit. On behalf of my electorate, I thank Brian Langton and offer my condolences to Brian's family.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (14:56): On behalf of the Parliament of New South Wales, I acknowledge the life and service of the Hon. Brian Langton, who passed away in October last year. I extend my heartfelt sympathies to Brian's wife, Elizabeth, his three children and his seven grandchildren during this difficult time. For more than 27 years, Brian diligently and fiercely represented the Kogarah community. He served as a staunch advocate for the people of Kogarah at both local and State Government levels. Born in Maroubra, his family moved to Carlton when Brian was five years old. He was educated at Marist College Kogarah, the same school as the Premier. He was a lifelong resident of the area and was steadfast in improving the lives of his constituents.

Brian joined the Labor Party at the age of 15. During his time in this place, Brian was a devoted Labor member and an important figure in the Carr Government. Like me and many other members of this place, Brian's political career had its origins in local government. Following in the footsteps of his father, Joseph, Brian was elected as an alderman of the former Kogarah municipal council in 1973 at the age of 23. He served on council for 12 years, including one term as mayor, until he left council in 1983 to run for State Parliament. His involvement in local government also extended to membership of the executive of the Local Government Association from 1981 to 1982.

Serving in local government provides a strong foundation for anybody entering this place. As the closest tier of government to the people of the State, being on council enriches one's perspective with a deep insight about the issues at the heart of the community. Whilst on council, Brian worked tirelessly to address those issues and enhance the lives of those within his local community of Kogarah. His tenacity carried into this place when he was elected as the member for Kogarah in 1983 at a by-election, and that marked the start of a 15-year parliamentary career.

In the early days Brian served as chair of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Safety. He was a member of several caucus subcommittees, including corrective services, police and emergency services, public works, ports and roads, sport and recreation, tourism, finance, employment, planning and environment. While Labor was in opposition, Brian served as shadow Minister for Transport for six years. When Labor came to government in 1995, he was appointed Minister for Transport and Minister for Tourism. Reflecting on his time

leading the Transport portfolio, Brian was particularly proud of the increase in patronage on public transport and putting the issue of accessible public transport on the nation's agenda.

He worked hard to ensure members of the community with a disability were not excluded from public transport, campaigning for accessible buses, bus stops and train stations. He recounted conversations with constituents telling him that they were able to catch public transport for the first time since they were children because of the accessibility improvements that had been made under his watch. Brian later also served as Minister for Fair Trading and Minister for Emergency Services. He was a fierce champion of Labor values and always stood up to fight for people who could not stand up for themselves. In his final speech to this House, he reflected:

Being a Labor member was and is knowing that the party is the only one capable of representing the poor, the sick, the needy, the downtrodden, and those who are - for whatever reason - unable to fend for themselves, and embracing those who can contribute.

Beyond the political arena, Brian was well known for being an active volunteer and philanthropist in the local community. He selflessly dedicated his life, both while in his place and when he left Parliament, to give back over the years. He volunteered to local organisations including the Wesley Mission, Wayside Chapel, Lifeline, St Vincent de Paul Society and Meals on Wheels. He also contributed to the board of St George Hospital, St George School for children with disabilities and the St George Cancer Care Centre.

Brian was renowned for his love of aerial ping-pong—or Aussie Rules, as some call it—and his passionate involvement with Kogarah's Australian Rules football community. He served as President of the St George Australian Football Club and was an important part of the AFL Sydney Tribunal for more than 15 years, many of those years as chair. Brian played a pivotal role in setting up the inaugural AFL NSW/ACT Tribunal and was chair from its inception in 2020 until he stepped down in 2023. Shortly before his passing, Brian was given an AFL Sydney life membership, which made him one of less than 60 people to hold that honour.

I will tell the House a couple of stories of interactions that I had with Brian that well reflect him, the latter of which had a profound effect on me. The first was on election night in 1987. Brian, Elizabeth, Christine and I went to the Rockdale Mayoral Charity Ball. There we were in our dinner suits, participating in those mayoral charity balls that used to be quite frequently held in our constituencies. Word went out that the member for Barton, Gary Punch, was having an almost apoplectic reaction as the votes were being tallied and reported by scrutineers. Brian and I decided that we had better go to the Barton electorate office to see how we could help those people who were trying to manage Gary Punch.

It was Gary's third election, which meant that it was essential for Gary to be re-elected, because you needed to win three times to get a pension. Secondly, in those days Barton was very much a marginal seat. It was a bellwether electorate, and Gary Punch had only held that seat through sheer determination and hard work. As the votes were being tallied and Brian and I, in our dinner suits, went to the door of the electorate office—having left our wives at Rockdale Town Hall—we could hear the then member for Barton screaming in the high-pitched voice that only those who knew Gary well would regularly hear. As we went into his office and as phone calls were coming in from scrutineers, I decided the best way to deal with Gary was to lock him out of his office.

Brian and I locked ourselves in a room, and I was taking the calls from the scrutineers and writing them down. Brian had a lead pencil behind his ear, and he was scribbling on a piece of paper, licking the end of the pencil and working out the two-party preferred vote in his head. He just sat there calmly doing it, as if somehow everybody could perform that task. When the very last booth came in, within about 20 seconds Brian worked out the two-party preferred vote and proclaimed Gary to be the winner. That was at least 1½ or two hours before it was announced on television or anybody else knew. I found that to be the most remarkable mathematical calculation, and that quietly spoken, respectful individual had that skill.

Probably the most profound effect that Brian Langton had on me was something that I have never forgotten. It is something that has stayed with me from the time I had the conversation with Brian. Brian was the Minister for Transport in the Carr Government, and he lost that ministry under the most incredibly unfair circumstances. I said to Brian, "Mate, I'm really sorry. You were a great Minister for Transport. You've been treated so unfairly." That was not long after it happened, and he looked at me and said, "Ronnie, I've got everything I have in life because I've got three letters after my name. Those letters are ALP. If it wasn't for the ALP I never would have been the mayor of Kogarah. If it wasn't for the ALP I never would have been the member for Kogarah. If it wasn't for the ALP I never would have been a shadow Minister, and if it wasn't for the ALP I never would have been a Minister. So I very much value those letters that I have after my name and feel that I was incredibly privileged to have the opportunity that those three letters gave me." To this day, I remember that conversation.

Many of us—either members who have moved through this House or who have been in the political process—have generally felt defeat; have generally felt that they needed some other position that somebody else got; have felt that they have been duded by their colleagues, their leaders or their party machines along the way;

and have felt some sense of entitlement. But Brian Langton had no sense of entitlement. He just had a sense of appreciation and respect for the party he joined at 15 and the opportunities it gave. To me, that says everything about the man as a human being. It says everything about the man and his commitment both to the public and to the party that he served. I value the opportunity of being able to say that in this House, because it might remind all of us in this House of the privilege that we have and the privileges that have been extended to us because of membership of the political party that we represent in the New South Wales Parliament.

Brian will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to public office and for the lasting impact he left on the Kogarah community. He made it his life's mission to stand up for those less fortunate and to ensure that their voices were always heard. While in this place, he raised the concerns of his constituents and dealt with the big issues of the day impacting the people of New South Wales. Brian is an example of one of the great sources of wisdom and guidance many of us have known within the Labor Party over the years. His presence here and across his Kogarah community will be deeply missed by all. Once again, I extend my deepest sympathy to Brian's family and loved ones. May he rest in peace.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (15:09): I speak on the condolence motion for Brian Joseph Langton, who passed away on 17 October 2023. I pay my condolences to Elizabeth, his wife; to Davina, Adele, Celia, his daughters; to other members of his family; and to his colleagues and friends, some of whom are here today. I knew Brian mainly from the bus industry, from his years in BusNSW, which coincided with the main years of my involvement with that organisation as a country tour organiser and operator. To me, as someone from a country town, Brian was a wise, immaculately dressed, urbane, sophisticated man and, most importantly, an approachable and trusted advisor to the industry. In fact, I cannot remember a time when he did not have a smile on his face. He was always ready with a kind word, a quick repartee or a funny anecdote about how things should work, whatever issues the government of the day put on the industry.

As a politician, he knew the value of anecdotal stories of success, where a small change to a person's life had unlocked for them opportunity, independence or a sense of hope, perhaps for the first time. Those are the stories that are most illustrative of the power of government and politics. He took that view into the bus industry. While he never tried to impose his views or necessarily lead the discussion, he used his vital role in the bus industry to guide it with wisdom and truth, and to make it better. I asked Matt Threlkeld, the executive director of BusNSW, to share some comments on Brian's contribution to the industry. The industry held Brian in high regard, as was evident from the attendance of industry representatives at his funeral. Matt commented:

Brian Langton's service as an Independent Member for the BusNSW Board of Management from 2005 to 2012 significantly impacted the bus and coach industry in NSW. Brian shared his experience as a Minister for Transport and tourism and helped shape policies aimed at growing and improving public transport services. His advice and insight helped BusNSW and its membership to manage significant change following the Unsworth Review and reforms to bus service contracts and safety regulation. Brian's legacy reminds BusNSW of the importance of collaboration between industry and government, while focusing on the benefits for customers and community.

As the current Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and seeing the current safety challenges across all modes of transport, I know that Brian's sage advice to the industry—in meetings and conversations with little operators like me as well as with big multinationals—about what the Government needed for a safer and more customer-focused industry led the way and was certainly welcomed at the time. In my view, it drove a stronger and more significant response from the bus industry to addressing its many safety issues. It was ahead of its time.

It was interesting to hear Deputy Premier Prue Car speaking about his similar contribution to the ferry industry. To my mind, Brian was a man who could bring everyone to the table and carry us all forward, looking like he was the jester but getting things done in a quiet, friendly and supportive way. Matt's comments about the importance of deep collaboration between industry and government, and the need for robust and honest conversations around the challenges faced by those in the public transport space, are a testament to Brian. He drove those conversations. I was a Labor member in plain clothes during my time in the bus industry. Brian never outed me. It is not an easy industry to win trust from, but once you do you are part of that family forever, which is very valuable.

With a nod to Brian's wisdom of how to do things right, I read Brian's valedictory speech a couple of days ago because, of course, who better to frame the achievements of his political life than him? I want to again put on the record what Brian saw as his *raison d'être* for being in the Labor party. Part of this has already been quoted today, but I think all of it is important. He said:

It was not just a matter of being in the Labor Party; it was about believing in social justice and in the intrinsic link between the industrial and political wings of the party. That link is the foundation of the Labor Party and it must never be permitted to weaken. It is the heart and soul and meaning of our existence as a party.

How right he was. He continued:

Being a Labor member was and is knowing that the party is the only one capable of representing the poor, the sick, the needy, the down-trodden, and those who are - for whatever reason - unable to fend for themselves, and embracing those who can contribute.

It was the long contribution of the Catholic boys who came up through the Labor Party who had that commitment to social justice, taught at the knees of the Marist Brothers. I think all of this still holds true today. It is certainly what has driven me as a member of the Labor Party for over 30 years. Brian's service as an alderman, as a mayor, his 16-year parliamentary career and his service as a Minister all speak to his deep-seated commitment to social justice. But it was not just in his political career. Outside of politics, Brian was a member of the New South Wales AFL judiciary. Sport can unlock many opportunities for those who are not academic. Brian was also president of St George AFL and volunteered for the Wayside Chapel, Lifeline, Meals on Wheels, St Vincent de Paul and at jails. Brian was an investment banker and travel manager before entering Parliament. He truly understood the transformative power of this place to effect social justice for people and the practical impact it could have on their lives. In his valedictory speech, Brian noted the Labor mission was at the core of good government, saying:

That gets down to the rationale of government. Governments have been in existence for centuries, and for a very good reason. Only governments can provide the four basic services that people need: schools, hospitals, police and decent transport. They are basic social services which cannot be dictated solely by a profit motive. They must always be provided as cost-effectively as possible but, in the end, they are social services.

This is the same mission I bring to my portfolio—that transport is a social determinant of health, education, opportunity and jobs, and vital for social inclusion. In this vein, Brian was rightly proud of his enormous contribution to public transport as the Minister, particularly the emphasis that was put on public transport and the significant increase in patronage during his term. He was focused on providing the right services to get people where they need to go. In particular, I recognise Brian's role in putting accessible public transport on the national agenda for the first time. The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act was first passed in 1997. It led to enormous changes in ensuring public transport is more accessible—although there is always more to do, and we made announcements about that today. Brian's move really changed this. The conversation that Brian started in government, on the national stage as a State Minister, he continued in his role as an advisor to the bus industry. All of us should be grateful for that.

Ever a man of the people, during his last speech in this place Brian read out a letter from Shirley Williams, thanking him for the joy he had given to her intellectually disabled 45-year-old daughter, who was confined to a wheelchair. Shirley had written:

Usually I don't write to polities but ... I had to tell you how much happiness you have given us, with the wheelchair buses. I have enclosed a cutting from the *Leader* which will tell you our story.

No matter what happens to you in the future please just remember how much happiness you gave one beautiful special girl.

Brian articulated his values and took action to achieve social justice—that is the hard bit—right to the end of his 30-year political career and beyond. Ever the wise counsel, Brian provided this parting advice to MPs:

Our purpose here as part of the democratic process is to raise individual concerns on behalf of our constituents as well as deal with the big issues that affect the whole State. We grapple with those issues, and it is not always easy. It is not made any easier when we are sidetracked by the petty and the trivial. My hope is that the great majority of members who seek to find solutions to the major problems continue to do so and have great success.

This is an ongoing challenge for all of us. Focusing on the things that are important for a constituent, or which can change a whole community, or unlock opportunities for the State and our nation can be difficult, but it is vital. In these days of social media and "what-about-ism" it is easy to get lost in the noise of things that are not important or focus on things that stop us getting to the heart of what really matters to people. The thing I loved about that comment from Brian was it spoke to his genuine hope for the success for all members in this Chamber in finding solutions to the major problems of our constituents, communities and States, because good government is bigger than the petty squabbles and harping of oppositional politics.

Attending Brian's funeral last year, I saw many people from across the Chamber pay tribute to a man who was here for the right reason and did not let the petty or trivial stop him from making a contribution. At the funeral there was unity across the political divide in respect for a man who sought to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our State, and who actually did it. Brian had a choice after leaving politics to step away from community and industry, and yet he did not. He continued his Labor mission and his social justice mission. He was an inspiration. I again pass on my deepest condolences to his family, friends and loved ones and, in fact, his whole community. We have lost a good one. We will remember Brian, and we will continue to be inspired by him and the values we all share. He lived life as he spoke—a social justice warrior in plain clothes. Vale, Brian Langton.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:20): It is with a sense of honour and some sadness that I contribute to the condolence motion. I mirror the contributions of other members in relation to social justice. I met Brian in the early '90s. At that time I was working for Cardinal Edward Clancy and I was thinking of joining

the priesthood. I was not sure, but I was smart enough to join Young Labor. During that time I met Brian in this House. As I listened to previous members' contributions, I thought about how I have been involved in politics and how my political career was linked to Brian all the way through. It is not just me. In those early days, I first talked to Brian about social justice, looking after working people and what the then Carr Opposition could do to make things work. I wanted to be involved in industrial politics, in the Labor Party and also in the trade union movement.

Brian and I had conversations about social justice time and again. But it was not just me. My experience with Brian reflects that, but I think of our friends from the time who would sit in his office. He would always be very generous with a beer or a wine. They certainly drank a lot of beer and wine in those days, compared with now, and smoked a cigar, or normally cigarettes, on the balconies or in the garden. That was normal in the early '90s. There was Cherie Burton, who went on to become an outstanding Minister in a future government. But I look at the photos from that time and remember there was also Jason Clare, Michelle Rowland, Reba Meagher and many others. Brian provided guidance and mentorship to our current Premier but also to all those people and many more.

That was the thing about Brian. He was always welcoming and always happy to help, make a joke and have a laugh. He was always there at a social function. He was always about when we needed him. That worked for me in Young Labor. We looked up to him. He had come in with the Wran Government. Neville Wran was still coming to functions. We would be in awe of him and of Brian. Then, of course, he went on to win with the Carr Government and became transport Minister. At that time, my job also changed. I went from working for the Catholic Archdiocese to working from the Australian Workers' Union [AWU]. I went from going to mass every day to attending workplace meetings. I worked predominantly in rail and on buses, in maintenance in Chullora, in the different depots and in workshops. I was also given the task of civil construction in those areas, including building the railways. So I saw Brian not only in Young Labor but also, when I was 25 or 26, as the Minister.

At that time, I was not as eloquent as I am now. The f-word was in nearly every sentence. I was at the union office in Granville. I lived in Parramatta. I had grown up in Central Queensland. Brian was far more sophisticated, as another member said. He dressed immaculately. He spoke well, and he knew how to articulate things far better than I did. But he was always open to having discussions. Union politics—especially the AWU, which was going through all kinds of amalgamations—and civil construction generally are always rough-and-tumble. In the middle of a dispute, I would give him a ring and say, "Could I talk to you to get some guidance?" He would talk to me off the record, and it was not a problem. He was about solving problems and helping working people. It was ingrained in who he was. That was one of his great strengths, and he did it throughout his life.

Of course, he went on to Tourism, Fair Trading and Emergency Services as Minister, and he was great. I remember when he decided to resign. We were at a Labor Party social function when I found out about it. We were devastated. All this crap was going on at the time—I will use that word. Not one of us shied away from the fact that Brian was a great man who did not need to go. We did not want him to go, and we told him that time and again. Sadly, he did go, and we understood why. Then Cherie decided she would step up. Brian helped and she went on to win the seat. She was told there was no way that she would win the seat, but she did. And she is still around helping us in the Parliament today, just like Brian did over the years.

I went to Brian's funeral last year. I was very sad and very stunned, but I saw at that funeral many people from all sides of the political divide, including some I had not seen for years. Brian touched their lives in so many ways. Apart from politics and social justice, the other thing Brian and I talked about was the Australian Football League [AFL]. We talked bits and pieces, but I was not much of an AFL person in Young Labor or the union. But then I was elected the member for Prospect. Gipps field in Prospect was the only full-time AFL ground. He pulled me aside and said, "How are the Parramatta Holroyd Goannas going?" I thought, "Oh my God. Someone else knows who the Goannas are." He knew all about them and knew the site. We had long chats. Every time I would run into him in the corridors here, he would ask that question and talk about how the Goannas were going. More than a year ago, we talked about how they had women's teams that were winning pennants. His influence on AFL in New South Wales has made it a better sport. I understand why Brian enjoyed it so much.

As we have spoken about, after Brian left Parliament he went to work at the Wayside Chapel, Lifeline, Meals on Wheels and the St Vincent de Paul Society, and for countless other local events. He was incredible. He continued on, because that was who he was and what he helped make us. I know what a wonderful man he was, and Elizabeth knows even better than I do. I know how proud Davina, Adele and Celia must be of their father. I hope that my daughters can be as proud of me one day as they are of him. I thank them for helping us be part of their life with him. I thank them for helping make him the man he was. God bless them all. He will always be in my mind, as I know he will be in the minds of many members here. I thank the House.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (15:28): I remember Brian Joseph Langton. I acknowledge my friend Davina, his daughter.

I also acknowledge Adele and Celia and their mum and Brian's wife, Elizabeth, and his wonderful friends, colleagues and grandkids. I can see a number of Brian's colleagues in the gallery, including Richard Amery and Alan Ashton. I was 20 when I joined the Labor Party and entered politics. My parents had moved from Canterbury to Hurstville. Brian was a big figure in that local community. When I entered politics and public life, Brian already was well into lifelong dedication to the Labor Party and public service. He mentored many colleagues, such as the Premier, who talked about his own experience. Many have succeeded because of his guidance, his belief in our democratic institutions, his belief in our nation, our State, our people and multiculturalism.

Brian's entry into party political life was a done deal. Born into a Catholic family, he once told this place that his father dragged each of the kids by the ear along to the local Australian Labor Party [ALP] branch to sign them up. So it was for Brian at age 15 in 1963, when his father duly committed him to the Labor fold. That era, though, was a low point for the ALP. Within two years, Liberals would rule both this State and the nation, and Australia joined the Vietnam War, causing ructions within the Labor Party. Brian once said that during this period he lost the faith, leaving the party—not for long—before eventually coming back.

He entered politics at a young age, but he was a mature young man with that community spirit. He was a raconteur from a very early age. He won a seat on the Kogarah council at just 23. By the end of the seventies, he had risen to become mayor. After serving 12 years on the local council, he then entered the New South Wales Parliament in 1983 during a by-election. He faithfully served as a Government MP and later in Opposition. It was a long, hard slog of seven years in Opposition. I have done 12 years in Opposition. Brian held a shadow portfolio, such as Transport, and he and other Labor MPs were slogging it out, working day in and day out. It is testament to him and that cohort of Labor MPs that Labor won the election in 1995, when Bob Carr became Premier.

Brian Langton was asked by the Premier to serve as Minister for Transport and Minister for Tourism, Minister for Fair Trading and Minister for Emergency Services. He did an exceptional job, as my colleagues have stated. I have spoken to a number of his colleagues—not those in the gallery and not those present, but others—who said he was a fine transport Minister who made valuable changes to transport in this State. He cared about the workers—the railway workers, the bus drivers and ferry workers—and cared about public access to transport. He really cared but, as described by my colleagues, he brought people together. That was one fine quality of being the Minister for Transport.

Brian retired in 1999 but his commitment to Labor was lifelong. When I had my many interactions with Brian as the secretary of the Kingsgrove branch of the Labor Party, there were some interesting mechanics in the branches of that part of Sydney. After about three attempts—losing a couple of times—at putting my name forward to become the secretary of the Kingsgrove branch of the Labor Party, we eventually got there. I will not be factional, but I was very proud because we won the branch off the left, which was great, and we went on to outreach and being collegiate with all our branch members while making sure that we had people like Brian, who helped to navigate the party for the young people—but young people from a multicultural background.

I did not have the normal pathway coming through the party where my parents were involved. My parents worked in factories. My dad was a painter. The Labor Party provided the opportunities for young migrants like my parents to have workplace health and safety and to have rights at work, but the daughter of migrants being involved in politics was quite unusual at the time. The elders—they were not that old—like Brian and other people of that time, particularly our members who were of the Catholic background and faith, were the trustees of the party. They opened the door and reached out. Brian was a man of honour. In Greek, there is a word, "philotimo", which cannot be translated. It has many meanings, but a direct transliteration is "philo", or friend, and "timo" is honour. He had philotimo and he was a good and gracious man, particularly with me.

He would come to the Kingsgrove branch and provide us with a report from the Parliament. For young people at the time like me, it was just amazing to hear from the local member of Parliament. Mind you, the Kingsgrove branch had a number of MPs. We were a combined branch at the time, so we had the member for Canterbury at the time, Kevin Moss; George Thompson, the member for Rockdale; and the member for Kogarah, Brian Langton. It was amazing to have those three come along and provide a branch report and talk about the wonderful things the Labor Government did and what it was delivering for the people, particularly for the people of St George and Canterbury. For us, it was just incredible. We would see them on TV and we would see them out there, and Brian was a Minister who would report to our branch. He was a wonderful man who reached out and he was always there to provide advice and guidance.

Our colleagues considered Brian to be a self-deprecating team player who was no-nonsense, but he had a sense of humour. As I said, I found him to be a gentleman, a true stayer of the party and a trustee of the Labor Party, which means handing down the baton—not giving away the baton, but handing it down. Like Brian, trustees of the Labor Party, one of the world's oldest political parties, provide guidance and recognise that we have a responsibility to the next generation to do better, to advance and to build a better democratic society. Locally,

Brian Langton set about making important critical change. A local councillor can see the changes he made in the local community, whether it is in the parks or the local traffic committee. Those things are important.

One thing that Brian and his cohort of colleagues taught me, my colleagues and others who are here today was that every little thing matters. If it is fixing the local road or if it is somebody coming to you seeking support, you have a duty and an obligation to help them. Every single person needs a response. Whether you like it or not, always answer your phone. These were the tidbits, the really important things, that Brian taught me and others. I will soon relate a little story about Brian being a very involved local member. He knew all his community groups and all the different ethnic groups. As we all know, he advocated very strongly for services at the St George Hospital. He knew everyone and everyone knew him.

Brian established a very good relationship with the Greek Orthodox Parish and Community of the Resurrection of Christ, Our Lady of the Myrtles and St Eleasa of Kythira, the Greek Orthodox Church at Kogarah. It is up the road from where Brian's office was and is one of the largest Greek Orthodox churches in Australia. Brian established a good relationship with the church and especially with Father John Varvaris, who was much younger at the time. Brian, like me and many of us who would attend the parish at different times, was fearful of him. Father John played an influential role in the local community. He was a big guy in the local community. And Brian was supportive of all the places of worship, including this church.

Councillors, including Councillor Katris, used to have many meetings with Father John throughout Brian's time as the State member. At one of these meetings, Brian was wearing shorts. Those of us who know Father John know that he was not always happy. I place on record that I love Father John. But he was a tough, strong, influential man, and his word goes. At that meeting, Father John was so happy with what Brian was doing for the church and the news he came to deliver that he slapped him on his thigh as a gesture of gratitude. But, as Councillor Katris could see, Brian exhibited an excruciating, painful smile. As they left the meeting, Brian said to the councillors, "Remind me not to wear shorts next time we have a meeting with Father John to give him good news for his parish." That is just one story. But he was an amazing human being. In his own words, Brian Langton said:

It was not just a matter of being in the Labor Party; it was about believing in social justice and in the intrinsic link between the industrial and political wings of the party.

That link is the foundation of the Labor Party and it must never be permitted to weaken. It is the heart and soul and meaning of our existence as a party.

Brian's commitment to social justice and public service is key to the man he was. Into his final years he volunteered for various charities and causes, including the Wayside Chapel, whose CEO, Jon Owen, said of Brian today, "He was a committed member of the breakfast crew, with his loud pink shirts. No-one ever knew he was a former senior member of the Government. He was simply Brian with a smile. He had a deep love for his family and would often talk about his many grandkids. When he was diagnosed with cancer last year, Brian had a no-fuss approach and, effectively, apologised to everyone at Wayside, saying, 'Sorry. I might not be able to make my shifts anymore.'" It is very sad. I say to the family that a good man has left us, but he is in good hands. He inspired many of us coming through the Labor Party in the local area. I thank him for his service to our State, our nation and his family. Vale, Brian Langton.

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (15:43): I acknowledge the Hon. Brian Langton, MP, former member for Kogarah, and pay my respects to his family and friends today. I joined the Australian Labor Party at the age of 21 and was very much involved in Young Labor. Brian was one of the many MPs whom I looked up to and who very much inspired me. I then went on to work for former member of Kogarah Cherie Burton, where I came across Brian quite often and was lucky enough to work with him again. Brian was born on 21 January 1948 in Maroubra. The former mayor and long-serving State Labor member for Kogarah and Minister in the Carr Government passed away at the age of 75.

Educated at Marist College Kogarah, Brian began his political career when he was elected to Kogarah City Council, in 1971, at the age of 23. He served on the council for 12 years and as mayor in 1979 and 1980. Brian was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1983 and retired in March 1999. After serving as shadow transport Minister, Brian was appointed Minister for Transport and Minister for Tourism when Labor came to government in 1995. He performed those roles until December 1997, when he was appointed Minister for Fair Trading and Minister for Emergency Services. In April 1998 Brian resigned from Cabinet and did not seek re-election for Kogarah. In 2008 he was appointed chairman of Sydney Ferries Corporation.

To prepare for this speech, I reached out to former Premier and member for Lakemba the Hon. Morris Iemma and former member for Kogarah Cherie Burton, who gave me some beautiful insights on Brian. Morris advised that Brian took politics seriously but never lost sight of the lightheartedness of life. Whether it was for friend or foe, he was famous for his quips. It was never personal. He made things lighthearted, whether on the floor of Parliament or in caucus. When there was robust debate on a bill or proposal, Brian would always add

humour to de-escalate. Morris advised that Brian loved telling and sharing stories and would interject at the tensest times to brighten the place up. He was a travelling minstrel with his guitar. His office was a place of hospitality, always open for a drink, music and a chat.

Shadow Minister for Transport and then Minister, Brian was an instigator of cashbacks for tolls for the M4 and M5. That election commitment is what helped win the election. He was an avid Swans supporter and a big AFL supporter. He was always a massive supporter of St George Hospital for funding, resources and rebuilding. He caught the train everywhere, spruiked public transport all the time and put it to public use, even though he had a ministerial driver. I believe Brian was the first Minister who rolled out the "made them here" new carriages for the Tangara trains. Brian was a strong advocate for local procurement, particularly in rural areas. Brian reached out across political divides, which we have heard about today. He had his own diet of cigarettes, chocolate bars and Coca-Cola. Morris reminded me that Brian was genuinely loved in the electorate and loved by all.

Former member of Kogarah Cherie Burton, who is present today in the advisers area, said that Brian was a mentor to her. She said that when she was first elected, she was overwhelmed and Brian said to her, "Don't worry. In six months, you'll have it down pat." He was always there for her for advice and support. She called him the father of Kogarah. The member for Heffron referred to Brian's tally room expertise and skills, particularly on election nights. Cherie reminded me that Brian ran the tally room with his pencil for all of Cherie's and Chris Minns's elections and could do it faster and tell them whether they had won before any computer system could. She says he loved representing her and Chris at functions and on the local traffic committee. Brian loved regaling people with stories of when the traffic committee was not listening to him about the issues the community needed fixed. He would thump his fist on the table and read the committee the riot act. Suffice to say he would always get the right outcome.

Brian especially loved representing Chris at functions. During the last State election campaign, on one particular night, he attended a Chinese function in Hurstville, where he gave a rousing speech and was up dancing with everyone until late into the evening. The next day the electorate office got a call requesting that Brian represent Chris at its next function. After politics, he continued to dedicate his life to volunteering and community advocacy, including combining his two great loves, Kogarah and footy. Brian was a member of the AFL NSW/ACT judiciary for 20 years and served as the president of St George AFL. He volunteered for the Wayside Chapel, Lifeline, Meals on Wheels and St Vincent de Paul, and at countless local events. Brian is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, daughters Davina, Adele and Celia, and his seven beautiful grandchildren. To Brian's loved ones, my thoughts are with you and I pass on my deepest condolences. Thank you, Brian, for your public service and your dedication to the Australian Labor Party. Rest in peace, mate.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (15:50): Brian Langton was a character, as members of the House and visitors in the gallery are hearing today. He was larger than life, funny, strategically smart, politically smart, engaging and, above all, a true servant of the people and the community. People will remember Brian as the Mayor of Kogarah and the member for Kogarah, posts of which he was very proud but also knew were privileged. Kogarah has certainly had its share of grandees, as I call them, and none more so now than our Premier, Chris Minns. Brian would have liked that immensely.

Brian was Minister for Transport, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Fair Trading and Minister for Emergency Services—all portfolios in which I worked with him. But even before Bob Carr became Premier, while in opposition I was fortunate to campaign with Brian at various times in regional New South Wales and in my area. Brian was as at home in the country as he was in the city. I cannot say that about everyone who serves in Parliament—I am watching my words here. He could fit in absolutely everywhere. We never thought, "Oh, here comes the city slicker to the country, to tell us what to do." It was always a joy to have him. I remember driving around the Northern Rivers with him at different times campaigning—always in a haze of smoke. I remember that well.

I also remember being on the back of a big truck with him in Kyogle as part of the Summerland Way Committee—the member for Tweed will know this—that campaigned for years and years for the Summerland Way. I managed to get a commitment—it amazed everyone—from Brian and Bob Carr for \$50 million to upgrade the Summerland Way if they were elected to government. We got the \$50 million and the Summerland Way was duly upgraded. It came in under budget and everyone was proud. I think Carl Scully was the responsible Minister by the time it was finished. It cost about \$48.8 million and everyone was amazed that Brian had driven the Summerland Way with me and knew what it meant to people. That was the one thing I got and it always sticks in my mind because people often say, "There are not that many who drive on it. Why would you do it?" There are a lot of reasons you would do it.

Brian loved his family and always spoke of them very fondly. I say to Elizabeth, Davina, Adele and Celia—but particularly to Elizabeth—that Brian was often amazed he had done so well. He would convey an impression of "Lucky me. How did this happen to me?" I did not get to know Brian in the way that some of my colleagues

who have spoken did, because they lived and worked together in the city. But he was one of those colleagues that struck a chord with us in the country and in the party. He was always absolutely welcome. I acknowledge Richard Amery, Alan Ashton, George Thompson and Cherie Burton, who have been in this place with us. Brian loved the Labor Party, and the Labor Party was a vehicle for him to achieve good for communities and to further social justice. He was an adept advocate and I remember that, even as Minister, he never lost the ability to focus on his electorate and on people. He was a fierce advocate, and I really respected him for that. In that sense, he was a model MP because he used his ministry well. He was not up himself, as some of us might say. That is probably the best way to explain how Brian was.

I had forgotten his guitar playing until today, but I remember it well now. It was a delight to hear him sing and play the guitar. I feel very privileged to have known Brian, to have campaigned with him and to have served with him. He did try to get me over to the right, but I said no. That is why I said to Sophie, "It's alright, you can be factional." Brian always wanted to make the community a better place. I note that there was one time in Brian's public life when he was, in my view, judged unfairly. Brian was an honest man. I finish with a quote from Proverbs 31: "Be kind, speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." That is what Brian did. May God rest his soul.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (15:56): It is with some sadness, but also with a great sense of privilege, that I contribute to the condolence motion to commemorate the life and work of Brian Langton. Brian served as the member for Kogarah from 1983 to 1999 and as the Minister for Transport from 1995 to 1997. Prior to entering the New South Wales Parliament, Brian served as an alderman on Kogarah Council from 1971 to 1983—a pretty good term—following his father before him, and he served as its mayor from 1979 to 1980. But Brian's most important role was as a loving husband to Elizabeth, a doting father to his daughters Davina, Adele and Celia, a support to their partners and a loving grandfather to their beautiful children.

Prior to the State election in March last year, Brian and I spoke many times about public transport. He generously offered his time to share his insights and his advice. Sometimes the conversations were over Zoom because it was during the COVID pandemic. He was Zooming in from his study. One time I was stuck in the front bedroom for several weeks after the COVID outbreak, so I was a bit grumpy, but I have to say that my time on Zoom with Brian was lively and informative. He was a great storyteller. He really took you on a journey, but there was always a purpose. He wanted to tell me about how important he felt transport was to a good Labor government and how important the role of a good transport Minister was to a good Labor government. I have thought about that regularly in this incredibly privileged role that I hold in, I believe, the best portfolio in government. I am sure that Brian thought the same. I really loved his confidence and he tried regularly to instil a bit of it in me—his confidence in how we were going to win the 2023 election and how we were going to do great things as a long-term Labor government.

Brian really loved public transport and loved the impact that reliable public transport can have on the public and on people's lives. It is a key determinant for social equality, opportunity and access. As the Premier noted, one of Brian's greatest passions was expanding access to public transport for people with disability. I think of the conversations that I will continue to have, strongly, with the Treasurer about the need to continue to invest to make our train stations accessible and to make all of our points of access available to everybody. It is a great way to ensure that our community is engaged and our system is working for everybody, but it also presents a fundamental opportunity for every one of those people. We have heard some great stories about what he did as Minister for so many people, and I know our Government will continue to do the same.

Brian believed that public transport should be a means to overcome barriers and should not create new ones. He spoke with me about access to economic opportunity and how a late bus or train was not just an inconvenience but could mean a missed shift or a missed interview, which has real-life implications for people. Our job of making that system run means much more than just running on time. Transport is about connection as well—about people seeing friends and family. What we can do in the role of Minister for Transport is about much more than just numbers, maintenance and infrastructure. In so many ways Brian understood that transport is at the very centre of a life well lived.

Brian was clearly a brilliant public servant, and his commitment to public duty extended far beyond his time in Parliament. Other speakers today have talked about the various contributions he made and the missions he was on. Locally in his community, he served on the board of St George Hospital and took on many voluntary roles—Lifeline, Wesley Mission, the Wayside Chapel, Meals on Wheels, the St George Hospital Cancer Care Centre, St Vincent de Paul, the St George School for children with disabilities and the New South Wales Prostate Cancer Institute.

Of course, Brian was also a passionate supporter of AFL. The member for Heffron referred to it as aerial ping-pong, but Brian would rightly defend that great game. His incredible experience, great attributes and love of the game were perfectly merged in the 20 years that he served on the tribunal and the judiciary. We spent some

time talking about sport—more about cricket, but definitely about AFL as well. As the contributions today have made very clear, Brian loved his community. He served it incredibly well and with incredible dedication. He was a great transport Minister and I am so grateful for his advice and his wisdom. We are all great beneficiaries of his life of public service, and I think now of his family. I know that they will share not only sadness but also great pride in the contribution that he made to his community and to the State of New South Wales.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:03): I make a very brief contribution on behalf of people with disabilities across New South Wales. To Brian's family and friends in the gallery: From the bottom of my heart, I thank your husband, your dad, your grandfather and your colleague on behalf of all of us whose lives he changed. Members of Parliament really do not know how many lives they have touched, but being included and being able to access basic facilities, like everybody who can walk, is so important. Cheers to your amazing dad and his fight for social justice, and for the lives that he changed by making it possible for us to be included.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): I welcome the host of young people from Stewart House in the gallery. We are currently considering a motion to remember and reflect on the life of a former Minister of this House, and somebody who did some incredibly important work, particularly in the areas of tourism and transport. Unfortunately, he passed away, so we are spending some time today remembering him. The House's condolences are extended to the entire family and to former colleagues who have been in the gallery for the debate.

The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Members and officers of the House stood as a mark of respect.

Bills

CONVERSION PRACTICES BAN BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (16:06): Prior to question time, when my contribution was interrupted, I was speaking to the House about the process leading to the presentation of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 to the Parliament. I had discussed the Minns Government's process of closed consultation with hand-picked stakeholders to consider a secret consultation document, which led to the bill being drafted. Many people were not consulted during that process. I understand that groups like the LGB Alliance Australia, faith-based schools, women's groups and others were left out of the consultation process.

The large number of groups that the Attorney General says were consulted hides the fact that many relevant community groups were left out. The Attorney General stated that the process was confidential, and I can definitely say that over half of the elected representatives in the Parliament—including all of the Coalition MPs—were kept out of the consultations and were never shown the draft bill at any stage. That is an extraordinary way for a minority government to operate. It means that the Coalition first saw the bill less than a week ago, when the Attorney General tabled it and started his second reading speech in Parliament on the afternoon of Wednesday 13 March 2024.

That means the Opposition has effectively had less than four clear business days, including two parliamentary sitting days where other legislation was being debated and considered, to deal with the bill—to discuss it amongst colleagues, to try to receive feedback from the community about it and to state a position in this Chamber today. It is the intention of the Government to ram this legislation through both Houses of Parliament this week. That means that about a week after it was first disclosed to the public and the Opposition, it will pass both Houses of Parliament. It goes without saying that this is incredibly unreasonable and undemocratic. It is a time frame in which it is impossible for constituents to review the legislation and consult with their local MPs as is supposed to be the case in a representative democracy. As a consequence, it is an inadequate time frame for MPs to obtain feedback on the bill from the communities that they represent. It is not just people who live in Coalition electorates who are unhappy about this. Members of the community who live in Labor electorates should also be angry that their members of Parliament are part of a government that has determined an unreasonable timetable that disallows proper public consultation.

Public consultation can go both ways. It can be that the legislation does not go far enough or that the legislation does not protect certain rights. No politician has a perfect sense of what the community thinks about an issue at any point in time. Yesterday, the upper House Selection of Bills Committee resolved to send this bill to an inquiry. The Opposition supported that resolution. In the circumstances, an inquiry of that kind would

provide an opportunity for greater consideration, public consultation and scrutiny of desirable amendments to the bill. However, the Premier instructed his upper House colleagues in the Labor Party to combine with The Greens to kill any short, sharp inquiry by the upper House. It shows how intent the Minns Government is to avoid any proper scrutiny of its legislation.

Why does the Minns Government fight so hard against transparency, democracy and, ultimately, accountability? Why do crossbench members and minor parties become enablers for such conduct by a minority government? Why do The Greens and other crossbench members talk such a big game on transparency only to act to the contrary effect? This is in a circumstance where religious groups like Faith NSW are supportive of the bill but are encouraging amendments on issues that are important to them that they were not able to convince the Government of during the consultation process. Other non-religious groups also have concerns about the bill.

The Attorney General has said he will not entertain amendments. By saying that, the Attorney General is acting like this bill is a piece of perfect art produced by somebody like Leonardo Di Vinci. This bill is not like the *Mona Lisa*. Few bills, especially a bespoke piece of legislation—as the Attorney General was proud to say this bill is—are masterpieces unable to be improved by hearing other views on their wording and construction. This bill is about a social policy that impacts people's lives. It is very important to make the legislation as good as it can possibly be. We encourage Labor to be open-minded about the targeted amendments that the Opposition will bring in the upper House.

I now turn to the bill in some detail, but do not propose to deal with all of the matters that the Attorney General dealt with in his detailed second reading speech. I raise some questions of clarification or uncertainty. The first thing I note in its rush through Parliament is that clause 2 provides that the bill has a delayed commencement of 12 months after its assent. The Attorney General gave practical reasons for that delay, and I do not quibble with those. But certainly, given the circumstances, the Coalition could have been given some more time to consider the bill before debate commenced in the Legislative Assembly. Labor ought to have supported a short, sharp upper House inquiry rather than have torpedoed it.

The second matter I note is that clause 3 (1) of the bill is directed to activity that concerns the changing or suppressing of an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. Conversion and change are synonyms or have similar meanings, but suppression can mean something quite different. The bill contains no definition of suppression, meaning that the courts will be left to determine what it means, rather than the Parliament giving a definition through the bill. The Attorney General made clear in his second reading speech that the exception to the definition of a conversion practice in clause 3 (3) (b) included "affirming" as well as what he described as:

... neutral or non-directive conduct to better understand a person's self-identified gender identity or sexual orientation, or non-directive actions to explore and develop that identity. For instance, that might be parental conversations about sexual orientation or gender identity and the risks or benefits of certain actions ...

Although that was the Attorney General's description, the exception does not specifically refer to parents, and the example given in the second reading speech appears to more accord with clause 3 (4) of the bill, which states that the examples of what does not constitute a conversion practice under the section includes:

(d) parents discussing matters relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion with their children.

Does that mean that in certain circumstances where parents set rules or behavioural standards for an individual under their care, it may not fall within the description? Parental rules and behavioural standards do not exactly correspond to a discussion. Why are family discussions, as well as parental discussions, not expressly protected? Are these not the discussions that are as likely to occur between siblings, or even a grandparent and a grandchild, as they are between a parent and a child? Should they not all be protected?

While the criminal provisions under clause 5 (5) and clause 6 (3) of the bill expressly exclude an individual under the age of 18 years, the definition of a conversion practice does not. That is highly relevant to the civil redress provisions. It would be helpful for the Attorney General to clarify my reading of the bill that conversations by a person with their brother or sister that correspond to "a practice or sustained effort" and conform with the description of a conversion practice, even if done when the child was under the age of 18, could expose that child to a civil claim for as much as \$100,000 under the civil complaints scheme under part 4 of the bill.

At the end of the day, courts give little regard to the second reading speeches in Parliament and only consider them if there is ambiguity in the legislation. The words of the legislation are the most important in terms of how this bill will be interpreted by the courts. The Attorney General said in relation to clause 3 (4) (d) that it:

... was never intended to stop parents from having discussions, even challenging discussions, with their children about these matters.

The matters he was referring to were sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion. However, it is not clear where in the definition of a conversion practice in clause 3 he draws from the text of the bill to suggest that the discussions could be "challenging discussions" as opposed to discussions that are purely affirmative. It is

important for the Attorney General to explain the difference between a "challenging discussion" and a "suppression practice".

I agree that families should be able to have challenging discussions about these important matters, because they are typically underpinned by the undoubted love and care that family members have for each other. It would be helpful for families to understand what conversations they can have with each other before the conversation conforms to a conversion practice and possibly makes them liable for a criminal offence or a civil claim. There also seems to be some uncertainty as to whether requests for help are expressly covered under clause 3 (3) (b) of the bill, or whether anyone who is asked for help has to be incredibly careful what they say. Turning to religious freedoms, clause 3 (3) (b) of the bill says that a conversion practice does not include:

... the following expressions if the expression is not part of a practice, treatment or sustained effort, directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity—

- (i) an expression, including in prayer, of a belief or principle, including a religious belief or principle,
- (ii) an expression that a belief or principle ought to be followed or applied.

That is the exception to the definition of "conversion practice" that constitutes the Minns Labor Government's major protection of religious freedom in the bill. It is incredibly difficult to understand. As a senior barrister with two law degrees, it took me a few moments to work out what the protection meant and how it might operate. That is unfortunate for social legislation that governs the operation of the lives of the citizens of our State. Social legislation should be easily understood by ordinary members of the community.

The Attorney General explained it as meaning that "the bill does not impact a person's ability, of their own consent, to seek counsel or guidance from within their faith. Counsel and guidance can still be given, provided they are not directed to change or suppress." I am not sure that it is clear where the boundaries of the exception are. The uncertainty is exacerbated by the tortuous wording in the bill. The reality is that the Opposition does not have sufficient numbers in this House to improve those matters, but it will move amendments in the upper House that are directed towards a protection for discussions and interactions that are appropriate in a family context and a clearer definition of religious protections for faith communities.

In conclusion, those are the matters that I seek to highlight in my second reading contribution. The bill is 24 pages long and contains a large number of issues of interpretation and scope. The matters of interpretation and the scope of the bill were perfectly suited to an upper House parliamentary inquiry of a short and sharp nature, where members of the community, from their life experience, could draw to the Parliament's attention the ways that they see the bill can be improved. The Opposition does not have the numbers in this House for a lower House inquiry or to make changes to the bill. I thank the many groups that have corresponded with me, the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Coalition in the less than four business days since the bill was second read with regard to the issues that it raises. I foreshadow that the Coalition will move amendments to the bill in the upper House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): Before I call the Minister for Health, I recognise the guests in the gallery. They are guests of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, MLC. I thank Mark for taking time out of his busy schedule in the other place to be with us today. I welcome Edward Cavanough of the McKell Institute and representatives from the United States and European-based Progressive Policy Institute, led by executive director Lindsay Lewis.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (16:23): I welcome the guests in the gallery to the New South Wales Parliament. This House is more entertaining than the other place and it is where the real work gets done. I speak in support of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I have had a deep level of involvement with the Attorney General in drafting the bill. I start by acknowledging members of my team, both my personal staff and departmental staff. First, I acknowledge my senior adviser, Rosie Rand, who has done an outstanding job on a challenging piece of legislation. She has spent an enormous amount of time working with stakeholders and with the offices of the Attorney General and the Minister for Multiculturalism, as well as the member for Sydney and other members in this place.

I also acknowledge the public servants who have been on this journey for some time, including Gemma Broderick, Hugh Percival and Amelia Parsonage, as well as two former NSW Health staff who have played a big role, Ann Reid and Greg Smitheram. I acknowledge those people because bills like this one take an enormous amount of work and navigation. I start by making some comments about the shadow Attorney General's contribution to the second reading debate. He said that consultation on the bill has not been comprehensive. I cannot allow that comment to sit on the record without being corrected. I have been involved in discussions through government and have had staff from my office embedded in the dialogue with faith-based groups, with

members of the LGBTQIA+ community and with all communities that have an interest in the bill. It is not correct to say that the consultation had shortcomings.

Members are elected to this place to make decisions. I understand that consultation and engagement with stakeholders and the community is important. No-one denies that. Members are elected to this place, in an elected democracy, to make decisions on behalf of their communities. That is what we do in this place every day. We cannot get to a situation where we think we have a perfect piece of legislation. Otherwise, we might as well turn off the lights and go. That will never be the case. Let us come to the bill in the same way that we come to every other bill, knowing that we, as legislators, need to make decisions. We do that by seeking advice from expert groups, public servants, stakeholder groups and community members. I have been around this place in various capacities, and I am not sure I have come across a bill that has had more consultation. I may be wrong about that, but there has certainly been a lot of consultation on the bill.

I made a commitment to the bill with the Premier in the lead-up to the last election because I did not want to give any impression, particularly to my two boys, that I felt gay people needed to be somehow converted. I did not want that. I did not want them to think their dad believes that. The bill is important to me. I find the need for so-called "conversion" abhorrent. I put that on the record. Change or suppression practices often involve subtle and recurring messaging that an individual can change or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity. Those practices can take many forms, including counselling, psychotherapy and support groups. In all cases, those practices are based on a flawed ideology or pseudoscience that a person is broken due to their sexuality or gender identity. That could not be further from the truth.

Practices predicated on the belief that any deviation from cisgender heterosexuality is a sign of brokenness or disordered identity have no place in our community, nor in contemporary health care. Worryingly, around Australia those practices are still occurring. A 2009 study of over 6,000 people from the LGBTQIA+ community aged under 25 found that 4 per cent of participants had attended counselling, group work, interventions or programs aimed at changing or suppressing sexuality or gender identity. Those practices run completely counter to the firm commitment the Government has to celebrating and strengthening safety, inclusion and belonging for everyone in our community. From my perspective, our community has no place for practices, treatments and sustained efforts that result in stigma, discrimination, physical harm and long-term trauma. Every person in New South Wales deserves safety and to be treated with dignity and respect for who they are.

With the time available to me I will talk about some of the health components of the legislation. It is important that we understand what they are and what they are not. Significantly, the bill is intended to promote rather than interfere with access to legitimate and clinically appropriate healthcare services provided by registered healthcare practitioners. For that reason, the definition of what constitutes a conversion practice excludes a health service or treatment delivered by a registered health practitioner that the health practitioner has assessed as clinically appropriate in their reasonable professional judgement, and that complies with relevant professional, legal and ethical requirements.

The intent is that registered health practitioners providing health care that is clinically appropriate and complies with regulatory and ethical standards that they have to meet as part of registration will not be subject to criminal or civil penalties. I want to be very clear about that because it is at the heart of the part of the bill that I am responsible for, which is the exclusion around healthcare workers. Again, the intent is that registered health practitioners providing health care that is clinically appropriate and complies with regulatory and ethical standards will not be subject to criminal or civil penalties.

The health care exclusion was purposely framed around clinically appropriate care. It was recommended by key stakeholders and ensures that a clinician can continue to provide clinically appropriate health care to a patient. Examples include where a registered health practitioner is genuinely assisting an individual who is exploring the individual's sexual orientation or gender identity or considering or undergoing a gender transition; genuinely assisting an individual who is receiving care and treatment related to the individual's gender identity; or genuinely advising an individual about the potential impacts of gender-affirming medical treatment. That approach seeks to strike the appropriate balance in safeguarding LGBTQ+ community members against harmful conversion practices whilst continuing to allow registered health practitioners to deliver clinically appropriate health care to their patients.

Further, the bill provides an extra layer of protection for persons, including registered and unregistered health service providers, who provide services that are supportive, accepting or assist in the development of a person's identity. The bill does so by providing a broad exclusion for conduct that genuinely facilitates an individual's coping skills, development or identity exploration to meet the individual's needs, including by providing acceptance, support or understanding. That conduct will not be a conversion practice for the purposes of the bill. That will include providing health care that affirms a person's sexual orientation or gender identity in

a way that meets the individual's needs. Further, the exclusion would capture neutral and non-directive conduct that is aimed at supporting identity exploration and development.

Importantly, the exclusion also requires the conduct to be genuine and to meet the person's needs. The conduct must be real, authentic and centred on the person in order to fall within the exclusion. Those two exclusions together recognise that both registered and non-registered health practitioners provide critical health services to the LGBTQ+ community. To be absolutely clear, the bill does not give health practitioners a free pass to engage in conversion practices, but it does exclude clinically appropriate care. The bill fulfils the Government's election commitment to ban LGBTQ+ practices like that. It recognises that the rich fabric of our State is only possible where we support a diverse, inclusive and safe society that protects everyone in our community.

I know many people will speak passionately about the bill, and I always have and always will respect differences of opinion in this place, but I remind the House that we are talking about often very vulnerable people, and the debate should be reflective of the fact that we are making legislation that will impact on the lives of many people who already have significant obstacles. In that spirit, I ask that members be respectful over the next few hours and engage in the debate in a respectful way. I look forward to the debate continuing. I am proud to have worked on the bill with the Attorney General, the Minister for Multiculturalism, members of my own team, as well as members of the crossbench. I thank the team from NSW Health for their support and advice in the development of the bill, as well as my own team—particularly Rosie Rand—for their hard work. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (16:34): Harmful conversion practices should be outlawed but in a way that prevents unwarranted intrusion into the exercise of traditional parental guidance and authority, other family discussion or freedom of faith. The Opposition would have preferred that the Government's Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 be considered by a parliamentary committee in a short, sharp inquiry reporting back to Parliament in time for the May sittings. That would have allowed members of the community and those interested stakeholders who were not consulted by the Government the opportunity to provide input to the bill. The Government and The Greens blocked that. The Opposition will support the progress of the bill in the Legislative Assembly to allow debate on its detail in the Legislative Council. It is there that the Opposition will move a series of amendments to strengthen protections for parents, other family members and people of faith.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:36): I make a contribution on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I begin by noting—for all of the people in my electorate and across the State who have contacted me—that conversion practices are based on the idea that LGBTQ+ people are broken or need fixing, and that is wrong. There is nothing wrong with LGBTQ+ people; they do not need fixing. Conversion practices are dangerous, and there is no room for them in New South Wales. From the outset, the New South Wales Labor Government recognised that this is a complex area of law reform, and it is important to balance prohibiting those harmful practices with protecting things like freedom of expression and freedom of religious belief. I acknowledge that point for all of the people across my electorate and the State who wanted me to note that. There are strong and very polarised views about the reform, but the bill represents a carefully balanced approach that takes into account those views.

This is a New South Wales bill, and it is fit for purpose for our State. The bill provides for a graduated response to LGBTQ+ conversion practices. It is educative and it clearly defines conversion practices and carefully sets out considered exceptions and exclusions. It provides for a civil complaints scheme, and it provides a targeted criminal response for the most serious conversion practices where people have suffered substantial harm. The bill is aimed at stopping conversion practices, be they in a practice, treatment or sustained effort directed toward an individual on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity to suppress or change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The New South Wales Government made a clear commitment to outlaw LGBTQ+ conversion practices, with the Department of Communities and Justice and NSW Health leading a working group for the reforms. I particularly want to acknowledge the member for Sydney for his important work and advocacy in this space for many years. We, of course, as a government, considered his bill closely during the development process. The bill reflects a legislative response that is suitably tailored to the New South Wales community and legal system on the basis of our in-depth targeted consultation, in which we heard from a wide range of stakeholders. I thank the member for Sydney for engaging with us constructively on this, as we have done on so many issues in the past and as we will again.

Consultation on the bill was wideranging. The Government heard from members of the health, education, youth, legal and government sectors; faith and multicultural organisations; parents' rights and LGBTQ+ community advocacy organisations; and, importantly, people with lived experience. All views were carefully considered in the development of the legislation to ensure that it strikes the right balance, noting that there were often divergent stakeholder views and positions on preferred reform options. What do conversion practices look

like? I have been answering this question, over and again, during the past number of months, but I will put it on the record. Conversion practices can include conduct ranging from secular or religious behavioural and talking therapies, formal workshops, camps and programs, spiritual deliverance practices and exorcisms, or abusive aversion therapy such as electroshock therapy or inducing nausea and other forms of physical abuse. It happens. Different forms of conduct can also be used in combination with each other as part of LGBTQ+ conversion practices.

As the Minister for Health noted, studies indicate that LGBTQ+ people in Australia continue to be exposed to conversion practices, and that greater exposure was observed in trans and gender diverse people and people from faith communities. This bill implements the Government's commitment to ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices. This commitment was made because available evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that these practices are ineffective and cause significant harms for those who are subjected to them. Documented harms include heightened suicidal ideation and suicide attempts in comparison with other LGBTQ+ people not exposed to conversion practices; poor mental health, including depression, anxiety and poor self-esteem; alienation, loneliness and social isolation, including the loss of support networks; and physical injury where conversion practices use physical or sexual violence, or aversive techniques such as electroshock therapy.

At this point, I acknowledge Craig from the Blue Mountains, who wrote to me, "Given my experiences and struggles with suicide within the church environment, I strongly urge the New South Wales Government to ban all such conversion practices immediately." He went on to explain in some detail about the dark places he went to, which I will not put on the record. This bill is for Craig and for all of those who have been hurt and have suffered. As we know, there are no existing laws in New South Wales that specifically prohibit conversion practices. This means not all conversion practices are currently prohibited, and also that existing laws for conduct such as physical violence are laws of general application and do not specifically recognise this conduct in the context of conversion practices. This bill ensures that conversion practices as a specific class of conduct are prohibited under both civil and criminal law.

To those who have made contact with me—and there are many of you—to express concerns or opposition to the bill, I note that our bill has powerful protections for people of faith that go far beyond our election commitments. The bill protects the expression of a religious belief. It protects religious teachings. It protects the expression that religious beliefs ought to be followed. It protects the right to prayer. It protects discussions between parents and their children about sexuality and gender. It protects the rules of religious orders such as the celibacy of priests. It protects general school rules such as uniform requirements. And, to be clear, the bill does not stop someone from telling a young person not to have sex before marriage and it does not stop someone counselling a married person not to have an affair. I thank all of those from the LGBTQ+ community in the Blue Mountains, particularly the crew from Pink Mountains and the trans teens support group. We see you, we hear you, we celebrate you, and we love you just the way you are. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (16:44): I make a short contribution to the debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. Harmful conversion practices should be outlawed but, as a couple of previous speakers have said, it should be done in a way that does not impact on a parent's ability to support and guide a child in these decisions and in those discussions. As has also been mentioned, the Coalition would have preferred that a parliamentary committee at least examine the Government's bill. That would have allowed community members, families and those impacted that have not been consulted by the Government the opportunity to have a say on the proposal. The Government and The Greens blocked that opportunity. We recognise that harmful conversion practices should be outlawed, and we will be moving amendments in the other place to strengthen protections for family members, parents and people of faith.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (16:45): I speak in support of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. At the outset, I state that I am a trans-inclusive feminist. I reiterate what others in this House have said: that there is nothing wrong with trans people. They are not broken, and they do not need to be fixed. This principle should be universally true to us all, and I look forward to a day when that is the case. What is wrong, and what must be fixed, is the very premise of conversion practices themselves. The evidence is that conversion therapy and suppression practices are dangerous, damaging and, quite frankly, in some cases deadly. These practices have been known to trigger complex trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, negative mental health outcomes and suicidal thoughts. While there is no evidence that these practices are effective at changing sexuality or gender identity, there have been cases where vulnerable people have concealed their sexuality and gender identity as a result.

The harm of these practices has been acknowledged by expert bodies including the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Psychological Society, and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, to name a few. Putting aside the dangerous nature of conversion practices, I would like to put on

record some facts about the New South Wales LGBTQ+ community. They add colour to our lives. They make us stronger and brighter and happier because of who they are. This State would be a darker place without them. It has been a privilege for me to have known and cherished so many wonderful LGBTQ+ people over the course of my life.

There is one example I would like to share with the House. In my former role serving as Mayor of Lake Macquarie, I went to a meeting arranged by ACON in my local area. It was a meeting that I will always remember. The parents of a group of young trans men told me about the challenges that their boys faced. I can tell the House that these loving parents held very genuine fears for their children. They were not concerned about their boys' gender identity, but they were terrified about the world that they were living in—one where, too often, LGBTQ+ people are bullied and mistreated simply for living their own authentic lives. These parents spoke with me because they did not want the vicious cycle of trauma, discrimination and harassment to continue for their boys. We all knew that these young men were not broken, but that had not stopped others from perpetuating the myth that they were.

Like all LGBTQ+ people, these young men should be celebrated for who they are, not converted into what they are not. This bill draws a line in the sand on that principle. In the years that have passed since I met with those families, there have been some welcome social advances for the LGBTQ+ community. Marriage equality was passed into law in 2017. Every jurisdiction in this country settled on the commonsense decision to abolish the abhorrent gay panic defence. But we cannot say that New South Wales is leading the way on LGBTQ+ rights while we continue to lag behind other States in banning conversion practices. We now have a chance to change that. We can send a clear message to our LGBTQ+ families, friends, neighbours and work colleagues in our electorates and across New South Wales. That message is this: We see you. We love you. We know who you are. There is nothing about you that needs fixing.

I acknowledge this is an emotional issue, and in some people's minds a complex issue, which has drawn significant input from stakeholders and the community. I acknowledge Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, Peter Stuart, who I had the privilege of meeting last year to discuss this topic. Earlier this year Peter wrote in support of LGBTQ+ equality. There is a misconception that people of faith lack empathy for LGBTQ+ people in this debate. Often I see nothing but goodwill and understanding from people who practise their religion. Many people of faith are victims of discrimination, whether they adhere to Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or any other religion. Discrimination against people based on their religion is just as wrong as discrimination on the grounds of their gender identity or sexuality. They are not mutually exclusive concepts.

I have heard from all sides. I acknowledge the Attorney General's extraordinary work in putting together the bill, which balances the complexities in this area of reform. I also recognise the work of the Minister for Health and his input from a health point of view. I recognise those Ministers' staff and their agencies. I also recognise the member for Sydney for the openness with which he has engaged with all members in Parliament to help us understand how this affects people's lives on a real, day-to-day basis.

On one hand, the bill provides the New South Wales LGBTQ+ community with protection from harmful practices. On the other hand, it upholds freedom of expression and religious belief as important pillars of our democracy. Let us be clear about what the bill does: It sets out a clear definition of what constitutes a conversion practice. That is a practice, treatment or sustained effort inflicted on an individual on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity which is intended to change or suppress that part of their self. The bill also clarifies what is not a conversion practice, carving out appropriate and carefully considered exclusions. The bill does not outlaw religious belief, religious teachings or religious practices. It does not impact on personal prayer and reflection. It does not prevent anyone from seeking religious or spiritual guidance of their own free will. It does not interfere with educational institutions' ability to make general rules. It does not prohibit parents from talking to their children about their own views on sex, sexuality, gender and religion.

Let us be clear about why the bill is necessary: Conversion practices cause harm. Survivors of conversion practices have reported the physical, mental and emotional damage they have suffered. The consequences can vary, including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. In some cases, victims take their own lives. It can take survivors a lifetime to heal. To address this issue, the bill has two components. It outlines criminal offences in which a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment may apply to individuals engaged in conversion practices. There are also ancillary offences for people who seek to circumvent the prohibition in the bill. It also sets up a civil regime to manage complaints against individuals or organisations engaged in conversion practices.

The bill prohibits sending a person outside New South Wales for the purpose of conversion practices or the engagement of someone interstate to deliver conversion therapy. The civil complaints scheme allows for a victim to make a complaint to the Anti-Discrimination Board. The President of the Anti-Discrimination Board is empowered to investigate and conciliate complaints brought under the bill. The President can also refer complaints to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] in certain circumstances—namely, if the complaint cannot

be conciliated or if the president considers that the complaint needs to be considered by the tribunal. Referral will only occur with the consent of the complainant. The bill allows NCAT to make orders should a complaint be substantiated, including orders for damages and to stop the respondent from continuing or repeating unlawful conduct. This will empower NCAT to put conversion practitioners out of business. [*Extension of time*]

I circle back to those parents I met as Mayor of Lake Macquarie many years ago. I thank them and their brave and resilient sons for sharing their story with me. The bill will not be a panacea for all the unacceptable prejudice that LGBTQ+ people face daily. In fact, I heard of some very recent harassment experienced by a trans person, which I found abhorrent and confronting and which they live with every single day. I thank everyone, particularly members of the LGBTQ+ community, who has spoken to me about this matter. My views will not always align with every stakeholder, but I respect the input of all people who come to this debate with goodwill. There is no escaping the fact that this State is lagging behind other States and Territories in this area, including Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, of all places.

We have an opportunity to bring our State's laws in line with community expectations. We have an opportunity to listen to the voices of those who have been impacted by conversion practices, including those who can no longer speak for themselves. We have an opportunity to say this to communities that have been, and continue to be, marginalised: We see you. We love you. We know who you are. There is nothing about you that needs fixing. I am proud to support the bill and to be a member of the New South Wales Labor Government, which is delivering on this important election commitment and this step forward for equality. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:55): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I note with disappointment the position the Minns Labor Government took in the upper House by backing The Greens to block the move to enable fair and broad community consultation of the bill through an upper House inquiry. What speaks volumes to me is the managed, closed-door consultation that this Labor Government has had with the chosen few. Some faith-based organisations were consulted, but if Labor wants to manage an outcome, the approach is to manage the number of contributors to the conversation. That seems to be the driving motive that delivered the result in the upper House. Inviting more public contributions and engagement that would drive smart debate and ideas on the best way forward is not the Labor Government's objective.

The bill is being rushed through the Parliament, and we will be the poorer for lack of effective scrutiny. The Opposition has considered the bill and will propose amendments in the upper House, which I hope will be supported. However, a review of the bill in the other place would have considered the views of all interested parties, not just those favoured by Labor, The Greens and some Independents. My preference would have been to take the time to get this right. Meaningful consultation considers a wide cross-section of the community. Respecting the rights of parents and carers is a critical factor too. Sadly, that ship has sailed, and a public inquiry is no longer an option. The Opposition will move a number of amendments, and I seek consensus to genuinely achieve an acceptable outcome.

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (16:57): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. From the outset, it is incredibly important to note that the bill intends to protect some of the most vulnerable in our society, and I support that. Every individual matters. Every person I speak with agrees that no person should be subjected to conversion practices. I thank the member for Sydney for raising this issue in Parliament. His contribution in this place has been disproportionate to one member. I can only hope that when my time here is done, I might have made a similarly disproportionate contribution, in a positive sense, to that of the member for Sydney. This Government bill attempts to do two things. On the one hand, it protects individuals from practices that target individuals, seeking to change or suppress their sexual identity or the way they identify, distinct from their biological sex. On the other hand, it protects parental rights and freedom of religion and its expression. While some might regard these rights as competing, they can coexist. Indeed, the bill goes some way to addressing that. I will comment on that in my remarks.

It is my hope that this debate is not one that is used to vilify others based upon their views, because one's position on this bill should not form the basis on which we assess each other's character; rather, there are nuances and subtleties that we need to consider and which I hope all members in this place will do their best to address with sensitivity. The conversation around this bill in this Chamber and in our communities must be conducted with respect, compassion, dignity and the finding of as much common ground as possible—a sincere attempt to limit issues that divide so that we might be stronger as a community.

Over recent days I have received hundreds of emails and phone calls. In recent times, I have had countless conversations with individuals who feel strongly about this bill. I thank representatives of Equality Australia, faith groups and residents for taking the time to carefully explain their views, concerns and the evidentiary basis for their positions.

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

Public Interest Debate

REGIONAL CRIME

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:01): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Opposition has called for a parliamentary inquiry into the regional crime crisis gripping our State.
- (2) Notes that this escalating situation requires a statewide, whole-of-government response.
- (3) Notes the Minns Labor Government's 12-month trial in a single regional town is not the solution to a statewide crisis.
- (4) Notes that everyone has a right to feel safe in their home, no matter where they live.
- (5) Notes the Minns Labor Government's proposed bill does not address serious indictable offences such as domestic violence related assault and knife crimes.
- (6) Condemns the police Minister's comments in budget estimates where she referred to a parliamentary inquiry into regional crime as a "talkfest" and "waste of time".
- (7) Calls on the Minns Labor Government to listen to key stakeholders like the NSW Police Association, Country Mayors Association, Country Women's Association of NSW and NSW Farmers and support a parliamentary inquiry into regional crime.

Crime in regional, rural and remote areas of this State is arguably one of the biggest issues facing our communities today. Regional and rural crime has overtaken the topics of conversation around the dinner table. The statistics have blown out of proportion to what we are seeing in metropolitan areas. Crime has been on the front page of 52 newspaper stories over the last 30 days alone. I make it very clear that our cops are doing everything they can. They are not the problem here. Regional and rural policing services around 789,940 square kilometres of land in New South Wales—99 per cent of our land. That is an area bigger than the whole of Turkey. We have a Government that has been ignoring most of this State since being elected when it comes to law and order in New South Wales. The NSW Police Force does not have the officers or resourcing to adequately cover that expanse of land. It is not possible.

The New South Wales judicial system does not have the right laws to properly penalise those who are fuelling the crime crisis. All we have from this Government is a weak bill that addresses only two offences. It does not even address serious indictable offences such as domestic violence-related assaults and knife crimes. I do not think Government members fully understand what is occurring. The Opposition has been raising this issue in this place and across our communities for over the past six months, yet Labor members are just switching on. They are only just starting to actively listen to our communities. Why are they just starting to listen? Because it has been brought to their attention by the media. It is only in the past few weeks that we have seen any action from the Government or the police Minister in this space. Government members should hang their heads in shame. They have failed the people of regional New South Wales. They have failed the people of this State.

Ms Anna Watson: Where were you for 12 years?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: How would you feel if you arrived home to find a knife-wielding man in your driveway who was ready to stab you as soon as you get out of your car? How would you feel after receiving a phone call from the police that your small business, that you have put blood, sweat and tears into all your life and all your savings, had been broken into and everything had been smashed to pieces and stolen—not for the first or second time, but the third time? How would you feel if you woke up to find six masked criminals in your house who were rummaging through your jewellery and belongings and taking off in your car? How would you feel if that was a daily reality that was being experiencing in your backyard?

It is hard to comprehend if that has not actually happened to you, but I would like to assume that the Government members I am looking at now have enough heart and soul to imagine how regional people are feeling. That those opposite try to understand why regional people are not sleeping at night, why they are barricading their doors in the evening and why they travel only in groups. That they know why regional people are refusing to invest any further in the community in which they live because now they are too afraid to live there. To live in fear is to not live at all. Everyone has a right to feel safe in their community, no matter where they live.

We have reached boiling point. This escalating situation requires a statewide, whole-of-government response right now—not a 12-month trial in a single town, not a talkfest. We need a swift parliamentary inquiry to fully understand what is causing this issue and how to address it most effectively. The package delivered by Labor this week falls drastically short of what is needed. The worst part about this lacklustre package is that the Government did not even do because it cared. It was forced into doing it after six months of nagging from the

Opposition, six months of victims coming forward and six months of people sharing their stories. We saw six months of no action from the New South Wales Labor Government.

I draw the attention of the House to the Minister's response to this crisis—that is, when she does respond. Most of the time we find that the Minister is hiding during times of trouble. But during budget estimates, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism labelled a parliamentary inquiry into a devastating crisis that is gripping regional and rural New South Wales as a complete "talkfest". She said it would be a "waste of time". If that is the attitude of the police Minister in the Government, regional communities have very little hope. But the Government is good at trying to take credit for other programs introduced by the former Government. The Government has ignored the calls of the bush and organisations. A parliamentary inquiry is needed to tackle rising crime in regional and rural New South Wales. The Wild West was a time when governance was lacking. We are finding ourselves back there today because of lack of action by the New South Wales Labor Government.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (17:07): My contribution to this public interest debate will be brief. Regional youth crime is a serious matter that needs a whole-of-community and government response. The Opposition would have us believe that this issue has arisen only in the past six to 12 months—since the Minns Government was elected. I have been looking at the statistics relating to motor vehicle thefts over the past five years, but I cannot go into them all because I have limited time. In 2018, it was 51 per cent; in 2021, it was 56 per cent—

Mr Dugald Saunders: Of what?

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: A percentage of the total number of crimes.

Mr Adam Crouch: We are talking about regional crimes.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: This is regional—it is from the mayors association. In 2022 it was 57 per cent; and in 2023 it dropped down to 56 per cent. This issue occurring over the past five years is a worrying trend. There is no doubt about it. But it was an issue under the previous Government as well, and the Coalition's lack of action over the past five years brought us to this situation. The Government is taking this matter seriously and has adopted a suite of measures to address regional youth crime. On 12 March the Government announced a \$26.2 million package of reforms and initiatives to support community safety and wellbeing in regional New South Wales, with a focus on strengthening early intervention and prevention programs for young people.

Mr Michael Kemp: Where is Moree?

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: I am coming to that. There are reports of an emerging phenomenon of offenders posting recordings of their offending behaviour, particularly motor vehicle offending, on social media. This performance crime may encourage others, specifically young people, to engage in similar activity. The reforms aim to address the increased rate of offending and community safety concerns through three key elements. Yesterday the Government adopted legislative changes to strengthen bail laws and introduce a new offence for disseminating material to advertise an offender's involvement in or the commission of targeted serious offences. These changes are targeted and designed to stop specific offending behaviour by certain young people who repeatedly engage in serious break and enter and motor vehicle crimes.

It is well known that Moree has the highest rates of youth crime in New South Wales. Accordingly, the Government will invest \$13.4 million in a targeted response in Moree to address crime, support young people and improve community safety. These measures in Moree will act as a pilot program and, if the approach proves successful, will inform actions to address similar concerns in other regional communities. Young Aboriginal people will be linked to Indigenous organisations, Elders, and cultural and family supports from their own communities with skilled, qualified, trained and consistent staff members on site 24/7, providing child-safe care.

As Chair of the Legislative Assembly's Committee on Law and Safety, I advise the House that the committee has adopted a new inquiry into community safety in regional and rural communities. The member for Bathurst, too, is a member of the committee. The inquiry will investigate the drivers of youth crime in the regions and the actions the Government is taking and can take to improve community safety. The inquiry will have regard to the Government's commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal people. The committee is accepting public submissions until 31 May 2024. To read the inquiry's terms of reference and to make a submission, people should visit the committee's webpage.

Mr Richie Williamson: Are you having a hearing in Casino?

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: It is not a laughing matter. These reforms will help protect the community and significantly lift support for young people and disadvantaged communities and were informed by months of engagement with regional communities across New South Wales. This is a serious matter, and the Government is taking all avenues to address this issue. I thank the House.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:13): It is hot off the presses. Finally there will be some action, after we have been calling for it, as the member for Bathurst pointed out, for six months.

Mr Edmond Atalla: Why did the Coalition not do anything for the last five years?

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS: I acknowledge the interjection of the member. He should focus more on how the Committee on Law and Safety, which he chairs, will actually help the people of regional New South Wales. I bring to the attention of the House and all regional New South Wales that last night I handed to the Premier's office a letter signed by every Nationals member in this place, many of whom are behind me, urging him to hear the calls for help from residents and families of our communities and every other bush community in the State, about escalating crime. That letter reads in small part:

The NSW Nationals are calling for a Parliamentary Inquiry into regional crime to give regional communities a voice, and shine a light on the long-lasting emotional, financial and often physical scars of regional crime.

This would allow your government to formulate a whole-of-government response to benefit communities experiencing the same issues as those in Moree.

As we have just heard from the member for Mount Druitt, an inquiry has been formed to look at things more closely. We would all say it is about time. It is good to see that the Government has finally started to listen to what we have been saying for months now and started on a pathway like we have been calling it on to do for a long time.

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

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS: An inquiry will allow us to look at the broader picture. The harsh truth is that, if you live in a regional area, you or someone you know has been impacted by crime. We have heard of countless instances of violent assaults, home invasions, break-ins, robberies and vehicle theft, so much so that these stories are becoming the shocking norm. As regional MPs, we all understand this. It is part of our lives. It is happening in my backyard and the backyards of several of my colleagues. Our constituents are left in the middle of it all. They feel anxious in their own homes, with nowhere safe to go. After the launch of our regional crime website, we have already had over a hundred submissions. Regionalcrime.com.au is where to share the stories. Here is some of what the people in my community had to say:

Us locals have had enough we don't feel safe in our own homes anymore.

This type of crime is happening all over Dubbo and is creating fear amongst our elderly. They don't deserve to live in fear.

When you go to bed at night and have to go through a list to check everything is locked and double check all security cameras at work and home, it's no way to live.

This crime is dangerous, a complete waste of everyone's time, resources and money. Please do all you can to help stop this.

So we are doing everything we can to make sure that this Government realises there is a way forward, by actually listening to people in regional areas. They are some of the stories from people in my electorate who have come face to face with the issue. One of them is Mike Blake, who is 84 and was stabbed in broad daylight outside his home. He was going about his day on a normal Wednesday afternoon. He moved his car towards his carport, near his house, where he was confronted in his garage by a young man armed with a 300-millimetre-long knife. In a matter of milliseconds, Mike was brutally attacked. He suffered two stab wounds on his left side and lacerations to his arm. He is lucky to be alive. That is the terrifying reality for many regional towns right now. Dubbo is an incredibly great place to live, with so many things going for it, but it needs a government that understands.

I acknowledge that the Premier made a short visit to Moree last month, but the grasp of this problem extends much further than just one town. For example, my colleague Sarah Mitchell has shared chilling stories from her family and friends in Gunnedah. One instance happened to a married mum in her forties, who woke up in the middle of the night to three masked offenders with large knives standing in her home. Her daughters woke up to find their mother being threatened. The 12-year-old locked herself in her room and called her dad. On that phone call, she told him, "I know Mum is alive because I can still hear her screaming." Thankfully, no-one was hurt. There are so many instances.

The member for Mount Druitt needs to take this seriously. He does not need to be sledging people who have written in and talked about their bad scenarios. He needs to listen and take note of what is being said. As we have heard, the inquiry will not report back until February of 2025. The question now is what measures will be put in place from now. I am sure my colleagues will keep asking the question. In the interim, we have one solution for Moree. What about all of the other towns and the other things that need to happen? Until February 2025, when the committee will report back, what else will the Government do?

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:18): When I first heard the calls for the parliamentary inquiry into youth crime, I agreed with the calls. I agreed with the Country Women's Association and the country mayors

and my colleague the member for Clarence. I heard him on the ABC, as I do when I am driving around the electorate. I knew that they were important calls, but an inquiry is one part of what we have to do to address youth crime. A parliamentary inquiry is great because we can gather all the evidence and everybody in the community will get a voice and be heard, but we need to do much more. I had these conversations with my colleagues because I live in an area where there was a youth crime meeting. It was called in Goonellabah. There were a couple of hundred people. The Federal member, the mayor and I attended. We were all doing our best to back in the cops, who are doing a terrific job, but a lot more needs to happen.

The other day I said that we inherited a lot of machinery of government that does not work in a collaborative way. There are many agencies that work with youth and in the community, but do they work together? No, a lot of them do not, and there was no compulsion at the time for that to happen. It takes a long time to turn that around. Agencies that are tasked with helping youth close at five o'clock. They do not work on weekends or in the school holidays. As local members, we attend Community Safety Precinct Committee meetings—or local crime meetings, as I call them—which are run in local police stations and other locations. The police always tell us that they have a real problem in school holidays and on weekends. We have to fix those issues. We cannot fix them with a parliamentary inquiry, but we can hear more about them.

They are the issues that I have been raising, not issues about who said or did what. The statistics show that between 2021 and 2022 youth crime rose by 7 per cent. We were not in Government then. I am not having a crack at those opposite, but I mention those statistics because I am familiar with them. Even back in 2015 and 2016, 63.4 per cent of youth reoffended. The recidivism rate was that high. Was a lot done about it? No, but now we can all work together to make sure that something is done. Members in this place are adults and should act like adults by taking responsibility for the youth in their communities.

At the local crime meeting, my community asked for the bail laws to be strengthened. The Minns Government has done that by introducing the Bail and Crime Amendment Bill 2024, which has passed this House. Some members in this place may say that it is not strong enough or does not do certain things, but it does make a significant change. I have worked in the courts and in juvenile justice as a lawyer representing youth, and it is not easy. The bill will make a change. A young man called Bradley Walker—he does not mind me naming him—who attended the local crime meeting in Goonellabah, was one of those youths. He spent a lot of years in prison. At the meeting Bradley said, "Did prison help me? No, it didn't." It helped the people in the community because he was not offending—he said that—but it did not change the facts.

As a Parliament, we have to do a hell of a lot more. Part of the Minns Government's package announced this week was a \$12.9 million investment to fund a new range of statewide regional crime prevention measures: expansion of Youth Action Meetings, or YAMs, in nine police districts; expansion of the Safe Aboriginal Youth Patrol Program; and continuation of the rollout of justice reinvestment grants. In my community I am leading a meeting on justice reinvestment. I hope not only Lismore can benefit but also somehow communities across the region. Normally it is locally based. I say to members opposite, and to the member for Bathurst in particular, that I know what it is like for people and I feel for those who are scared to be in their homes. The Government is doing everything it can. It is not my intention to sledge those opposite by saying, "What did you do when the statistics rose?" I just want members to have a civil debate about the issue and I want us to fix it by working together.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (17:23): I am so delighted that Opposition members have finally got what we have been asking for—not only us but also the groups that come to us to represent them in this place, including the Country Mayors Association, local councils and the Country Women's Association. They have all advocated on this issue and said, "We have a serious problem, and we need it addressed." It concerns me that the Government's first response to their request was that it does not need to listen to them. It deliberately said to the community, "We do not need to listen to you about the important issues that you are facing." That was the first response.

Mr Edmond Atalla: That is not true.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: It is true. We have had lots of letters and correspondence calling for an inquiry. The Minister's response to that correspondence was "We do not need a parliamentary inquiry or politicians on Macquarie Street to tell us that there is more work to do." That was the first response. We are here to make things better for our communities.

Mr Edmond Atalla: Absolutely. The Government is here to do what the Opposition did not do.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: It is okay to start blaming the Opposition, but when communities come forward and tell the Government that there is an issue, the Government has to listen. But it seems that this Government has an aversion to asking communities for their views and listening to their responses. I thank the member for Lismore for her contribution. It is fine to strengthen the bail laws—that is a great outcome but there

is more to be done on that—but what is important is a holistic response. Some great programs are running in communities but they need to be funded and recognised. My local PCYC has limited funding. Police officers are doing wonderful jobs with some very troubled youths, but they are reaching into their own pockets to buy kids work boots or help them get job interviews because those kids cannot afford the programs. The Government can take credit for the RISEUP program, but there must be funding to make programs like that one a success.

Importantly, an inquiry enables members to listen to communities, to find out what is being done, what programs are successful and how organisations can help communities to tackle regional crime so that people are not living in fear. It is abhorrent that someone does not feel safe in their own home. We have to ensure that we propose the right strategies based on proper data and evidence so that we can support funding programs that will tackle the problems and get them fixed. I congratulate the communities and organisations that have lobbied to ensure that the inquiry takes place. I hope that we get a lot of input from them and the information we need to get the right programs up and running to holistically address the crime in our communities.

I thank the local police officers for their work. It is an enormous job. I have great relationships with some of the police in my community. They must be congratulated. The Nationals supports our communities and wants to ensure that people feel safe. Today is a great day for our communities because we are ensuring that their voices are heard. We want to make our communities safe again and ensure that programs are given the right amount of funding to achieve the best outcomes. The Government has our absolute guidance in this regard.

Mr Clayton Barr: You can't say the word support?

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Absolutely, we are here to support. We are all about our communities. I thank the member for Cessnock for acknowledging the work that we have done to ensure that our communities are heard. It is important that we work together in our society to ensure that our communities are safe and protected and to ensure that our young people are nurtured, are put on pathways to great futures and are not beholden to criminal elements or go down the wrong pathways. We want to support our police to ensure that we have strong communities.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:28): Sadly, I hear the drums beating. Members on the other side of the House started fanning the flames of fear as soon as they got into opposition. They speak as if crime in regional New South Wales did not exist until March 2023.

Mrs Wendy Tuckerman: That would be a silly thing to say.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Goulburn, because that would be a silly thing to say. I am not sure if she was in the Chamber for the introduction of the motion by the former police Minister, the member for Bathurst. I was sitting opposite him in the Chamber convinced that crime only started in March 2023 in regional New South Wales. I know I will run out of time because I have a heck of a lot to say. Therefore, I move:

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

- (1) Notes that everyone has a right to feel safe in their home, no matter where they live.
- (2) Supports the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety's inquiry into community safety in regional and rural communities.
- (3) Notes that the New South Wales Government has taken action to address regional crime through legislative reform, \$12.9 million in regional crime prevention initiatives and a place-based response in Moree.
- (4) Notes the inaction of the former Liberal-Nationals Government in tackling the regional crime crisis, including its inactivity in implementing the findings from the 2018 report of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety inquiry into the adequacy of youth diversionary programs in New South Wales.

I acknowledge that the member for Tweed, who is in the Chamber, was the chair of the Law and Safety Committee inquiry. I acknowledge that the member for Cootamundra was the deputy chair for the latter part of that inquiry. I commend their report to the House—there's about 250 pages of it. That report identifies the complexity of the problems that we are dealing with. It identifies all of the same things that have been brought up in debates in this House over the past couple of days. It is an excellent report and members should read it.

As well as the 60 recommendations, there is a Government response—and this is where I begin to despair at why I am here. For the past 15 or 20 minutes I have listened to the debate while reading the report at the same time, and I am wondering. I want the community watching the debate at home—hi, Mum—to understand that this Chamber is a stage. Actors come on—we play our roles and do what we do. But in reality what is happening in this place today is that members opposite are fanning the flames of fear and pretending that they have no responsibility for where we are. "Oh my! If only we were in a position to do something about this. If only we had the opportunity to take action." Well, they did, for 12 years!

Mr Dugald Saunders: And we did.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Not just that, member for Dubbo. I now know that members opposite have not read the report or the response. How do I know that? It is because the response—which does not even have an author's name; that is how much members opposite care—says, "We don't need to follow the 60 recommendations because we're already doing everything." The report is excellent. It talks about dental care, mental health, drug abuse support, more support for education, getting kids into early education and diversionary tactics. Those are the all-encompassing things that we have to do. It is an excellent report, and we need to support more of its recommendations.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (17:33): I was not going to make a contribution to the public interest debate, but I heard the former police Minister, the member for Bathurst, introduce it and felt obliged to put some things on the record. I am looking at it from an independent perspective; I am not here to take sides. But I honestly cannot believe the audacity of the members of the previous Government in bringing this public interest debate to the House. I talked about the issue last night and I agree with the member for Cessnock. As someone who spent 15 or 16 years in the local and children's courts before coming to this place, every day I heard things, saw things and got a feel for our regional communities. Most of it was in the regional areas of New South Wales. In the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] statistics over the past four or five years, the crime categories across regional New South Wales have increased dramatically—exponentially disproportionate to what has occurred in metropolitan Sydney.

There has clearly been a disconnect in policing resources in regional New South Wales, not just for 12 months but for many years. I said in my contribution last night that I take it back to the re-engineering that occurred back in 2018, which is consistent with the statistics from BOCSAR. At the time I was very critical of the re-engineering by the then Government because I knew—and I was talking to local police, whom I am still very good friends with—that all it did was push the resources further and further afield. It stretched the thin blue line even more across regional New South Wales.

In my electorate, Forbes has police stations that do not have 24-hour policing. Cowra does not have 24-hour policing. The member for Cootamundra has been very passionate about getting that for her community, as I am for Forbes. Many members in this Chamber, especially regional members, do not have police stations manned 24/7 in their communities, and it has been like that for a long time. In recent times, the police that work in those areas are often being called away to the major towns and centres because they have to cover shortages at those locations. We saw the number of police drop under the watch of the previous Government.

I certainly welcome the police Minister's announcement that the Government will pay recruits to go to the police academy, because that is one way to create an incentive for people to take six months, 12 months or whatever it might be to do their police training. I heard what the police Minister said in question time this week about the significant uplift that has caused in recruitment. I appreciate that this issue has been specifically addressed in Moree, and I note that the member for Northern Tablelands has been a very strong advocate for his community. I fail to recall a time that a Premier went out to a regional town like Moree so quickly after having the issues identified and worked with the local member—who is not someone from his own party—and the local community to address those concerns. Yes, we can always do more, and the Government is now the Government. Government members need to do more, and they are.

I am part of the committee, as are the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Bathurst, the member for Prospect and the member for Cabramatta. We are committed to getting out into the regions and hearing firsthand from those communities—from the local police, from the local stakeholders and from the local authorities—to find out what is really causing a lot of the issues in those communities. We hope to bring that back to the Parliament and get some meaningful change. I am looking at it through an objective lens, not as someone in either camp. It is not entirely correct to apportion the blame for all of the issues on the current Government when Opposition members had 12 years in government to address all of those concerns. Those things needed to be placed fairly on the record. I will be supporting the amendment from the Government.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (17:38): By leave: Those of us who live in rural and regional areas do not need a report on crime stats to tell us what we already know, and that is that crime in this State is far worse in the regions than in Sydney. A quick glance at some recent media headlines paints the picture. One from the *Daily Advertiser* in Wagga Wagga, just to the south of my electorate, read, "Man shot, another threatened with gun during late-night home invasion." Another from the *Daily Advertiser* is, "Man to face court accused of stealing delivery car, taking it on joyride." Another one was from the *Central Western Daily* in Orange: "Teenagers arrested in broad daylight after homes broken into and cars stolen"—and I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Orange, who is in the Chamber. I could go on, but I think the incidence of crime in the regions has been firmly established. That is not up for discussion. Now we need discussions around lasting solutions to the

ongoing problem. Those solutions can be found only through a bipartisan parliamentary inquiry into regional crime.

The Country Mayors Association [CMA] belled the cat last October. The CMA shone a spotlight on the fact that crime is far worse in rural and regional areas than in places like Sydney. The chair of the CMA at the time, Jamie Chaffey—

Mr Adam Marshall: A good man.

Ms STEPH COOKE: He is a good man. Chaffey said, "We in the regions are second-class citizens when it comes to the safety of our communities." With the support of the Police Association of New South Wales and the NSW Farmers, the CMA quite rightly identified the need for an inquiry to get to the bottom of the problem and identify the solutions we need to combat it. I and other members—I note the member for Bathurst and the member for Northern Tablelands; there are others among the colleagues sitting behind me today—offered our full and unwavering support from day one. To put it bluntly, it is an absolute no-brainer. I am so relieved that today the Government has stopped resisting the calls for an inquiry and that we will now get the chance to ventilate these issues.

A quick glance at the parliamentary website shows an interesting array of subjects that have been deemed worthy of inquiry. They include the impact of the Rozelle interchange, the Ethical Clothing Extended Responsibilities Scheme 2005 and the Sixteenth General Meeting with the Valuer General. That is not to say that those topics are not worthy of inquiry, but it is my view that an inquiry into regional crime meets the criteria of a subject worthy of investigation.

Mr Adam Crouch: It's not a talkfest.

Ms STEPH COOKE: I thank the member. Yes, it is not a talkfest. This is a serious issue and nothing short of a parliamentary inquiry will properly address crime in our regions and get to the bottom of what is causing the antisocial behaviour. It will identify the support services that are already available but are not necessarily connecting up properly, the deterrence measures that are needed, and the appropriate level and allocation of police resources. When it comes to police resources, my electorate—which is the size of Switzerland or thereabouts; it is well over 40,000 square kilometres—has 28 police stations across four police districts. Most are one- or two-officer stations. None have the doors open 24/7. The member for Orange noted that he has a similar issue at Forbes. There are 17,000 police officers in this State covering six regions: three metropolitan and three regional. Yet only one-third of those 17,000 officers cover the 90 per cent of land mass in New South Wales that is regional. I argue that is not enough officers and it warrants review.

Finally, I thank each and every member of the NSW Police Force for the work they do 365 days of the year. We are served so well by the police, and we give them our unreserved support. I thank them very much for what they do. As a local member, it is always a pleasure to attend the various activities that the police put on, such as Police Remembrance Day services and awards ceremonies, or just to pop in for a chat. The police do a magnificent job, and I am very proud of all the officers in the Cootamundra electorate and right across the State.

Mr MICHAEL KEMP: I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

Leave not granted.

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON: I seek leave to make a valuable contribution to the debate.

Leave not granted.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate, please.

Leave not granted.

Mr GURMESH SINGH: I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

Leave not granted.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): The will of the House is clear, and I cannot accept further requests for leave to contribute to the debate.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Considering that the member for Cessnock praised my report, I would have thought it would be appropriate that he listen to my contribution.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): Leave is not granted, despite the very eloquent request.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I seek leave to make a valuable contribution, please.

Leave not granted.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): There will be no further requests for leave to contribute to the debate. I call the mover in reply.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:45): In reply: I thank the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Dubbo, the member for Lismore, the member for Goulburn, the member for Cessnock, the member for Orange and the member for Cootamundra for their contributions. I am disappointed that the Government did not allow other contributions to be made on this important topic, when regional and rural crime is an issue in our communities. Other members wanted to tell their stories as well.

I note that during debate on such an important issue, which has been spoken about for the past six months, the police Minister has been absent. The Minister is not present in the Chamber because she is embarrassed and she actually said it was a talkfest. The Minister said that this debate would be a waste of time. I give the Minister some advice. When she talks about law and order in this State, she needs to make sure that she deals with the situation as crime evolves. She has to be proactive. I offer some more advice. She should not just sit on her hands and expect that without doing something about it, the issue will go away. She should not bury her head in the sand. She must address the needs of those communities. She must be proactive in the things that she is doing.

People deserve to feel safe in their homes without the fear of being bashed or knifed in the driveway, or having their car stolen. That is why the Opposition has been calling for a parliamentary inquiry for the past six months. We have always said that we wanted the committee to be bipartisan. We wanted politics to be taken out of it so that the stories of those communities could be heard and we could get to the issues around regional youth crime. We need to understand and acknowledge the severity of these crimes. It has gone to a whole new level. We need to work out how to save our kids and how to actually address and help young people in our communities.

The New South Wales Labor Government is embarrassed. An urgent meeting of the Committee on Law and Safety was called today for 2.00 p.m. Without that meeting, Government members would have had nothing to talk about in this debate. I acknowledge the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Prospect, the member for Orange and the member for Cabramatta. I know that those members want to do the right thing for regional and rural communities. I know that they want to help. Unfortunately, there is a Minister who would be a good gymnast. At the end of day, she does more backflips than anyone else on that side of the House. We need to get to the bottom of the issue of regional youth crime.

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

The House divided.

Ayes53
Noes34
Majority.....19

AYES

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

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

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

NOES

Amon, R

Hodges, M

Singh, G (teller)

NOES

Anderson, K
Ayyad, T
Clancy, J
Cooke, S
Coure, M
Cross, M
Crouch, A (teller)
Dalton, H
Di Pasqua, S
Griffin, J
Henskens, A

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

Sloane, K
Speakman, M
Taylor, M
Toole, P
Tuckerman, W
Ward, G
Williams, L
Williams, R
Williamson, R
Wilson, F

PAIRS

Minns, C

Preston, R

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

*Bills***CONVERSION PRACTICES BAN BILL 2024****Second Reading Debate**

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (17:58): I continue my contribution to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I thank the representatives from Equality Australia, faith groups and residents for taking the time to carefully explain their views, their concerns and the evidentiary basis for their positions. Without their respective counsel and guidance, I would not be able to make this contribution. I have pored over the detail of the bill, questioned stakeholders on their views, considered similar Acts in other States and applied my own experience as a lawyer in dissecting and understanding the impact of the bill. There are wide and varied views about its impact, if the bill were to become law. That said, the manner and spirit in which those views have been expressed by all stakeholders, both in favour of and questioning the bill, has been respectful and from a place of tolerance and love. I commend all parties for that.

On the one hand, the bill seeks to protect some of the most vulnerable in our communities. It is evident that mental health challenges and suicide attempts amongst those the bill seeks to protect are disproportionately high, and that is not acceptable. On the other hand, residents and stakeholder groups have conveyed to me their concern that the bill might impinge upon their freedom of religious expression or their ability to raise their kids as they deem to be in the child's best interests. After all, in my view, no-one loves or wants what is best for a child more than their parent. Proposed sections 3 (3) and (4) provide a level of protection for parental rights and freedom of religious expression, including in religious schools. Some residents expressed concerns that the bill would legislate or mandate a medical practice of gender-affirming care. Whilst the Victorian Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021 seems to do that in some sense, the bill does not mandate gender-affirming care. In my view, it is not appropriate for legislators to prescribe forms of medical care in what is an incredibly complex space, and the bill does not do so.

The bill can be made better. We can protect the vulnerable, we can safeguard parental rights and we can ensure the freedom of religious expression is maintained. I turn to what we can do to improve the bill. Under proposed section 3 (4) (d), parents discussing matters relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion with their children is exempted from the conversion practices ban. However, what is not expressly included in that proposed section is carers, relatives, caregivers or other significant persons. Excluding those kinds of individuals from the exemption means that, for example, a grandparent might be prohibited from discussing with a grandchild matters that the child's parent has permitted them to discuss. That could see grandparents liable to civil or criminal action. Parental and family rights are intended to be protected under the bill, so that proposed section ought to be amended to address that matter. That also recognises the diverse nature of the family unit within modern Australia.

Proposed section 3 (3) (c) has circular references that create confusion regarding exemptions relating to prayer and an expression of a religious principle. That causes vagaries and potential challenges in the interpretation and meaning of the legislation. That can be rectified by amending proposed section 3 (4) (a) to explicitly reference prayer and religious practices. The third way in which the bill can be amended is that there is no exemption allowing parents to set household rules without falling foul of the legislation. That is problematic. It can leave parents open to civil or, in serious cases, criminal complaints by an aggrieved child. That does not seem to be the intent of the bill, and there should be an explicit subsection in proposed section 3 (4) to ensure parents' rights to set household rules are protected, consistent with the intention of the bill and to avoid any confusion in the implementation of the Act.

Under the bill, if an unmarried individual asks their clergy for prayer to help them suppress their desires for sex before marriage, that prayer might be a banned conversion practice. If a complaint was made under the Act—and I appreciate that is unlikely—either at the time of the prayer or at some later time, for example, if the individual ceased to be an adherent to that faith and was aggrieved from their experience, the clergy might have committed an offence under the Act. It would not seem to me that that is intended by the bill. That challenge can be overcome by explicitly inserting words in proposed section 3 (3) (b) to provide that it is not a banned conversion practice if an individual is meeting a reasonable or genuine request of an individual. I support the above amendments. I would also support a parliamentary inquiry. However, I know the Parliament has decided against that course. That would have allowed further investigation of those issues.

I appreciate that the Government has consulted widely, but in the view of some—not all—not widely enough. That is the substance of the amendments that I am assured will be moved by my colleagues in the other place. I support passage of the bill in this place so that the other place—the Legislative Council—can do its work, including dealing with the above amendments. There is one additional matter I raise in making this contribution. A fundamental principle in civil matters before courts and tribunals is the concept of *restitutio ad integrum*, or total reinstatement—that is, the fundamental purpose of proceedings or a civil process is to put a person in no worse a position than before a harm took place. In our common law system, there is a requirement for harm before proceedings are to be maintained. Sound policy considerations exist for that principle—for example, ensuring that our courts, tribunals or government agencies are applying their resources effectively.

In the case of the civil actions available under the bill, there is no requirement for any level of harm before the civil regime can be activated. It is concerning that a technical breach of the Act could be pursued, and the weight of adversarial processes could be visited upon citizens without any evidence of harm being required. I appreciate there are circumstances in which the Anti-Discrimination Board can summarily reject or dispense with complaints. I also appreciate that there is an educational purpose in complaints. However, as a safeguard, there should be an onus on a complainant to show a level of harm before visiting a court or tribunal system upon a complainant and the complained-about person. That provides added protection from frivolous complaints. *[Extension of time]*

My concerns have not been stridently pursued by stakeholder groups, so I do not seek to pursue them on behalf of my community because I am here to represent them. Of course, if such amendments are proposed by others, my inclination is to view them favourably. As I have said, it is incredibly important to note that the bill intends to protect some of the most vulnerable in our society, and we should do that. The bill certainly makes efforts to protect the vulnerable, to protect parental rights, and to protect freedom of religion and its expression. Those rights and protections can coexist, and the foreshadowed abovementioned amendments will make the bill stronger. I thank the House for its indulgence, and I support the passage of the bill to the other place so that the amendments may be considered.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (18:06): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, which I support. I start with a personal story. As many members know, my community in Prospect has the highest concentration of practising Catholics and Orthodox Christians. It is a socially conservative area, and I represent that community. This is a message for them and for the Parliament. As a young Catholic in my late teens, for many years I could never really understand why Christ would ever want to come back. He arrived on Earth 2,000 years ago and we beat him, crucified him and killed him. Why the hell would he want to come back? It is something people do not often grapple with, but I did for many years. A Dominican priest in Armidale once said to me, "Well, it's pretty simple, Hugh. It is because of love. It is because he loves people so much. That is why he can forgive anything, and he wants to come back." That changed my perception of what it means to be a Catholic.

The whole Christian faith is based on love and care for each other—care for human beings. It is not about judgement. It is not about attacking. It is about care. The faith leaders I have spoken to—and I will not speak for them because I am not a Buddhist, a Hindu or a Muslim—say similar things; their faiths are based on care for people and love. I look at the legislation through that lens. Taking off my Catholic hat, I was a lawyer before

I came to Parliament. Human rights, social teaching and social justice are very important to me. I also look at it that way. When I am a lawmaker in this Chamber, I view every piece of legislation in the same way. The discussion about the bill that has eventually come before us was very divisive. People took different sides. But the bill, as it stands before us now, has brought all the groups together.

I will talk about the groups particular to my area in Western Sydney. The legislation was developed with Faith NSW representatives from the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, the Hindu Council of Australia and the Australian National Imams Council. The bill has powerful protections for people of faith that go far beyond our election commitments—far beyond. I will state them so that people who are attacking this legislation can hear them. The bill protects the expression of a religious belief; it protects religious teachings; it protects the expression that religious beliefs ought to be followed; it protects the right to prayer; it protects discussions between parents and their children about sexuality and gender; it protects the rules of religious orders, for example, the celibacy of priests; and it protects general school rules. Let us be clear about what it does not do. It does not stop someone from telling a young person not to have sex before marriage. It does not stop someone from counselling a married person not to have an affair. While there have been some wild allegations made about the bill, Faith NSW has said:

While the bill is not perfect, our communities' concerns have been heard and we consider this a genuine attempt ... to balance the interests of many affected stakeholders.

The New South Wales Government has learnt from the mistakes made by other States, especially Victoria. We do not want to make the same mistakes, and we believe with this bill we are looking after faith groups and our LGBTQ+ community, because they need to be cared for too. Those who believe in human rights, care and love, like I do, will agree with me on that.

I will now address the bill in detail. Homelessness, PTSD, suicidal ideation, addiction, physical injury, poor economic participation, distrust of health professionals, impaired civic participation, social isolation—these are the effects of conversion practices felt by members of the LGBTQ+ community across New South Wales. According to the 2020 report of the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination, "conversion therapy can amount to torture". From talking therapy and camps to exorcisms, aversion therapy, starvation tactics, force-feeding, isolation and physical or sexual violence, conversion practices are dangerous and there is no room for them in New South Wales.

The bill prohibits practices directed to changing or suppressing sexual orientation or gender identity. By creating criminal offences and a civil complaints scheme, the bill creates a framework to protect our LGBTQ+ community, protect qualified medical practitioners giving advice, preserve religious freedoms, and protect parents and families providing the guidance they have every right to give to their children. As Parliamentary Secretary and as the member for Prospect, I am proud to stand with the Minns Government to support this bill. First and foremost, I thank all those with lived experience of conversion practices who bravely shared their stories. Without their insights, we may not be standing in this place today advocating for such a balanced and informed bill.

I thank Premier Chris Minns, Minister Stephen Kamper, Matt Shaw from his office, the Attorney General and his staff for the ongoing discussions and leadership that have led us to this bill. I also thank the Department of Communities and Justice and the NSW Ministry of Health, which established a joint working group to undertake targeted consultation with health, education, legal and government sectors, faith and multicultural organisations, LGBTQ+ community advocates and victim-survivors. Almost 150 stakeholders were engaged and over 130 submissions received. This enabled development of a carefully balanced, fit-for-purpose legislative framework. Rather than just replicating what happens in other jurisdictions, this bill charts a path to address the needs of New South Wales—to balance effective prohibition and respect freedom of expression and religious belief.

I turn now to the amendments made by the bill. The bill introduces provisions to prevent LGBTQ+ conversion practices and provide recourse for future victims. It focuses on three objectives: making it a criminal offence to deliver a conversion practice to another person with the intention of changing or suppressing their sexual orientation or gender identity; establishing a civil scheme to ban a person from delivering a conversion practice, aligned with the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977; and increasing community awareness and education. First, it is key to consider how conversion practices are defined in this reform. Clause 3 (1) of the bill defines a conversion practice using three limbs: first, the conduct must be a practice, treatment or sustained effort; secondly, it must be directed to a person on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity; and, thirdly, it must be directed to change or suppress that person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Drawn from section 93Z of the Crimes Act and section 4 of the Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984, "sexual orientation" is defined as sexual orientation towards individuals of the same sex, a different sex, both sexes or a lack of sexual attraction to any individual. "Gender identity" is defined as "the gender-related identity

of an individual, which may or may not correspond with the individual's designated sex at birth", recognising that gender identities also occur on a spectrum. Part 3 of the bill establishes the criminal law response. The principal offence is provided in clause 5 (1) of the bill. It also contains three elements: first, a person over 18 years delivers a conversion practice to an individual; secondly, the person must intend to change or suppress the other person's sexual orientation or gender identity; and, thirdly, the individual to whom the conversion practice is delivered must experience physical or mental harm that endangers life or is substantial.

The second element encases the mens rea of the offence. Importantly, this does not turn on harm, as many conversion practice providers operate with the misguided view that they may be helping and not harming. The third element of the offence is solely a question of fact as to whether harm occurred to the requisite standard. Substantial harm takes its common law definition to mean more than trivial or inconsequential harm. It must be more than taking offence, hurt feelings or simple humiliation. [*Extension of time.*]

If all three elements are proven beyond reasonable doubt, a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment may be imposed for this indictable offence. I turn now to the civil response scheme contained in part 4 of the bill, which empowers Anti-Discrimination NSW to accept, decline or refer complaints of conversion practices to a prescribed entity. If a complaint is referred, consent must be obtained from the complainant to ensure that victims have agency in choosing the most suitable reporting pathways. Part 4, division 4 of the bill empowers the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to hear and determine referred complaints. If substantiated, the tribunal may make orders requiring damages, injunctions, steps to redress loss suffered or publication of an apology. Lastly, part 4, division 5 of the bill gives the Anti-Discrimination Board complementary functions to conduct inquiries, investigations and research, and provide education in relation to conversion practices. This ensures that the board can respond holistically to conversion practice issues, without the limitations of a particular complaint.

I now address the concerns of my Prospect constituents. Many people have written to me, and I hope they will continue to do so. I will engage with them over the next 12 months—that is how long it will take before this bill becomes law. I look forward to talking with people in my community and others during that time. As the member for Prospect, I represent a vibrant and diverse multicultural and religious community. We are so fortunate to live in New South Wales, a democracy where all voices are heard and considered. I thank everyone who reached out to voice their valid concerns, which I now aim to clarify. I turn first to parenting rights. This bill will not impinge on parental rights to support young people to explore their identity and values. Under clause 3 (3) (b) of the bill, a person who genuinely facilitates an individual's coping skills, development or identity exploration, including by providing acceptance, support or understanding to the individual, is not carrying out a conversion practice.

Clause 3 (4) (d) of the bill also explicitly provides that parental discussions about sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion are not conversion practices. As to religious beliefs, expressing a belief through sermon, taking offence at religious teachings or seeking guidance through prayer will not be banned by the bill. The exclusion in clause 3 (3) (c) of the bill provides that a conversion practice does not include the expression of a religious belief or principle, as long as it is not directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. Therefore, general conversations around religious beliefs are not conversion practices. The exemptions provided in the bill's open list are not exhaustive, as it is not advisable to legislate every scenario. Ultimately, every case will turn on its facts and merits.

Faith plays an important role in the lives of our Prospect community. As a practising Catholic, I was raised on a core tenet of Catholic social teachings—the golden rule in Matthew 7:12—which reminds us, "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." Though we may come from many places with varied perspectives, it is our obligation to care for the dignity of the human person. We must respect the way people live their lives, and treat them with kindness, empathy and acceptance. The bill is guided by a core principle: all people across New South Wales should be able to live free of practices that cause harm and be protected by evidence-based protections that the community expects, deserves and can rely on. I approach the bill as a Catholic and a lawmaker. This considered legislation upholds commitments to protect prayer and preaching, whilst also preventing the continuation of harmful practices. Astutely described by Monica Doumit, Director of Public Affairs and Engagement for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the religious exemptions in the bill are a "qualified victory for common sense".

Conversion therapy is inherently harmful. It aims to question whether a person has interpreted themselves correctly, undermining their identity and infringing upon their rights. Repetitively telling a person their sexual orientation or gender identity is immoral or the cause of negative life experiences is harmful. Aversion therapies—forcing people to view materials and then exposing them to external negative stimuli like electric shocks, nausea-inducing medication and "corrective" rapes—are harmful. We cannot accept them in New South Wales, and we will not. The bill is necessary to provide greater cohesion and acceptance across our modern society. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:21): On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, acknowledging that my Greens colleagues in this Chamber, the member for Ballina and the member for Balmain, will also contribute to debate. In alignment with The Greens' long-term commitment to championing the rights of the queer community, we absolutely support the end of conversion practices in New South Wales. As a starting point, we must acknowledge that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, gender diverse and queer people exist in all our communities. All members in this place have a responsibility to ensure that no matter where they are, queer people can thrive without fear of discrimination or othering. No matter what space they are in in our communities, they deserve to be recognised and feel safe and supported. But so long as conversion practices are still allowed in this State, all our efforts to act on that responsibility are undermined.

Conversion practices are founded on the damaging falsehood that queer sexuality and gender diversity are disorders that need to be treated. They are extremely harmful practices that masquerade as medical treatment or counselling, and grassroots activists, incredible LGBTQIA+ advocacy organisations, health organisations and human rights advocates have long pushed for them to be outlawed. Outlawing conversion practices in New South Wales is long overdue. Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand have all outlawed them, and Queensland has banned them within healthcare environments. It is time for New South Wales to catch up. With this legislation, we are doing just that.

There is a serious but not uncommon misconception that conversion practices are a thing of the past—something that happened in a bygone era less tolerant than ours. But let us be absolutely clear: Conversion practices are not confined to the history books. They still take place today in communities across New South Wales. Today's conversion practices are varied and their sinister nature is not always immediately apparent. Often, religious organisations disguise their attempts to suppress or convert someone's sexuality or gender expression as "celibacy support groups" or "counselling sessions" that provide "care" to individuals. But make no mistake: There is absolutely nothing "caring" about the practices. They can, and do, cause extensive social, psychological and physical harm.

Equality Australia reported that 4 per cent of LGBTQIA+ Australians aged between 14 and 21 years have experienced, and up to 10 per cent are vulnerable to, conversion practices. In 2022 at least 10 organisations publicly advertised conversion practices in Australia and New Zealand. To understand the harm caused by conversion practices, we simply need to look at the survivor advocates who have courageously come forward to share their stories. I acknowledge the incredible work that Equality Australia has done, putting the voices of some of those survivors into the community and recognising that before its existence, many long-term survivors advocated for this change. Nobody should ever be forced to undergo what those individuals experienced.

The Greens are very pleased to see that the bill expressly deals not only with attempts to change someone's sexuality or gender identity but also with those that shamefully advocate that queer people suppress parts of themselves. In particular, The Greens welcome the bill's inclusion of protections for trans and gender diverse people. Conversion practices can touch all members of the queer community, and in a political climate that is, shamefully and horrifically, increasingly intent on policing trans people and their bodies, we must continue to ensure that trans, gender diverse and non-binary folk are front of mind when changing the law.

I turn now to the substance of the bill. Part 2 defines conversion practices "as a practice, treatment or sustained effort that is directed to an individual on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity with the intention of changing or suppressing that sexual orientation or gender identity". That definition is notably broad, though subclauses (3) and (4) explicitly prevent a number of acts from being deemed a conversion practice. Those acts include parents discussing matters relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion with their children, and general rules in educational institutions. Expressions of belief or principles, including in prayer, that are not part of a practice, treatment or sustained effort directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity are not, under the bill, considered conversion practices. The Greens believe that that exclusion raises significant cause for concern.

We believe that the exclusions are too broad, given that survivors of conversion practices have stressed that homophobic or transphobic beliefs or principles expressed during sermons can cause the same harm as practices specifically directed at an individual. Why should expressions that encourage people to change or suppress their sexual or gender identity be considered less damaging when they are spoken to a room full of people instead of one person alone? Some survivors have said that it was beliefs and principles expressed during religious sermons that made them feel that there was something wrong with their sexuality or gender identity and made them seek out, or feel they needed, conversion practices. To that end, I foreshadow that my Greens colleague in the other place Dr Amanda Cohn will seek to amend the bill to remove clause 3 (3) (c) in its entirety. That will ensure that sermons or prayers that convey the wrongful belief that queer people are somehow broken or less than everyone else are included as conversion practices. I urge the Labor Government to closely consider and support

those sensible amendments. It is not okay for homophobia to be perpetrated in public spaces anywhere in New South Wales.

Part 3 of the bill creates new offences of engaging in conversion practices that cause mental or physical harm, and taking individuals from New South Wales, or engaging persons outside of New South Wales, for conversion practices. Part 4 establishes a civil complaints scheme for individuals or representative bodies, meaning bodies that represent groups of individuals in New South Wales and have the primary object of promoting the group's interests or welfare. Complaints must be made in writing and lodged with the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board.

In cases where a third party makes a complaint on behalf of an individual, the bill requires that the individual be specifically named. It does not set out a process whereby third parties can directly report a suspected conversion practice taking place. In Victoria and New Zealand, any third party who observes conversion practices or other high-risk situations taking place is able to report this to a civil scheme without explicitly identifying the affected individual. That also means that the responsibility for making a complaint does not rest on the survivor alone, which is a critical element.

Accordingly, some survivors have advocated for a similar model in New South Wales that allows any third party who observes conversion practices or high-risk situations to make a complaint, regardless of whether the individual survivor is named or not. That would enable harm to be stopped while an individual or group of individuals is still undergoing conversion practices and would significantly empower the community to take timely action before significant harm may be inflicted. I note that clause 47 of the bill provides an alternative power for the Anti-Discrimination NSW board, by resolution, to carry out investigations on the basis of reports from a third party. However, this is not a clear entry point to the civil complaints scheme.

Conversion practices are rooted in bigotry and discrimination, and banning such horrific acts is a welcome first step towards tackling those harmful attitudes head-on. But what comes next is what matters the most—the step that must be followed by many more steps—that we ensure that survivors of conversion practices receive adequate counselling and that redress of harm is addressed, supported and funded. I acknowledge the incredible work of many survivor advocates and organisations, experts and activists who have brought us to this point. I particularly acknowledge the individuals who have spoken up and shared their stories—sometimes in whole books, advocacy documents and open letters, and sometimes during personal briefings with MPs.

We know that repeating those stories can add to the trauma that people have experienced, but we also know that repeating those stories is the most powerful way to get politicians to listen and act. We cannot ignore the fact that New South Wales still holds some of the worst laws in the country for the LGBTQIA+ community. There is still much work to be done in this space, and The Greens reaffirm our commitment to work with the community, LGBTQIA+ organisations and activists until full equality without exception is realised. [*Quorum called for.*]

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

Business interrupted.

Business of the House

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (18:33): I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that:

- (1) If a division is called during Government business today the division shall be deferred and conducted at 10.30 a.m. tomorrow, Thursday 21 March 2024, and any business before the House at that time to be interrupted and to resume after the division.
- (2) Provide that, during consideration of all remaining business this day, the following motions may not be moved:
 - (a) member be not further heard;
 - (b) member be now heard; and
 - (c) question be now put.
- (3) At the conclusion of Government business today, the House to adjourn without motion moved.
- (4) On Thursday 21 March 2024:
 - (a) community recognition statements permitted for up to 60 minutes; and
 - (b) additional private members' statements permitted.

I advise the House that any member who wishes their private member's statement or community recognition statement not be dealt with today will have it dealt with tomorrow. Any member who wishes to leave and who

has no further business can have those matters dealt with tomorrow. I discussed the matter with the Manager of Opposition Business, and I was going to wait for him to come to the Chamber to hear the motion.

Ms Anna Watson: He is here.

Mr RON HOENIG: He has drawn to my attention that only the Government can move the suspension of standing orders at this particular time. I undertake to the House that the Government will not move any further suspension of standing and sessional orders that would interfere with the resolution of the House, if carried. Is that sufficient?

Mr Alister Henskens: Yes.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:35): I must say I thought the Leader of the House might wait until I got down the stairs, but as quick moving as I am, I am not as quick as I used to be. The New South Wales Parliament is sitting 45 days out of 365 days this year. At 6.35 p.m. the Government is already pulling up stumps. If ever there was an example of a lazy government, this suspension of standing orders is an absolute rolled gold example of that. It is entirely disappointing. The Opposition is ready, willing and able to bat on and deal with this bill tonight, but we obviously do not have the numbers. I am sure the suspension would not have been moved if the Leader of the House did not have the numbers. I make those observations about this suspension of standing orders. I appreciate the Leader of the House indicating that there will be no further suspensions of standing orders moved tonight to ensure that there is good faith in terms of moving the suspension. I appreciate that indication.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (18:37): I do not normally take the bait, but I inform the House that only yesterday the Manager of Opposition Business raised in the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee, and approximately a week ago circulated proposed standing order changes, that the House is sitting for too long and that members are tired. I keep raising with members of the House that the Government is considering changing the calendar to include Friday sitting days, but that is not convenient to certain members of the National Party and nor is it convenient to various regional MPs. In case Opposition members do not know, they should understand that before the sitting calendar is determined by this House, it is provided to the Leader of the Opposition for his concurrence. Just as I sent the sitting calendar to him last year, I sent it to him this year. The Leader of the Opposition has an input. If the Leader of the Opposition considered that the sitting calendar was not satisfactory, no doubt he would have indicated that very clearly to me.

Mr Gareth Ward: How is 45 days satisfactory? It's the lowest number since World War II.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua): Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time.

Mr RON HOENIG: It is wonderful to hear the dulcet tones of the member for Kiama. I hope we are still hearing them in a month. The other issue, as the Opposition well knows—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua): I call the member for Kiama to order for the second time.

Mr RON HOENIG: —is that almost 30 days are taken up with upper House budget estimates hearings, which have eaten into the sitting times. Crossbench members have said pretty firmly to the Government that Ministers in this House need to be accountable to this House. We are realistically considering their suggestions and their requests. I understand the Opposition has its own tensions and the member for Wahroonga has his own ambitions, but he should not stand in this Chamber in an effort to generate—

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point order relates to Standing Order 76, which is on relevance. As much as this stream of consciousness might be interesting to the Leader of the House, he is actually not talking to the suspension motion.

Mr RON HOENIG: I am. I am talking about sitting days.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua): There is no point of order. The Leader of the House has the call.

Mr RON HOENIG: As much as the member for Wahroonga might be braying and complaining about sitting times, these sitting dates were agreed to by the Opposition. Rather than circulating calendars to certain members of the crossbench—the ones he thinks he can get onside—why does he not make a genuine approach to the Government and say, "We want more sitting times. We can do it at this time"? I am sure the Jewish community really appreciates his suggestion, in his draft secret calendar, that the House should sit on holy days of Passover. I can tell him that this Jewish member does not appreciate it. If he is genuine about this, he should raise it with the Government. He should not go sneaking around when he agreed to the calendar in the first place. He is nothing but a hypocrite. He should run his agendas in his party room and not use the procedures of this House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:41): By leave: The Greens support this suspension of standing orders. But I put on record that crossbench members wrote to the Premier in a genuine way raising serious concerns about the lack of sitting weeks and the fact that there will be only 14 days of private members' business this year—and we never heard back. The hoo-ha and grandstanding are not coming from the crossbench. We approached it in a genuine way and got absolutely no response. We have tried multiple tactics now and it appears this is where we are at.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (18:42): By leave: It is a bit of a mea culpa, but I do wish to defend the honour of the Premier. I assisted in the drafting of the crossbench letter that the member for Newtown refers to. We engaged with the Premier and the Leader of the House in relation to our chagrin at the paltry number of days made available for this House to conduct its business—a record low. However, I can update the House that the Premier has recently engaged with myself and for the member for Sydney in some other discussions.

Ms Jenny Leong: There are other members on the crossbench.

Mr GREG PIPER: I say to the member for Newtown that I have not kept it a secret. I have raised it with members of the crossbench. The Premier has engaged with us and is looking at a remedy. I have not been able to provide what that solution might be, but I bring it to the attention of the House that the Premier is dealing with that issue in good faith. If that has not been reported back, I take responsibility for that, but it does look like it will be addressed. Perhaps now we can put this issue to bed and deal with the suspension motion as moved by the Leader of the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

CONVERSION PRACTICES BAN BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Business resumed.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (18:44): I speak on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. This bill has been a long time coming. I acknowledge the many survivors, advocates and organisations that have fought for us to be debating the bill today. I thank the Attorney General for his diligence and attention in bringing this bill to the Parliament, and especially acknowledge the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC; the Minister for Health, the Hon. Ryan Park; and the member for Sydney for their work to bring an end to conversion practices in New South Wales. I note that prior to the 2023 New South Wales State election there was bipartisan support for ending conversion practices. I hope that bipartisan support will continue throughout this debate.

The bill prohibits practices directed to changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. It creates criminal offences where substantial harm is caused and establishes a civil complaints scheme in relation to conversion practices. Amnesty International references the Human Rights Law Centre report *Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice: Responding to LGBT conversion therapy in Australia*, which indicates that 10 per cent of the LGBTIQ+ people in Australia are "vulnerable to harmful conversion therapy practices" and that currently at least 10 organisations are publicly advertising conversion practices in Australia. While conversion practices have a long history in New South Wales, today this House will deny them a future.

It is important to dispel the misconception that conversion practices do not occur in New South Wales. Eamon McCaughan, a survivor of the practices, shared his story with *The Sydney Morning Herald* last week. He explained how at the age of 17 his family took him to a psychologist who claimed he could "fix" his homosexuality. He explained how he was asked to listen to meditation music, recalling the first time he was attracted to a man. He said:

They'd get you to focus on particular moments in your life and then try to unpack it and twist it ...

They'd say this is not actually how you felt... this is just unnatural.

He explained how, two years after participating in the sessions, he attempted to take his own life, noting that he is now being treated for bipolar disorder, which he attributes to the sessions. He said, "My brain was at war with itself." Earlier this month Samuel Johnson, a constituent, wrote to share his own story. With his permission, today I share with members his brave and beautifully written letter. Samuel wrote:

If my 16-year-old self had anything to do with it, this letter wouldn't exist. But as your constituent and a Marrickville local, I wanted to share my personal experience of surviving conversion practices with you, in the hope of illustrating the urgency of reforming NSW law to protect LGBTIQ+ people.

As an adolescent, I became fearful of a difference I felt deeply but could not consciously acknowledge.

I sought help at church and found it in the form of a pamphlet and website from a conversion organisation. It contained advice on how I could be free of sin: by praying to God to make me normal.

I did so discreetly and precautionarily, to mitigate against the prospect of spending an eternity in hell away from those I loved. By age 15, I raised my hand to be prayed over during a youth service at a Pentecostal church I attended with friends.

The pastor relayed that homosexuality was curable with prayer and that there was hope for transformation.

Initially, the tactics seemed innocuous, even vital; I wanted to be a good person and I thought conversion practices offered a path toward achieving this objective.

When they didn't work, I descended into dysphoria. My ability to lead the fulfilling life I wanted for myself gradually collapsed.

I last attempted conversion twelve years ago as a politics student at the University of Sydney. Starting uni, I wanted to perform with SUDs and run for the SRC. But I was so wound up in a cycle of fear that I would take a rubber band to class and whip myself upon observing a desire I determined was incompatible with a good life.

Shame and suppression derailed my mental health thereon, spurring a chronic avoidance of my peers and the opportunities I craved.

In May this year I will be 32. Privately, I continue to bear the consequences of conversion ideology across multiple domains of life. Recovery began when I came out over six years ago, and it has been long and costly: I spend up to \$6,000 on therapy annually. I otherwise struggle to quantify my losses.

My twenties came and went without the joy of a romantic relationship. I lost years of income and career advancement to the symptoms of complex trauma. I endured periods of paralysis in connecting with friends and family. I developed an eating disorder to cope with the pain.

But there's been immense joy and healing since coming out, too. I've had the privilege of a second adolescence, the opportunity to unwind years of self-abnegation to explore who I am outside of a relentless struggle to survive. I entered a loving relationship last year and introduced my partner to my family over Christmas.

Last weekend I marched for the first time in Mardi Gras; an experience of profound acceptance that once seemed as impossible as writing this letter.

And I have rediscovered the energy to be had in acting not out of fear (as conversion ideology rewired my brain to do), but out of conviction.

It is with conviction that I believe LGBTIQ people deserve to be treated with dignity, that our laws should protect us from harm.

Samuel concludes his letter by saying, and I think this is a call to all of us:

Like many in the LGBTIQ community, I believe religious freedom is to be cherished and protected in this wonderfully diverse country of ours.

I also believe it can coexist with protections for LGBTIQ people that would help to consign experiences such as mine to the past. Indeed, in banning conversion practices, the Bill includes important measures to protect religious expression.

The sense of loss I carry today is compounded by the knowledge that the longer we wait to legislate protections for LGBTIQ people, the longer young lives are subjected to a harm that is unseen, unquantifiable, and unnecessary.

I had the opportunity to speak again with Samuel this week, and I am incredibly grateful to him for sharing his story. His is one of many stories that have motivated people to work for such a long time to bring us to this bill today. Like other members have acknowledged, I have also been contacted by residents, churches and organisations with concerns about the bill. I assure those residents that I have read and contemplated those concerns.

This bill is considered. It has emerged from detailed consultation led by a joint working group with over 150 stakeholders, eight stakeholder round tables, and following over 130 written submissions from the health, education, legal and government sectors, faith and multicultural organisations, LGBTIQ community advocates and victim-survivors. The bill seeks to strike a balance in recognising the rights of individuals to religious expression and to be free from harm from practices that seek to suppress a person's sexuality or gender identity. But as Samuel's story demonstrates, LGBTIQ+ people of faith are the most vulnerable to these practices. The driving principle behind the bill is that conversion practices have no place in modern Australia. The driving principle is that LGBTIQ+ people are owed acknowledgement and dignity and that those LGBTIQ+ people who are of faith are also entitled to safety and to life.

The 2020-2022 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing reveals that 74.5 per cent of lesbian, gay and non-heterosexual people have experienced a mental disorder in their lives, as opposed to 41.7 per cent of heterosexual Australians; 41.2 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual people have reported attempting self-harm in their lifetimes, compared with 7.4 per cent of heterosexual people; 85.2 per cent of non-binary people in Australia have experienced a mental disorder, with almost 80 per cent reporting that they have seriously considered taking their own lives; and 70.6 per cent of transgender people report having experienced a mental health disorder in their lifetimes. A peer-reviewed study published in 2021 suggests that 63 per cent of transgender Australians reported previous self-harm and 43 per cent had attempted to take their own lives.

Discrimination and stigma have a real cost. We have come a long way in recognising the fundamental rights of LGBTQA+ people, and I acknowledge we still have a very long way to go to deliver equality and to ensure that all LGBTQA+ people are able to live free from discrimination. But today is a good day. It is an historic day. I said earlier that, with the passing of this bill, we can deny conversion practices a future in New South Wales. I am proud that a New South Wales Labor government is finally getting that done. But, more importantly, today we deliver a brighter future for young LGBTIQ+ people in New South Wales who may have otherwise been subjected to these practices and told that who they are is wrong. Today we say to them: You are not broken. You do not need to be fixed. You do not need to be anything other than who you are.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (18:54): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I briefly reflect on the very moving speech by the member for Summer Hill. Samuel is heard by everyone in this Chamber. He is brave and he is acknowledged. I wish him so much happiness. I ask that the member for Summer Hill pass that on to Samuel and thank him for his story. I thank everyone who has sent their stories to members. We are reading them and taking them seriously, and I hope we have a good outcome for those people. Tonight I offer some personal reflections and I hope to offer the reflections of the many constituents who have written to me and represent a broad church of views. They are views from all sides of the social spectrum but they are united in the goal of preventing harm and doing it right.

I had great joy, a bit like Samuel, in joining the Mardi Gras parade two weeks ago. I marched down Oxford Street and it was a night of inclusion, celebration, equality and love. It was a demonstration of our State at its best, of the power of respect and inclusion that we clearly cherish in New South Wales and of the power of freedom, to live a life free from discrimination and to be authentic to oneself. As I marched among the glitter and the wonderful costumes, I saw the joy on the faces of the countless members of the LGBTIQ+ community. All of them were enjoying a night with friends, family, children and colleagues. I know the joy and freedoms of a night like Mardi Gras for the LGBTIQ+ community were not easily won. It was the result of decades of campaigning. It was the result of struggle and working from grassroots to government, of turning the community's eyes and ears to the undisputable truth that there is nothing wrong with LGBTIQ+ people. They deserve to be afforded the same rights and freedoms as anybody else.

In supporting this bill, if the bill is supported, we will help to make New South Wales a safer place for LGBTIQ+ people. We are saying that they do not need fixing, that they are not broken and that it is not okay to try to change them. Victim-survivors of conversion practices have been found to have poor mental health, including depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem, heightened suicidal ideation and a higher number of suicide attempts in comparison with other LGBTIQ+ people. The practices also perpetuate a broader damaging narrative, and lead to societal prejudice and even family rejection. Harmful gay conversion and suppression practices should be banned. As simple as that statement sounds, it is not easy to draft legislation because we must carefully navigate the definitions of what constitutes conversion and suppression practices, not just the obvious but at the fringes, including how we protect religious speech and teachings and how we make sure that natural and often imperfect conversations between parents and children delivered with love and the best of intentions are not prosecuted.

There are important safeguards for parents, faith communities and health professionals within this legislation. But they should be afforded adequate scrutiny. It is unfortunate that such an important piece of legislation—one that is not clear cut to many people, a bill that is challenging for many faith groups—was announced via news conference and delivered in the House without any consultation with the Liberals and The Nationals and the constituents we all represent. In this place, that is more than two million people who should be afforded that opportunity on such an important social bill. In the words of the Attorney General, "This is a complex and delicate area of law reform," yet the Coalition has only had a matter of days to reach out to our own community groups and stakeholders to discuss this very important piece of legislation to make sure that it is a journey for good together.

I support amendments to the bill to strengthen protections for all. I also support time for further consultation. It is my sincere hope that members can work together constructively on behalf of our communities to achieve a positive result, because it is not just the legislation that is important; it is the message that we are sending. In banning harmful gay conversion practices we are saying that it does not matter who you love or how you identify, you are okay just as you are. There is nothing that needs fixing, and anyone who tries to do that or tries to harm you will be accountable under law. You should be immensely proud of who you are. Live your authentic life and don't go changing.

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (19:00): I make a brief contribution to the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. From the outset I acknowledge the varying views of the people who have come into my office. I also acknowledge that the Government's approach to the bill recognises that this is a complex area of law reform. It is important to balance prohibiting these harmful practices with protecting things like freedom of expression and freedom of religious belief. Hearing the information and the views that have come to my office I can say that

there has been a lot of misinformation in our communities about the bill, so I think it is important to put on the record what the bill is not. The bill does not prohibit general expressions of religious belief, principles or teachings; private prayer, including personal prayer reflection; an individual by their own consent seeking guidance through prayer; general rules in educational institutions—for example, general requirements in relation to school uniform; or parents having discussions with their children related to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion.

Conversion practices violate basic human rights, but they also perpetuate harm and suffering. It is crucial to recognise that being gay or queer is not a choice. Sexual orientation is a fundamental aspect of who we are as individuals, and at a bare minimum it should be respected and not subjected to attempts to change. Forcing someone to deny their true self can lead to profound psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts and suicide. No-one should have to endure such anguish simply for being who they are. Conversion practices lack scientific legitimacy. Major medical and mental health associations have condemned conversion therapies as ineffective, unethical and harmful. There is no credible evidence to support the notion that sexual orientation or gender identity can be changed through these methods. In fact, attempting to do so can cause severe psychological trauma and damage. These practices violate the basic principles of autonomy and consent, but also perpetuate stigma and discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community.

The bill is about protecting vulnerable individuals from harm and ensuring that everyone has the right to live authentically and without fear or discrimination. By outlawing these harmful practices we send a clear message that gay and queer rights are human rights and that no-one should be subjected to discrimination or abuse based on their sexual orientation. Banning conversion therapy practices is a matter of human rights, compassion and evidence-based policy. It is about standing up for the dignity and autonomy of LGBTQIA+ individuals, ensuring that they are treated with the respect and acceptance that they deserve.

It is essential to recognise that being gay and queer is not wrong, and that banning conversion practices is a matter of dignity and their human rights. Queer individuals deserve the same respect, acceptance and freedoms as anyone else. No-one should be subjected to conversion practices that deny their true selves and inflict psychological harm. There is nothing wrong with being gay or queer. You are not broken, you are not doing anything wrong and you do not need fixing. We should all affirm the inherent dignity of every person and stand in support of equality and human rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (19:04): I speak on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. The proposed bill is welcome and long overdue. As my Greens colleague the member for Newtown outlined in her speech, and as the member for Ballina will also speak to, The Greens have long been advocates for the queer community, and we unequivocally support the banning of conversion practices. I have heard directly from queer people in my electorate of Balmain who have suffered because of conversion practices and the dangerous falsehood that suggests that queer sexuality and gender diversity are disorders that require treatment. Those dangerous falsehoods cannot be allowed to persist and harmful conversion practices must not continue. We must acknowledge that queer people in our communities have a right to equality, without exception. We have a duty to ensure that members of the queer and gender-diverse community are safe and do not face discrimination and harmful practices. To fulfill this duty, we must ensure that our laws are fit for purpose and align with evidence-based best practice.

Outlawing conversion practices in this State is long overdue. New South Wales lags behind others, including Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand, which have all outlawed conversion practices. New South Wales must act now to avoid falling further behind in this critical area. As my colleague in the other place Dr Amanda Cohn said, "New South Wales still has the worst laws in the country for LGBTIQ+ people." Shamefully, New South Wales is the only jurisdiction that still requires people to have invasive and medically unnecessary genital surgery to change their gender on official documents such as driver licences. We also have an Anti-Discrimination Act that protects trans men and women but fails to protect non-binary people. It protects homosexuality but not bisexuality or asexuality. Our anti-discrimination legislation should offer protection and equality, again without exception. While the current proposals are a welcome step, it is clear that so much more work needs to be done to ensure equality for all.

Looking at the detail of the bill, I raise several concerns, as my colleague the member for Newtown has done. In particular, I share the concerns regarding exemptions in part 2, clauses 3 and 4 of the bill. These clauses explicitly prevent a number of acts from being deemed a conversion practice, including parents discussing matters relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion with their children, or general rules in educational institutions. Expressions of belief or principles, including in prayer, that are "not part of a practice, treatment or sustained effort, directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity" are not considered conversion practices under the bill. The Greens believe that this exclusion is a significant cause for concern, given that survivors of conversion practices have stressed that homophobic or transphobic beliefs or principles expressed during sermons can cause the same harm as practices specifically

directed at an individual. Those expressions can be just as damaging to queer and gender-diverse people and they should not be the subject of an exemption.

Last week we were privileged to listen to survivors of conversion practices who were brought to Parliament by Equality Australia. Many of them discussed how the influence of sermons since their early childhood had heavily influenced their belief that they were broken, damaged or evil and that they needed to seek help to fix themselves. Those stories were incredibly harrowing. The bravery of these survivors recounting their deeply personal experiences to strangers time and again is nothing short of remarkable. I thank them for their care about others' suffering and for being willing to speak up about these issues. It is truly remarkable, considering everything they have been through.

In addition, I draw attention to section 47 of the bill—as my colleague the member for Newtown did—which currently requires that an impacted individual makes a complaint themselves or that a third party identifies the affected individual for whom they are lodging a complaint. Victoria and New Zealand have an alternative system in place that allows third-party complainants to lodge complaints without identifying the affected individual. This would be preferable to the current proposal, as it would offer better protection without placing all of the burden on individual victims.

To conclude, while improvements should be made to this legislation and further changes to New South Wales anti-discrimination laws should be pursued, this legislation is a good start. I hope to see further action to help end discrimination and ensure equality for all, without exception. I acknowledge the incredible work and advocacy of groups like the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts Survivor group, the Brave Network, Equality Australia and others who have continued to advocate for these changes, and of my colleagues in this place who have continued to advocate strongly for these changes, such as the member for Sydney and my Greens colleagues. I will continue working alongside my Greens colleagues to deliver this for our community in New South Wales.

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (19:09): I speak today in support of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I am proud to be part of the New South Wales Labor Government, which has made a commitment to ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices, which are harmful formal or informal practices based on the ideology that LGBTQ+ individuals have a disorder or require treatment. The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 prohibits practices directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill creates criminal offences for persons when substantial harm is caused and creates a civil complaints scheme in relation to the practices.

The bill makes it clear that general conversations around religious beliefs or how religious beliefs might be reflected in a person's life are not conversion practices. This includes personal prayer, seeking spiritual guidance or stating religious teachings. It satisfies the general requirements of religious orders and membership of a religious community and protects parents' rights to discuss with their children matters related to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion. The bill provides that a conversion practice does not include the expression of a religious belief or principle, or the expression that a belief or principle ought to be followed or applied, if those expressions are not part of a practice, a treatment or a sustained effort directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill strikes a balance between an effective prohibition and respecting freedom of expression and religion. This is a sincere attempt to balance the rights of faith groups.

The bill defines a conversion practice as a practice, treatment or sustained effort that is directed to an individual based on their sexual orientation or gender identity to change or suppress that individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. From a clinical and healthcare perspective, the bill makes it clear that clinically appropriate health care provided by a registered health practitioner, facilitating genuine identity exploration and development, including providing acceptance, support and understanding, and expressions of beliefs or principles, are not conversion practices.

The bill explicitly provides that a health service or treatment which is assessed by a registered health practitioner as clinically appropriate and which complies with relevant professional, legal and ethical requirements is not a conversion practice. The legislation also has a non-exhaustive list of examples of what these health services or treatments might look like. These include genuinely assisting an individual exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity, or considering or undergoing a gender transition; genuinely assisting an individual receiving care and treatment relating to gender identity; and genuinely advising about the potential impacts of gender-affirming medical treatment.

While these examples are demonstrative, no matter what kind of professional service or treatment, if it is not assessed as clinically appropriate in the reasonable professional judgement of the registered health practitioner, it will not be covered by this exclusion. Health care should be provided on the basis of clinical judgement. Health

care is patient specific, but it must be provided within an appropriate ethical framework, with registered health practitioners complying with relevant standards and guidelines. Both the Australian Medical Association and the Australian psychological association oppose LGBTQ+ conversion practices. Health practitioners are bound by the principles of medical ethics: beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and justice.

As a medical professional, one has the privilege to be involved in the most sensitive and confidential elements of human existence. And one learns that the expression of human identity, through sexual orientation, behaviours, preferences, gender identity or spirituality, has an infinite spectrum. The concepts of personal identity and the self are central to understanding individual consciousness, personality development and social interaction. They involve acknowledging the diversity of experiences and the importance of respect, consent and communication in all forms of relationships. They encompass the internal, reflective aspect of personal identity. They include one's awareness of one's own existence, traits, thoughts and emotions. Shaped by a complex interplay of biological, psychological and sociocultural factors, they highlight the multifaceted nature of human identity. This bill protects LGBTQ+ individuals from the trauma caused by harmful practices which threaten this existential core.

Conversion practices lack a scientific basis, cause psychological harm, are a violation of human rights and perpetuate social and cultural stigma against LGBTQ+ individuals. Conversion therapy is based on the discredited belief that being LGBTQ+ is a mental disorder that can be cured. As I mentioned earlier, major medical organisations, including the World Health Organization, have rejected this notion and affirm that being LGBTQ+ is a natural variation of human identity and not a disorder. Same-sex attraction and gender non-conformity are not signs of psychopathology. Rather, individuals of sexual and gender minorities should be supported in embracing their own identities.

There is a significant lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of conversion therapies. Many who have gone through these practices report that their sexual orientation or gender identity did not change. Providers of conversion therapy often make misleading claims about the success rates of their methods, which are not supported by scientific evidence. You cannot make better a person who does not have a problem. Medically, I learnt that the only thing you will create by trying to treat someone without a problem is a problem. There is substantial evidence to show that conversion practices can lead to severe psychological harm. Individuals subjected to these therapies often experience increased anxiety, depression and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts. The emotional and psychological stress induced by trying to change one's innate identity can have long-lasting negative impacts.

The majority of lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer individuals lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. However, studies have found that non-heterosexual individuals face up to twice as much abuse or violence, including physical, mental, sexual or emotional, as their heterosexual counterparts. This prejudice and discrimination adds an additional layer of risk on top of biological, social, environmental and psychological factors which can lead to depression, anxiety and suicide. Research and real-life experiences have found that, when compared with heterosexual individuals, same-sex attracted and transgender individuals have higher psychological distress, significant levels of anxiety, substance abuse, self-harming and suicidal thoughts.

Conversion therapy practices are considered a violation of human rights. Being LGBTQ+ is a part of human diversity, and attempts to change or suppress it through psychological or physical interventions are unethical. These practices are often performed without the individual's consent, particularly in the case of minors. Conversion practices perpetuate the stigma against LGBTQ+ individuals by implying that their identity is undesirable or abnormal. This stigma can lead to increased discrimination and marginalisation in society. LGBTQ+ conversion practices are not only scientifically unfounded but also cause significant harm to individuals. They perpetuate harmful stereotypes and violate basic human rights, making their use and promotion a serious concern from both a psychological and ethical standpoint.

Many LGBTQ+ youth are still forced into harmful so-called treatments with devastating mental health consequences. Although sexual orientation change efforts have been widely discredited, they remain legal and continue to be practiced with lesbian, gay and bisexual children and adolescents. Furthermore, as the past 20 years have seen an increase in gender-nonconforming and transgender individuals, there has been a similar rise in efforts to socially reprogram gender-nonconforming children and adolescents. *[Extension of time]*

Managing gender dysphoria, which is the distress a person feels due to a mismatch between their gender identity and their sex assigned at birth, involves a multifaceted approach. It is important to emphasise that the goal is to support and affirm the individual's gender identity rather than trying to change it. The management should be evidence-based, multidisciplinary, holistic and age-appropriate, and it can often include psychological support, social transitioning, medical interventions and continuous care. The bill fulfils the Government's election promise to ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices by introducing a scheme that is right for New South Wales. The bill sends a powerful message that there is nothing wrong with LGBTQ+ people and they do not need to be fixed. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (19:20): I have a serious problem with some aspects of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. Firstly, no-one has ever raised conversion therapy with me. However, I do not support any kind of therapy that attempts to alter a person's gender. I have said many times in this House, and I say again, that I was raised to treat everybody equally regardless of their background, race, colour, religion or gender. I stand by that, and they are the values that I have instilled in my children, and hopefully they will be the values that are instilled in my grandchildren. My opposition to the bill is partly due to the limited time we parliamentarians have had to digest the different aspects of the bill—only a few days. I find it particularly egregious that the Labor Government and Attorney General are avoiding greater scrutiny of the bill by the general public that could easily be done by sending the bill to a parliamentary committee.

While the Government will proclaim that it has consulted widely with church and religious school leaders, the broader community has had no opportunity to voice its support for or concerns with the bill. It has slipped under the radar, and no legislation that impacts parents and families should be treated in such a flippant manner. The Labor Government talks a big game in terms of transparency but hides from the public when the going gets tough. For example, I am sure the definition of the term "suppression" contained in the bill would alarm most parents with children. The bill is ambiguous about the term, to say the least; it is undefined in the bill. In the second reading speech, the Attorney General suggested that suppression is defined to mean "keep in repress" or "put an end to activity". What is the bill trying to keep in repress and what activity is to be suppressed?

Does it include a church leader talking to a parishioner who is celibate, in line with church teaching, but is seeking guidance and support because they are struggling to come to terms with their gender and are frightened to raise it with their family? In that instance, a church leader may be one of the most compassionate people for a person to talk to outside their family. Under the bill does suppression restrict a parent wishing that their child not act in a way, such as having a sexual relationship at a young age, which may be in contravention to their own family values and standards? Crucially, will this bill mean that a parent will be punished for having discussions with their adolescent child about their sexuality and for suggesting that their child should not make any decisions until they are older? Parents of adolescents who would have had discussions about a myriad of different topics will be constrained or be acting illegally due to the bill. As I said, the term "suppression" is ambiguous at best. A parent should always have the right to discuss any topic with their children at any time and governments should stay the hell out of the family home. However, the bill will allow the Government to raise a case of a parent suppressing their children and will punish them, which is absurd.

The bill attempts to legislate a gender affirming model. But, given the wide definition of suppression, any medical, religious or parental advice given to an adolescent child that opposes the gender affirming model of care is deemed suppressive. The entire gender affirming model needs tearing up. Why is there a focus on affirmation rather than inquiry or neutrality? No other form of psychiatric or psychological care operates that way. No decision should be made without a widespread and holistic psychiatric approach to a patient's entire circumstances, including their upbringing, environment and relationships. The gender affirmation model is the attitude held by people who have never known what it is like to raise adolescent children. I wonder how many members in this Chamber voting on the bill tonight have raised adolescent children?

Ms Anna Watson: Everyone.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Everyone in the Chamber?

Ms Anna Watson: At least 95 per cent of members would have raised adolescent children—their own and other people's as well.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Shellharbour but say that there would not be too many regarding the aspects of the bill. Parents of adolescent children will know only too well the many issues that their children deal with and the complexities of helping them deal with those issues on a daily basis. A child may want to get a tattoo or drop out of school and a parent will put their foot down, much to the chagrin of the child. We discuss with our children voting, why they should not smoke, drink or take drugs and many other decisions about their health and their looks. Loving, caring discussions about any issue between parents and their children should always be encouraged, not suppressed. But the bill would make it a crime for a parent of a child who is young, inexperienced and naive to discuss openly with them a declaration of something as fundamental as their sexuality or gender.

We have heard horror stories from overseas of drugs being prescribed to young adolescents after only one or two psychiatric assessments because the stated goal of the treatment is affirmation of gender. The gender affirming model is slowly being rejected overseas. Just last week, the United Kingdom banned prescribing puberty blockers due to recent research that they slow the brain's development, harm bone development and result in infertility. It is happening to children of 11 or 12 years of age when, let us be totally honest, the brain is not developed enough to make complex decisions around sex and gender. There is so much contradictory research

and thought regarding those issues. There is an array of opinions and studies, many of which are being published daily.

I make my view on the matter overwhelmingly clear: I never want to see a child become infertile due to irreversible decisions that they make before they are even teenagers. I will vote against any bill that restricts or, in the wording of the bill, suppresses parents playing a loving and supportive role when discussing their children's needs, sexuality and health. The bill impacts the rights of parents to raise their child as they see fit. The former bill from the member for Sydney was a disaster. It defined gender identity, and therefore the suppression of gender identity, as including dress, mannerisms, names, personal references and speech. The bill does not make it clear that those are not included in the definition of suppression. Indeed, given the definition of gender identity as gender-related identity—and identity can easily be expanded to include the aforementioned characteristics—I therefore argue that the bill, even in its current form, supports the inclusion of those characteristics by excluding reference to them.

The bill only provides parental exemptions for discussion but it needs to be expanded to include setting family rules and behavioural standards, which are basic discussions in any household between a parent and their children. The bill still has the potential—and in my opinion is likely—to criminalise the enforcement of a suggestion by a parent to their child about what dress, mannerisms, names, personal references and speech the child uses. As a parent, and speaking on behalf of other parents, a parent should not be forced to accept whatever style of dress their child wishes to wear. A parent should not be forced to accept whatever mannerisms a child wishes to demonstrate. A parent should not be forced to accept whatever name a child wishes to be called. They should also never be forced to accept whatever personal references a child wishes to use, including pronouns. A parent should not be forced to accept whatever style of speech a child wishes to use. In short, a parent should not be forced to become woke in the way they raise their own children.

In terms of what parents can say to their children, recently I was interested in learning about what identity-affirming speech was recommended for transgender children. I visited transhub.org.au, partially funded by the New South Wales Government, and discovered the following expressions. Some suggestions for speech that affirms one's gender identity includes using "front hole" instead of vagina, "girdick" or "T-dick" instead of penis, "chest" instead of breasts and "the bloodening" or "Auntie/Uncle Flow" for a monthly period. They are included on the website transhub.org.au, which is partially funded by the New South Wales Government. *[Extension of time]*

The bill seeks to criminalise a parent instructing a child not to use such terms, given that would be putting an end to activity that affirms their gender and would potentially satisfy all three limbs outlined in the Attorney General's second reading speech. In my opinion, never has there been a bill in this House that was a greater attack on parental rights. I will always stand up for the right of parents to discuss whatever issues they wish in regard to their children's health, wellbeing, sexuality or gender.

Finally, the bill contains insufficient religious exemptions. The bill needs to be expanded to include exemptions for religious services provided to the individual. The current bill contains exemptions for "genuinely facilitating an individual's coping skills, development or identity exploration to meet the individual's needs". That needs to be expanded to include "needs or requests" such that it is up to an individual which facilitations they need, via a request, rather than what a court later determines to have been the individual's need at the time. The provision as it stands is far too determinative in a matter such as this. As I said, the Government should stay out of the family home. I certainly would never support conversion therapies, but there are many aspects of the bill that I do not agree with. I oppose the bill.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:32): I start by addressing a few of the issues raised by the member for Kellyville. The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 is in no way a suppression bill; it is a human rights bill, and I am alarmed by what I heard. Nowhere does the bill take away the rights of parents to discuss anything with their child, so in my view the former speaker has misled the House. I speak in favour of the bill, and I thank the Attorney General for bringing it to the House. I also thank the member for Sydney for his unwavering advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community and his amazing work in this area of law reform. It is well overdue.

I start by supporting the statements made by the Attorney General in his second reading speech essentially stating that conversion practices are founded on the idea that LGBTQ+ people are broken and need fixing. I agree with the Attorney General that there is nothing wrong with LGBTQ+ people and that they do not need to be fixed. The bill aims to stop conversion practices, which are essentially a treatment or sustained effort directed to an individual based on their sexual orientation or gender identity to suppress or change their sexual orientation or their gender identity—again, opposing what the former speaker has just said.

This area of law reform is complex, and I have listened to views on both sides of the debate from members of my community and beyond. The bill has been developed following extensive and targeted stakeholder consultation by a joint working group from the Department of Communities and Justice and the Ministry of Health, and today the Minister for Health spoke at length about that working group. It liaised closely with the health, education, government and legal sectors; faith and multicultural organisations; LGBTQ+ community advocates; and victim-survivors of conversion practices. Importantly, the bill considers those different views and strikes a balance that will protect religious freedom whilst still protecting vulnerable people.

Those dangerous and harmful practices need to be prohibited whilst still protecting freedom of expression and freedom of religious belief. Anybody is entitled to speak to their faith leader at any time about anything, as children are able to speak to their parents and parents to speak to their children. In circumstances where people have suffered substantial harm, the bill provides a targeted criminal response for the most serious conversion practices. The bill clearly defines conversion practices and includes carefully considered exclusions and exceptions. Importantly, the bill does not prohibit general expressions of religious beliefs, principles or teachings that are not directed to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity. It does not prevent parents from having discussions with their children related to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion.

I am supporting the bill to protect vulnerable people from psychological and physical harm. Nobody should be told that they are broken just for liking someone of the same sex or identifying as a certain gender. It is obscene that people would seek conversion therapy as an option, and it absolutely sickens me. People should never be made to change or suppress their identity to conform with heterosexuality, nor should they have to accept a gender that corresponds with their sex as designated at birth.

Victim-survivors of conversion practices tend to have poorer mental health in comparison with other LGBTQ+ people. They have higher rates of anxiety, higher rates of depression, poorer self-esteem and higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. It must be stopped. It is inhumane, cruel and ignorant. The Minns Labor Government went to the 2023 election with a commitment to ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices in New South Wales, and the bill offers a much-needed change to our current legislation. It will protect vulnerable people right across New South Wales, and I absolutely commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (19:37): I contribute to the debate on the Conversion Practices Bill 2024. The Greens wholeheartedly support legislation to ban LGBTQIA+ conversion practices—harmful and outdated practices that deny the rights of a person to be non-heterosexual, deny a person's worth and identity, and place cruel and inhumane pressure on people because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, asexual or queer. It is hard to comprehend that those practices are still happening in our country, and I want to say to every LGBTQIA+ person in this State and in my electorate that The Greens are sorry for the discrimination they still face in our society. To every person that has been subjected to those practices and ideologies, we are so sorry, and we will do everything we can to ban those hateful and harmful practices.

I acknowledge the incredible work of Equality Australia and organisations like Amnesty International. I also acknowledge Queer Family in my own electorate for the work that it does as one of the only support services for LGBTQIA+ people and families in the Ballina electorate—a big shout-out to them. I acknowledge The Greens spokesperson for LGBTQIA+, Dr Amanda Cohn, MLC, and the former spokesperson, Jenny Leong, the member for Newtown, for their work over many years. I acknowledge the member for Sydney for his advocacy, and I thank the Labor Government for having the courage to introduce this legislation. I also thank the survivors of conversion practices who I was privileged to meet with last week. I thank them for sharing with members of this place their lived experience and trauma—such a challenging and brave thing to do—so that things can truly change for people from this point onwards. It is incredibly selfless to talk about deeply traumatic experiences in order to help others.

I understand that there are diverse views on this subject. My community includes Byron shire, which is very progressive, and Ballina shire, which has an older population. I respect people's views. But when it comes to compassion, I feel that my community is absolutely united. We were a standout on the subject of marriage equality because we know that punishing people and believing that they are somehow wrong is absolutely inhumane. What are conversion practices? Amnesty International states:

Conversion practices, also known as Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE), are formal therapeutic and informal practices which target LGBTQIA+ people of faith with the false ideology that their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender and sexual expression can be changed or suppressed.

As we have heard many times today, the underlying premise is that a person is somehow wrong. It is so deeply shaming to say to a person, "You are wrong. Your identity, your attractions, who you are is wrong." Amnesty International has outlined the history of conversion in this country as a movement that started in the 1970s with what was called the ex-gay movement. It operated under the belief that same-sex attraction or transgender identity or expression was unnatural and could be altered through prayer, personal effort or through celibacy or heterosexual marriage.

We have seen the impact of that over the past 50 years. People were told that if they just tried hard they could somehow deny who they actually were. It was not only a refusal to celebrate who the person is in all their glory; it was worse than that. It was to actually say, "There is something wrong with you." In the 1970s, conversion was more about psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and what I call "spiritual bypassing": spiritual practices with a deeply conservative and fundamentally flawed approach. By 1985, conversion practices had become quite formalised, with a coalition of ex-gay organisations deeply connected to some of the more fundamentalist evangelical religious moments.

Amnesty International states that in the 1990s, when social attitudes started to shift, the language of conversion practices became more implicit. Conversion practices were often described as "freeing" LGBTQA+ people from experiencing "unwanted" same-sex attraction or gender divergence. That has been very sinister, very deep and very covert—and, in many instances, very overt. Last week I was incredibly moved to hear from survivors of those practices just how devastating the experience was. People of faith, deeply connected to their churches and their beliefs, were told by church elders that there was something wrong with them and that they could not possibly be accepted—that they would not be accepted by their God unless they changed.

I also heard the deep grief of survivors who had not lost their faith but who had to move away from their church because of those practices. It is heartening to see so many church leaders acknowledge that this was a fundamental wrong that has no place in modern society. I attended Catholic schools and saw for myself the pervasiveness of conversion ideologies. I was distressed to hear a member suggest earlier that this law somehow penetrates the family home and speaks to parents talking to their children about anything and everything. That is absolutely absurd. That argument is fear based and ignorant. The legislation does not touch the subtle methodology of conversion by religious organisations, schools and institutions, and that is of concern to The Greens. Queer children in religious schools get that messaging every day. The bill does not touch that all. Religious schools can still discriminate against queer teachers and students.

Banning conversion practices in New South Wales was a commitment made by both major parties before the 2023 State election. The bill bans conversion practices, defined as a practice, treatment or sustained effort that is directed to an individual on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity with the intention of changing or suppressing that sexual orientation or gender identity. That will be quite a high bar—but we will see. I believe that the fears we have heard about families, for example, are unfounded. The legislation may give some organisations and religious groups cause to pause, but it will still very much be up to the individual to pursue. That will not be easy. Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand have already enacted legislation to ban conversion practices. Tasmania and South Australia are exploring potential reform, and Queensland has banned conversion practices within healthcare environments.

The strengths of the bill are that it covers both sexuality and gender identity. The Greens are very grateful for that. It is a very important protection for trans and gender diverse people. The bill covers practices intended to convert or suppress, which is important, because many modern conversion practices promote chastity for same-sex attracted people or the idea that it is okay to be same-sex attracted but not to act on it. The bill has specific exemptions for religious activities—I have a problem with that, but it is what it is—but has not provided a broad exemption for religious organisations or all religious activities. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House. The Greens also see some weaknesses in the bill. Some victim-survivors have strongly advocated that sermon can be harmful in and of itself, and have argued that the definition of conversion practice should not be limited to practices directed to an individual. That will be the subject of a Greens amendment to be moved in the other place. The civil complaints mechanism requires the identification of a named complainant, limiting the ability of third parties with resources or capability to engage. The bill sets out an alternate power for the Minister to refer a practice, alleged practice or proposed practice to the board, which must subsequently conduct an examination under clause 48, and for the board, by resolution, to carry out investigations, research and inquiries.

To anyone who thinks the legislation will be a magic thing, there will still be many hurdles for anyone experiencing conversion practices to move forward in raising it, and for it to come under the scope of this law. The Greens will move an amendment in the other place to respond to concerns that homophobic preaching—not only practices directed to an individual—is harmful in and of itself. We will continue to pursue other reforms in this space. As education spokesperson for The Greens, I add that we absolutely must end the discrimination in religious schools towards LGBTIQ+ teachers and students. However, The Greens welcome this bill, which is overdue. It is very progressive. I am grateful to be a member of a Parliament with a Labor government that is actually undertaking this reform. I know that it is hard. Many constituents are people of faith. But The Greens are grateful. This is brave work. We commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:49): I speak in support of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. Conversion practices are based on the idea that LGBTIQ+ people are broken or wrong and need to be fixed. There

is nothing wrong with LGBTQ+ people. They do not need fixing. Conversion practices are dangerous, and there is no room for them in New South Wales. The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 has three key elements: It defines what a conversion practice is; it creates a principal criminal offence of engaging in conversion practices that cause mental or physical harm and ancillary offences; and it creates a civil regime for dealing with complaints that an entity, including an individual, has provided or delivered a conversion practice.

From the outset, the New South Wales Labor Government recognised that it is a complex area of law reform. It is important to balance prohibiting those harmful practices with protecting freedom of expression and freedom of religious beliefs. There have been strong and polarised views about the reform, but the bill represents a careful, balanced approach that takes into account those views. The consultation process carefully considered the best way to ensure that the ban would be consistent with the Premier's commitments. In 2023 a joint working group led by the Department of Communities and Justice and the Ministry of Health undertook targeted consultation with the health, education, legal and government sectors, faith and multicultural organisations, LGBTQ+ community advocates and victim-survivors. Almost 150 stakeholders were engaged, over 130 written submissions were received and eight stakeholder round tables were held. The consultation informed the underlying policy positions adopted in the bill.

The Government has never intended to ban the teachings of religious leaders or the expression of religious belief through sermon, and the bill does not ban those things. It is a New South Wales bill, and it is fit for purpose for this State. The bill provides for a graduated response to LGBTQ+ conversion practices. It is educative, it clearly defines conversion practices and it carefully sets out exemptions and exclusions. The bill provides for a civil complaints scheme and also a targeted criminal response for the most serious conversion practices, where people have suffered substantial harm. The bill does not prohibit the general expression of religious beliefs, principles or teachings if such an expression is not directed to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity, and it does not include private prayer, including personal prayer and reflection.

The bill allows an individual, of their own consent, to seek guidance through prayer and allows parents to have discussions with their children about sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion. The bill is aimed at stopping conversion practices on the basis of suppressing or changing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Gender Alliance is a group of psychologists, doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers and allied health professionals. Many of the trans and gender-diverse people that they see have experienced terrible discrimination and, in some cases, abuse in health services, including denial of care, attempts to change gender identity, inappropriate genital examinations and untrained practitioners.

As professionals working in the area, they have told me that they see firsthand the health benefits and positive life trajectories associated with having access to local and timely gender-affirming care and experiencing broader health care in an environment of non-discrimination, respect and safety. Many people that they see are living with the legacy of being survivors of conversion therapies in their earlier lives. It is State-sanctioned harm that has been allowed to occur in this country and other countries, and it must be outlawed and legislated against to protect LGBTQIA+ people in this State. That group of health professionals acknowledge that ending conversion practices will save lives and save many people from harm and violence at the hands of others.

I acknowledge the member for Sydney for his important work and advocacy in this space. His bill was closely considered during the development of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill. This bill reflects a legislative response that is suitably tailored to the New South Wales community and legal system. The Government's in-depth consultation process, which included faith and multicultural organisations, parents' rights and LGBTQ+ community advocacy organisations and people with lived experience, has informed the model contained in the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (19:55): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. Firstly, I thank the hundreds of constituents from the Davidson electorate who have contacted me about the bill since the day that I was elected in March 2023. I have read their correspondence, and I thank them for engaging with me as their representative in the New South Wales Parliament. At the 2023 State election, the Liberals and The Nationals agreed to an election commitment to ban conversion practices. I note that this has the most impact on those who identify, publicly or privately, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning or asexual. In February 2023 then Liberal Premier, the member for Epping, said:

When the parliament returns, my government will provide in-principle support for legislation that brings an end to any harmful practices.

He also said:

This is a complex matter and in working through it with parliamentary colleagues we will carefully consider the legal expression and effect of such laws,

He said further:

I always encourage people to work through those issues and treat everybody with respect, understanding and tolerance.

An election commitment was also made by the current Premier, the member for Kogarah, when in opposition. Today the Labor Government is exercising its election mandate. Every single person that I meet agrees that action on this issue is required to protect individuals against harmful conversion practices. Individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ are our friends, our family and members of our community. They always deserve love and respect. I also make some remarks as a practising Christian. Sadly, some sections of the community attack religion, faith and worship. I believe that religion, although not always perfect, has been a force for good in the world.

As a legislator, I believe that legislation should, first, defend and champion freedom of speech. That is central to our liberal democracy. I note that freedom of speech does not include hate speech; there is a clear difference. Second, it should defend and champion freedom to practise faith, worship and religion. As a practising Christian, I am a believer in encouraging love and compassion in our lives. Third, it should defend and champion parents, families and carers. They play a crucial and important role in raising and supporting children. Fourth, it should protect the most vulnerable in our society. Gandhi said it best when he said, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." Sadly, conversion practices have caused mental and/or physical harm to the most vulnerable members of our community. I am sorry that has happened. And fifth, it should promote inclusion. In my first speech to the New South Wales Parliament, I spoke about the need to exercise the politics and leadership of inclusion.

The best way that we, as legislators, can agree to positions is through our values and by listening to our communities. Disappointingly, I saw the bill for the first time only one week ago. I note that the New South Wales Government has undertaken a targeted and confidential consultation with almost 150 organisations, including 134 submissions and eight targeted stakeholder-sector round tables, and I welcome that consultation. However, that consultation should be the start of the conversation, not the end of it. I believe the current consultation has not been sufficient. More needs to be done so everybody in our communities can have their say. As such, I supported the call for the Legislative Council to undertake a parliamentary inquiry with a robust submission process. That would have enabled everyone, whether they agree or disagree with the bill, to have their views listened to and considered. The inquiry would have taken place in March and April for the bill to be debated in this place in May.

I also note that the Liberals and The Nationals in the other place have foreshadowed that they will move several amendments. I believe the bill should be clearer on parental, family and carer rights, and on practising faith, worship and religion. But it is time to ban harmful conversion practices. I return to where I started and thank the hundreds of Davidson electorate constituents who have contacted me about the bill.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (20:00): The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 intends to ban practices directed to changing or suppressing the sexual orientation or gender identity of individuals by creating offences and a civil complaint scheme in relation to those practices. That was an election promise of the now Labor Government, and it is long overdue and very important. The bill has been a topic of much discussion, and I understand there are strong feelings on both sides, particularly within faith communities. There is also much confusion about the bill's content and focus, which is on extremely harmful and, thankfully, rare practices. At the outset we should be clear about what the bill is not. As the Attorney General said, "The Government does not intend to ban the teachings of a religious leader or expression of a religious belief through sermon."

The bill does not penalise prayer, religious advice and biblical teachings about sexuality. In their feedback, multiple members of my community raised that issue. I am pleased that community views and traditional practices have been respected in the preparation of the bill. Discussions by parents with their children are protected by the bill, although that protection does not cover the extended family. Medical practitioner services that are considered clinically appropriate are also excluded. The bill is not modelled on similar laws in other jurisdictions such as Victoria. As the Attorney General has said:

It is a New South Wales Government bill, and it is fit for purpose for New South Wales. It takes from those other models what the Government considers to be the most appropriate elements for New South Wales and, in some cases, it charts a different path altogether.

Before I delve into the specifics of the bill, I take a moment to acknowledge the human stories at the heart of the issue. LGBTQ+ people deserve to live authentically and free from the fear of being pressured to change who they are. Conversion practices—also known as conversion therapy—are a range of harmful and discredited interventions that attempt to change a person's sexuality or gender identity. They do not work and they are extremely harmful. Those practices can take many forms, from so-called talking therapies designed to convince individuals that their LGBTQIA+ identity is wrong to more extreme methods like electroshock therapy.

The research is clear: Conversion practices cause significant emotional distress. They can lead to depression, anxiety and even suicidal ideation. LGBTQIA+ people are not broken and do not need fixing, and

treatment does not work anyway. The Conversion Practices Ban Bill is a step towards creating a society where everyone feels safe to be themselves. Conversion practices cause lasting harm and find no support among any mainstream medical or psychological professional community. There is scientific consensus that conversion therapies are not effective to change someone's sexual orientation or gendered identity and risk causing mental health problems. Overseas studies have found exposure to sexual orientation change efforts is consistently linked to a higher likelihood of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts compared with LGBTQI+ people who have not had conversion therapy.

Leading mental health organisations support the proposed New South Wales ban on conversion practices. Organisations including the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses, BEING - Mental Health Consumers, Black Dog Institute, Mental Health Carers NSW, ReachOut, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Suicide Prevention Australia and WayAhead have jointly said:

We support the legislation to ban conversion practices in NSW on the basis that these practices have:

1. Significant prevalence in the NSW community;
2. Been shown to be highly correlated with negative mental health outcomes;
3. Been shown to exacerbate stigma and discrimination against LGBTQA+ people, which are determinants for increased mental health risk, especially for young LGBTQA+ people.

The head of government relations at the Black Dog Institute, Lawrence Muskitta, said:

There is nothing therapeutic about conversion practices. The evidence is clear: these practices have a devastating effect on the mental health of the people subjected to them. We urge politicians in NSW to listen to the data and to the stories of victim-survivors, and to vote to ban conversion practices in NSW.

I recognise the concerns raised by some faith communities that view the bill as an infringement on their religious freedom. Many faith traditions hold specific beliefs about sexuality and gender identity. Those beliefs are deeply held and deserve respect.

Let us consider a hypothetical scenario: A teenager confides in a religious leader about their same-sex attraction. The religious leader, instead of offering support and understanding, subjects the teenager to conversion practices. This can lead to a deep sense of alienation from their faith and their community. The Conversion Practices Ban Bill aims to prevent such scenarios and ensure that religious settings remain a source of comfort and guidance, not fear and manipulation. Many people in my electorate have contacted me about the bill. Some are very supportive, but some are not. I thank them all for taking the time to contact me and tell me their views. I also thank the local churches that took the time to meet me last year to discuss their concerns, including Guildford Anglican Church, Merrylands Anglican Church and Merrylands Baptist Church.

I will address some of the concerns about the bill raised with me by constituents. Some said the bill is not clear. However, some of the key elements are, in my view, very clear. I note that in the second reading speech the Attorney General said:

Suppress is defined in the *Macquarie Dictionary* as "to keep in or repress" something or "put an end to activities". Ultimately, whether something is a conversion practice as defined under clause 3 (1) requires all three limbs that I have outlined to be satisfied. That is a question of fact, and it will depend on the particular circumstances.

"Practice" means a habitual or customary performance. It requires some degree of formality or established form. "Sustained effort" means conduct kept up or kept going over a period of time. If it is not a practice, treatment or sustained effort, it is not a conversion practice and the scheme in the bill does not apply. The definition excludes expressions at large or generally, such as sermons, general requirements in relation to leadership or membership of a religious community, and general school rules. It also excludes parents discussing matters regarding sexuality, sex, gender and religion with their children. It also excludes stating what relevant religious teachings are or what a religion says about a topic. Some have told me they are concerned that prayers would be banned. I note that the Attorney General has said religious leaders are not banned from preaching generally about their views on the issue. He said:

Stating what relevant religious teachings are or what a religion says about a topic is not [gay conversion].

...

Going so far as to say for example, that in our faith, being a homosexual is wrong and it's a sin and you can go to hell ... that's not a conversion practice.

The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 is the result of extensive consultation with not just LGBTQI+ advocates and legal experts but also faith-based organisations and the Faith Council. Open dialogue allows us to find common ground so that we can protect vulnerable individuals while respecting religious freedom. The bill is not an attack on religion but a step towards a more just and compassionate society. It can help foster a spirit of inclusion across all religious settings. I note that Faith NSW CEO Murray Norman is reported as saying, "While

the bill is not perfect, our communities' concerns have been heard." Monica Doumit, director of public affairs and engagement for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, said that religious exemptions in the bill were a qualified victory for common sense. She told *The Catholic Weekly*:

While this bill has not addressed all concerns put forward by faith communities, it is a sincere attempt by the Minns government to balance the interests and concerns of many parties and to meet the commitments to protect prayer and preaching made prior to last year's election.

I note that the Uniting Church supports the bill. In an open letter to the Premier, 37 clergy—including from Parramatta, Parramatta-Nepean and Wentworthville—wrote:

As Christian ministers, we support this legislation. The Scripture speaks of all living creatures being given life by God's spirit...

Our identity is shaped by God in that process of giving life, of bringing to birth the identity of a new human being. Furthermore, all creatures are sentient beings—we have a soul, a state of being, a life that is fully formed and given by God.

All human beings are created with the spirit of God within us...

All human beings exist within this understanding.

Our human identity is grounded in the creative work of God's spirit.

[*Extension of time.*]

Who we are is how God has made us to be—each human being is made in God's image.

There are no exceptions to this in biblical understanding ...

"Conversion therapy" provides a direct challenge to such acceptance.

It seeks to intervene and "change" the way that an individual identifies.

Because we believe that who we are is a gift from God, we therefore believe that we are called to accept the identity of each individual, as they perceive and understand themselves.

Conversion therapy survivor Eamon McCaughan was a 17-year-old Catholic when a family member took him to a psychologist in Western Sydney who claimed he could "fix" his homosexuality. It would be the first of three sessions of what he now knows was gay conversion therapy. Within two years of participating in the therapy, he attempted suicide. Mr McCaughan has no doubt this bill will save lives. He said:

For people like me who grew up in a religious setting and are put through conversion therapy, there is now a distinct opportunity for them to have a choice.

What choice is there for people whose only options are conversion therapy, or burning for an eternity in hell?

The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 presents an opportunity for progress, for a society where compassion and respect for all individuals prevail. Let us engage in constructive dialogue, ensuring the bill protects the vulnerable while upholding religious freedom. Together, we can create a safer and more accepting environment for everyone. We can build a future where everyone in our society can thrive within their faith communities, and where all people feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (20:11): I contribute to the debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I start by outlining the need for balance to ensure parental rights are respected. While governments have a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children, excessive interference in parental decisions can undermine familial autonomy and breed mistrust. Parents are the primary caregivers and educators of their children, possessing unique insights into their needs and values. Striking a balance requires nuanced policies that protect children from harm while respecting parental authority and cultural diversity.

The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 has been put forward by the Government with the objective of making it an offence to engage in conversion practices with the intention of changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, and to establish a civil complaints scheme to provide avenues and processes for redress for individuals and representative bodies if they have a complaint. I agree with the need for criminal and civil recourse for the offence outlined in the objective, especially for instances of electroshock therapy and other serious practices. However, I would like to focus on what is defined as a conversion practice. I am concerned with the current wording of the bill, particularly with the definition of a conversion practice.

Clause 3 in part 2 of the bill defines a conversion practice and outlines what is not considered a conversion practice. Subclause (3) (b) stipulates that it is not a conversion therapy practice if an individual genuinely facilitates another's coping skills, development or identity exploration to meet the individual's needs. However, I agree with and will foreshadow the Opposition's amendments. I believe that this subsection should include an individual's request for assistance, as a request can be considered as permission to help. This will ensure that a conversation between two friends on the topic, if it is a genuine attempt to help, is not considered a conversion practice. This will protect a person who is trying to help a friend to explore their feelings.

Subclause (3) (c) stipulates that prayer or a religious belief or principle, and an expression that a belief or principle ought to be followed, is not considered a conversion practice if it does not form part of the aforementioned definition of conversion therapy. I believe the intent of paragraph (c) is to protect religious organisations and the leadership of religious groups to ensure the teachings of their faith are not contrary to the bill. However, in the spirit of balance and good faith towards these groups, I believe it should be changed to explicitly state that a practice is not considered a conversion by itself.

Clause 4 of the bill outlines specific practices to avoid any doubt of what does not constitute a conversion practice. It is comforting to many in my community, particularly religious leaders and their respective adherents, to make clear that stating what relevant religious teachings are or what a religion says about a specific topic is not a conversion practice. The clause also stipulates other protections for religious communities and educational institutions, as well as parents. However, it is of significant concern that these protections are not extended to other family units, and they fail to recognise the role of siblings and any other decision-making authority over an individual. It is not right that a parent is protected under this clause but a conversation between siblings or with a guardian is not. In many families, older siblings play a crucial role, nearly as important as the parents, in personal development. In some instances, siblings may be better placed to have delicate conversations.

This change would also acknowledge that parents and guardians do more than have discussions. They set rules for behaviour, which is one of the critical points in determining whether this bill has passed the threshold of impinging parental rights. A parent's right to raise their child in a way that aligns with their moral and religious beliefs should be unimpeachable. Whilst the current drafting of the bill provides some cover, I believe this can be expanded in good faith to ensure a balance. I also raise a key concern that many constituents have expressed to me, where suppression is not defined within the contents of the bill. The bill currently leaves the word suppression undefined. The Attorney General stated in his second reading speech that suppress has the ordinary dictionary meaning, being "to keep in or repress". Many in the community, including myself, are concerned that this is too broad and may capture communicating personal restraint to another individual as suppression of their sexuality.

For example, there are concerns that the statement of telling a young person to reserve sex until marriage could be seen as a conversion practice. I would be more comfortable with the bill if it was amended to include a stringent definition of suppression as meaning "an attempt to eliminate". I believe the bill is well intended and many faith groups across New South Wales have stated that they were consulted in good faith to ensure there is a balance. However, it is incredibly disappointing that the Opposition was not consulted throughout this process whatsoever. This bill is incredibly controversial. Government members in the other place refused to send the bill to a standing committee where the bill could be forensically assessed for its impacts. The second reading speech by the Attorney General was delivered only seven days ago and now we as an Opposition are expected to review, deliberate and analyse the impacts of the bill. Given there is no consensus, many components in the bill will be left to the judiciary to interpret, which undoubtedly creates a risk of acting contrary to the objective and essence of the bill.

I do not understand why the Government wants to rush this bill through. We need to make sure we get this right and we cannot leave it up to chance. I do not accept that the bill sufficiently and effectively protects parental rights, unless the aforementioned amendments are adopted. Upholding these rights acknowledges the importance of familial autonomy and the diverse beliefs that contribute to the fabric of society. By safeguarding parental and religious rights, societies foster environments where families can thrive and individuals can express their beliefs without fear of discrimination or oppression. Parents should expect that the changes within this bill do not infringe on their right to raise their child in the way they believe is right. At the end of the day, that is what tolerance is, and that foundation is what makes our multicultural and multifaith society such a success in New South Wales. I thank the House.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (20:19): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. A number of my colleagues have contributed to debate on the bill. I acknowledge those contributions, many of which come from long-term supporters of the principles behind the legislation. It would be remiss of me, Mr Temporary Speaker, not to acknowledge your own longstanding contribution to the debate and your advocacy for the legislation. Similarly, I recognise the tireless work on this matter, within and outside the Labor Party, of my colleague in the other place, Penny Sharpe. I look forward to hearing her contribution to debate on the bill in the other place.

In his second reading speech, the Attorney General laid out in great detail the provisions of the bill, including what will and will not be considered a conversion practice and how the legislation will function in practice. The Attorney General also said that this is a matter of the heart for the Labor Party, and I want to stress that. The importance of legislation like this bill being introduced in this Parliament, and hopefully passing with strong support, cannot be understated, because for the people to whom it makes a tangible difference, it truly is a matter of the heart. The legislation will make a world of difference for many people in my personal life and my

community. It could have prevented harm for many more, had it been introduced earlier. As a society, historically, we have not done enough to protect and support people in the LGBTQ+ community. I am glad that that has changed in recent years and that it continues to change with the bill.

I was proud to stand with the LGBTQ+ community, as well as many others in the Illawarra, for the marriage equality plebiscite a few years ago. I am proud to continue to stand with that community in the Illawarra and support the bill. In deciding to speak on the bill, I asked a member of my staff if there was anything she would like me to say. The staff member has been with me since day one. As a young gay woman, this issue is important to her. We have had many lengthy and truly heartfelt and thoughtful discussions about the matter. I read the following statement into *Hansard* on her behalf, because these sentiments strike at the heart of this discussion. She said:

I'm lucky to have never had any kind of experiences of explicit conversion. I'm lucky to have always had such a supportive family. And everything following this, is said from a position acknowledging that privilege.

I grew up going through Catholic schools at a time where they still actively taught heaven & hell, and with the explicit mention that gay people go to hell.

I went to an all girls Catholic high school, where being labelled as a lesbian and a dyke was the worst thing that could happen to you.

I changed social groups a number of times, and lost a lot of friends throughout high school and into the early years of university not because I was out, but just because other people decided I was gay.

At a time when I hadn't made that decision, hadn't had that realisation even for myself, other people around me decided that and decided that it was okay to ostracise me for it.

Through simply being a young person, questioning their sexuality, in that context and at that time in a regional area, I was implicitly told that there was something wrong with me, and that I should be ashamed of that.

That shame is something that didn't come from a particular person, or a particular institution for me—it was a pervasive underlying commentary for society at the time.

That shame was something that I've struggled to deal with as a young adult and even moving further into adulthood, despite now having a strong sense of my identity and worth.

I came out to my family when my youngest sister was 10 years old, and I told her at the time that she shouldn't tell other people at school.

I was worried that my sister would be bullied for telling other kids that I was gay.

But at 10 years old, my sister told me that she didn't care.

And the same high school that when I graduated, wouldn't entertain the idea of a girl taking another girl to the formal—was accepting of openly gay & non-binary students by the time my sister graduated.

The change that can be seen, and has been felt by many of the millennials in the queer community over the last 10 to 15 years, is immense in so many ways.

This legislation brings NSW into 2024. It's long overdue, but I'm glad that it's here.

And its importance is not for the people who've been through these experiences.

Its importance is in protecting the next generation of young people to make sure that everyone feels that they can be who they are, and discover who they are, free from fear of harm and prejudice.

The importance of this legislation is in the message it sends to every 13 year old kid in NSW, who might be wondering what it means if they have a crush on someone the same sex as them.

That they're okay, that there is nothing wrong with them, there is nothing wrong with what they're feeling, and that no one can force them to feel otherwise.

As the member for Wollongong, I hope that all young people in my electorate can feel that same way: that there is nothing wrong with them, that there is nothing wrong with what they are feeling and that no-one can force them to feel otherwise. I believe the bill holds particular importance for young people in the Wollongong electorate. Obviously, the bill holds particular significance for all the victim-survivors of conversion therapy, and I acknowledge the attendance of many of those people in the Chamber over the course of the debate. The bill also holds significance for all the other people who have been impacted, or have loved ones who have been impacted, by conversion practices. I do not understate the importance of the legislation for the memory of all the people who have taken their lives, in no small part due to their experience with conversion therapies. As much as many of us—including everyone in the LGBTQ+ community—wish that we could go back and change things, regrettably, that is not possible.

That leads me to the greatest significance of the bill—what it means for younger generations in the LGBTQ+ community. As the Attorney General said, the bill makes it clear that in New South Wales it is unacceptable to conduct any activities that aim to convert or suppress a person's sexuality or gender identity. Young people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and those who are discovering their own

identities, deserve our protection, support and acceptance. Pleasingly, younger generations will not need to be told that. They have led, and continue to lead, the charge not just for tolerance but also for outright acceptance for themselves and their friends, siblings and schoolmates.

I recognise the work of the Young Mayors of Wollongong on this issue. While that youth forum was only established in September last year, they immediately identified issues facing LGBTQ+ youth in the Illawarra as among their top priorities. Their vision for Wollongong includes a city where all young people feel welcome and safe, physically and mentally, regardless of their identity or presentation. I share that vision with the majority of people in Wollongong. I am pleased that, with the bill, we send a signal to all LGBTQ+ young people across New South Wales that their safety and wellbeing are a priority not just for this Government but also for this Parliament. They can feel safe, accepted and respected to discover who they are, who they love and the way they want to exist in the world that is most comfortable for them. The legislation shows that the New South Wales Government, and hopefully the New South Wales Parliament, will support young people to do that. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (20:27): I support the Government's Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, which bans conversion practices in New South Wales. This is an important day. Deliberate, forceful and harmful conversion practices, based on the notion that individuals within the LGBTQIA+ community are in need of fixing or are broken, have zero place in our community. Conversion practices can cause serious and lasting harm. Survivors can suffer chronic trauma, distress and complex mental health repercussions. Tragically, many victims have been lost to suicide. People in our communities have genuine and legitimate questions about how the bill might impact freedom of religion and the rights of parents and other adults to guide their children through complex personal matters related to their identity. I acknowledge those concerns and have met with representatives of faith-based groups who wish to see the bill amended.

It is important the bill gets the balance right but, ultimately, putting an end to harmful practices is a goal I completely support. I thank every survivor who has shared their story and pushed for this change. Hearing their stories was hard but nothing in comparison to how difficult it must be to share them. I thank them for their bravery, vulnerability and honesty. I have heard stories where survivors were tricked, being told they were seeing a psychologist or counsellor to help them. Alarming, those counsellors had no qualifications, but rather a deliberate intent to actively work to change the person's identity. Other times, the efforts to suppress, change or punish a person are more overt, including behavioural-change camps and programs, and even exorcisms. Make no mistake: It is clear from survivors' stories that the practice of conversion is very much alive in New South Wales. That is why this bill is critically important. It has been welcomed by survivors, advocacy groups and, importantly, my colleague the member for Sydney, who has championed this reform.

While there are survivors with us today, many people did not survive this. There are many people who right now are being damaged by these practices. That is why this legislation is so important. This is a very emotive issue. It is so important we all approach this with unwavering respect and empathy. I get nervous about the impacts of debates and news cycles when LGBTQIA+ reforms are in the spotlight. The discourse around these issues often spirals into something harmful, hurtful and damaging. We need to be better at having these conversations. I am determined for this Parliament to lead by example. This debate has to be respectful.

I acknowledge that there have been genuine questions from people across New South Wales who were unsure what these measures may mean for the rights of parents as well as faith-based individuals and groups. I 100 per cent respect that and view their input as a vital part of this discussion. In rigorously assessing this legislation, I met with representatives of faith-based groups and, of course, the LGBTQIA+ groups. For me, the legislation is about balance. It is about finding the sweet spot where we can adequately protect people's rights while still allowing the practice of faith in peace. That is not an easy thing to achieve, but it is vital that we get the balance right.

Wakehurst has a dynamic and diverse community, which we are very proud of. Many of my constituents—indeed, my in-laws and my wife—belong to faith groups. It is wonderful to see their strength and connectedness. They are a very important and deeply valued part of my community. I am a parent to two young men. I know that the guidance a parent brings to the raising of their children is incredibly important. Our families shape so much of who we are. I do not believe this bill tries to diminish that. It is about making sure that there is no longer the opportunity to deliberately harm someone based on their sexual identity. That is where we are drawing a clear line today. In Wakehurst, we have a blossoming rainbow community. Like everyone, they have the right to live authentically and peacefully. There is really great progress in Wakehurst and across the northern beaches. I am proud to have been mayor of a council that upped the ante with very visible support of local pride groups and our rainbow community in general. They are great steps, but I know that there is a long way to go and a lot of work still to do. This bill represents a significant step towards ensuring their safety and wellbeing in our community.

The truth is that, while things are indeed getting better, the northern beaches has a dark history with anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes. Many of these crimes remain unresolved decades later. My own uncle, "Auntie" Glen, as I affectionately knew him, was very much a victim back in the eighties. He ended up in intensive care after a bashing. In making positive change, the bill will protect the rights of parents and persons of faith. It clearly clarifies that conversion practices do not include professional clinical care that is appropriate; activities genuinely aimed at aiding an individual's ability to cope, grow, or explore their identity, which includes parents engaging in discussions with their children; and expressions of religious beliefs, including prayer, provided they do not actively alter or suppress someone's sexual orientation or gender identity in a way that causes harm. This bill only criminalises intentional conduct that results in substantial physical or mental harm.

Ultimately, parents and faith groups are still free to provide guidance based on their beliefs. If a faith group does not support a particular way of life, they are still free to say this. I believe that is appropriate. This means we also need to make sure that everyone, regardless of who they love or how they identify, knows they are not broken in the eyes of this Parliament or our wider society. They need to know that they are valued, respected and accepted for exactly who they are. I commend the Government for its approach to the bill. I commend the member for Sydney for his approach, in particular.

It appears careful consideration has been given to strike a balance between protecting individuals and respecting religious freedoms. Let us now send a clear message that harmful conversion practices have zero place in New South Wales. If the other place can improve the bill, then great; I am more than happy and open to amendments. I do not think anybody wants this legislation to be weaponised. I look forward to the other place working together in the spirit of this proposed legislation. This issue is too important and critical, now and for the future.

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (20:33): I join in debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, which will prohibit practices directed to changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill creates criminal offences for persons when substantial harm is caused, and a civil complaints scheme in relation to the conversion practices. The Minns Labor Government made a commitment prior to the 2023 election to ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices based on the ideology that LGBTQ+ people have a disorder or require treatment. A joint working group, led by the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice and the New South Wales Ministry of Health, was established to lead development of the legislation and consult with survivors and key stakeholders. Like every other member in this place, I received scores of emails, phone calls and letters in response to this bill—and I thank people for those—and in response to the member for Sydney's private member's bill. I have met with faith leaders, parents, LGBTQ+ friends and members of the community, those with lived experience of conversion therapy practice, and other stakeholders. I have spoken to my sons, their friends, my work colleagues, my straight friends and my queer friends. These conversations have been invaluable.

I have chosen to speak on this bill because I have been elected to this place to represent the people of Parramatta—a diverse community, but also one with a changing face that represents a diversity of culture, religion, age, ethnicity, mobility, education, income, language, ability and gender. My role as a member of Parliament is to represent everyone in the Parramatta electorate and be a member of a government that legislates for all residents across New South Wales. That requires navigating a path through challenging issues that have the potential to divide our community but also have the opportunity to make our State a better, stronger and more tolerant place in which to live. They are issues that attract varying political, philosophical and religious views. I believe this bill seeks to achieve a balance that acknowledges and respects our community's diversity. It carefully navigates and protects the concerns of those with religious beliefs while ensuring protections for the critical legal, social, physical and mental health of some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

From the outset, the Premier made commitments that this bill would not impact religious practice prayer. The consultation process carefully considered the best way to ensure that the ban would be consistent with these commitments. During my discussions with stakeholders, concerns were raised about the potential impact of the bill on the expression of religious belief through sermons and teachings. My response to them is true. The Government has never intended to ban the teachings of a religious leader or expression of a religious belief through a sermon, and the bill will not ban those things. Clause 3, subclause (3) (c) of the bill makes it clear that general conversations around religious beliefs, or how religious beliefs might be reflected in a person's life, are not conversion practices. That includes things like personal prayer or seeking spiritual guidance. Clause 3, subclause (4) also includes examples of what are not conversion practices, some of which are specific to religious practice.

This reform is about tackling practices that we know cause harm because they seek to force LGBTQ+ people to change or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity—if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Conversion practices can include conduct that ranges from secular or religious behavioural and talking therapies, formal workshops, camps and programs, spiritual deliverance practices and exorcisms, or abusive aversion therapy, such as electroshock therapy or inducing nausea and other forms of physical abuse. Different forms of conduct can also

be used in combination with each other as part of LGBTQ+ conversion practices. Australian studies indicate that LGBTQ+ people in Australia continue to be exposed to conversion practices.

A 2019 study of 6,142 LGBTQ+ Australians under 25 found that 249 people, equating to 4 per cent, attended counselling, group work, interventions and programs aimed at changing or suppressing sexuality or gender identity. Greater exposure was observed in trans and gender-diverse people and people from faith communities. In a qualitative study undertaken between 2016 and 2021 of 42 Australian victim-survivors, one-third experienced conversion practices through formal therapy with a registered psychologist or counsellor, and every participant had experienced spiritual conversion practice.

These practices are ineffective and cause significant harm to those subjected to them. Documented harms include heightened suicidal ideation and suicide attempts in comparison with LGBTQ+ people not exposed to conversion practices; poor mental health, including depression, anxiety and poor self-esteem; alienation, loneliness and social isolation, including the loss of support networks; and physical injury where conversion practices use physical or sexual violence or aversive techniques such as electroshock therapy. Overwhelming scientific evidence shows that conversion practices not only do not work but also result in such extreme damage to victim-survivors that they often spend the rest of their lives recovering from it, with ongoing trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-esteem issues and relationship difficulties. Tragically, many individuals have taken their own lives as a direct result of these practices, which makes them fundamentally unacceptable.

These practices usually take place within a religious framework that has been used as a fraudulent justification for practices which in any other medical setting would be deemed archaic and torturous. A narrative saying that people should have the option has been presented, but the reality is that those who undergo these practices do so almost exclusively under the coercive influence of others. These practices are also inflicted on minors who cannot give consent. As our society has progressed, so has our understanding and acceptance of the diversity within our communities. It is horrific to think it was once an acceptable treatment for queer individuals to be lobotomised. We have a responsibility to protect our citizens from harm. That is what this bill seeks to achieve.

During my discussions with the community, there were questions about how the bill would compare with the Victorian legislation. My response was that the definition of "conversion" was key. The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 establishes that conduct will amount to a conversion practice only if it meets all three limbs of the definition, as set out in clause 3 (1) of the bill. In addition to meeting the three limbs of the definition, the legislation also makes clear, at clause 3 (3), that certain practices are not conversion practices. Another question raised in correspondence and conversations was about the potential impact on parents' ability to speak to their children about their sexuality in context with their held religious beliefs. The legislation makes clear, under clause 3 (3) (c), that an expression of a belief or principle or an expression that a belief or principle ought to be followed or applied is not a conversion practice if it is not part of practice, treatment or a sustained effort directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. This exclusion extends also to religious expressions, including prayer, sermons and one-on-one conversations.

However, the legislation is clearly intended to prohibit a practice, treatment or sustained effort that is directed to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. An invocation of religious belief or principle is not enough on its own to have the exclusion apply. The bill provides, in clause 3 (4), some examples of what does not constitute a conversion practice. These include specific examples relevant to religious beliefs and principles. These examples are not exhaustive. Whether something is a conversion practice is a question of fact, and it will depend on detailed consideration of the factual circumstances. The fact is that this bill is explicit in saying that parental discussions about sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion are not conversion practices. [*Extension of time*]

Last week I sat in a room with survivors of conversion therapy. I thank them for sharing their stories with us. They made me sad and mad. But then I felt glad because I am a member of a government that has committed to ending these heartless, heinous conversion practices so that we may save others from mental and physical anguish and also save lives. I thank all who have advocated for this bill over a long period, including my parliamentary colleagues the member for Sydney and the indefatigable defender of LGBTQI+ rights, Penny Sharpe, from the other place, along with members of Rainbow Labor. I also commend the Premier, the Attorney General and Ministers Park and Kamper, who have contributed to bringing people together so that the conversations could be had and we could get to where we are today. This is an important bill about human rights, and I commend it to the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (20:44): The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 seeks to ban practices directed at changing or suppressing the sexual orientation or gender identity of individuals, including by creating offences and a civil complaints scheme in relation to the practices and for related purposes. As outlined in the overview of the bill, the bill seeks to prohibit practices of change or suppression, establish a civil response scheme

and ensure that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, feel welcomed and valued in New South Wales and are able to live authentically and with pride. The bill seeks to protect the vulnerable who are harmed by practices that cause lasting effects, and no-one, religious or otherwise, wants to see those things occur.

I said at the outset I would have preferred that the bill be referred to a parliamentary committee so that all stakeholders could provide feedback and have their say in that forum, just as this Parliament has done with other important reforms. That a bill of such significance did not follow this normal approach is troubling. However, I acknowledge that the Government engaged with a range of stakeholders and note your engagement, Mr Temporary Speaker, in this issue too. At the last election I was asked about the bill. While I had not seen the text of any bill to ban conversion practices, I made clear that I would support outlawing harmful conversion practices. I have met people who were subjected to those practices and reject the notion that there is something wrong or broken with a person because of their sexual orientation.

In the year 2024 the concept of attaching electrodes to genitalia to change a person's sexuality, to conduct a harmful exorcism or engage in subtle yet harmful psychological control is cruel, crude and crackers. I commend the bravery of those who have come forward to share their stories as part of the development of this bill. Whilst the sharing of these stories returns their memories to trauma and pain, without them the people of New South Wales may not know what has happened to them and many others in relation to conversion practices. Banning harmful conversion practices is as much about this Parliament making a statement about this obscene approach as it is the law proposed in the bill. I thank those of my community who have contacted me to share their views on the bill. As a candidate and as a member of Parliament, I frequently reiterated my philosophical position that guides my decision-making in all forms.

As a philosophical liberal, I believe in small government but not government so small it fits into people's bedrooms. This bill is clearly not small government. But, as a philosophical liberal, an article of faith for me is my commitment to free speech, and that includes the freedom to choose your religion and practise your beliefs so long as this does not interfere with the rights of others and their beliefs, including the right not to hold any belief at all. Whilst I appreciate that some people believe in the notion of emotional philosophy about all things, for me, your emotions need to be balanced against the notions of logic, reason and rationale. It is virtually a truism to say that laws should protect the vulnerable, but you can do that without transcending other important rights or even diluting rights, which may have unintended consequences.

This bill is far from perfect. I do not want to see people harmed, but I have genuine concerns about freedom of speech and parental rights. Frankly, I think it is high time that we considered a parents' bill of rights to protect the rights of parents to raise their children in accordance with their values and the law. I am aware of the Opposition's amendments, and I support them. As the member for Wakehurst said eloquently, if the bill is improved in the other place I will support those changes as well. I appreciate that the amendments will be moved in the other place, and I look forward to seeing debate in the other Chamber. I place the House on notice: I reserve the right to correct unintended consequences such as infringement of parents' rights and free speech should this legislation pass without amendments.

I note the civil complaints in the bill. Whilst a complaints process is obviously necessary, it can cut both ways and I am concerned that, without the right safeguards, any complaints process can also be weaponised. That could have been the subject of a committee inquiry process but the Government decided to oppose that approach. I did not raise any of my concerns lightly. I maintain my commitment to my electorate that harmful conversion practices should be outlawed, and the bill certainly does that. Whilst the detail of the bill is well-intentioned, it will be up to the Parliament to guard against good intentions being turned into something that they were never intended to be.

I acknowledge the faith groups that have respectfully raised their concerns. I acknowledge many groups that have met with me, both from my electorate and from around the State, and I thank them for their genuine advocacy and concern to try to get the balance right. I also acknowledge the survivors of harmful conversion practices. Those people are real. They have real stories and real lives, and the impacts have been long-lasting. No-one should be harmed because of their sexual orientation. This Parliament is duty-bound to bring those shameful practices to an end.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (20:50): I speak in support of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, which seeks to put an end to the inhumane and damaging LGBTQ+ conversion practices that look to change or suppress one's sexual orientation or gender identity. Ten per cent of the national LGBTQ+ community is vulnerable to harmful conversion practices. Whether they come in the form of behavioural manipulation and religious interventions or horrific acts of physical violence such as electroshock therapy, the practices are discriminatory, harmful and have no place in our communities. Today we have the opportunity to stop the detrimental impacts of those practices. It is undeniable that conversion practices can have both a physical and

mental toll on the participants. Victims of conversion practices are more likely to struggle with mental illnesses and often face an increased risk of self-harm and taking their own life.

The bill has been developed in consultation with major stakeholders from a range of faith groups and the result is a piece of legislation that protects our LGBTQ+ community and respects freedom of expression and religion. The bill does not impede upon an individual's freedom of expression and it protects the expression of religious beliefs by protecting the right to pray, private conversations had at home between families and the rules of religious orders and teachings. The bill has received support from local religious leaders in the Hunter including the Very Reverend Katherine Bowyer, Dean of Newcastle at the Christ Church Cathedral. Dean Bowyer is passionate about making the cathedral an inclusive and safe space for the LGBTQ+ individuals and has been a great supporter of the bill.

There has been some concern in my electorate about the scope and definition of conversion practices and whether the legislation would inadvertently ban genuine and clinical counselling and identity exploration assistance. Part 2 of the bill clearly outlines what are and are not considered to be conversion practices. Under the legislation, clinically appropriate health services provided by a registered health practitioner will not be considered to be conversion practices. That includes advising individuals on the impact of gender-affirming medical treatment and genuinely assisting and providing care to individuals exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. Our health professionals are not afraid of the bill. They are not at risk of potential criminal sanctions. They are encouraged to support, advise and care for people exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity or are considering or undergoing gender-affirming treatment.

The legislation will make it a criminal offence to deliver or provide conversion practices to an individual with the intention of changing or suppressing that individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, which carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment. It will also make it a criminal offence to take an individual out of New South Wales with the intention of delivering or providing a conversion practice outside this State, which carries a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment. The bill not only makes it a criminal offence but also sets up a civil complaints scheme in which the president of the Anti-Discrimination Board will investigate and attempt to resolve complaints in cases where an entity delivers or provides conversion practices.

Newcastle is very supportive of our LGBTQ+ community. The 2017 Federal same-sex marriage plebiscite received support from 75 per cent of Novocastrians. The Conversion Practices Ban Bill has created a lot of conversation throughout the State and it has been welcomed by an overwhelming majority in my electorate. I cannot discuss the widespread community support for putting an end to conversion practices without mentioning the amazing LGBTQ+ advocates. I thank the Newcastle Pride president, Lee-Anne McDougall, and her team for their enduring spirit and constant support for Newcastle's LGBTQ+ community. It was wonderful to see them waving the flag high at Mardi Gras just a few weeks ago.

I thank the fabulous team at Hunter Gender Alliance, who have had many a meeting with me about the bill and seeing conversion practices banned. Their passion and drive are inspirational. I thank the Attorney General for introducing the bill, and I thank the member for Sydney for introducing the now-lapsed Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill and for being such a strong advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. People should not be forced to change. We should all be supported to be exactly who we are.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:56): I make a short contribution to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. Firstly, with regards to some of the processes that got us here, Labor did rush this bill, only giving us a week to take it out to our communities and the citizens of New South Wales. Then, in rushing it though, lazy Labor decides to call it a night at 6.00 p.m. and go home. It is very disappointing. We would have liked to have had more time to consult with our communities on this, at times, controversial topic. We would also have liked for it to be taken to a committee so the Government could hear the thoughts and reservations about the bill from members of our community.

I believe the bill has some room for improvement, and it has been foreshadowed that the Opposition will be moving amendments in the upper House. I acknowledge the work that the Attorney General has done to get the bill to this point. I hope he is able to consider some of the amendments, particularly one that addresses parents discussing those matters with their children. The bill allows that at the moment, but I ask that the Attorney General and the Government consider amendments that would widen the scope of family members being able to be involved in those discussions, particularly in ethnic families where such conversations might not be comfortably had between parents and their children—in fact, in all families. Rather, they might go to an aunt, an uncle, a cousin or another trusted family member. We will certainly fight for that amendment. Another amendment is the one that addresses the definition of the word "suppression". There is certainly room to tighten that definition up. I do not think I need to say anymore because plenty has been said on the bill. I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on it.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:58): For me, the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 is about Luden, celebrating Luden's life and everything Luden chooses to live for. It is amazing to be able to come to the Parliament and know Luden can live their life free of discrimination in the future, which is sadly not the life that other people from the LGBTQIA+ community have been able to live across New South Wales. All people should be able to live without discrimination, but that right has not been extended to the LGBTQIA+ community. Constituents have reached out to me, describing their experience of being harassed constantly, being the subject of a trendy discussion topic or being called controversial, disgusting or filthy predators. Their identities are questioned daily; they are deemed to have a disorder that needs to be "fixed", which is not the case. These people are people. People should be accepted as they are without qualification, including their sexual orientation and their gender identity. What needs to be fixed are the conversion practices, which must be banned after detrimentally affecting so many lives. The bill will do just that.

I celebrate a group of young people in our community called YAAS—Young, Authentic and Social. It is so exciting to know that because of what we are doing in Parliament tonight, those young people can live different lives to their predecessors on the Central Coast and across New South Wales, and so too the people from Central Coast Pride. We have a very strong pride community on the coast, and knowing that the bill is passing the Parliament will give them a sense of satisfaction, although it will not heal the harms that have happened in the past. I wholeheartedly and proudly support the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, and I am proud that the New South Wales Government has made a commitment to ban LGBTQIA+ conversion practices as abuse masquerading as care, which has no place in our State.

The bill gives effect to that commitment by criminalising conversion practices that seek to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, which causes serious mental or physical harm, and by providing a civil scheme to ban people from providing or delivering a conversion practice. First, part 2 of the bill defines a conversion practice as a practice, treatment or sustained effort that is directed to an individual on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity to change or suppress that person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

I refer to a beautiful gentleman whom I met in the Parliament this afternoon. Anthony was part of our Kids Helpline presentation, and he was really grateful to Kids Helpline because it saved his life. As a young gay man growing up in a private school and playing rugby, he said he did not consider it as conversion therapy at the time but that he lived nearly every day of his life trying to be converted from who he was on the inside. Kids Helpline gave him a place to make anonymous calls and get support for the person he knew he was within and the life he wanted to live. I thank Anthony for sharing that story and for the continuing work he does with Kids Helpline. Let us hope that, with conversion practices banned, that pressure will change for young people like Anthony in the future.

It should also be noted that conversion practices do not include appropriate clinical care, genuine facilitation of an individual's coping skills or development, or identity exploration such as parents discussing matters with their children. Nor does it include religious expressions, like prayer, that are not directed at changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. Part 3 provides that it is a criminal offence to deliver a conversion practice to another person with the intention to suppress or change their sexual orientation or gender identity, which causes physical or mental harm.

I thank Anthony Venn-Brown, OAM, who was voted one of the 25 most influential gay and lesbian Australians. His journey began in 1972, when he became one of the first individuals worldwide to be subjected to what would later be termed conversion therapy in a church's residential program in Sydney's south. Anthony underwent public shaming, endured exorcisms and was coerced into conforming to societal expectations of traditional masculinity, all to alter his sexual orientation and make him "acceptable" to the church and society as heterosexual. Anthony went on to marry and have children, and he became well known as a Pentecostal preacher. However, his sexual orientation remained unchanged, with the anguish over his internal conflict often leading to dark places, and he considered ending his life. He resigned from the ministry in 1991, came out and wrote his autobiography.

Sharing his experiences provided a catalyst for a lot of other people who had had similar experiences, who had been told they were abominable or broken and who had sought solutions through prayer, counselling and even exorcisms. Yet change remained elusive, resulting in deep mental health issues, anxiety, depression and often post-traumatic stress disorder. One of the people who wrote to Anthony was Matt, who confirmed that it was positive and life changing just to hear the story of someone who had had a similar experience. He said that he made a lot of friends in his years of conversion therapy, but only six of the 40 people are still alive. That shows how important it is to make this change, and I thank Anthony for being such an important advocate for the change that is needed.

I sincerely thank all of the advocates who have fought this fight for so long, and I feel proud to be part of a government that committed during the election campaign to make this change. It is a monumental step forward in ensuring equality and a life free from discrimination for all of our LGBTQIA+ community. I thank and commend the Government, the member for Sydney and the almost 150 stakeholders from health, education, legal and government sectors; faith and multicultural organisations; LGBTQIA+ advocates; and victim-survivors for their time and work putting together the bill. I also thank the Naughty Noodle Fun Haus in my community, which makes the Central Coast a fantastic place for—

Mr Michael Daley: Naughty noodles?

Ms LIESL TESCH: The Naughty Noodle Fun Haus. The Attorney General should come up and enjoy some of our frivolous fun and joy. It has really changed the nature of the Central Coast community, making it a safe place for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Alongside them, I will continue to celebrate the diversity of people in New South Wales. May we all live safely.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (21:05): I make a short contribution to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. We come to this moment through advocacy and through the commitments made by the then Premier and Leader of the Opposition prior to the 2023 election. We come to this place seeking to act compassionately for the most vulnerable in our community. I hoped we would all agree that coerced conversion practices such as electrotherapy are abhorrent and that it is appropriate that steps are taken to outlaw them. However, when government steps into people's personal lives, it ought to tread with due caution and without haste.

I acknowledge the work that the Government has done in terms of consultation. But it has been made clear to me through discussions with organisations such as the LGB Alliance that whilst the Government has engaged in a level of consultation, it and a number of other parties were not privy to that consultation. As a parent, I also acknowledge where ambiguities may arise, particularly when we talk about government being involved so intimately in the relationship between parent and child around parental rights. I express my concern about the broader consultation with the community, and it is for that reason I feel a referral for inquiry is a fit and proper approach. I cannot help but reflect on the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control in the last Parliament and the approach taken to that significant piece of social policy.

I acknowledge the faith groups that have urged the Opposition to support the bill lest a more radical bill be adopted by Labor and The Greens. It does not bode well to see the tool of legislation used to plant one ideology on top of another. It is a familiar failing of humanity to see one contemporary view as in all ways superior to an existing view—for the wellbeing of others, of course. It is the territory of belief, whatever else members might think is at work. LGBTQ+ conversion practices stand out as unfair and cruel. No-one should be told that they are broken because they do not conform. Hopefully, by working together in this place, we can strike firmly against abuse while supporting families to communicate fairly and sensitively about identity, sexuality, gender and love.

Another word on communication, if I may. Like the member for Sydney and many other members, I have received correspondence from constituents. While they almost uniformly support elements of the legislation, there remains some ambiguity and uncertainty about how its rules and its sanctions will play out in their work or at home. One constituent wrote:

It concerns me that the bill is very unclear about what one is permitted to do and say when talking to someone about the important issues of identity and sexuality, even within families, and important personal relationships.

Can I respond to genuine requests for support and advice without fear of being prosecuted by providing such support?

Can parents and caregivers or responsible guardians set standards for their family and only "discuss" sexuality rather than purposefully guiding their children?

I give those quotes because, if we stop for a moment to contemplate, it means there are still ambiguities and concerns around understanding. Parliament has an obligation to provide not just a change of law, but workable pathways for compliance and social acceptance when passing laws that regulate the very act of conversation. Communication, education and clear support documentation would be invaluable in delivering the positive outcomes that I hope will emerge from such laws as this. I reiterate my concerns about the Government's block of the referral of the bill to inquiry and, in that sense, a conversation with the broader community. I look forward to the strengthening of the bill in the other place through amendments. I recognise that what we seek is to act with compassion, respecting individuals and their life choices and acknowledging that there must be a better way forward.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (21:10): I make a very brief contribution to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I have previously made my apology in this place to the '78ers, and I unequivocally support this bill. We are each of us who we are. We love who we love, and that is a massive part of our identity. That is enough for all of us. We are all enough. I say to everyone

in my community and across the State who has struggled with the trauma of being coerced, bullied, discriminated against or forced into renouncing that fundamental part of self—their sexuality—that I am sorry. To those who have lived a life they never wanted because of the social pressures that forced them to be ashamed of who they are, I am sorry. To those who have tried to take their own lives, or who we have lost because they could not live a life which was not true to themselves, I am sorry.

To say sorry, we must really mean it—and to mean it, we must do all we can to stop the same injury, the same harm, from happening again. For that reason, I congratulate the Government, and particularly the Premier and the Attorney General, on taking the initiative to address the issue by bringing this bill to the House. I thank the member for Sydney for pushing us, at times, to this place. I thank all the advocates for their care, compassion and grace in their struggle to save lives and to make those lives liveable. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (21:12): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I do so driven by the core values that guide me now and always: All of us are of equal human value, we all have and should be afforded dignity, and we all deserve respect. For roughly 30 years I have actively participated in our democracy and public policymaking. Throughout that time, I have always believed that a flawed process leads to a flawed outcome. Regrettably, that is the case here. A far from optimal process to bring a bill in turn brings forth a far from optimal piece of legislation. The Minns Labor Government must own this, explain this and be held accountable for this. That is the central premise among my fundamental concerns with respect to this bill, as I will set out.

I say at the outset that harmful conversion practices should be brought to an end. That is common ground, and it was the commitment of then Premier Dominic Perrottet early last year. To be clear, conversion practices that cause harm have no place in New South Wales. The reality is that there could barely be coercive and harmful conversion practices like electric shock treatment, drug treatment or other such unacceptable physical or psychological interventions in this State today. They are wrong and of the past. I am advised that in the past 20 years the New South Wales Health Care Complaints Commission received 18 complaints about conversion practices that related to three individual health practitioners. Again, and I say this unequivocally, all harmful conversion practices should cease. Both parties share that commitment.

Legislating such a ban requires a very thoughtful, thorough, understanding and cooperative approach in order to strike the balance needed and to serve our community as a whole. Any such legislation necessarily strikes upon fundamental human freedoms: freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of belief and freedom of association. These are the foundations of our civilisation, upon which our democracy has been built. There is a lot at stake here. Again, a careful balance must be struck. Such weight and significance warrants an exhaustive, highly effective, very human and inclusive policymaking and lawmaking process in which all people and communities can be heard and respected and in which all are afforded dignity. That has not been the case here.

Last year, then Premier Dominic Perrottet rightly said on this topic, "This is a complex matter, and in working through it with parliamentary colleagues we will carefully consider the legal expression and effect of such laws." Those words are key. "Working with parliamentary colleagues" has not happened. My colleagues and I, on this side of the Chamber, first saw this bill last week. We had no prior role or engagement with respect to it. Returning to the former Premier's words, "carefully considering the legal expression and effect of such laws" has not happened either. The bill opens a raft of legal questions—matters of interpretation that the courts will need to address and definitional issues requiring clarification. To be crystal clear, and as the former Premier's words spell out, the Coalition would have gone about this very differently to Labor. Let that be clear.

Labor's approach has been to conduct its own closed-door, secretive consultations with a targeted group of stakeholders of its choosing. The Attorney General, in his second reading speech, referred to 150 organisations. Notably, he also said that there are "strong, polarised" views on these reforms. There were, he said, 134 submissions and eight roundtable sessions. There are eight million people in this State and countless groups—hundreds of them—that would seek to be engaged on these issues. Labor did not conduct true, open, genuine consultation that passes the test of public interest. This was a process from which the New South Wales public has been, in effect, shut out.

I do not know which groups were consulted by Labor, but I understand there are many groups that sought to be included and were not. I am aware of at least ten such groups being excluded, and there would be many more I do not know of. That is before we even get to the millions of ordinary people—citizens, residents, individuals, mums and dads and people of all backgrounds—who could be affected by this bill. The reality is that we have a bill that was intended to root out bad practices, but which now, in effect, regulates how parents may parent, talk with their children and practice their faith as a family.

Not surprisingly, I have received many hundreds of letters to my office about this bill just in the past week. Overwhelmingly, by a factor of about 20 to one—yes, we have read them all—they raise concerns, doubts,

questions and dismay that this may be about to become law when people have just had it brought to their attention for the first time. Just imagine how many ordinary people out there do not even know of the existence of this bill. How could they, in just one week? Yet they could soon be subject to its provisions and penalties. Those residents of New South Wales have not been engaged, and will not be engaged, by the Minns Labor Government. Their voices will not be heard under Labor. Their concerns will not be addressed under Labor. Their doubts cannot be dealt with under Labor.

The Labor approach has been, first, a closed-door, selective, exclusive, secret stakeholder engagement; second, killing off a much-needed parliamentary inquiry sought by the Coalition and crossbench members in the Legislative Council; third, opposing any amendments, as the Attorney General has made clear; and fourth, rushing the bill through the Parliament in one week. In short, there has been little or no real scrutiny by the Parliament—Labor has done this; so little time before the Parliament—Labor has done this; no real consultation by the Parliament—Labor has done this; no real engagement of millions of residents—Labor has done this; and no real community debate—Labor has done this. It is a sad reflection upon this Parliament, upon our democracy and most of all upon the Minns Labor Government.

It is remarkable and ironic, given the predisposition of this Government to call for and conduct so many reviews and inquiries—some lasting over a year—that this will likely be wrapped up, in a public sense, in just one week. It smacks of politics and game playing that has no regard for the people or the purpose for which the Parliament was established, which is to represent the people and keep government accountable to the people. Labor has commenced one such review into the Anti-Discrimination Act. That review will take well over one year and will be live for many months to come. Some elements of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill hinge upon that law, yet it will be passed well beforehand, in one mere week. That smacks of hypocrisy and undue urgency.

The people of New South Wales will not forget this, nor should they. Time will not permit me to traverse the many substantive issues that I, and so many of my constituents, have about the bill. I concur with the many concerns and matters raised by my colleague the member for Wahroonga, as well as the amendments that have been foreshadowed and will be moved in the Legislative Council. The amendments are essential. I have read the bill. It casts the net widely and broadly in scope as to what is considered a conversion practice and provides few exemptions. One problem is that exemptions are framed in a circular and confusing fashion. As all members know, exemption by example, as we have here in front of us, can never cover the field. There will always be examples that go beyond but were not foreseen nor detailed. Therefore, the unamended bill would have major consequences for many people going forward. In conclusion, the people of Willoughby and New South Wales deserve so much better than this Labor rush job on something that matters to millions of residents of our great State. I will continue to fight for better for my community and the people of this State. I thank the House.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:21): I speak in debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. As someone who has lived my entire life in the area that I now represent, my links to my community run deep. They are not merely transactional. People of faith are my family, my long-time friends and my neighbours. They are not just constituents. They also include many people from various faith communities. As such, I am in a unique position to consult genuinely and widely with a diverse array of faith communities, and I have done so on this bill.

Just this afternoon I was on the phone with the principal of a faith-based school in my community. He emailed me earlier in the week, and I emailed him back. He raised concerns that had come through to him about the bill. We had a good chat, and I told him that I had been consulting and speaking with the Minister, the Minister's office, peak bodies and other faith groups. By the end of the conversation, he was comforted and assured that he would be able to continue to be a principal at a school that practises and teaches faith. That right will not be impinged on. Those discussions have not just taken place today; they have taken place over a long period. Essentially, that is how democracy should work.

For too long the tone on these kinds of issues has been unhelpful. All too often, stakeholders on both sides go to their corners, throw pejoratives at each other and do not progress any further. We end up with a society that is probably a little bit more divided than it should be. I did not get elected to this place to play those kinds of politics. For all the pompous bluster of those opposite, that is not what I have been elected to do. During the election campaign, Freedom for Faith held many forums throughout New South Wales about the bill and many other issues. In my electorate, that took place at Hoxton Park Anglican Church. It was not a "meet the candidates" event, because I was the only one who turned up. The Liberal candidate did not turn up, and neither did the other two or three candidates. It was essentially a conversation with me and the pastor. It was well informed, and I still receive positive feedback about that forum to this day.

I have regular discussions with Freedom for Faith, with that church and with the pastor from that church, and I will continue to do so. I have an open-door policy to any group on any issue. That is the way that I do politics. For many in my community, religion and faith are central to their identity. I represent a diverse

multicultural community. Many of them have fled as refugees from war, from genocide and from other atrocities, and their faith is integral part of who they are. They were persecuted because of their beliefs. They have come to New South Wales for a better life, and they continue to practise their faith in a country that allows that. Like many members of this place, I have received emails from all corners of my electorate over many months. I have had conversation after conversation with people in my electorate, be they faith leaders or constituents who attend church on a Sunday or the mosque on a Friday, or even be they agnostic or atheist.

While the bill is likely to work its way through Parliament this week, conversations about the bill and the issues it raises will continue for a long time. As the member for Leppington, I will continue to have those conversations. I have raised my concerns and questioned some of the issues about the bill on behalf of my constituents. I have made sure that south-west Sydney is represented as part of the consultation process. I have spoken to multiple Ministers, their staff and peak bodies. To take one faith as an example, all Catholics are not Catholics, so to speak. There are Roman Catholics but, in my community, there are Chaldeans and many other people who adhere to the Catholic faith who are not run-of-the-mill Roman Catholics. It is important that people from south-west Sydney are consulted and get to have their say. People like me are in this place to represent those people.

The answer that has come out of over 12 months of consultation is that, regardless of what side of the fence a person is on, it is clear that conversion practices are harmful and must be banned. It is also clear that people of faith must be free to continue to practise their beliefs, free from undue intervention from the State. The bill is not perfect. It is likely that no group is 100 per cent happy with the result. But there will be 12 months or so to educate and inform the community about any concerns and to dispel any misunderstandings. The process of development and consultation on the bill has been extensive, and the public discourse has been civil. The process as a whole has run more smoothly and been more inclusive than previous attempts on issues of conscience and faith in the past.

I congratulate the Attorney General for his work. I thank all stakeholders for their productive contributions to the debate over many months. This time, the Government has got the bill right. The Government has consulted widely and struck the right balance between the diverse views of the New South Wales community and my community in Leppington in particular. I note that the bill is an election commitment and has been through a long and thorough process of development and consultation. From the outset, it was made clear by the Minns Labor Government that this is and always will be a New South Wales bill. It is a bill by and for the people of New South Wales. It will not incorporate some of the concerns from other jurisdictions that have passed similar legislation. It addresses the unique issues and concerns of this State. I commend the bill to the House and look forward to a future for New South Wales where both harmful conversion practices no longer take place and people of faith continue to have their views respected.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (21:29): I speak on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I firstly thank the many community organisations, faith groups and members of the Terrigal community who took the time to reach out to me and my office with their concerns, interests, positions and passions regarding this piece of legislation. I also thank the amazing team in my office. Jack, Deborah, Donna and Julie spent a lot of time with the people from our community who took the time to write to, call or drop into my office to raise their points. It is important that they know that, as their MP, I am here to speak on their behalf in this Parliament.

It has been acknowledged by pretty much every member who has spoken tonight that there is a bipartisan commitment to outlaw harmful conversion practices. It is important to lay that out at the beginning. I have been listening intently to all of the eloquent speakers who have put their points forward, and it is important to put that on record. However, it is also important that we strike the right balance with the bill and ensure that all stakeholders are heard and consulted. That is why the Opposition supported the establishment of a parliamentary committee in the other place. It is disappointing that the Government and The Greens refused the request to establish a committee that would have enabled genuine community consultation to provide feedback to the bill. One of the concerns that many Opposition members raised this evening is that the committee opportunity has been lost. That is very sad.

Government members on the Central Coast will no doubt be questioned by community members who have taken the time to contact them. They will want explanations as to why they were denied that process. Of course, I fully support the sensible amendments that the Opposition has foreshadowed it will move in the Legislative Council. I call on the Government and the crossbench in the Legislative Council to support those amendments, which were done in consultation with key community and faith stakeholders. They were not just whipped up at two minutes to midnight; a lot of work went into them. I acknowledge the speech on those points by the shadow Attorney General this evening. Should those amendments not pass in the other place, I would strongly encourage our community stakeholders who reached out to me to seek an explanation from the member for Gosford, the

member for The Entrance and the member for Wyong as to why the Government did not support those very sensible amendments.

I am proud to represent the schools, faith-based groups, individuals and community organisations of Terrigal who reached out to me and who know they have a member that listens to them and passes their feedback on in this place. That is what we are elected to do. It is disappointing that the Government saw fit to deny those people an additional say through the committee process. Yesterday—and we have heard it tonight too—was an indictment of the fact that the Government runs everything through committees when it suits it. Sadly, this was not one of those cases. The member for Leppington admitted that no bill is perfect. That is why we have the committee structure: to make a bill as perfect as we can as it progresses through the Houses.

I reaffirm that I fully support the amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Attorney General that will be moved by the Opposition in the Legislative Council, and I urge the Government and the crossbench to take them seriously, because they will be asked to justify their decisions. The local members representing the electorates of Gosford, The Entrance and Wyong will have to answer to the people of the Central Coast as to why those sensible amendments were not supported, and I will encourage my community members to contact them directly seeking a response on that. I look forward to seeing the passage of the legislation through the Legislative Council.

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (21:34): I make a brief contribution to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. It is important to acknowledge that banning harmful conversion practices has bipartisan support from across the Chamber. We are all in favour of ensuring that people from the LGBTQIA+ community are respected and have the right to live their lives in freedom—not to be forced to change who they are. That goes for all people in our community. I was raised to give all people the highest respect, but this is not about that. It is about whether the bill strikes the right balance.

I have engaged and listened, and my community has told me that family life and faith is important to them. I would have hoped that the Government would have supported a parliamentary inquiry on the issue. I think it is a reasonable and sensible request to invite community consultation and to give all people the opportunity to contribute to the debate. That would ensure that the bill considers, and is in line with, community sentiment. Given that the Government has not supported a parliamentary inquiry, my colleagues in the other place will seek to make amendments to the bill. I ask the Government and the crossbench to support those amendments.

I thank everyone who has contacted me with their diverse views on the bill. I have appreciated the respectful manner in which we have been able to discuss the bill. I particularly acknowledge Mr Darryl Soh, pastor at Abbotsford Presbyterian Church; Murray Norman and parishioners of Abbotsford Presbyterian Church; Mr Joel Radford, pastor at Drummoyne Baptist Church, and his parish community; Father Michael McLean and parishioners of the St Mark's Drummoyne parish; Father Michael Lanzon of Our Lady of Assumption parish; Dr Duncan Chang and the congregation at the Cornerstone Presbyterian Church at Rhodes; Father Tom Stevens and parishioners at St Patrick's Mortlake; and Father Chaminda Wanigasena and parishioners at St Ambrose Concord West, all of whom have taken the time to engage with me on the issue. I thank the House for allowing me to contribute to debate on the bill.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (21:37): I speak on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024, which will have wide-ranging ramifications for the State. Yet it is a bill that the Government and The Greens seem intent on ramming through this place without any genuine consultation with the broader community. It was greatly concerning that yesterday in the other place the Government and The Greens did not support the referral of the bill to a public inquiry. If the proponents of the bill were serious about representing the public interest, a public inquiry would have been the most positive and logical step. An inquiry would have allowed members of our constituencies to voice their immense concerns about the potential unintended consequences of the legislation.

I take this opportunity to thank the many members of my community and community groups who have approached me with concerns about their ability to give the Government feedback on the bill, yet the Government has been hellbent on silencing dissent and forcing this rushed piece of legislation through. The fact that the Government has already said that it will not accept amendments to the bill and will not be open to a public inquiry shows a level of arrogance towards the people of New South Wales and, indeed, the Government members' own communities. Massive changes require thoughtful and inclusive participation from the communities that we represent. I want my constituents to have the opportunity to participate through a public inquiry in addressing their ideas and concerns about the bill. Open government is good government. The bill can be addressed by this Parliament in a reasonable time but with engagement from the broader community and not just interest groups hand-picked by the Government.

I urge the Government to support a public inquiry, to give a voice to the voiceless. Until there is such an inquiry I cannot, in all good consciousness, support this bill in its current form. I firmly believe that, at the very least, the bill should be referred to the Law and Safety Committee for inquiry and report. It will be a year before

this legislation comes into effect. That allows more than enough time for dealing with such a complex piece of law reform by way of open committee. This legislation was brought to this House without the level and depth of consultation that a bill such as this merits. The Government needs to ensure that the people of New South Wales have their voices heard. I urge the Government to support the Opposition's amendments in the other place, for the betterment of New South Wales and our communities.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (21:40): I contribute to the debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I recognise the member for Sydney, who is in the Chamber this evening, and acknowledge that he was the catalyst for this bill, through the bill that he introduced in this term of Parliament last year and also by the work that he did leading into the last election to advocate for the rights of survivors of conversion practices. I thank him for the work he was done, and I welcome the bill the Government has put before the House.

The objectives of the bill are to make it an offence to engage in conversion practices with the intention of changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, and to establish a civil complaints scheme to provide avenues and processes for redress for individuals and representative bodies if they have a complaint under this bill. A lot of work has been undertaken to get to this point. I particularly acknowledge the work of Equality Australia in developing this important legislation alongside the member for Greenwich and the Government. Conversion practices are an insidious issue that continue to affect many LGBTQ+ people in our local communities. The bill characterises conversion practices as those that seek to suppress or change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. Contemporary forms of conversion could include counselling, psychology or psychotherapy, formal behaviour-change programs, support groups, prayer-based approaches and exorcisms.

First and foremost, let us recognise that being a member of the LGBTQ+ community is not a disorder or defect that needs to be remedied. It is a natural aspect of human diversity, and every person has the right to live authentically and without fear of judgement or discrimination. As a Liberal, I believe in the inalienable rights and freedoms of all peoples, and conversion practices aim to limit and attack the rights and freedoms that LGBTQ+ people have to be themselves. The notion that sexual orientation or gender identity can be altered through therapy is scientifically unfounded and ethically reprehensible. Conversion practices are not only ineffective but also harmful, perpetuating stigma, discrimination and mental anguish amongst LGBTQ+ individuals. Moreover, gay conversion practices perpetuate harmful stereotypes and reinforce societal prejudices against LGBTQ+ individuals. Promoting the false idea that being LGBTQ+ is something to be ashamed of or corrected fosters a culture of discrimination and intolerance. It sends a dangerous message to young people in particular that they are not worthy of love and acceptance unless they conform to outdated and harmful norms.

According to research undertaken by the Human Rights Law Centre and La Trobe University, almost 4 per cent of LGBTQ+ Australians aged 14 to 21 years of age have experienced conversion practices. Last week, in this place, I was fortunate enough to hear directly from survivors of conversion practices thanks to the Parliamentary Friends of LGBTIQ+. What we heard was nothing less than heartbreaking. I have also heard from many people in my local community who have offered support for this bill. Some of them have shared stories of their own personal experiences or those of family members, and all have asked me to ensure that we in this place do not miss this opportunity and continue to leave our community exposed to discrimination and harm.

Last week, in this Parliament, we heard stories of those who sought out conversion practices when they were younger because they had been told, either through family, friends or their church, that they were damaged, that they were filled with demons or that they could not be a child of God unless they changed who they were entirely. What struck me about those stories was that these were often people of very profound and deep faith who felt that their ability to practice and experience that faith had been broken because their sexuality or gender identity could not be respected. People are sometimes driven towards conversion therapy by an unwavering yearning for acceptance and validation, not only from their families but also from within their faith or their broader communities.

One of the most disturbing aspects of conversion therapy is the potential for severe emotional and psychological damage. LGBTQ+ people who undergo these practices often have high rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal ideation. Far from "curing" them, conversion practices frequently exacerbate the very distress it is claimed they alleviate, leaving lasting scars. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise that gay conversion practices are fundamentally at odds with the principles of autonomy and consent. Many individuals who undergo these types of practices do so under duress, pressured by family members, religious leaders or societal expectations. They are often coerced into participating in these practices against their will and with little regard for their own desires or sense of self.

I turn to some of the concerns that have been raised with me by members of my community regarding this legislation, which I hope to address and provide clarity on. I recognise that concerns about religious freedom have been surrounding the debate on this bill. We need to ensure that we are not prioritising the rights of one group

over another, but rather protecting the rights of all people equally. Freedom of religion is a crucial right for people across this State and country. I have heard from faith groups in my community who are supportive of ending conversion practices in New South Wales. I have also received amendments from members in my community who have concerns with the bill as it stands. I am open to supporting amendments that will strengthen this bill to ensure the right outcome for all.

I note the bill clearly states that expressing a belief through a sermon, taking offence at religious teachings and seeking guidance through prayer are not included in the ban. To me, this responds to the very genuine concerns that people of faith in my community and across the State have about ensuring their religious freedoms and ability to worship or practice are preserved. In his second reading speech, in relation to religious beliefs or principles, the Attorney General said:

The exclusion has been carefully drafted to preserve the ability for people to express their views and their beliefs.

I understand this legislation has been considered with input from over 150 organisations, including many faith-based organisations that provided submissions and input into the drafting. This legislative reform has been considered while acknowledging and respecting longstanding religious beliefs and practices.

It has also been suggested that the bill seeks to tell parents how or whether they should discuss these issues with their children. This is not the case. The bill clearly states that a conversion practice does not include parents discussing matters relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion with their children. I refer again to the second reading speech of the Attorney General, where he said:

This ban was never intended to stop parents from having discussions, even challenging discussions, with their children about these matters.

The Liberals believe in the family unit and the strength of it for our society, no matter its composition. We believe that parents and families are often best placed to address these issues, and that each family plays a vital role in shaping their own values, beliefs and cultural traditions. Furthermore, the issue of an individual seeking guidance through faith leaders within their community or from medical practitioners or psychologists remains protected within this bill. The bill does not impact a person's ability to seek guidance or counsel from within their faith. As outlined in the Attorney General's second reading speech, an individual would still be able to seek guidance or support from health practitioners registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW), such as medical practitioners and psychologists, who have existing obligations to act ethically and in accordance with professional codes and standards.

We cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the suffering caused by conversion practices. As a State, we have come a long way when it comes to the rights of LGBTQ+ people, but we have more work to do. We have a moral obligation to protect the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Banning conversion practices is not only a matter of public health but also a fundamental human rights issue. Other jurisdictions have implemented similar bans and New South Wales is the next piece in the puzzle. We cannot afford to wait any longer; LGBTQ+ members of our community continue to suffer in silence and so many lives have been lost. It is time for our State and every member of this place to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of dignity, equality and respect for all. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (21:49): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I take this opportunity to speak on behalf of the hundreds of constituents who have contacted my office to contribute to the very personal and important conversation surrounding the bill. I thank them for their engagement. I understand and reject the horrific practice of conversion therapies, and I acknowledge the appropriate steps to outlaw their practice in this State. Whilst I agree we should be taking steps to protect every vulnerable person from harmful situations, as members of Parliament we are duty bound to ensure that we scrutinise the legislation and take the time to be informed, and listen to those who wish to contribute to this important piece of legislation. I am in disbelief that this Government has failed to give the communities of New South Wales a voice, by rushing through the bill.

The Government wishes to step into the personal lives of its citizens, without considered consultation, to deny the rights of parents the opportunity to communicate with, educate and provide guidance to their children without the threat of prosecution. For that reason and many others, an inquiry would be the proper approach. It is disappointing that that has been denied by this Labor Government. I have been contacted by constituents sharing stories of their devastation and frustration when outsiders intervened in their lives, engaging with and encouraging their children to pursue a certain path of gender identification or sexual orientation at a time when their child was feeling lost and vulnerable. Through love, compassion and affirmation of family values, some families have been able to successfully navigate this period. I reiterate that for some it is a period when children are lost and vulnerable.

I am well versed in the complexities of harm to children. I worked as a detective and investigator in that field for many years. I am not oblivious to the perverseness of people trying to persuade children into acts that suit their own personal agendas. I am also acutely aware of the trauma and lifelong effects that those acts have on children. As parents, we are obliged to teach our children about protecting themselves, communicating and having uncomfortable conversations about many things. Gender, gender identity and conversion should not be excluded from those conversations.

When a government steps into the personal lives of people, it should do so with caution and respect. It is alarming at best to observe a government intruding so intimately into the relationship between a parent and child without express consideration of family dynamics. Parliament has an obligation to provide not just a change of law surrounding harmful conversion practices but also workable pathways for compliance and social acceptance. We need to communicate, educate and develop a concise document that will be invaluable in delivering the positive outcome we all need to emerge from these laws. We must respect individuals and their life choices, and enact a law that reflects that.

As has been made clear to me through discussions with LGB Alliance, faith-based schools and others, the bill combines two separate issues—sexual identity and gender identity. They also made it clear that whilst the Government engaged in a level of consultation, those groups and a number of other parties were not privy to consultation. For that reason, an inquiry is the most fit and proper approach. It is disappointing that that has been denied by this Labor Government. I acknowledge faith groups who have urged the Opposition to support the bill with amendments, lest a more radical bill be adopted. It does not bode well to use the tool of legislation to plant one ideology over the top of another.

It is the familiar failing of humanity to see one contemporary view as, in all ways, superior—for the wellbeing of others, of course—to an existing view. This is the territory of belief, whatever else one might think is at work. The Government denied an inquiry and rushed this important piece of legislation, and the very groups that participated in the closed consultation suggest that the legislation needs amending. That tells me that consultation is lacking and further discussion is needed. The Coalition has foreshadowed that it will move amendments in the upper House. I urge members to support those amendments to strengthen the bill.

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (21:54): I contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I am pleased to contribute to the debate on behalf of my community. I make it clear that I fully support legislation that will make our community safe. I make it clear that I support legislation to make the community safe for LGBTIQ+ and other vulnerable persons. Harmful conversion practices must be banned. I agree it is important to ensure that members of the LGBTIQ+ community are afforded respect. I agree with statements that the debate in this House must be respectful. I also agree that members of the LGBTIQ+ community are not broken and, as such, they do not need to be repaired. They also should not be made to feel that they are broken.

I thank every member in this House who has contributed to the debate, and every person and group, including survivors from conversion practices. However, whilst providing support for members of the LGBTIQ+ community, the bill does not get the balance right. The bill constrains the free rights of individuals to obtain advice on deeply personal matters. It constrains the ability of parents, teachers and faith leaders to provide counselling, advice, care and comfort without fear of civil or criminal consequences. Many members of this House have also raised a concern that the Government has rushed the bill through Parliament without appropriate time for a full consultation process with members of our community and important stakeholder groups.

The bill follows on from two bills tabled last year by the member for Sydney—the Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 2023 and the Equality Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The member for Sydney recently referred the equality bill to a Legislative Council standing committee for inquiry and report. That report is to be provided on or before 3 June 2024. I mention the referral of the equality bill because the position of the Opposition is that the Conversion Practices Ban Bill should also have been referred to a committee for a short, sharp inquiry and report. Yesterday in the other place, a motion was considered to refer the bill before this House to the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice for report. That motion called for a report by 14 May 2024. That date would have meant that the report would be returned to this House before the return date of the equality bill. The Government and The Greens voted not to allow this bill to be subject to the same inquiry and process afforded to the equality bill. No valid reason has been proffered by Government members.

It is clear to me, as it will be clear to members of the community in my electorate and the electorates that the Labor Party members represent, that the Government decided to rush this bill through Parliament without allowing proper time for a full consultation and report. The failure by the Government to agree to the referral of the bill to a committee simply does not pass the pub test. As correctly stated by the member for Lane Cove earlier, "Open government is good government." The Government and The Greens should have agreed to refer the bill to a public inquiry. A committee of inquiry would have allowed members of the community to contribute to the

process of government and to proffer amendments to improve the bill. Sadly, the Premier chose not to send the bill to a committee.

Members on this side of the House have consulted with our communities. I listened to my community and read the correspondence, including from those advocating for amendments. I also want to thank the leaders of the faith communities who have in good faith consulted with the Government and with the Opposition. I note that many members of those faith communities have asked for amendments to this bill. I thank the many members of my own community who have written to my office concerning the bill. I will not read the extracts from the many emails I received. However, I will say that members of my own community have asked that I seek those amendments. I also thank my staff in my electorate office—Helen, Leanne, Molly and Dugald—who have read and collated those many emails.

In the view of members of my community, the bill in its current form is an overreach of government that will impact the rights of parents, teachers and faith leaders. To overcome some of the issues, the Opposition will be proposing amendments in the other place. I note that the member for Wahroonga in his second reading contribution referred to those amendments. The amendments which will be moved include amendments to define the term "suppression". The Attorney General in his second reading speech referred to the term "suppression" by reference to the *Macquarie Dictionary*. As the bill creates a criminal offence, the term should be clearly defined to give clear guidance not only to the courts, should a matter be referred to the courts, but also, more importantly, to those who may be asked to advise members of our community.

We should be making the legislation clear and not leaving important clauses and the importance of the bill to conjecture and uncertainty. The absence of an appropriate definition within the Act means that parents also may feel constrained when asked to provide guidance to their own children as to sexual identity or gender issues. I appreciate that Government members of this House have said that the bill does not stop parents from having conversations with their own children. Government members have suggested that the bill is explicit and does not prevent parents from having a conversation as to sexual identity or gender issues with their children. However, I say that parents should never have to be worried about the criminal or civil consequences of engaging in loving and caring conversations with their children.

Parents are in the best position to know the needs of their own children. The importance of maintaining the bonds between parents and their children can never be understated. A child who wants to speak to his or her parents about sexuality or gender issues may be confused when a parent does not, or cannot, provide appropriate guidance. The failure by a parent to be able to counsel, comfort and guide the growth, development and wellbeing of a child may have an adverse impact on the parental bond between a parent and a child. I believe there is a requirement for legislation to ban harmful practices which cause harm to vulnerable members of our community. But, as I have said, in my view the bill does not provide appropriate definitions and it does not provide appropriate safeguards for parents, teachers and faith leaders. I urge Government members to listen to the community. The community has asked for amendments. I urge Government and crossbench members to support the Opposition amendments. When the bill is debated in the other place, I strongly urge the Government and crossbench members to support the Opposition amendments.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (22:02): I too wish to contribute to debate on the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. When we think about some of the abhorrent conversion practices—electric shock, nausea-inducing drugs, exorcisms, ice baths, aversion therapies and so on—they are completely shocking. I am not aware, nor have I in my life been aware, of any such practices occurring in the electorate of Upper Hunter, but that is not to say they have not occurred. It is certainly not something we want to happen in our modern society, nor is ours a society in which we wish those things could happen. I think we all agree on that particular aspect. We all oppose coercive conversion therapy practices, including the historical cruel physical and emotional treatments inflicted on people to change behaviours and tendencies. Actions such as aversion therapy, shock therapy, lobotomies, castration and drug treatments are all terrible practices that are totally unacceptable. Of course we want to see those practices prohibited by this bill.

The bill needs close scrutiny because it seems to go a long way beyond those practices to reach into the family home by inserting legal frameworks into family units. Right or wrong, I feel that it is a huge intrusion into people's lives and therefore requires close review. I do not feel the bill has had the sufficient level of scrutiny called for. There has been a significant lack of community consultation. Members have had this bill for only a week, so I can say I have not been able to consult with my community. For that, I apologise to people in the Upper Hunter. It is a shameful position for this Parliament to be in right now when this is such important legislation.

Members have not had the time or the opportunity to receive feedback from the public. I am disappointed that Labor and The Greens have prevented an open discussion from occurring about these changes, through whatever form is suitable, whether it is in a Legislative Council committee or simply by having sufficient time to

have conversations with the public. This bill will make a major change to the manner in which families talk to each other about sexuality and gender. This is an important bill which, if left unamended, could have major ramifications for our society, so it is worthy of community discussion.

I note the religious protections in the bill. There does seem to have been a concerted effort by the Government to protect the freedom of religious expression. Faith NSW, which represents various faith groups around the State, sent me a letter stating support for the bill. I thank them for that and for their guidance. But further to that, the bill becomes questionable. Government members claim there has been wide consultation on this bill but I do not feel that is the case. Rachael Wong from the Women's Forum Australia states:

We received no feedback at all on our submission and we were not invited to participate in any of the closed roundtable meetings that were conducted, despite our clear community interest regarding the proposed Bill. Unlike what has been the case for a very small select group of stakeholders. Neither were we provided with any draft bill for review. We understand that there are other women's groups, as well as children's, parents and LGB alliance groups, who similarly found themselves shut out of consultation on the Bill.

That is not the experience of a major stakeholder who has gone through a proper consultation process. Although, to be fair to the Government, it sounds like it has consulted faith groups and progressive LGBTIQ+ groups, and that has been its focus. While the Government does seem to have engaged with part of the community that is very supportive, the Government has avoided other parts of the community and avoided the tough questions on the bill. The Women's Forum Australia has strongly advocated for the removal of gender from the bill. I think there is merit in their request.

There seems to be a mixing of the concepts of gender identity with sexual orientation. It is a complicated field. I do not profess to be an expert on any of this, but it would certainly be worthwhile to float it with interested parties who feel very strongly about the legislation so we can have that discussion. We have not had time to do that. There is also an issue related to the definition of suppression. The Attorney General said that the key term "suppression", which is not defined in the bill, has its ordinary dictionary meaning, which is "to keep in or repress" something or "to put an end to activities". This bill absolutely feels too general in nature. We need a very clear definition of "suppression" that can be relied upon by our judiciary when working with this bill. It seems to me that two people discussing sexuality more than once could trigger the suppression rule. As an example from a simpleton like me, if there are maybe two discussions involving non-religious people who are not the parents, they could end up in jail if relations between those parties sour and a complaint is made. We must get to the bottom of those sorts of questions and understand those scenarios.

For me the key issue in the bill is the exemption for parents, and I understand where that came from. But, when I look at family relationships, it is the aspect I feel most uncomfortable about. Some amendments will be proposed in the other place, and I ask the Government to have a close look at this one in particular. The bill exempts parents but no other members of the family. Grandparents have a special relationship with their grandchildren. It is completely reasonable that they have conversations about sexuality. Grandparents would have things to say about their grandchildren's behaviour in various ways. The bill allows an exemption for parents discussing matters relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual activity or religion with their children. But we need to look at grandparents, siblings and others who are part of that family unit.

We need further protections for behavioural standards that parents and other members of the family dictate for how the household is to run. It is completely fair that we be tolerant of the various opinions that can occur in the household and also aware of how relationships can break down in the household when you are dealing with, in my case, teenagers or grandparents who have different ideas. Those relationships can be close but fractious at times, and I fear that some of the provisions in the bill could be weaponised by angry kids at any time.

In conclusion, whilst I applaud the bill's aim to ban the horrific conversion therapies we have spoken of, it would seem that the definition of "suppression" needs more work. Most importantly to me as a legislator, we need a close look at exemptions for direct family members such as siblings, and for grandparents and other extended family members. It must be looked at more closely, and I ask the Government to look at the amendments to be moved in the other place.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (22:12): I feel compelled to speak clearly in support of the Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024. I thank the Government and the Attorney General for bringing forward this important reform. I also thank my friend the member for Sydney for his advocacy around this issue and his unwavering support for the LGBTQA+ community, and I note that he first initiated reform in this area with his Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill in August 2023. This important bill sends a clear message that practices directed at changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity cause psychological harm and trauma and that they are wrong, do not work and are not acceptable within our civil society. It also sends a clear message to the community that being LGBTQA+ is not shameful or wrong, that our LGBTQA+ community members are not broken and that they do not need to be fixed.

Australian studies into conversion practices suggest that around 4 per cent of LGBTQA+ Australians aged between 14 and 21 years have experienced conversion practices. That is alarming. Medical and psychological communities oppose conversion practices, and many studies have shown they are ineffectual and can cause significant psychological harm and trauma. People who have been subjected to conversion practices have suffered feelings of shame, guilt, grief, anxiety, depression and, in some cases, suicidal ideation and, unfortunately, successful suicide. The Australian Medical Association [AMA], the Australian Psychological Society, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia oppose conversion practices or practices that attempt to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender, and the AMA has called for a ban on coercive conversion practices.

I understand that for many this is a difficult and sensitive issue. I have heard from many people expressing their views—most vociferously from those who oppose this reform. Weighing these arguments against the harm that conversion practices inarguably do, I conclude that this bill strikes the right balance between protecting vulnerable persons from harmful conversion practices and balancing freedom of religious belief. It recognises clinically appropriate health care and practices that genuinely facilitate an individual's coping skills, development or identity exploration. It allows for the expression of a belief or expression that is not otherwise part of a practice, treatment or sustained effort directed at change or suppression. This bill does not restrain parents' ability to discuss matters regarding sexuality, gender or religion with their children, something that unfortunately happens perhaps too rarely.

Wide consultation has taken place with over 150 stakeholders, and the bill takes into account feedback from victims, religious organisations, advocacy groups, parents' rights groups, and health, government and other stakeholders. The bill allows for a civil redress scheme that is focused on conciliation and voluntary resolution, mirroring the existing anti-discrimination framework. It also empowers the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal with remedial powers for unresolved complaints, including limited damages. It reserves criminal offences for the worst category of conduct—intentional conduct that results in substantial physical or mental harm—recognising the level of harm and damage that conversion practices can cause.

Finally, the bill empowers the Anti-Discrimination Board with an education and inquiry function, allowing it to carry out investigations and research into conversion practices, and allows referrals to other relevant industries, such as the Health Care Complaints Commission. The inclusion of a civil redress scheme is important. Limiting redress to the criminal system would force victims of harmful conversion practices into the adversarial criminal justice system in order to seek redress, potentially causing further harm and trauma.

As a society, we have grappled with behaviours that were once institutionalised, common and accepted practice but which we now abhor or have banned in law, such as the flogging or smacking of children and the use of corporal punishment in schools. Such practices are now just not accepted in a civil society, and rightly so; and that is how it should be with conversion therapy, as we look back following the passing of this bill, hopefully. Some will argue otherwise, but I truly respect people's faith. But where there is a history and clear evidence of physical and psychological damage to vulnerable people exposed to terrible conversion therapies, excuse me for siding with those vulnerable individuals. Once again I acknowledge the Attorney General, and I thank the Government for taking up this bill and my friend the member for Sydney for the work he has done to bring this bill to this place. This once again shows just how good this House can be when we work together, as we are. I trust that the bill passes this House and the other place unchanged.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (22:19): The Conversion Practices Ban Bill 2024 will make it clear that LGBTQA+ people are not broken and do not need to be fixed, and attempts to make us change or hide who we are will be against the law. Everyone should feel affirmed and welcome regardless of who they are or who they love. For LGBTQ people there is a long history of attempts to change or suppress their sexuality or gender identity, with devastating impacts on their lives. I have heard heartbreaking stories from survivors of conversion practices. Many grew up and became aware of their sexuality or gender identity in an environment where they were told that being gay, bi or trans is a disorder that needs to be healed to avoid unhappiness, rejection and damnation.

Discovering your sexuality or gender identity when the only message you hear is that you are broken has lifelong impacts on your self-worth and makes you want to change who you are. Most survivors voluntarily participate because they have been surrounded by the ideology that their sexual orientation or gender identity is broken and can and must be fixed. Experiences range from counselling, therapy, pseudo-psychology, pastoral care, camps, spiritual guidance and/or deliverances. They come out of those experiences, sometimes decades later, with their sexuality and gender identity unchanged but their emotional state severely altered. I want to tell the House the story of Dawn, who told me:

I believe I have always been a person who has intrinsically felt a deep sense of religious faith or belonging. I did not grow up in a Christian household, I was never taken to Church, and yet at the age of 8 to 9, I asked my parents if they would take me to Church.

While I was not actively involved in any church during my teens, at the age of 19, I became a born-again Christian through a friend.

My life changed completely. I lived for the Church (for God), I experienced my faith intensely. Within a couple of years, I was running mid-week home church groups, heading up prayer chains, bible studies, attending part-time Bible College, followed by full-time Ministry Training College all while working full-time as part of the administrative team within the Church itself.

Unfortunately for me, one week after becoming a Christian, I also met Judy, who impacted me with the same level of intensity. For three years, because of my Christian faith, I did everything I could to not become involved with Judy. Ours was an on-again, off-again emotional relationship that caused me (and her) immense pain and one which we both hid from everyone we cared about.

We lived in constant fear of being found out. My faith told me that this was "the greatest of all sins", that it was "unnatural", "forbidden", "of the devil".

It taught me that if I continued to see Judy, my destiny was hell and there was no way to reconcile the two. I learnt to hate myself. I experienced significant internalised homophobia. I couldn't sleep. I felt it hard to make friends. I felt as if I was constantly walking on the edge and being pulled in two, and very alone. I was a walking mess.

It took me almost 18 months to muster up enough courage to book a counselling session with a Pastor, predominately due to the deep shame that I felt. My confidential counselling session one Sunday morning with one of the Ministers (who had no counsellor training, no mental health training) ended up being disclosed to the entire Ministry Team (without consent) to ensure that I got the help I needed, to ensure that I was still fit to be on staff. If I wasn't traumatised enough by the words from the Pulpit, my time during and post counselling certainly made up for it.

During the period of counselling, I was told by a Pastor that they physically felt sick to the stomach after meeting with myself and a gay friend of Judy's to talk about this. They said that they felt they had to "wash their hands", that they were so physically impacted by the abhorrent thought of someone trying to condone this relationship. I had Pastors send me books on conversion therapies showcasing people who had successfully walked away from sinful same sex relationships. I had people lay hands on me to cast out the devil.

I was told I was broken and needed healing. I had one person lay hands on me and ask me to physically cough to exorcise the demons. It became a condition of my employment that a pastor lay hands on me to pray every morning. One pastor insisted I stay over a couple of nights at their place with his family as he didn't trust me not to call Judy.

Dawn's trauma from conversion practices continues to this day. She urges this Parliament to shut down those practices. Similar stories to Dawn's are formed in New South Wales and that is why we need this bill. LGBTQ people are not broken. They do not need to be fixed. It is conversion ideology and practices that need to be shut down. The Australian Medical Association, the Australian Psychological Society, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses and all peak mental health organisations recognise the psychological and emotional trauma of conversion practices and their futility. They condemn conversion practices, with many signing a joint statement supporting the bill.

We know that conversion practices lead to poor mental health. They are associated with depression, anxiety, addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder, social isolation and, at worst, suicide attempts. It is heartbreaking to hear survivors talk about friends from conversion programs who died by suicide. Unfortunately some elements of the community have engaged in a loud and concerted campaign against banning conversion practices in the name of faith and religious freedom. There are many LGBTQ people of faith, and the campaign has been deeply upsetting for them. Religious freedoms should not be used as a weapon to facilitate what is, frankly, torture against the LGBTQ community. The bill appropriately navigates the tension between religious freedom and keeping the LGBTQ community safe. It makes it clear that religious expressions, including in prayer or of a belief or principle that must be followed, are not conversion practices.

Conversion practices must be directed at an individual with the specific aim of changing or suppressing their sexual orientation or gender identity. Religious organisations would still be free to denounce homosexuality, bisexuality or the trans experience if that is their ethos. Conversion practices involve a significant power imbalance that needs to be acknowledged. The ministers, counsellors and teachers who adopt practices have community respect; the gay, lesbian, bi, trans and gender diverse and asexual subject to the practices are considered by them to be broken. We make laws to protect the vulnerable from harm. LGBTQ people, in those circumstances, are the vulnerable ones.

The bill is simple and does three things: It defines conversion practices, creates a criminal offence and provides a civil response scheme. Conversion practices are defined as a practice, treatment or sustained effort that is directed at an individual for the purpose of changing or suppressing their sexual orientation or gender identity. The criminal offence will be limited to when conversion practices result in substantial harm. This is appropriate. The bill is not about locking people up; it is about making vulnerable LGBTQ people safe. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House. The civil response scheme is the most important part of the reforms: It is about preventing harm. The civil response scheme empowers Anti-Discrimination NSW to educate the community about the harmful impacts and unlawfulness of change and suppression practices. I hope that the education framework will reduce conversion ideology and practices. I ask the Attorney General to confirm that appropriate funding and support will be provided to Anti-Discrimination NSW to conduct community and stakeholder education before the law takes effect.

Where change or suppression practices do occur, an affected person or someone on their behalf will be able to make a complaint to the President of the Anti-Discrimination NSW. The president can try to resolve the matter by bringing the parties together for conciliation. Conciliation can keep communities together, giving those who practice conversion insight into the consequences and creating options for those affected to safely stay in their communities. Where conciliation is unlikely or fails to resolve a matter, it can be referred to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which will have the power to issue orders and award damages.

A broad range of practices are covered by the bill. However, there is concern about referrals and advertising. Referring someone to conversion by, for example, giving them a pamphlet or sending them to see a counsellor needs to be captured, and advertising conversion practices should be banned. No-one should be able to promote or refer someone to a banned practice that is both damaging and futile. Banning advertisements would also provide opportunities to intervene before harm is done. I ask that the Attorney General clarify in his reply how referrals and advertisements will be covered by the provisions in the bill.

Many survivors will not make complaints until years after their experiences. They see themselves as broken and believe others see them as broken. They blame themselves for not being able to change. Because the bill focuses on complaints made by and on behalf of complainants, if those affected are not ready or able to go through with a complaint, a member of the community with information about high-risk conversion practices occurring must be able to make a report that is investigated and acted upon. An example could be a teacher uncovering conversion practices at the school they work at or someone finding a pamphlet in a community hall. Anti-Discrimination NSW needs to be able to investigate and take action in response to information from the community, and I ask the Attorney General to inform the House in his reply what options the bill provides for such reports.

There has been a push to exclude suppression practices from the bill. Suppression practices attempt to make an LGBTQ person hide who they are and live contrary to their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are a growing and deceptive form of conversion. They see gay men marry women, lesbians marry men and trans people live as someone they are not. Suppression practices are as harmful as change practices. They deny people some of the fundamental parts of being human and happy, like love and meaningful connections, and accepting themselves for who they are. The harm can extend to others, including spouses, who through no fault of their own find themselves married to someone who is attracted to another sex.

There are pushes to allow someone to consent to conversion practices, but consent is not possible. Those raised under the ideology that they are broken, sinful or condemned will do anything to change. Excluding consent would do nothing but provide a blank cheque for conversion. In enacting a ban on conversion practices, this Parliament is denouncing them and recognising the serious harm that they cause. The bill tells LGBTQ people that their sexual orientation or gender identity is not broken and does not need to be fixed. It recognises that change or suppression practices are deceptive and harmful. LGBTQ people exist; they are who they are and there is no problem with that. The bill moves us forward, affirming that no sexual orientation or gender identity constitutes a deficiency or shortcoming.

I pay tribute to the survivors of conversion practices who have championed reform for many years. Their dedication to stop others suffering the way they did is admirable. They have educated the community and members of Parliament about what conversion practices entail by sharing deeply personal stories about their lives, with details about their traumatic experiences, mental health and relationships. I especially recognise the work of Chris Csabs, who established SOGICE Survivors; Nathan Despott, who established the Brave Network; and Anthony Venn-Brown, who established Ambassadors and Bridge Builders International. Their organisations bring survivors together to provide support and healing and to advocate for reform. I have learnt a lot from them on this journey, and I hope that they are proud to see the bill before the House.

I also thank Teddy Cook from ACON and TransHub for joining me to meet the Attorney General to share the trans experience with conversion practices. I ask the Attorney General to confirm in his reply that survivors of conversion practices will continue to be consulted during the implementation of the legislation. I also thank Equality Australia—especially Anna Brown and Ghassan Kassisieh—for championing reform, working with members to explain the legal frameworks for banning conversion practices and being a powerhouse of LGBTIQ+ law reform organisation. I thank the many faith leaders who have advocated for a ban on conversion practices, particularly the Uniting Church and Dr Peter Stuart, the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle. They continue to show that Christianity can be inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ people, and their work is so important to many people of faith.

Last year I introduced a bill to this Parliament. My bill and this bill both achieve a ban on conversion practices, and I am happy to support this Government bill. I thank the Government for working with me and all stakeholders to establish reform. I especially thank the Premier, the health Minister, the Attorney General, the Hon. Penny Sharpe and the Minister for Multiculturalism, as well as their amazing staff and departments, for the

work they have done. I thank my crossbench colleagues for their support and those in the Coalition who have engaged with me on this legislation for over 12 months. I also thank the many people in Rainbow Labor who continue to advocate for this reform and acknowledge my amazing staff member Tammie Nardone for her tireless work on this.

The bill will make LGBTQ people safer by banning harmful, traumatic and futile conversion practices. It will say LGBTQI+ people are loved just the way they are. I will be voting for Dawn, Anthony, Chris, Nathan, Teddy and Samuel, who was mentioned in the Minister for Transport's contribution, and all of the amazing survivors I have met and those I have not, and I ask my colleagues to join me. As the only openly gay member of the Legislative Assembly, I feared this debate and the things that might have been said, but I leave the debate affirmed and grateful for the respectful tone of all members. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (22:35): In reply: That was quite some speech by the member for Sydney. I thank him for that. I begin by thanking all of the members who contributed to the debate, including the members for the electorates of Wairoa, Keira, Cronulla, Blue Mountains, Dubbo, Charlestown, Hawkesbury, Pittwater, Prospect, Newtown, Summer Hill, Vacluse, Coogee, Balmain, Bega, Kellyville, Shellharbour, Ballina, South Coast, Davidson, Granville, Holsworthy, Wollongong, Wakehurst, Parramatta, Kiama, Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, Gosford, Albury, Maitland, Willoughby, Leppington, Terrigal, Drummoyne, Lane Cove, North Shore, Goulburn, Castle Hill and Upper Hunter; Mr Speaker; and, finally, the member for Sydney.

Prior to the election, the now Premier as Leader of the Opposition promised that if we took government, we would ban LGBTQ+ conversion practices. This bill is a culmination of that commitment. It creates criminal offences and a civil complaints and response scheme relating to conversion practices. This bill has been the subject of significant consultation; I have hardly seen the likes of it in my 18 years in this place. It strikes the right balance in prohibiting harmful and objectionable practices while also respecting civil liberties such as the freedom of expression and the freedom of religious belief.

I address some matters raised by certain members during the debate on this bill, which has spanned many different elements of the bill. I start with the comments from several members around the consultation process which has informed the bill and comments that the bill was rushed. It was not. I take pride in the fact that I see those comments as ones that have been conjured up by certain members who could conjure up scant legitimate criticism of the bill. It has been consulted on widely for a long time. It lay on the table for the requisite period, and I reject entirely that the bill was rushed. As I noted in my second reading speech, reform in this area is highly sensitive and we know that striking the right balance is challenging.

We know there is, and remains, amongst a number of stakeholders no absolute consensus and that there are differing positions that reflect deeply held personal convictions. That is okay on this sort of subject matter. However, the consultation process that led to the bill was significant. Almost 150 organisations were engaged in the consultation work that took place between 31 July and 25 August 2023. Those stakeholders included people with lived experience, as we have heard; representatives from the LGBTQ+ advocacy groups; faith-based organisations; parental rights groups; gender advocacy organisations; and legal, government, educational and health stakeholders.

I thank the Minister for Health and the Minister for Multiculturalism, and their staff and departments, as well as my own, for the incredible role they played in the consultation. Sector-specific round tables were held during the consultation period that also provided an opportunity for views to be shared amongst stakeholders ahead of further written submissions. Stakeholders were initially identified by the joint working group with regard to the key sectors assessed to be impacted by the reform. Following that initial identification, that cohort of stakeholders also nominated other organisations as having relevant expertise or interest in the reforms. Those additional stakeholders were also included in the consultation process.

The confidentiality of the process sought to facilitate frank discussion and contributions from stakeholders on polarising issues. Some members have specifically named stakeholders that they say were not consulted. In fact, many of those stakeholders did make contributions as part of the significant consultation process that informed the policy positions behind the bill. The consultation process also allowed people with lived experience of conversion practices to share their stories and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. At the conclusion of the consultation process those stakeholders, still holding their own positions, understood the other positions that were held but also understood that the bill was in a form that could be accepted. I thank all the stakeholders for the open, genuine, trusting, confidential and respectful way that they engaged in this long and comprehensive process.

The member for Wairoa raised a number of specific issues relating to the definition of conversion practices, some of which were reflected in the comments of other members. I will deal with those in turn. First,

the member for Wairoa noted that it is not clear what suppression means in this bill. As I outlined in my second reading speech, the term "suppress" in clause 3 (1) is intended to take on its ordinary meaning. "Suppress" is defined in the *Macquarie Dictionary* as to keep something in, repress something or put an end to activities. The statutory interpretation of key terms with reference to their ordinary meaning is not at all an unusual feature of this bill; it is common in much of New South Wales legislation.

Secondly, the member for Wairoa indicated that the religious practice exclusion was difficult for him to understand. I appreciate the member's desire for straightforward or simple legislative drafting, but that simplicity should not come at the expense of accuracy. This is a bill that, in striking its delicate balance, must be accurate. Clause 3 (3) (c) of the bill provides that a conversion practice does not include an expression of a religious belief or principle, or an expression that a belief or principle ought to be followed or applied, if that expression is not part of a practice, a treatment or a sustained effort directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. That makes it very clear that general conversations around religious beliefs or how religious beliefs might be reflected in a person's life are not conversion practices. That includes personal prayer or seeking spiritual guidance.

Thirdly, I refer to comment by the member for Wairoa about a complaint of a conversion practice arising from a discussion between two siblings under the age of 18. In the first instance, I note that the definition of conversion practices is captured at clause 3 (1) of the bill. Such a discussion would only amount to a conversion practice if it could be found to be a practice, treatment or sustained effort directed to an individual to change or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity. A general discussion between siblings under the age of 18 about sexual orientation or gender identity would be unlikely to meet that definition. For example, a general discussion of that nature is unlikely to be considered a practice, sustained effort or treatment.

Turning to the civil scheme as it relates to this scenario, generally a child will not have legal capacity to make a complaint due to their age. In these circumstances, a parent or guardian would need to make a complaint on the child's behalf under clause 9 (1) (b) of the bill. This is consistent with the standing requirements for complaints made under the existing Anti-Discrimination Act. I also note the concern of the member for Wairoa that a complaint of conversion practices made in these circumstances will lead to an order for compensation being made by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

It is important to note that complaints of conversion practices are not immediately referred to the tribunal for determination. Instead, once a complaint is accepted, the president will attempt to resolve the complaint by conciliation and, if they are unable to do so, only then consider referring the complaint to the tribunal for determination in certain circumstances. In addition, I note that the president has the discretion to decline a complaint during an investigation for specified reasons under clause 22 of the bill, including where it is not in the public interest to take further action in relation to the complaint or where the president is satisfied for any other reason that no further action should be taken in relation to the complaint. The particular circumstances of the case, including the parties to the dispute, may be relevant to the exercise of the president's discretion on these bases.

Finally on this example, I reiterate the point I made in my second reading speech for the avoidance of doubt. The criminal offences in part 3 of the bill cannot be committed by a person under the age of 18. However, victims of conversion practices will be protected by the criminal offence regardless of age. Several members have also made comments about how the definition may interact with parenting activity, such as parental discussions and household rules that are set by parents. First, in relation to parental discussions, the exclusion under clause 3 (3) (b) specifically relates to conduct that genuinely facilitates an individual's coping skills, development or identity exploration to meet the individual's needs, including by providing acceptance, support or understanding to the individual. This will, as I mentioned in my second reading speech, cover a difficult conversation had by a parent with their child, such as talking through their child's feelings and how those might relate to their sense of self or their religious beliefs to better understand them.

Importantly, this exclusion is not limited to parents. It would cover similar difficult conversations between other kinds of family relationships—for example, grandparents or even amongst friends. The Government has added clarification to this exclusion through the examples under clause 3 (4) (d) around parental discussions. This is just one example, and it does not limit the exclusion. The examples in the bill are non-exhaustive by design. It is not possible, or even desirable, to capture every possible scenario in legislation. Rather, the examples reflect what the definition of "conversion practices" and the exclusions under clause 3 achieve. Just because an example is not listed does not mean that it will not be excluded.

In relation to setting household rules, I go back to the core definition and its elements. First, it must be a practice, treatment or sustained effort. Second, it must be directed to a person on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Third, it must be directed to change or suppress that person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Just because conduct is directed towards an LGBTQ+ person is not enough. It must be directed to that person on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity or to change or suppress their sexual

orientation or gender identity. This means that rules of general application, such as rules generally relating to sexual activity in a household, are unlikely to be captured as conversion practices.

I acknowledge the comments made by the members representing the electorates of Newtown, Balmain and Ballina, who expressed the view that the exclusion for expressions of belief or principle under clause 3 (3) (c) is overly broad. This exclusion reflects that the bill strikes a balance in line with the Government's commitment that this ban would not unduly limit freedoms of expression and belief, which are important. The exclusion only applies where an expression of belief or principle is not part of a practice, treatment or sustained effort directed to changing or suppressing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. This makes clear that the exclusion extends to general conversations around religious beliefs or how religious beliefs might be reflected in a person's life. However, just because religious belief or principle is invoked does not mean the exclusion will apply.

I note that the member for Kellyville made comments about gender-affirming care models. The bill does not mandate any treatment. Rather, it bans LGBTQ+ conversion practices. A conversion practice does not include a health service or treatment delivered by a registered health practitioner that, first, the health practitioner has assessed as clinically appropriate in their reasonable professional judgement; and, secondly, complies with relevant professional, legal and ethical requirements. The bill does not prevent a clinician from deciding what treatment to provide to an individual patient based on their reasonable clinical judgement. It also does not prevent advice being given to a patient about the impacts of any proposed treatment.

I turn to matters relating to the criminal offences in the bill. Before I note comments made by the member for Sydney, I thank him for his leadership, for his example, for his assistance with the bill and for once again having the courage and leadership to bring these issues to the House. I note that the member for Sydney raised the issue of advertising conversion practices and how the bill might address that. In New South Wales ordinarily there are no offences for advertising criminal conduct. That is because advertising that a person is providing an unlawful service exposes that person to potential criminal investigation and liability. To the extent that the purpose of such an offence is to prohibit objectionable speech, the Government notes that there is existing coverage provided under both the New South Wales and Commonwealth legislation.

Depending on the facts, the offence of using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence under section 474.17 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code could be applicable. It is also an offence under the Public Health Act 2010 to advertise or promote the provision of a health service in a manner that is false, misleading or creates, or is likely to create, an unjustified expectation of beneficial treatment. There are also civil laws that may be applicable, including laws relating to false and misleading representations. However, it is important to stress that, depending on the way in which such an advertisement is delivered and used, the criminal and civil prohibitions in the bill could also apply. In cases where advertising material is directed to an individual on the basis of changing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, a conversion practice may have occurred. That might be the case, for example, in targeted letterbox campaigns towards individuals who are known to be LGBTQ+.

The member for Sydney also raised the issue of referrals to conversion practices. In New South Wales, general principles of accessory liability will apply to the offence, as they do for other offences. Those principles exist where a third party has knowledge of the essential circumstances or a third party has a state of mind or attitude that helped the main party commit the offence. A referral to a conversion practice would, as a baseline, require an intention to help a person or organisation in undertaking a conversion practice and, thereby, knowledge of a conversion practice taking place. Those factors are relevant to whether accessory liability can be established and will be examined by a court on a case-by-case basis. The application of the general existing principles of accessory liability, which would cover referrals, are therefore suitable and ought to be relied on for a conversion practice offence.

I turn to comments relating to the civil response scheme. The member for Pittwater queried the absence of a harm threshold for the civil prohibition on conversion practices. It is important to note at the outset that the civil law response is but one part of the response to conversion practices. It forms part of the broader, tiered response to banning conversion practices, which provides for more escalated responses as the seriousness and harm of the conduct increases. Under the civil scheme, it is unlawful for an entity to engage in a conversion practice, with no requirement to establish harm. In contrast, the criminal offence of providing or delivering a conversion practice, at clause 5 of the bill, targets more serious conduct. It requires proof of substantial harm and is punishable by a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment. The tiered approach is strongly supported by LGBTQIA+ groups and victim-survivors. It also reflects the approach in most jurisdictions that have banned conversion practices, including the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and New Zealand.

I also note that if a complaint proceeds to the tribunal for determination and is substantiated by the tribunal, it can make various orders, including an order that the respondent pay damages or cease continuing or repeating the unlawful conduct. An order to pay damages is for the purpose of compensating the complainant for any loss

or damage suffered because of the respondent's conduct. This means that, while actual harm is not necessary for a complaint to be dealt with by the tribunal, it will have regard to whether any harm was suffered by the complainant in its assessment of damages. The member for Pittwater also raised a concern that the lack of a harm threshold may lead to frivolous complaints of conversion practices. I note that there is a range of safeguards in the bill to protect against frivolous or unmeritorious complaints. These safeguards include standing requirements and a mechanism to allow complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, misconceived or lacking in substance to be declined by the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board.

The member for Sydney, the member for Newtown, the member for Balmain and the member for Ballina made comments regarding the reporting of conversion practices by an individual who is not a direct complainant. Under clause 9 of the bill, only certain identified individuals or bodies have standing to make a complaint of conversion practices to the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board. This clause requires that there be a connection between the complainant and the individual alleging that they have been subjected to a conversion practice. Complaints may be brought by other individuals and bodies, not just victims of conversion practices. This ensures that it is not solely the responsibility of victims to bring these complaints. For example, under the bill, a complaint can be brought by a representative body on behalf of a named individual, provided it meets certain criteria.

Importantly, to bring a complaint on behalf of an individual, the individual or body must have the consent of the affected individual. This preserves the victim's ability to choose the reporting pathway most suitable to them and ensures that they will not be required to participate in the Anti-Discrimination NSW complaints process if they do not wish to. In addition, there are other mechanisms in the bill that would allow Anti-Discrimination NSW to become aware of and take action in relation to issues relating to conversion practices, even where a complaint has not been made. Under clause 47 of the bill, the Anti-Discrimination Board has the power to conduct investigations and inquiries relating to conversion practices. This general investigative power is not reliant on the receipt of individual complaints, nor is it limited to investigating the subject matter of a particular complaint.

For example, the board could resolve to conduct an investigation relating to conversion practices based on information that it has received in the course of conducting community outreach or as part of the complaints handling process. Action taken by the board following an investigation under clause 47 may include education and engagement with relevant individuals and bodies or reporting certain conduct to other relevant agencies where authorised or required to do so by another Act. In addition, under clause 48 of the bill, the Minister has the power to refer certain matters to the board. Once referred, the board would be required to examine the matter and report to the Minister about its findings and conclusions. The Minister also has the power to refer certain matters to the tribunal as a complaint under subclause 33 (2) of the bill.

I turn to the comment made by the member for Sydney concerning funding for Anti-Discrimination NSW to provide education in relation to conversion practices. The Government funds Anti-Discrimination NSW to fulfill its various functions. When this legislation commences, these functions will include receiving and dealing with complaints of conversion practices, as well as carrying out other complementary functions, including an educative function in relation to conversion practices. Currently, Anti-Discrimination NSW's community engagement team works with diverse groups in the community to raise awareness about discrimination, its impacts and the services available to help people who experience it. This includes education work in a wide range of in-person and online meetings and events, including conferences, workshops, training sessions and webinars. Anti-Discrimination NSW is experienced at doing this work, and it is expected that it will provide education in a similar way with respect to conversion practices.

Perhaps most importantly, the bill provides for a 12-month delay in commencement during which preparation for implementation will occur. That period will enable us to develop community education around the bill and determine how it will work, which we know is a critical element of its success. I also note the member for Sydney raised the issue of further consultation work in that implementation period. One of the key aspects of implementation will be community education and awareness. Developing effective community education will require engagement with impacted stakeholders, which includes considering the experiences and expertise of victim survivors.

Before I conclude, I will address some matters raised by the Legislation Review Committee in *Legislation Review Digest No. 11/58*. First, in relation to the criminal offence, the committee noted that the term "substantial harm" may be broad. As it also recognised, that term is currently used in New South Wales criminal law, and the courts have interpreted it to mean "having substance, other than trivial" but to not include things that are "transient or trifling". The courts have also found it would not include things like "the transient, or temporary, shock or fright that anyone would suffer who felt his or her safety was in peril, but which passes within a relatively short time leaving no lasting ill-effects". I appreciate that finding meaning in case law or indeed even in statutes can be challenging for the wider community. That is exactly why, as I have said a number of times, the bill has a delayed

commencement of 12 months. That will enable implementation activities to occur, including training for government agencies and community education activities.

Second, the committee noted the partial extraterritorial application of the criminal offence. The primary offence under clause 5 of the bill requires at least some of the conduct to occur in New South Wales. That recognises that conversion practices can form a course of conduct over time. However, I think it is worth clarifying that this extraterritorial application will only apply where it is one "conversion practice" which is a course of conduct. The extraterritorial application would not extend to where a person outside of New South Wales provided a conversion practice and then, subsequently and without any link, a further conversion practice was delivered within New South Wales. That was the scenario raised by the committee. The approach of treating the entirety of the course of conduct as subject to the offence is consistent with other course of conduct offences such as the offence of coercive control introduced under the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Act 2022, which will commence on 1 July of this year.

Third, in relation to the committee's comments on the supporting offences of taking a person from New South Wales for a conversion practice or engaging a person outside of New South Wales to deliver a conversion practice, I confirm that, as I mentioned in my second reading speech, those offences target those who are trying to evade the ban. The conduct that those offences are seeking to criminalise is someone trying to get around the law that we are passing, rather than delivering the practices directly. That is why those offences do not require harm to have been caused.

Fourth, I note that the committee has referred four matters to Parliament with respect to the civil complaints scheme under part 4 of the bill. I will briefly address each of those matters in turn. However, it is important to note at the outset that those aspects of the civil complaints scheme have been adapted from the existing complaint handling framework under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, which has been tried and tested over many years. That reflects the approach to the development of the civil scheme—that is, to start with the existing complaint architecture under the Anti-Discrimination Act and modify it where required to ensure that the scheme is fit for purpose. I also note that the Anti-Discrimination Act has been referred to the NSW Law Reform Commission for comprehensive review, including its complaints framework. When the Law Reform Commission reports, there will be an opportunity to consider the relevance of any recommendations for reform of the discrimination complaints framework to the framework set out in the bill.

The committee noted that under clause 15 (5) of the bill the decision of the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board to decline a complaint at lodgement is not reviewable by the tribunal. In response I note that, importantly, the president's power to decline a complaint under clause 15 is limited to the three reasons set out at subclause (2). This ensures that the president's power to make non-reviewable decisions under the bill is carefully confined to a limited set of circumstances. That includes circumstances where it is clearly appropriate for a complaint to not proceed any further, such as where a complaint does not disclose a contravention under the Act, or where the president is not satisfied that a complaint has not been made by, or on behalf of, the complainant named in the complaint.

The committee also commented on the width of the investigation powers of the president. With respect to the president's power to require information or documents under clause 17, I note that an entity will not be required to supply information or documents under this clause if they have a reasonable excuse. That provision provides the president with sufficient flexibility to assess what is a reasonable excuse in the circumstances of that matter. Relevantly, when making this assessment, the president will be able to consider the relevance of recognised common law bases to refuse to provide documents and information, such as the privilege against self-incrimination.

It is also relevant to note clause 51 of the bill in this context. This clause provides that the president must not exercise their functions under the bill in a manner that would prejudice criminal investigations or proceedings. This clause is intended to mitigate the risk of prejudice to the criminal process where an investigation into a complaint of conversion practices and a criminal investigation are concurrent and examining the same or similar facts. In those circumstances, the president may need to consider the risk of self-incrimination to a party to a complaint relating to a requirement to supply information or documents as part of the discharge of its obligation under clause 51 of the bill.

I now turn to issues raised by the committee with respect to the president's powers to assist a complaint under clause 12 and decline a complaint under clause 22 of the bill. In practice, the president's power to assist an individual to make a complaint under the Anti-Discrimination Act is limited to translation, transcription, interpretation and lodgement services. Importantly, when exercising that power, the president does not assist a complainant in formulating their complaint. It is expected that the president's power to assist a complainant under clause 22 of the bill will be exercised in the same way.

Under clause 22 (1) (b), the president may decline a complaint during an investigation if they are satisfied for any other reason that no further action should be taken in relation to the complaint. That provision provides flexibility to account for circumstances beyond those listed in clause 22 where it may be appropriate for the president to not proceed with an investigation into a complaint. A complainant can seek that a complaint declined under this provision be referred to the tribunal for determination under clause 27 of the bill. That gives the complainant an alternative pathway to seek a remedy in respect of the complaint where it has been declined by the president under this clause.

I refer to the committee's comments on the president's power to delegate their functions under clause 32 of the bill. In practice, the president's power under section 94C of the Anti-Discrimination Act—which mirrors the power in clause 32 of the bill—is limited to delegating functions to selected staff of Anti-Discrimination NSW. Those delegations are necessary to ensure that the president can effectively carry out the day-to-day functions of administering the legislation. By way of example, the president may delegate certain functions to staff, including complaint handling managers, conciliators and intake staff, to facilitate the receipt and handling of complaints.

Finally, the committee notes that clause 55 of the bill contains a power to make regulations about anything necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to the bill. I note that this provision, with respect to regulation-making powers, is common across the statute book and enables matters of a machinery nature to be prescribed by regulation. As the committee acknowledges, written notice of the making of a regulation must be laid before each House of Parliament and such a regulation is subject to disallowance by either House of Parliament under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987. This enables appropriate parliamentary scrutiny of any delegated legislation made under the bill.

The views that conversion practices are founded on, that LGBTQ+ people are somehow wrong and need fixing, do not reflect the views of this Government. I hope they do not reflect the views of any member of either House of this Parliament. They do not reflect the standards that we want to set in our community. This is a bill which sets that higher standard. It provides protection to our LGBTQ+ community for practices, treatments or sustained efforts that are directed to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. Perhaps, most importantly, it is a bill that affirms that LGBTQ+ identities are not a disorder, a disease, an illness, a deficiency or a shortcoming; they are simply our brothers and sisters. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (23:10): In accordance with Standing Orders 108A (9) and 108 (3), I seek the leave of the House for up to eight members to give community recognition statements and for up to eight members to give private members' statements.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (23:11): On behalf of the Opposition, I thank the Attorney General for moving the motion. Obviously, the Opposition supports it.

Leave granted.

Community Recognition Statements

SOUTH SOLITARY ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (23:11): A community celebration many years in the making took place at Coffs Harbour's Jetty Foreshore on 15 March. A large crowd gathered for the official opening and lighting of the iconic South Solitary Island Lighthouse Optic, 144 years to the day when it was first lit on the island in 1880. The lighthouse optic takes pride of place in front of the new community building at the foreshores. The light was switched on for about 15 minutes and was a sight to behold. Back in 2021, the New South Wales Coalition Government announced support for this project with an additional \$175,000 grant to incorporate the optic within the landscape of the community building. I congratulate the Friends of South Solitary Island Lighthouse, better known as FOSSIL, for keeping alive this important part of the history of the Coffs Coast. Their committee comprises president/treasurer Chris Bramley, vice president John Wait, secretary Tammy Mills-Thom,

Terrie Beckhouse, Rob Trezise, Grant Cairncross, Cath Fowler, and National Parks and Wildlife Service representative Andrew Pitzen.

DAMIEN GAUCI

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (23:12): I congratulate a passionate and committed Leppington resident, Damien Gauci, on being honoured with life membership of the Liverpool Olympic Football Club. Damien's efforts in spearheading the process of applying for crucial grants has not gone unnoticed by the community or myself. In particular, through his advocacy and under his guidance and direction, the Liverpool Olympic Football Club has recently secured three grants from the NSW Football Legacy Fund. This fund supports women and disability programs in local football across the region. Damien is also an advocate for the special needs ability programs, an inclusive sports program for kids and young adults who have physical or intellectual disabilities. Damien is a passionate advocate in south-western Sydney, ensuring everyone can enjoy the world game. I congratulate Damien on this important accolade.

CREATOR ACADEMY

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (23:13): I am delighted to announce that for the second consecutive year the brilliant young minds from Creator Academy Eastwood have secured a place representing Australia at the 2024 VEX Robotics World Championship in Dallas, Texas, this April. Under Head Coach Garry Law, these students have demonstrated exceptional skills in designing, building and coding robots. I extend my warmest congratulations to Justin Wang, Yixuan Chen, Mina Zhang, Clare Wei, Ashleigh Xu, Alfred Li, Marcus Pan, Albert Xiong, Mia Chen, Ethan Zhang, Eric Yang, Sophie Pan and Emily Tse for their remarkable achievements. As they embark on this exciting journey to represent Australia globally, I ask the House to join me in wishing them well. I eagerly anticipate hearing about their successes and encourage others to check out the Creator Academy Robotics Centre at Eastwood to witness firsthand a local generation of high achievers at work. I congratulate our incredible Eastwood robotics students. May their futures be filled with continued success and innovation. I know they will make us very proud.

MENAI ROOSTERS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (23:14): I commend the hardworking members of the Menai Roosters Junior Rugby League Football Club ahead of their exciting season launch event at Akuna Oval on 23 March. The Menai Roosters have a proud history in our community spanning over four decades. Once a small club, the tireless efforts of volunteers have borne fruit, now boasting 150 players and 15 formidable squads, including four female teams, poised to compete this season. This weekend's season launch will have something for everyone and feature a free sausage sizzle and popper for kids, inflatables, face painting, and food and beverage trucks. I acknowledge the Roosters' dynamic executive committee for impressively growing the club and doubling the teams this year. I recognise president Hayden Kendrick, vice-president Tyneale Kendrick, treasurer Michael Charalambous, club secretary Deanne Charalambous, compliance and facilities coordinator Bradley Brooks, and Junior Rugby League delegate Ross Greenwood for their efforts. I extend my best wishes to the Menai Roosters Junior Rugby League Football Club, and I look forward to celebrating the launch of the new season this weekend.

WILLOUGHBY DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (23:15): The year 2024 marks a special milestone for one of the great institutions in the Willoughby community. The Willoughby District Historical Society is celebrating its golden fiftieth anniversary. The society was established in 1974 with the objective of "encouraging the study and appreciation of the history of Willoughby". The society has done this primarily through its local history museum housed in the beautiful Federation-style cottage, Boronia, at 58 Johnson Street, Chatswood. Opened by the Hon. Peter Collins on 30 October 1993, Boronia has delighted its visitors with its impressive collections of photographs, books, pottery, textiles and other miscellaneous items. In addition to its local history museum, the society has educated Willoughby locals about our history through exhibitions, walks and monthly events featuring engaging guest speakers. I warmly congratulate the Willoughby District Historical Society on its golden anniversary. We appreciate all it has done over five decades to foster an appreciation of our local history, community and growth over time.

KATARINA DJOLIC

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (23:16): I congratulate Katarina Djolic from Greenway Park Public School on her outstanding achievements in public speaking. On Friday 20 October, year 3 student Katarina represented her school and her community at the State final of the NSW Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition. After claiming victory in both the district and regional finals, Katarina was one of 10 finalists from across the State, out of the 10,000 who entered the competition. She delivered a fantastic speech called "A safe place to call home" and even spoke impromptu on the topic "Impossible". Katarina's passion for

public speaking has even seen her take out the Junior Academic category at the 2023 Liverpool Young Champions Awards, which I was fortunate enough to attend. I congratulate Katarina on her outstanding achievements. In addition to these accomplishments, she is also her class representative at School Parliament. Who knows, one day we may even see her in this Parliament.

ROSS COLQUHOUN

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (23:17): Coffs Harbour automotive technology student Ross Colquhoun is among nine TAFE NSW students showcasing their skills on the world stage later this year. These Skillaroos will represent Australia at the WorldSkills International Championships in France in September, when they will test their skills against competitors from more than 75 countries. Since 1950, the WorldSkills International Championships have united vocational apprentices and trainees from around the world in competition in their respective disciplines. They will provide students like Ross with unique learning opportunities. Their selection for the Australian team speaks volumes of their dedication to their course and to the high-quality support they enjoy from their TAFE NSW teachers. We are all very proud of Ross, as he represents the Coffs Coast with distinction. We wish him and his fellow Skillaroos, who are all from regional New South Wales, every success in France.

Private Members' Statements

COST OF LIVING

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (23:18): The single biggest issue in Leppington—and, indeed, across this State—is cost of living. Every day I hear from Leppington constituents who are concerned about the rising cost of essentials. For many, chief among their concerns is the rising cost of energy bills. As a government, we have been clear: One of our primary goals is to deliver practical cost-of-living relief where it helps most. Our Energy Bill Relief Fund, in partnership with the Federal Government, delivers \$1.3 billion in energy rebates and targeted energy bill relief to up to 1.6 million eligible households and 300,000 eligible small businesses. Some 8,600 households in my electorate of Leppington will be able to access vital energy bill relief as a result of the State and Commonwealth Labor governments.

Unfortunately, while families are doing it tough, our energy providers have been laughing all the way to the bank. Those energy companies boast massive profits, all at the expense of working families, especially in my electorate. Take Endeavour Energy, for example. Corporate overheads recently increased more than fourfold, and executive remuneration increased by 12 per cent last year alone. If anyone thinks Endeavour Energy is passing on its successes to its hardworking electrical staff, they would be wrong. Since 2019 the real wages of employees at Endeavour Energy have fallen 8 per cent. All the while, those workers are battling increases to the cost of their mortgages or rent, fuel prices, groceries and even the very energy delivered by their hard work each and every day.

In recent years workers at Endeavour Energy have been instrumental in keeping the lights on in our communities through the Black Summer bushfires, major flood events and the coronavirus pandemic. Not only that, those workers have also been essential in driving our State towards its emissions reduction targets, connecting community batteries and rooftop solar to the grid. It is time for Endeavour Energy to deliver the pay and conditions that match this essential work.

I recently met with the Electrical Trades Union [ETU] to discuss its ongoing enterprise negotiations with Endeavour Energy. Currently, there are 812 financial members at Endeavour Energy from a total workforce of approximately 1,400. That represents a substantial portion of the workforce. In the Leppington electorate, 47 ETU members are employed by Endeavour Energy. That represents some 5 per cent of Endeavour's total ETU membership. Their wages compared with other States are telling. Notably, on-call allowances are below the industry benchmark. Evoenergy and Energy Queensland set higher wage precedents, with the latter offering competitive rates, especially for apprentices, who receive \$10 more an hour.

The Australian Capital Territory's recent industrial action and Queensland and the Northern Territory branches' ongoing efforts highlight a regional disparity in pay and conditions. Endeavour Energy workers in New South Wales are only seeking equitable treatment, aiming to align their compensation with counterparts in more competitively paid regions. Those ETU members are fighting for a wage increase in line with the rising cost of living, fairer rostering to allow them to spend valuable time with their families and a stronger commitment to training new apprentices. These are all reasonable requests. When compared with other States, the deal for New South Wales workers simply does not cut it.

The Minns Labor Government took a promise to the election that it would deliver long-overdue pay increases for our essential workers. They were neglected and disrespected for 12 long years under those opposite. After only a year on the job, we have already delivered on that promise. The Labor Government delivered the

biggest pay increase for New South Wales nurses and midwives in over decade. We secured a historic pay rise for our teachers, taking them from the worst paid in the country to the best. The Government also delivered an agreement that will see our State's paramedics receive an average wage increase of 25 per cent over the next four years. That is the difference Labor governments make—governments that respect essential workers. While the mania for privatisation from members opposite means our capacity to intervene and protect our energy workers is limited, we will always continue to champion essential workers.

COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE SPORT

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (23:23): The Coffs Coast is renowned for sporting success across many fields of endeavour. Our region is home to many sporting organisations and I am proud to say that their priorities are inclusion, boosting participation and healthy lifestyles. Sports stars of all ages continue to represent the Coffs Coast with distinction and their achievements are worthy of recognition. One particular group making a positive difference is Coffs Harbour's wheelchair basketball community. They have warmly embraced eight-year-old Max Farr, who was recently diagnosed with Perthes disease, which means he cannot run or jump. Active in a number of sports before the diagnosis, the St Augustine's student now participates in weekly wheelchair basketball sessions on Friday afternoons at one of Coffs Harbour's premier sporting facilities, Sportz Central. The teamwork and inclusivity exhibited by the players means wheelchair basketball is more than just a sport for Max; it is a welcoming group that embraces diversity and differences. Coffs Harbour's wheelchair basketballers are also planning to introduce Tuesday sessions at Sportz Central.

Coffs Harbour's stunning harbour and foreshores will provide the perfect backdrop for the prestigious Pittwater to Coffs Harbour Yacht Race, eagerly anticipated by the hardworking team at the Coffs Harbour Yacht Club. The club and our local economy are gearing up for the anticipated influx of sailors, supporters and sightseers arriving in our city for the event. The starter's gun will fire at 1.00 p.m. on Friday 22 March at the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club in Sydney. The East Coast Classic 226 nautical mile warm water race is open to monohull, two-handed and multihull sailing. Coffs Harbour Yacht Club Commodore, John Wait, recently said that the race creates a tremendous spirit of camaraderie and endeavour. He said, "Sailors love the challenge of whatever the weather brings and getting the best out of it and their boat." After crossing the finish line, race competitors are escorted into the harbour by Coffs Harbour Yacht Club sailing volunteers, who are on a 24-hour watch.

A Coffs Harbour Yacht Club competitor is fuelling excitement locally, with well-known and accomplished sail race contender Pierre Gal entering his newly imported catamaran, *Fez*. Coffs Harbour Yacht Club is hosting the Pittwater to Coffs Harbour Yacht Race for the thirty-eighth time, making it a favourite signature event for our city. Elsewhere on the Coffs Coast, it was a proud moment for Coffs Harbour's Becker family, with swim star Coco receiving her NSW Government State Representative Award when I caught up with her recently. Also present were Coco's parents, Linda and Matt. Coco brought home bronze and silver medals from the Australia All Schools Swimming Championships last year from her six events—an amazing achievement. The 12-year-old is a proud member of the Coffs Harbour Swimming Club and she is also a representative basketballer. I congratulate Coco on all of her hard work and on being an outstanding representative for the Coffs Coast.

Another impressive young gun is Emerald Beach surfer Hamish Harrigan, who continues to make waves in the sport he loves. Most recently he took out his division at the Reflections Cadet Cup at Rainbow Beach, Bonny Hills. The Coffs Harbour Boardriders Club member won the under-14 boys title at the inaugural event, which attracted top junior surfers in the under-16, under-14 and under-12 divisions. Coffs Harbour Boardriders Club juniors can be justifiably proud of their efforts, with Luca Martin continuing his exceptional start to the year with a third place in the under-14 event. Benji Lowen finished second in the under-16 boys, while Max Crowley and Jarrah White had quarter-finals finishes in the under-14 boys event. Carter Crowley finished in the quarter finals in the under-16 boys and Jet Dean finished in the quarters of the under-12 boys. Sage White and Matilda Harrigan came third and fourth respectively in the under-12 girls. I am extremely proud of all of our sportsmen and sportswomen for proudly representing the Coffs Coast everywhere they go. Their achievements continue to cement our credentials as a regional sporting powerhouse.

REGIONAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (23:27): Over the centuries many politicians, public servants and leaders have extolled the virtues of consultation. The ancient Athenian orator and statesman Demosthenes said that the beginning of all virtue is consultation and deliberation. Consultation is one of the great props of democracy. In a democracy, a government listens to its people, deliberates on that consultation, considers expert knowledge and then acts. Given that most governments and their departments are based in big cities, when it comes to acting on behalf of regional, rural and remote areas, consultation is important.

People working in cities often have no idea of the bush—the distances, the climate, the lack of access to basic services, the disadvantage, the culture or the rhythms of life in the countryside. Consultation can help

government departments realise that rules, plans, concepts and laws that may work in the city do not always work in the country. There are probably people watching the broadcast who are nodding in agreement because good consultation seems an obvious thing to do and the right thing to do. But at times it has not been done well and that is to the detriment of many communities, including in Barwon. Some government departments talk about consultation as a pillar of their operations. It is framed in procedures and regulations. They are obliged to do it by law.

Those same departments have often developed consultation techniques to get the result that best suits them, or the government of the day. It is something I have heard referred to as DAD—decide, announce, defend. A decision is made for a community based on cooked-up consultation methods. It is announced or advised and then defended by the department. By cooked-up consultation, I mean things like drop-in sessions. They have a place but can be designed to separate communities. In group consultation, communities can support each other. Drop-in sessions do the opposite sometimes. People can feel less comfortable in voicing their opinion.

Real consultation is done with a broad cross-section of the community—community leaders, peak bodies and representative groups—not with scattergun or stab-in-the-dark approaches that do not target that specific community. In my electorate some departments have relied on Facebook posts asking for feedback, but connectivity is a problem in the bush and not everyone is on social media. Even a letterbox drop can be a problem in some remote areas. Not everyone has a mailbox. Some only check their mail when they visit town intermittently, or sometimes they can be cut off for weeks due to rain and cannot get to the mailbox. Sometimes consultation is a form with a few leading questions asking the person to tick the most relevant box but not telling them what they are consulting on. Face-to-face consultations are sometimes held at inconvenient times, like during harvest when farmers and workers are unable to attend a session.

Physically going to a community to talk to the locals and finding out what they think is only half the job. Reflecting that community input in the project, legislation or whatever the work may be is probably the most important part of the process. In Barwon, we have a long list of projects that forged ahead without proper consultation or where departments failed to listen, even after conducting some form of consultation session. They make for informative studies on what not to do.

There was a lot of talk about consulting and working with the Gomeroi people around the Santos coal seam gas project in Narrabri. A significant number of Gomeroi people protested and launched an appeal, which was recently validated by being allowed. When Toorale, a property out west, was purchased in 2008 to return water to the river, later the decision was made to impound the water at Toorale, despite originally saying that the \$24 million spent—\$12 million State and \$12 million Federal—was all about releasing water down the river. Local communities were kept in the dark about the change in policy but were subjected to DAD—decide, announce, defend. The decision had been made by the time the community was spoken to. When the new 10-year Regional Health Strategic Plan was announced in 2023, it claimed wide consultation, but we were unable to find anyone who was consulted with from hospitals, multipurpose services and other relevant groups across Barwon.

Last year a policy was announced to reduce regional speed limits. Rather than fix roads, they wanted to lower speed limits. This was done without any consultation with local government or industries that would be adversely affected. There was said to be "extensive consultation" on the Banksia Mental Health Unit at Tamworth. Given the lack of mental health facilities across Barwon, lots of people in my electorate use this facility, but the facility staff only talk to people in Tamworth, not to people outside the area. In December 2022, authorities did not listen to pleas from locals at Menindee when they warned that the water needed to be released to avert flooding. Surprise—it flooded! Locals have been consistently ignored, despite presenting legitimate reasons for the installation of a doppler radar in Far West New South Wales.

There are things that can be done. The Government needs to introduce mandated standards of genuine consultation with industry representatives, unions, chambers of commerce—basically, the whole community. This will draw out the community needs and identify the relevant gaps, concerns or issues that may impact the ability to deliver on a service or project. I ask the New South Wales Government to support the introduction of legislated minimum genuine consultation standards to ensure communities have been listened to and services, projects and programs using public money genuinely meet the need and suit the location.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (23:32): I wish to add some comments to those of the member for Barwon. First of all, all I can say is I am with him, but I would prefer that we use the word "conversation"—that we have conversations with the community, because they are more meaningful. When we have conversations, they are two-way. They are engagement. It is a better way to do business. I thank the member for Barwon for his contribution.

WAKEHURST PARKWAY

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (23:33): I address a matter of significance to Pittwater and the entire northern beaches community. The Wakehurst Parkway, or the Wakehurst floodway as it is known to some, is the source of community angst. The parkway is one of three roads providing access to Pittwater. Notwithstanding, it remains prone to flood closures. In 2020 it was closed 12 times; in 2021, 9 times; in 2022, 16 times; in 2023, half a dozen times. Back in 1952, when The Blinking Light was first installed at the Wakehurst Parkway-Warringah Road intersection, these closures might have been acceptable. However, as our area has grown, so too has the need for open and reliable roads. With the opening of the Northern Beaches Hospital in October 2018, the flood-proofing and upgrade of this road is now critical.

Too often in this place and, indeed, in our media, facts are optional, spin is mandatory and our community is taken for a ride. Tonight I set out the facts when it comes to flood-proofing and upgrading the Wakehurst Parkway. In 2017, in the lead-up to the opening of the Northern Beaches Hospital, the then Liberal Government gave Northern Beaches Council \$5 million to tackle flooding on the parkway. This funding followed the findings of the experts at Cardno, who found that the principal cause of flood closures arose due to flood challenges on council land that surrounds the parkway route. Those studies showed that 90 per cent of the flood-related closures of the parkway arose due to issues on that council land but that, once flood mitigation works were done, closures were forecast to reduce from six to seven times per year to once every two years—from 14 times every two years to once every two years.

In 2020-21 the State Government obliged the council and provided a further \$13.1 million to fund its flood mitigation works. Council then spent years doing more studies, consultations—or conversations—and designs, which it completed by March 2022. The consultation showed that 76 per cent of residents wanted council to do something immediately. Despite this, council voted to delay any works, pending a rework of the designs to reduce environmental impacts. That said, based on the community feedback, those impacts on the environment were not disproportionate to the safety and economic risks posed by a flooding parkway.

By late 2023 the council had re-scoped its works and needed an additional \$13 million to undertake necessary flood mitigation works. These inflated costs arose due to an increased scope of work and the inflation present in the construction industry since the 2020-21 period. Since March 2022—more than two years—council has progressed flood-proofing around the Oxford Falls Road. However, only flood-proofing a part of the troubled spots is not good enough. The troublesome bend section of the parkway remains no closer to flood mitigation works commencing. To add insult to the absurdity of this situation, the council has now received an additional \$13 million but has yet again delayed these essential works.

Why has the council, which has been in receipt of funds since 2017, again delayed works? In 2021-22 the former State Liberal Government budgeted \$75 million to provide separate upgrades to the Wakehurst Parkway. At the same time, the Federal Liberal Government budgeted an additional \$75 million to parkway upgrades unrelated to council's flood-proofing works. In late 2022 the new Federal Labor Government stole that \$75 million and dishonoured the cheque that had been cut for the people of the northern beaches. This happened under the watch of a teal Independent and the Federal Labor Government. It meant that the State of New South Wales needed to scale back the parkway upgrades.

Ludicrously, council has now used this as an excuse to further delay works, claiming that it wants to tie its work in with State government works. With every delay, council's modelling, studies and findings become outdated and may need to be redone, further delaying matters. Who knows how long the Government will take to finalise its proposed works with its \$75 million? Who knows what complications may arise? The council has now sat on this project for the best part of a decade. Once council finally lands on a scope of works, it will need development consents, tender documents and contracts prepared. This could take years. The bureaucratic merry-go-round needs to end. I say to the council: Enough is enough. It must get on with the job, get shovels in the ground and do its bit to flood-proof the Wakehurst Parkway now.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 23:38 until
Thursday 21 March 2024 at 10:00.**

Written Community Recognition Statements

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

ZACHERY DANCKERT AND HOLLY SPINKS - CASTLE HILL LIONS CLUB YOUTH OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—I congratulate Zachery Danckert and Holly Spinks, the winner and runner-up of the Castle Hill Lions Club Youth of the Year Award. The nominations for the award are long and challenging with the nominees required to sit interviews, deliver a prepared speech as well as give two impromptu speeches. As such Zachery has won the Castle Hill Lions Youth of the Year Award and will now compete at the Lions district level, and if successful, state and national levels. To be nominated for the award the students must possess an extensive portfolio of sporting, academic, rhetoric, and communitive achievements. Immediately this indicates both Zachery and Holly are hardworking students with bright futures ahead of them. The program itself is designed to promote to students and young people the value in active community engagement, as well as the value of hard work and dedication to one's work. This is a great program with great intentions and outcomes. I commend the Castle Hill Lions club for their wonderful youth focused program and I congratulate Zachery and Holly for their efforts and wish them well for their future endeavours.

PAM WILSON- HILLS DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—Today I recognise Pam Wilson for contribution to the community as a local historian. Pam with her family moved into 'the Hills' as child in 1961. With a strong interest in colonial history Pam joined the Hills District Historical Society in 1992. The following year Pam became the Secretary and has served in such role for thirty-two years. It is often the case that community minded members of our society contribute through service on many committees. Pam is the Secretary and Life Member of the Hills District Historical Society, President North Rocks View Club' Committee Member Convict Trail; Life Member of the National Trust; Member of Baulkham Hills Ladies Probus; and Secretary of the Beecroft Presbyterian Ladies Group. More recently Pam formed part of the organising committee for the re-enactment of the 1804 Convict Rebellion held at the historical Heritage Park, Castle Hill, on 2 March 2024. I was also very fortunate to attend a talk given by Pam on the history of the 1804 Vinegar Hill Rebellion. I commend Pam for the long service to our community as a historian. Thank you, Pam, for your service to our community.

CASTLE HILL HORSE SHOW

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—Today, I would like to recognise the work of the Castle Hill and District Agricultural Society. I was delighted to attend the Castle Hill Annual Horse Show on Sunday 18 February. The Castle Hill Show is a time-honoured tradition extending over 130 years, with the first show being held at the Showground in 1891. It was developed in the 1880s from the Castle Hill sports show day which, by 1886, included agricultural displays and ploughing contests. The Castle Hill Show, Horse Section, is an important event in our local calendar. The Horse Section importantly provides the opportunity for riders and their horses to qualify to compete at the Sydney Royal Show. This year competitors were competing to qualify for Sydney Royal, 2025. I recognise and congratulate the Castle Hill and District Agricultural Society and in particular Leanne Boyce for organising another successful Castle Hill Show, Horse Section, competition. Events such as the Horse Section of the Show enriches our society by permitting the community the chance to enjoy wonderful competitions. Thank you for your service to our community.

CELEBRATING WOMEN IN JUNE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—June's Athenium was shining a stunning ray of purple and a hive of activity on Thursday, March 4, as various community groups and ladies came together to celebrate International Women's Day. The June Community Centre team, in collaboration with the Women's Week Committee and June Shire Council, hosted the event, which saw attendees hear inspiring stories from several guest speakers. Students from June High School showcased their exceptional hospitality skills by serving guests delicious treats for the afternoon. Refreshments were served by the students of St Joseph's Primary School. Various stalls were set up around the Athenium, offering guests the opportunity to make purchases and learn about the multiple services available in the community. The stalls also provided information on how to get involved in local community groups and activities, encouraging active participation. To conclude this fantastic event, guests were entertained by a video highlighting local resilient women expressing their views on what it means to be part of the June community and being a resilient woman. Congratulations to everyone involved in bringing the community together to empower women, empower the community, and show how resilient we all are.

GRENFELL SWIMMERS SHINE AT COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Grenfell's Penny Hughes, Mikayla Hughes, and Ryan Toole showcased their talent in the pool at the recently held NSW Country Championships in Sydney. The three-day competition was fierce; however, Mikayla, who completed in the under-16 age group, dug deep to finish fourth with a personal best of 35.81 in the 50 meters breaststroke, which means she has qualified for the upcoming

2024 Australian Age Championships, which will be held in April on the Gold Coast. Penny competed in the under 12 age group, coming away with a massive five personal bests, those being the 100-meter breaststroke, 50-meter breaststroke, 50-meter freestyle, 50-meter butterfly and the 100-meter freestyle. Ryan competed in the 50-meter freestyle under 15 age group against some extreme competition, completing the race just outside his personal best. Well done, Mikayla, Penny, and Ryan. You should all be very proud of your efforts, it takes a lot of training and determination to achieve such great results.

SUE LIMBRICK

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—An eighty-six-kilometre trek may seem daunting. Yet, for Sue Limbrick, a resident of Narrandera, it was the minimum effort she could offer to raise funds and support the search for a childhood cancer cure. Each year, the Children's Cancer Institute puts on the '86K FOR A CURE' challenge for the 86 children who are diagnosed with cancer every month. With her unwavering determination, Sue has set her sights on a lofty goal: to raise \$1,000 and walk 172 kilometres, double the challenge limit. She has the entire month of March to achieve this, which she has calculated to be 8.1 kilometres per day. United by a common purpose, Sue, the other participants, and the Children's Cancer Institute are all striving towards one goal: to raise vital funds to support research for safer, more targeted treatments for children with cancer. Today, thanks to medical research and people like Sue, over 80 per cent of children will survive their disease. I thank Sue for her generosity and eagerness to raise awareness and funds for this not-so-silent disease.

SPUR RANCH EQUINE PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—The Spur Ranch Equine Program was developed by veterans, for veterans, to offer participants mental and emotional healing, recovery and wellbeing. Through equine-assisted activities, individuals can rediscover joy, purpose, and resilience in their lives. Co-located in RSL LifeCare's John Goodlet Manor in Picton, Spur Ranch Equine Program is driven by veteran Max Streeter. After finding that a short course in equine therapy boosted his own recovery after leaving the services, he realised the potential of this type of course in helping others. Max worked with RSL NSW and Racing NSW to develop the program, which can be completed in a series of short courses, culminating in a seven-day trek through the Snowy Mountains. In 2023 RSL sub-Branched donated \$3.3 million to RSL LifeCare Veteran Services to ensure the future viability of the program. Through engaging in the program participants find fulfilment in overcoming obstacles and are offered a practical path to healing. Over 100 veterans are set to participate in the course this year, and I am proud to recognise this vital and life changing program that RSL LifeCare Veteran Services, Max Streeter and the volunteers at Spur Ranch make possible.

PICTON PARKLANDS OUTDOOR STAGE OPENING SOON

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—Picton Botanic Garden will soon see the much anticipated opening of its new Outdoor Performance Stage. Funded through the Stage Government, this stage will open the park to many more opportunities for community engagement, through its use for performances, presentations and events. Incorporating amenities along with a big screen, this facility will be well used throughout the year for both community events and private functions. Assets such as these allow for people to engage with their local parks and open spaces, and create a sense of ownership. Strengthening the identity of Picton by invigorating its public spaces, the Outdoor Performance Space will also build resilience within the community by providing place to come together and serving as a landmark and point of pride.

COMMUNITY CIRCLE 1ST BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF THE ORGANISATION - WINGECARRIBEE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—Community Circles Wingecarribee recently celebrated its first anniversary. Offering a place for people to build connections within the community, the initiative is run with the support of Wingecarribee Shire Council and has seen a year of successful events. Run by a coordinator, the group has had a number of community members go through the Community Circles training, allowing them to share their expertise and knowledge, such as the lawyer member offering advice, or facilitating a group for a particular demographic, such as the father co-facilitating a disability support group. Other unique offering include a Death Cafe, Italian speaking long lunch and a pub sing along. The program is funded by Wingecarribee Shire Council, along with the Touched by Olivia charity, and over the year has achieved its aim of offering a way for people to connect, in turn building community resilience. Thank you to all involved for bringing joy and connection to so many, and I look forward to seeing this initiative go from strength to strength in the future.

GIULIO DI STEFANO

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I recognise the efforts of long-time Sutherland Shire Football Association honorary treasurer, Giulio Di Stefano. It's obvious that Giulio loves the game of football and he's recently left the treasurer role after more than 20 years working to help the game prosper in the Shire. Giulio's

time as treasurer was about giving parents and players the opportunity to enjoy their time in the game. He's been particularly passionate about MiniRoo football where boys and girls get their first taste of the game and he's enjoyed seeing young players being mascots, ball kids and playing at half time at Sydney FC, Matildas and Socceroos matches. He's also been a mainstay of the Caringbah Redbacks Football Club for more than 30 years, serving in roles including secretary and technical director and doing a range of jobs behind the scenes. North Caringbah Oval is almost a second home for Giulio and he's been recognised with a services award, club worker of the year four times and as a life member in 2002. Giulio Di Stefano is an enthusiastic and dedicated volunteer and I acknowledge his contribution to the game of football in the Sutherland Shire.

CARINGBAH BAPTIST CHURCH 70TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate Caringbah Baptist Church which recently marked its 70th anniversary with a special Sunday afternoon celebration BBQ and gathering of people from across its morning and evening services. "CBC" as it is best known was established on 25 February 1954 and since then has been a church with a heart for both the local community and overseas mission. As well as its regular Sunday church gatherings, CBC's doors are open to the community for playgroup on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and to children and youth on Friday afternoons and evenings. CBC members volunteer to provide the option of special religious education in local schools and as mentors through Kids Hope for students at Kurnell Public School. Fundraising from the church's regular Sunday BBQs help fund fresh food boxes packed by a dedicated team for local individuals and families in need. CBC support extends to missionaries in several countries and it has a continuing partnership with Asia's Hope after raising money to build the Lighthouse, a home for children in Cambodia. I recognise Caringbah Baptist's service to the community over 70 years and join with current and former staff and members in celebrating this milestone.

CITIZENSHIP CONGRATULATIONS

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—The great tapestry of Ryde is now brighter, bolder, and stronger for the contributions of our newest citizens who officially became Australians on 07/03/2024. To the following, I thank you for choosing Ryde: Manan Ahmed, Rabia Ali, Thomas Archer, Shayan Mehr, Asra Siddiqui, Rabab Awadalla, Roshan Basyal, Aditya Bhatnagar, Michael Caling, Mickayla Carreno, Eismenia Monsalve, Khing Chai, Feng Chen, Xiaoyu Chen, Fortune Chipeta, Jeni Chuang, Joao Coas, Lisa Cuffe, Claudia Ben, Hualie Diao, Yeer Du, Dennis Ent, Arjay Frilles, Varteny Gizmejian, Wency Gooi, Haotian Gu, Thomas Guilbot, Aditya Gupta, Farbod Manouchehri, Mei Hau, Kieran Hewer, Yuen Ho, Manatsanan Hoithong, Lei Hong, Zepur Jamkosian, David Jenkins, Da Jin, Gill Juan, Gi Jung, Caroline Kasmara, Erika Kawati, Hagop Kezanjian, Waqas Khan, Ilesha Khan, Amir Khezri, Keun-hyung Kim, Jay Kim, Kit Lau, Mingjiang Liang, Thay Lim, Junchi Ma, Ning Ma, Suresh Maharjan, Farah Hajiabadi, Darell Mendoza, Federico Milano, Zeynep Moroglu, Wei Ni and Woosung Noh. Congratulations and good luck!

CITIZENSHIP CONGRATULATIONS

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CITIZENSHIP CONGRATULATIONS

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Clodoaldo Prado, Vishtaspa Dorabjee, Socorro Dubois, Michael Eastmond, Xingni Fang, Jocelyn Ford, Pooja Gahlawat, Gelareh Ghasemi, Colleen Gomez, Dharshana Gopinath, Sujata Gurung, Tomoyuki Hachigo, Ali Haghighi, Yushen He, Elaheh Hemati, Matthew Hill, Theunis Holl, Shannon Holl, Mostafa Bakhsh, Yumi Kawamura, Shoushig Kelleyan, Mojtaba Farsani, Kenny Kim, Terry Kim, Wol Kim, Eung Kim, Alvina Anisey, Manikumar Kolli, Andrey Koryagin, Felicia Koswara, Amin Lashgari, Rubelyn Latoga, Ngoc Le, Pei-jui Lee, Hiu Leung, Charlette Li, Jing Li, and Hui Li. Congratulations and good luck!

CASS LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—On the 13th of February 2024, I had the privilege of representing the Minister for Multiculturalism at the Lunar New Year Celebration organised by CASS in Freedom Plaza - the heart of Cabramatta. CASS is a large-scale multicultural community services provider that has offered a comprehensive range of social and welfare services for more than 40 years. CASS delivers essential services to over 6,500 families weekly. I would like to acknowledge CASS's incredible commitment and contributions to my Electorate and beyond. I also extend my special thanks to Prof. Stephen Li Chairperson of CASS, Mr Anthony Pang Deputy Chair/Secretary of CASS, and his fantastic team, and everyone who was involved in organising this event. Lunar New Year is one of the most important festivals in my Electorate. The event was not only a festive celebration but also a time to honour the traditions of people across East-Asian heritage backgrounds. The event celebrates the rich cultural heritage and diversity in my Electorate of Cabramatta. I wish everyone a lunar new year filled with happiness, health and prosperity.

NGƯỜI VIỆT SYDNEY NEWS

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—In the lead up to Christmas and New Year last year, I had the great pleasure of being interviewed by Người Việt Sydney News to talk about my first year in the NSW Parliament and my experience in the community as an MP for Cabramatta. Người Việt Sydney News is a news channel on YouTube, operated by well-known members in the Vietnamese community especially in NSW. I had a great time discussing my experience as the first MP in the NSW Parliament to have Vietnamese heritage. I also discussed the priorities set out by the new government for NSW, especially for South Western Sydney and my Electorate of Cabramatta. I extend my appreciation for the opportunity to explain the State's priorities for my Electorate, be it to upgrade Fairfield Hospital, to support public schools and to improve the current situation of teacher shortage, addressing the cost-of-living pressure including housing affordability and more. I thank the Program Co-Ordinator Mr Trong Ai Than, the interviewer Ms Hoai Dang and Người Việt Sydney News team for the opportunity, and I wish them and the Vietnamese audience a happy festive season and a successful new year.

CHINATOWN SYDNEY STREET WALK CELEBRATING 2024 LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—Chinatown Sydney ushered in the Year of the Dragon with an explosion of vivid red- and gold-coloured decorations, lively lion dances and cultural performances, and joyous festivities. On the 11th of February, it was a delightful experience as I joined thousands of Sydney's residents and visitors, alongside the Premier, many NSW Ministers and NSW Parliamentary colleagues in a street walk in Haymarket to mark the beginning of the 2024 lunar new year. Lunar New Year is significant to many communities of East-Asian descent throughout NSW. It has become an integral part of the NSW cultural calendar. This year's celebration is particularly special, marked by the participation of government representatives in various events. We gather to cherish our rich cultural diversity and the harmonious multicultural society that we take pride in. This lunar new year is the year of the Dragon, representing potent, auspicious powers, good luck, prosperity, and generosity. I wish everyone a splendid year of joy, happiness, and prosperity. I commend the organising committee for their dedication and all the hard work to bring us a safe and fabulous multicultural event.

SCHOOL LEADERS 2024 – CORPUS CHRISTI

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Savannah Kesby and Noah Parker, School Captains, and Heidi Wright and Noah Skippen, Vice Captains for being elected as school leaders for 2024 at Corpus Christi Catholic High School. Being appointed a leader at your school is an honour for any student and worthy of recognition. You all have a very important job within the school and will act as mentors for younger students, advocate for student issues and represent your school at functions and events. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate you all on this achievement and wish you all the best in this leadership role.

HEADSPACE SHELLHARBOUR

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Headspace, Shellharbour, for the opening of their new centre on the corner of Shellharbour and Lake Entrance Roads on 28 February 2024. Headspace Shellharbour's service manager Charo Serventy was excited to open the doors of the long-awaited new space after an extensive planning and consultation process to ensure the new service met community expectations

and need. The centre provides services such as peer support, youth counselling, access to experienced clinicians and connections with partner services in the region. The new team consists of youth access workers, administrators, mental health clinicians and peer workers, with recruitment ongoing. Following the initial launch, the business will look to expand its services. They will also have support for young people seeking assistance around the use of alcohol or drugs, relationships and family counselling and employment and vocation support. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Charo Serventy and the Headspace team on providing this vital service to the Shellharbour community.

BEAU RITCHIE

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Beau Ritchie, from Mt Warrigal, who has entered many competitions with his filmmaking in the hope to forge a career in the industry. Twice-winner of the Creative Wollongong Short Film Competition (run by the local council), Beau Ritchie has his sights firmly set on becoming a household name. Beau's first film to take the top honour in Wollongong was *The Diet* in 2020, a spoof of the Stanley Kubrick thriller *The Shining*, and went on to feature in Flickrfest, while the second was a 'more sentimental' film called *Head In The Clouds*, which won in 2021 (the last time the competition was held). Beau is entering again this year and hopes to make it a hat-trick. The Creative Wollongong Short Film Competition is back for the first time since 2021, with categories for kids aged 12 to 24, and adults 25 and up. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Beau on this achievement and wish him well in his future filmmaking endeavours.

ELISE MCLEAN

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—Figure skating is one of the most physically demanding sports there is, as it requires participants to not only have excellent physical fitness, but also balance, strength, timing and coordination skills. I'm proud to say that Lake Macquarie is home to one of Australia's top young ice skaters, with 14-year-old Elise McLean recently taking home the bronze medal in the Australian Figure Skating Championships. Elise's love of the ice began when she was just six years old in 2016, and since then has accrued an impressive number of accolades, with Elsie obtaining the podium with a gold medal for the first time in 2017. Elise was also named Hunter Ice Skating Club's Club Champion in 2020, 2022 and 2023 in her division. I also note she has performed with Disney On Ice in 2018 and 2019 as a guest ice-skater. The sport demands a gruelling training schedule and Elise attends the Hunter Ice Club in Warners Bay four days per week under the guidance of her coach Lara Matskel and assistant coach Trica Burns. Congratulations Elise on your brilliant accomplishments, and I look forward to seeing what the future holds for you.

EMMA DUNDAS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I would like to congratulate the extremely talented Emma Dundas from Awaba, who at just 16-years of age has secured a full two-year contract with the Newcastle Jets A-League Women's side. Emma is the fourth Jets women's player to be offered a multi-year contract, after playing with the Women's A-League side in the 2023 – 2024 season. The year 11 student has become a critical member of the team, and in March had already featured in 12 matches, starting nine times. She is described by her coach as a high-energy and versatile midfielder, who can go out and play without succumbing to pressure. Emma began playing football in the under-6s at Barnsley United Football Club, and from there made it into the Emerging Jets when she was 10, steadily rising through the ranks of the Jets academy. Last year Emma also had a call-up to the Junior Matildas in Australia's under-17s Women's National Team for the Asian Cup Round 2 Qualifiers. Emma dreams of one day playing for the Matildas, and I have no doubt that she will achieve her goals. Congratulations Emma, you are an inspiration to young women everywhere.

LIONS CLUB OF TORONTO

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I was recently invited to be the guest speaker at a Lions Club of Toronto meeting, and while I enjoyed talking with members about the big things happening in Lake Macquarie, I was blown away to hear about the good work they have been doing for the most vulnerable members of our community. Under the Club's Eat Up Lunches program, members have been making between 1,000 and 1,500 sandwiches and delivering them to numerous schools throughout Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Maitland, every three weeks. Some of the sandwiches are eaten fresh by students whose parents can't afford to provide them with lunch, while others are frozen for later distribution. It's a sad indication of our times, that there are families in our community who are under so much financial stress they are unable to provide school lunches. This initiative is a simple one, that makes a real difference. Earlier this year, the Club also raised \$4,000 for The Pamper Care Project, a Woodrising based organisation that provides food and personal care items to those in need. I would like to thank Lions Club of Toronto members for their efforts.

DANCE PAIR ON POINT TO TAKE ON WORLD

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate East Albury's talented dancers, Patience Joss (14), and Corowa's rising star Skyla Schmidt (9), for their outstanding achievement in earning a spot to represent Australia at the Dance World Cup in the Czech Republic. These remarkable dancers, who happen to be second cousins, have demonstrated dedication and skill, securing their places on the Australian team. With over 120,000 dancers worldwide, aged between 4 to 25 participating in this event, I commend Patience and Skyla for their dedication and passion to dance. Skyla, who has been dancing since the age of two at Corowa's Body Basics Dance Academy under the guidance of her grandmother Tanya Rixon, will be representing the mini age group, choreographed by the talented Hume Dance Teacher Alyssa Kupa. Meanwhile, Patience will be representing the Junior Age Group with performances in Jazz, commercial jazz, and song and dance. Patience has been training at Lavington's MT Dance Creative, under mentorship of studio co-founder and teacher, Taylor Falkner who has prepared her for this prestigious international competition. I am proud that you are representing our community and wish you all the very best of success.

HOLBROOK'S LANDMARK FESTIVAL RETURNS

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to extend my appreciation to the following dedicated organisers of the Holbrook Festival by the Sub: Vicki Schuur, Jenni Papworth, Lea Parker, Jess Melbourne and Olivia Schuur. Their tireless efforts culminated in a remarkable and free community event, held on Saturday, March 2 at the Holbrook Submarine Park. This year's event boasted markets, live entertainment, and local food from our regions, showcasing our businesses and their diverse range of local products, often overlooked by many. Set against the backdrop of the majestic HMAS Otway, the festival not only celebrated our community's spirit but also honoured our rich heritage. It was last year's successful event that prompted the Holbrook Business and Community Development Group to establish what is set to become an ongoing cherished tradition. I commend all those who attended the event and their support and extend gratitude to those who organised the event, for their efforts and dedication.

LAKE HUME BIKE

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to acknowledge David Dow of Thurgoona, for his outstanding efforts in helping bring our community together through organising the successful Lake Hume Cycle Challenge on February, 11th. The money raised from this cycle challenge is going towards the Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre Trust Fund - Wellness Centre. The cycle ride demonstrated the incredible spirit and generosity of our Border community, with this year seeing the highest number of registrations. The event recorded a record-breaking turnout, with 325 riders participating in this inspiring event - 40 more than the previous year. This year's event also included the introduction of the new Lake Hume Hustle ride - a challenging 114km journey capturing the enthusiasm of 90 individuals. Well done to all the peddling participants, generous volunteers and sponsors who have all contributed to the success of this event to support the fight against cancer.

PINK STUMPS DAY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I thank and commend the Glenmore Park Cricket Club and the wider Penrith Junior Cricket Association for taking part in Pink Stumps Day, in support of the McGrath Foundation. On 17 February 2024, teams from Glenmore Park Cricket Club and the Penrith Junior Cricket Association wore the colour pink to show their support for the McGrath foundation and the important cause of raising awareness and support for the thousands of people affected by breast cancer. The Club and Association also highlighted the importance of the McGrath Breast care Nurses, who provide care for those affected. The support of the Club and Association included selling the Foundation's merchandise, holding morning teas with pink doughnuts at their games, making donations and setting up a fundraising page through which people may still donate. All proceeds will go towards helping the McGrath foundation reach their goal of 250 nurses by 2025, to work towards ensuring no one misses out on care. I thank the Glenmore Park Cricket Club and the wider Penrith Junior Cricket Association for their generosity and work.

LEISA MCGIVERN OAM - 2024 BADGERYS CREEK LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I congratulate and commend Glenmore Park local Leisa McGivern OAM on being named the 2024 Badgerys Creek Local Woman of the Year. I was proud to award Leisa the honour in recognition of her extraordinary service to children as a foster carer over the last 24 years, in which she has fostered more than 60 children. The quality of Leisa's character and values is second to none. She has provided babies and children a safe and loving home and a start to life that they would otherwise not have. I was thrilled to hear that Leisa is still in contact with many of those she had previously cared for. This goes to show the extraordinary love Leisa has given to the children who have been in her care. On behalf of the community of

Badgerys Creek, I sincerely thank Leisa and her family for loving and supporting these children and I congratulate her on this well-deserved award.

LUDDENHAM SHOW 2024

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—Mr Speaker, the 118th Luddenham Show was held on the 2nd and 3rd of March 2024. I congratulate and commend the committee of the Luddenham Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society, of which I am a patron, and all involved with the Luddenham Show for another highly successful event. The Luddenham Show is an original country show which showcases the beauty of our historic town and is a yearly tradition for locals and visitors alike. Throughout the weekend, spectators were entertained with a cattle show, a live reptiles show, dog high jumping, line dancing, pavilions and many more exciting events and activities which catered for all ages. I commend the community and participants for contributing to the vibrancy and excitement of the event. It's wonderful that a town with such a rich history and heritage is celebrated and showcased to all. I wish the committee, community and all participants to the Luddenham Show many more great shows in the years ahead.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AT ST LUKE'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)—On International Women's Day I was lucky enough to join the staff and students at St Luke's Catholic College alongside teachers and students from Santa Sophia Catholic College, Cerdon College, St Agnes Catholic High School, St John Paul II Catholic College, Catherine McAuley and Caroline Chisholm College. During my visit I met an inspiring group of women who epitomise the very meaning of International Women's Day. I had the honour of addressing these brilliant young women about the importance of ensuring that all women have equal chances to learn, earn and lead. Education is key to producing opportunities for women to learn, earn and lead. It was a privilege to speak to the students and witness how these incredible schools are shaping our future female leaders. The event was truly a great way to celebrate International Women's Day and reflect upon the progress our society has made and will continue to make.

KU-RING-GAI MEALS ON WHEELS

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Tuesday 2 April, I look forward to supporting the efforts of the Ku-ring-gai Meals on Wheels service. This service was established in 1961 by Estelle Wren Cooper OAM, to support aging residents and people with disabilities by providing them nutritious meals to their door. Their kitchen is located in Turramurra, and they provide over 7,000 meals a month across the North Sydney region, along with regular home visits. I recognise the work of Alex Kane as General Manager and Tony Lyons as chef who for over 20 years has been preparing nutritious meals. Thank you to all the volunteers who dedicate their time to this great cause. Without volunteers, many people within our community would struggle to access healthy and nutritious meals. I am excited to see firsthand the positive impact this service has on our community. The Davidson electorate is ranked the second highest in NSW for volunteer rates, and Ku-ring-gai Meals on Wheels is a key player, that I am proud to recognise in the Parliament of NSW.

DR BELINDA KHONG – DRAGON AND FRIENDS' MINDFUL ADVENTURES

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Saturday 23 March, I look forward to attending the official book launch of "Dragon and Friends' Mindful Adventures" written by Davidson constituent Dr Belinda Khong at Wahroonga Park. This will be Dr Khong's third book that pays homage to the Lunar New Year traditions. Dr Khong's previous two books "Am I a Tiger...?" and "Water Rabbits Mindful Adventures" have been credited to become children's classics in years to come due their heart-warming, uplifting and joyful nature. I want to recognise Dr Khong and illustrator Kelsey C. Roy for their work providing a piece of engaging children's literature which explores the positive values of our society. In our Davidson electorate community, we are privileged to be surrounded by creative talents like Dr Khong that I am proud to represent in the Parliament of NSW. I wish Dr Khong every success with the book launch, and I cannot wait to read the latest addition to your collection.

ST IVES JUNIOR CRICKET CLUB

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Sunday 7 April, I look forward to attending the St Ives Junior Cricket Club Presentation Day at Hassel Park in St Ives. The St Ives Junior Cricket Club is one of the largest cricket clubs on Sydney's North Shore with over 450 members ranging from 5 to 17 years old. Members of the St Ives Junior Cricket Club pride themselves on fair play, teamwork and individual skill development which are all recognised at the club's presentation day. I recognise President Antony Horan, Vice President Anurag Vasisth, Treasurer Lucky Singh, Operations Manager Katherine Stevenson, Coaching Coordinator Mahesh Malalage, and Stephanie Williams, Venessa O'Connell, Bruce Bryant, Brad Loder, Daniel Cheever, Brendan Matheson, Susie Loder, Andrew Stevenson, Louise Smith, David Lane, Chris Poulton and David McKay. Thank you for your dedication to the St Ives cricket community. I am incredibly privileged to represent the St Ives Junior Cricket

Club in the NSW Parliament. They are a sporting club dedicated to providing opportunities for all to play cricket. I am excited to celebrate the achievements of our future cricket stars.

END OF AN ERA AS BUTCHER FAMILY SELLS NIMBIN BAKERY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I wish Goonellabah couple Tricia and Darren Butcher a well-earned break after they recently sold the Nimbin Bakery they had owned and operated for the past 13 years. The Butchers were renowned for the effort and pride they put into running a thriving business, and for their support of the Nimbin community. This was on display during the tough times – the floods of 2017 and 2022 and Black Summer bushfires in 2019 – as they 'fed and watered' emergency service personnel and supplied essentials to affected residents. The Butchers boast fifth generation links to Nimbin. Tricia is the daughter of Bill and Nancy Nugent, who operated the Nimbin Bakery from 1974 to 1985. The baking then was done in a wood fired oven in a separate premises at the back of the main street. The retail shop was right next door to the current premises in Cullen Street. Bill made and sold the famous Aquarius Bread for many years, selling it widely throughout New South Wales and Queensland. The Butchers kept that tradition alive. I also wish new owners Tiarra and Clinton McKenna, and Tiara's mum Tammy McWhirter all the best.

KYOGLÉ SOLICITOR JOHN GIBSON'S RETIREMENT ENDS FAMILY'S CENTURY IN LAW

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Kyogle solicitor John Gibson let me know of his retirement with a Lewis Carroll quote: "The time has come the walrus said to speak of many things." In another life, John and I were colleagues when we worked together at Hannigans Solicitors, and know him as a lawyer who has gone the extra mile for his clients, often taking on complex matters. John's grandfather Robert started his law practice in Kyogle in 1924, his late Uncle Joe filled in the middle years and his own Geneva Street practice made it a century of the family providing legal services to the town and surrounding district. The family's links to Kyogle go back even further to when his great great grandfather established a creamery at New Park in the 1880s. In John's words, "It has been an absolute pleasure to be part of this great community. It truly is the 'Friendly Town'." His wife Colleen has been of great support as have his loyal staff over the years – Sue Dummett, who helped him set up his office, Anne Wall, Julie McBride, Helen Manning, Robyn Jeffery, Sam Glover, Bree Anderson and Karen Clarke.

MURWILLUMBAH'S REBECCA WHAN RECEIVES NSW COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I congratulate Murwillumbah District Business Chamber President and local architect Rebecca Whan, of Patternshop Studio, on receiving a prestigious NSW Community Service Award. The award, signed by former NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet, recognises her tireless work in driving recovery for local businesses and residents since the devastating 2022 floods. It was my pleasure to present the framed certificate to Rebecca during Business Murwillumbah's first after-hours networking event at the MIArts Precinct in the town's Central Business District. Rebecca supported the establishment and ongoing operation of the local Flood Recovery Hub 2484, as well as providing critical support for business owners and community members struggling with accessing grants and financial support to rebuild after sustaining damage in the floods. Rebecca and her fellow members of Murwillumbah District Business Chamber can be very proud of her State award. The MIArts Precinct -- an iconic Art Deco building and historic warehouse, now housing a range of creative retail and food outlets -- was an ideal venue for networking activities. Building creativity was the theme for the successful night with Tweed Regional Gallery's new Director Ingrid Hedgecock providing a preview of upcoming events at the gallery.

MELANIE JAY

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to acknowledge the wonderful contribution of Melanie Jay, the outgoing Centre Manager of Country Universities Centre, Clarence Valley. Since July 2019 Melanie has brought dedication, enthusiasm, and passion to the progress of the Centre in the Clarence Valley and to the wider community. The Centre offers a dedicated learning and study space in the Clarence Valley that has been designed for regional people by regional people. Students have free access to high-speed internet, modern technology, and general academic support for hundreds of Clarence Valley students in their learning journeys. Regional and rural communities deserve quality opportunities to pursue their dreams without the need to relocate. Country Universities Centre provides regional people with the space and tools they need to create a vibrant and more prosperous future for themselves. Melanie has achieved many things in her working career and has quite the list in her personal life as well, including writing a novel which she plans to publish soon. I wish Melanie all the best on her next adventure living and working in Malta, an exciting challenge, and a huge change, enjoy!

CLARENCE VALLEY COMMUNITY CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to acknowledge the successful event held for International Women's Day hosted by Grafton Chamber of Commerce. The sold-out event was held at the Crown Hotel Motel on March 7 in celebration of the widely loved annual festivity. MC for the evening, Misty Fisher

from local radio station 2GF and 120 attendees including guest speakers Jo Powell, Maddy Richey, Raelene Richey, Melanie Jay, Danielle Chamberlain, and Sharon Cannon, shared motivational stories from their personal journeys through their respective backgrounds in sport, education, and business, to overcome adversity, racial prejudice, and mental health issues, as they aimed to inspire those around them to never give up on their goals, to always dream big and aim high, and to never let anything or anyone stand in their way. Local performer, singer/songwriter Pam Hata delighted the crowd with her talent throughout the evening. Congratulations to Carol Pachos, President of the Grafton Chamber of Commerce, and her highly dedicated and passionate team for organising such a wonderful, inspirational, and successful event.

VOLUNTEERS - YEARS OF SERVICE BADGES

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to offer my gratitude and congratulations to Connect You Too volunteers celebrating five and ten years of service with the company and receiving their "Years of Service" Badges. Both John Cadman and Susan Cadman have been volunteering for five years while Darryl Brotherson, Alan Pitkin, Graham Waters and Ray Chesher have all clocked up ten years. What a wonderful achievement and contribution to the community these volunteers are making. Connect You Too has over fifty volunteers who donate their time and energy to supporting the less able in the community. The assistance and support they offer is invaluable helping with transport and meal delivery services. Thank you to all of the volunteers and keep up the great work.

VISIT TO KEMPSEY BY FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE USA

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—On the 5 March 2024 I had the pleasure of attending a Kempsey Shire Council Mayoral reception on behalf of the Friendship Force of Kempsey who were welcoming a group from the Friendship Force from New Hampshire, United States of America. The Friendship Force group is well supported in Kempsey, they invited me to attend the welcome to explain the Parliamentary system in New South Wales. The group were thoroughly interested in my explanation of what the Kempsey area has to offer. They also expressed their gratitude that the Oxley Electorate representative gave of his very valuable time and was willing to greet them and explain the political process in New South Wales. They expressed they were extremely interested in the States Politics, as can be imagined, current mid-term politics is consuming the Americans at the moment. This led to some interesting discussions during the get together. A wonderful morning tea was supplied by the Kempsey Country Women's Association which was very delicious as usual, and appreciated by all in attendance.

KEMPSEY ART TAKES GOLD

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—The vibrant murals lining Savages Lane in Kempsey have won the Australian Street Art Award for "Best Street Art Laneway." This prestigious award will help revitalise the city centre and offer a crucial venue for community involvement. Eleven artists collaborated to create the murals, which honour the Macleay Valley Coast's shared history and natural beauty from the mountains to the sea. A wall of smaller vignettes is placed next to large murals, giving the impression that viewers are looking at stylized images of local landmarks and social situations. The competition aims to give communities throughout Australia, especially those in isolated and rural areas, a way to be acknowledged for outdoor art that is being promoted to improve the allure of both their destination and our nation as a travel and exploration destination is important as ever, to show potential domestic tourists all the incredible art that can be found in your town or region. Kempsey's gold award is a great start for the town and for encouraging Australians to "see Australia first" Before travelling aboard. Let the colours and message of our beautiful laneways shine bright. Well done.

A SENSE OF EQUITY IN THE POOL

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—The Nambucca Valley Council, the Nambucca Valley Rotary, the Nambucca Heads Lions Club, and Complete Staff Solutions Coffs Harbour have worked together to provide equipment that will significantly improve the lives of many of the region's citizen with a disability. A specially designed mobile change table that offers people with complicated disabilities a new degree of independence and dignity has been delivered to the Macksville Aquatic and Fitness Centre. Any person with a disability can be lifted out of the pool and onto the mobile change table, which is on wheels and has hydraulic elevation and lowering capabilities. Carers can then roll the table into the changing area to help the individual change into dry clothes. Before this table was installed at the Macksville Aquatic and Fitness Centre, individuals frequently travelled long distances home, in uncomfortable wet clothes. This equipment is a significant benefit. The pool in Macksville is the only one in the area that can be used by people with complicated disabilities thanks to this table, which has completely renovated an incredible facility. I commend the community groups for their thoughtful contribution.

AUSTRALIAN WESTERN SAHARA ASSOCIATION

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Australian Western Sahara Association and their incredible work to bring together the local diaspora community to mark the 48th

anniversary of the declaration of the Saharawi Republic. For years, the Australian Western Sahara Association have come together to advocate for the protection of human rights in Occupied Western Sahara. They work tirelessly to advocate for a UN referendum of self-determination, as well as calling for access to jobs, housing and education for Indigenous Saharawis in occupied zones. As part of the 48th anniversary of the declaration of the Saharawi Republic, I joined the Association for the annual local flag-raising in Leichhardt, and attended an incredibly moving film night they organised to help share stories from Saharawi community. I thank them for their dedication and passion in championing human rights.

INNER WEST BICYCLE COALITION AND BIKE LEICHHARDT

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Inner West Bicycle Coalition and Bike Leichhardt. The Inner West Bicycle Coalition, and Bike Leichhardt have been strong advocates for the local cycling community for many years. They have been actively engaged with issues surrounding the opening of the Rozelle Interchange, and the disappointing closure of the Rozelle Parklands and the connecting pathways. These two community groups and their members including Mr. Neil Tonkin and Robert Moore have worked tirelessly to help deliver improved active transport infrastructure for the Inner West – calling for vital safety upgrades and increased investment to expand transport networks. They see the potential for a city with streets built for people, not just cars. I applaud their advocacy and thank them for their continued efforts.

CARLEY BUGEJA

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)—I wish to recognise Ms Carley Bugeja, who is the Principal of Willmot Public School, for her recent Prestigious National Excellence in Teaching Award. In her short time in the role of Principal for Willmot Public School, Carley has adapted new ways of communicating with her students to allow them the opportunity to speak freely in a safe space without the fear of judgment. Education is crucial in the development of our children and I would like to thank Carley for her ongoing care and dedication and congratulate her on this well deserved achievement.

NIGHTINGALE - FRESH HOPE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—For the past few years, Marrickville residents have patiently watched as the new Nightingale Marrickville project has taken shape over Illawarra Road. Nightingale Marrickville is a ground-breaking affordable housing project consisting of 51 teilhaus micro apartments, space-efficient, small footprint homes that are available for people to rent at rates 20 per cent lower than market value. The project has been a joint project made possible by the work of Fresh Hope Communities, the welfare arm and Public Benevolent Institution entity of churches of Christ in NSW and the ACT. A ballot has been held for potential residents and people should start moving in shortly. This is just one of a raft of new affordable housing projects in the Inner West, and I acknowledge in particular the work of Inner West Council to increase the supply of affordable housing, with Council investigating how some of its carparks might be able to be repurposed for affordable housing. It's clear that the housing affordability crisis will require out-of-the box thinking and collaborations such as those between Nightingale and Fresh Hope and I congratulate all involved in this extraordinary project.

FRESH ARTS INC 20 YEARS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, I would like to congratulate local artist collective Fresh Arts on celebrating their 20-year milestone! Fresh Arts Inc was formed in 2004 by 13 local artists who wanted to redefine what contemporary art meant, and their first group exhibition was held at Macquarie Regional Library in the March of that year. Since the establishment of Fresh Arts, the local artists involved in the group have evolved and changed, as have the spaces they have exhibited and the themes they have explored in the name of art creation. From beautiful spaces in and around Dubbo like Lazy River Estate, Ramien's Timber, the RFDS Visitor Experience Centre and Dundullimal Homestead to Gilgandra, Canowindra, Molong, Narromine and Baradine, Fresh Arts have showcased Dubbo artist's work on an array of walls! Now, in 2024, Fresh Arts have celebrated their 20th Anniversary exhibiting the work of 35 artists in an exhibition thoughtfully named 'Timeless', which officially opened at Dundullimal Homestead on the 16th of March. It is wonderful to see creative minds joining forces, inspiring, and supporting emerging artists and creating opportunities to showcase an array of art styles to the community! Congratulations Fresh Arts! I'm excited to see what's next!

DUBBO PRIVATE HOSPITAL 30 YEARS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, I would like to wish a very happy 30th Birthday to the Dubbo Private Hospital, its management team, and wonderful staff. The hospital is a significant employer in the region with over 130 staff across nursing, allied health, administration, and hotel services, and engages multiple local contractors and companies to maintain the facilities, which benefits the wider community. Over the past 30 years, the Dubbo Private Hospital has performed well over 120,000 procedures and currently operates

3 theatres daily with 6 different doctors led by nurse theatre unit manager Kim Troth, who has remarkably worked at the hospital for 25 years. One of the biggest achievements for the hospital has been the opening the Day Surgery Centre and Rehabilitation Gym in 2016 which expanded the treatment options for many orthopaedic and general surgery patients. Dubbo is incredibly lucky to have a regional private hospital which offers patients the opportunity to have procedures here locally without the need to travel to Sydney. Congratulations again on a wonderful milestone and thank you for taking such good care of our region's residents!

DUBBO WOMEN'S FESTIVAL

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Sharon Quill on the success of the recent Dubbo Women's Festival, in celebration of International Women's Day. Held on Friday 8 March 2024 in the beautiful grounds of the Western Plains Cultural Centre, the day was carefully curated to reflect the unique experiences and transitions that women go through over time. Featuring an array of engaging activities, including guest speakers, a movement lounge, social quarter, mums' corner and a relaxed hub, the festival created a safe and inclusive space for women of all ages to connect in meaningful conversations. Attendees took the opportunity to interact with the speakers and contributors, ask questions and participate in discussions, making the event both engaging and enriching. They were also treated to special performances by Delroy High School Aboriginal Dancers and Oriscon Dancers which added to the cultural and celebratory elements of the event. Sharon's dedication and commitment to making the event free and accessible demonstrates her belief in the importance of community engagement and empowerment, whilst highlighting the importance of unity, support, and solidarity among women from all walks of life.

NEWCASTLE MOSQUE OPEN DAY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—I was very happy to attend the Newcastle Mosque Open Day on Saturday 24 February. This lovely mosque – or "masjid" (Arabic for "place of worship") - can be found here in Wallsend. Everyone who attended received a polite, warm welcome. Mosques are places where Muslims can come together for prayer, celebrate special events, learn about Islam and meet fellow believers. This building is not a mosque with typical Islamic architecture – elaborate domes, minarets and large prayer halls - but it retains a spiritual feeling, a neat and tidy place, with separate prayer rooms for both males and females, wadhu area, toilet facility, and a digital donation box. This was an informative, instructional day, including: henna designs or "mehndi" - always part of happy occasions and even said to have health benefits - delicious food, activities for the children and having your name written in Arabic. Questions from non-Muslim visitors about the history and function of the mosque were encouraged by the Imam. Ours is an eclectic, vibrant and mostly tolerant community – though it is important that we all continue to try to understand each other.

KEN CHEETHAM

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Local training legend Ken "Cheeto" Cheetham, who passed away on 7 March 2024 at age 87, has left a memorable legacy on the greyhound industry. Ken came from a family of 11 children, his initial association with greyhounds earning pocket money exercising a local woman's dog near his family home in Millthorpe. After moving to Maitland at age 19, Ken began working for some leading Hunter trainers. His first big race winner was Flying Myobb, winning the 1964 National Derby at Wentworth Park. Though he trained two winners of the NSW Greyhound of the Year - How's The Fort and Take the Kitty - along with great stayer Brettianly, Myocard and John's Fury, Ken always declared his greatest moment was Fine Chiang beating the "invincible" Zoom Top. His greatest regret, however, was that in the 60s and 70s veterinary expertise was not as significant as it was 30 years later. Ken Cheetham, battling ill health for several years, continued training until recently, winning races until late last year. He is survived by his daughters Robyn and Louise, son Tony, and Marie, his wife of 67 years.

JORDAN HARTLEY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Jordan Hartley, initially from Eleebana, left school at the age of 15 and worked as a chef with now 3 Michelin-starred chef Brett Graham, as well as at the Bennelong Restaurant in Sydney. A back injury demanded a re-think, so she prioritised her mental health, saw a gap in the market for healthy, nutritious, tasty food delivered to your door, and launched Jordan Hartley Health in 2018. In 2022 Hartley Health was born, surviving COVID and preparing meals for a niche market free from the drawbacks of fast food like CO2 gas, additives, preservatives, refined sugars and seed oils. In collaboration with health practitioners, Jordan's food is made in-house at Birmingham Gardens by a team of eight, including three chefs, who cook and deliver made-to-order dishes within 48 hours, significantly reducing waste. By the end of the pandemic, she had acquired a new base of clients who were focused on holistic health. Jordan values her family, mental and emotional health more than overworking in the kitchen. All the best to you and your business - and enjoy those leisurely days at the beach with your daughter.

GREENACRE'S SALMA KAREEM 'ONE TO WATCH' WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2024

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—Congratulations to Salma Kareem for being awarded the Young NSW Woman of the Year 2024 in the 'One to Watch' category! I would like to thank Salma for her hard work and exceptional contributions in the Bankstown community. Her achievements not only inspire but also set a shining example for aspiring women leaders within the community. Her commitment to excellence and innovation has undoubtedly made a significant impact, and it is truly commendable. She has done such amazing work for the community, and have demonstrated remarkable talent, determination, and vision, making her a role model for many. This award is a well-deserved acknowledgment of her hard work, passion, and resilience. Her continuous efforts to drive positive change and empower others are truly inspiring and worthy of celebration. May this recognition be a stepping stone to even greater success and opportunities in the future. I thank Salma for her outstanding achievements and wish her continued success in all her accomplishments. Congratulations once again to Salma on this well-deserved honour and thank her for the hard work that she has put into assisting the Bankstown community.

BANKSTOWN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VIGIL BY BANKSTOWN WOMEN'S HEALTH

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—Bankstown residents stood united as a community with Canterbury Bankstown Domestic Violence Liaison Committee and Bankstown Women's Health Centre (BWHC) at a vigil in December to honour women who have tragically lost their lives to domestic violence. The vigil was held at Paul Keating Park in Bankstown. BWHC has been at the frontline of women's health service delivering health support and advocacy to local women for more than 45 years. Chief Executive Officer, Mariam Mourad said that, in 2023, in Australia, 58 women had lost their lives to domestic violence. The vigil included addresses by the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Jodie Harrison MP, and Member for Canterbury, Minister Sophie Cotsis. Local author of 'The Mother Wound' and social justice advocate Amani Haydar was also at the vigil to provide her personal insights on the topic of domestic violence against women by their partners. I would like to thank both Canterbury Bankstown Domestic Violence Liaison Committee and Bankstown Women's Health Centre for their dedicated work in supporting and advocating for the safety of females within Bankstown region.

CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2023 GALA DINNER

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 Chief Executive Officer of the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce (CBCC), Mr Wally Mehanna for his hard work and dedication of organising the CBCC 2023 Gala Dinner. The purpose of the Gala Dinner is to unite the business community with a common vision, to shape a vibrant future for our community and the southwest Sydney region, and to usher in a new era of growth and prosperity. The CBCC, established in 2016, connects local businesses in the Canterbury Bankstown region and beyond to assist in growing their business. The CBCC is one of the few Chambers of Commerce in Sydney that has a dedicated full-time Chief Executive Officer. The Gala Dinner was a great way to bring business leaders and the community together as well as having Members of Parliament there to connect and understand the aims of the CBCC. The event offered local businesses the opportunity to connect and develop and grow their business. Thank you to Wally Mehanna for his commitment and dedication to the business community and for connecting and supporting the many community organisations in our region.

RUBY HOLMES - JIANGMEN INTERNATIONAL FUTSAL FESTIVAL

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Congratulations to Ruby Holmes from Port Macquarie for recently receiving selection in the Under-13 Australian futsal team. Described as a rising talent in the world of futsal, 12-year-old Ruby Holmes is on her way to China in July to compete with the Australian Under-13 side in the Jiangmen International Futsal Festival. In November 2023, Ruby was called up to showcase her skills in Brisbane at the Australian futsal trials and by all accounts she did not fail to disappoint, earning a position in the Australian International team, astoundingly, a year in since taking up futsal. To pay for China, Ruby has been tirelessly collecting recyclable cans and bottles to deposit at the local Return and Earn collection points and to her credit has already paid off half of her trip. Those supporting Ruby on her fundraising endeavours is the local business Tyre Power, neighbours, friends and a fencing enterprise. Ruby's football journey commenced in kindergarten and has grown as a love and passion over the years through her participation in various local competitions in Port Macquarie. An exciting opportunity awaits Ruby and I wish her every success.

SCAS GRADUATES

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Commendations to the graduates recently announced by St Columba Anglican School who successfully gained placings in five prestigious universities around the country. Claire McIntosh's hard work has been rewarded with a place at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts to study a Bachelor of Performing Arts-Performance Making aiming to enhance her skills in voice, movement, acting, directing and writing. Lila Browning was accepted into the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) to study a Bachelor of Fine Arts-Technical Theatre and Stage Management. Lila has an exciting future with NIDA offering opportunities in stage, screen, events and interactive entertainment. Ben McLean will study a Bachelor of Advanced Science majoring in Advanced Physics and a Bachelor of Engineering through the University of NSW. With an ATAR of 99.5, Ben earned both the Facility of Engineering Rural and the All Rounder Scholarship. Evangeline Martin is one of 75 students in NSW to be selected into the Horizons Creative Industries Career Launchpad, aimed at creating employment opportunities in the sector. Lachlan Reck will commence study at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) pursuing a Degree in Film Study. The VCA is internationally acclaimed and produces the change-makers of tomorrow. Congratulations!

TOX TAILS FUNDRAISER DR KRISTY KOSTALAS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—The Port Macquarie community has once again given its generous support to the Tox Tails 2024 raising almost \$47,000 to support local women impacted by domestic and family violence accessing our local Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services. Tox Tails was initiated three years ago by Dr Kristy Kostalas to foster community support for those in need. In 2022, Dr Kostalas and her team aspired to create an event giving our community a platform to donate to local causes and organisations. Growing in attendance and impact each and every year the event has raised more than \$120,000 over the three years since its commencement. Unfortunately, the demand for the support provided by Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services is increasing with Liberty reporting that they receive around sixty calls for help every month - two calls every day. Funds raised by the community to support service providers and raise awareness of domestic violence is incredibly important and we are very fortunate in Port Macquarie and surrounds to have the dedicated workers and volunteers of Liberty matched with the enthusiasm and commitment of Kristy and her team who coordinated the Tox Tails event.

AUSTRALIA DAY EVE CANTON BEACH

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)—The Lions Club of Toukley organised the Australia Day Eve event at Canton Beach Foreshore on 25th January 2024. The event held on Thursday night involved local organisations, activities, entertainment including Coasties Got Talent, stalls, food trucks and fireworks over the lake. Just to name a few of the locals who are involved included Jammus the Mad Magician, Bunnings Lake Haven, Toukley Neighbourhood Centre, Harrington Entertainment, Mexico Coast Cantina, Blue J's Cafe, Toukley Car Park Butchery, Toukley Gorokan Runners, Northlakes High School Leo Club, Her Cave and Canton Beach Paddle Shack. The involvement of organisations and businesses at local events build social connections to strengthen our community. It is great to see the local event back after some years of COVID delaying our community events for families to enjoy. The event was well organised by the Lions of Club of Toukley who brought the community together to celebrate.

CATHY COLE

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 Cathy Cole from Jilliby is awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club and the community. A surf lifesaving member since 1992 and Cathy's father, David Roberts played a vital role to surf lifesaving changes and received an OAM for his involvement. The travel is a 2 hour round trip from Jilliby to Terrigal to act her duties as patrol Captain and coach, including rescue, resuscitation, and march pasts. Cathy has been an official and judge at the Australian championships since 2005, and judge at state and federal levels and has been an official and referee at competition carnivals since 2001, awarded the Federation's Distinguished Service Award 2005, named Club Person of the Year 2017 and Volunteer of the Year 2018. Apart from surf lifesaving Cathy has been involved with the Parents and Citizens Association and is a life member at Gosford and Wyong high schools, acting as the P&C Federation's State Treasurer from 2003-2005 and Central Coast Councillor from 1992-2003. Also, a life member of Jilliby Public School P&C, was president in 2017-18, is a former treasurer and has been a member since the 1980s.

ELLIE RUDDER

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)—Ellie Rudder from Jilliby is representing Australia in the junior 2024 Paris Olympic shooting team. The 19-year-old athlete has competed 4 rounds of Olympic trials in Australia, placing her in the top 3 and is selected in the Australian team to compete in Brazil for the final international qualifier as part of the 2024 Paris Olympic shooting team in Paris. Also, competing the 2024 Junior World Championships in October at Lima, Peru. Locals and businesses across the Central Coast are supporting Ellie's Olympic & World Championships campaign to provide her the opportunity of competing at a high level. Ellie is a Member of the Shooting Australia Pistol Squad and NSW State Pistol Team. Aside from shooting Ellie is juggling other commitments, she is an Equestrian Show Horse Champion and a medical student. I wish you all the best on your journey and your upcoming competitions in representing Australia.

ST JOHN AMBULANCE BLACKTOWN DIVISION - NICHOLAS BAKER

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to Nicholas Baker on receiving a Long Service Award from the St John Ambulance – Blacktown Division on Tuesday 5th March 2024. An integral member of the Blacktown Division since 1996, Nicholas has served our community for over 27 years. Donating 3,922 hours of on duty and another 4,620 hours of service, Nicholas' tireless efforts have supported the safety and enjoyment of our families at community events. Nicholas helped to train and inspire enthusiastic volunteers to administer vital first aid. He embodies the mission of St John Ambulance to empower individuals of all ages with skills and confidence to save lives. In 2010, Nicholas was promoted to a Divisional Sergeant. For his commitment, he was awarded a Service Medal in 2008 and Silver Service Bars in 2013, 2018 and 2021. Striving to offer responsive healthcare and wellbeing support, Nicholas also helped improve the cohesion and resilience of our Western Sydney community. Thank you again Nicholas for your long service. I wish you the best in your retirement. Thank you as well to Keith Avery OstJ and our St John Ambulance volunteers for their efforts to deliver outstanding health and community care.

PHUOC HUE TEMPLE - LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I was pleased to represent the Hon. Steve Kamper, Minister for Multiculturalism, for Lunar New Year Celebrations at the Phuoc Hue Temple in Wetherill Park on 9th February 2024. The Vietnamese Buddhist community plays an important role in our diverse community. Lunar New Year is the most important event in their cultural calendar. I was honoured to address over ten thousand Vietnamese-Australians to celebrate the Year of the Dragon. It was great to join Temple Abbot, the Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan OAM, the Venerable Thich Phuoc Thai, Tri Vo, Member for Cabramatta, Charishma Kaliyanda, Member for Liverpool, Fairfield Local Area Command and community members from across our Western Sydney community. Thank you to the religious members of the Temple for a great evening. May the Year of the Dragon bring good health and prosperity to all our proud Vietnamese-Australians, and to all those who celebrate across New South Wales.

TAMIL ARTS AND CULTURE ASSOCIATION - 2024 PONGAL CELEBRATION

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—It was a pleasure to attend the annual Pongal celebration organised by the Tamil Arts and Culture Association, in Parliament on Tuesday 6th February 2024. Thai Pongal is the Tamil harvest festival celebrated in the month of January. It is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Tamil people worldwide and corresponds to Makar Sankranti, the winter harvest festival celebrated throughout India. Pongal also refers to a sweet dish of rice boiled in milk and cane sugar, ritually prepared and consumed on the day. Established in 2011, the Association is a wonderful not-for-profit organisation, supporting initiatives organised by our local Tamil community. It encourages people from all walks of life across Western Sydney to engage in their historic and vibrant Tamil culture. It was great to celebrate Pongal event with the Tamil community, alongside Premier, Chris Minns, Steve Kamper, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Mr Anagan Babu, Secretary of the Tamil Arts and Culture Association. Thank you to the Tamil Arts and Culture Association for inviting me to the annual Pongal celebration. I look forward to further working with the Association to promote our vibrant Tamil community in the Electorate of Prospect.

PAUL PARKS - PROJECT GOOD TANKS

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)—I would like to congratulate Paul Parks, Director of Beer at Bondi Brewing Co for the fantastic Good Tanks project that he is currently running. Good Tanks welcomes different people from the community to help brew a beer. A dollar from each beer sold goes towards that person's chosen charity or community project. I have chosen Bondi Surf Life Saving Club. They have been around since 1907, rescuing around 350 people every year and are currently raising money for a critical response trailer. Paul helped

me brew an IPA that we have called Sloane Zone. It will be on tap soon at Easy Tiger down on Bondi Beach. I had a lot of fun – and it is fair to say I have made a few of my colleagues and friends quite envious! As always, I encourage everyone to drink responsibly.

PATROL 7 NORTH BONDI SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)—I would like to congratulate Patrol Captain Andrew Scott and his entire patrol (7) at North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club for their efforts on Sunday 25th February 2024. With only one set of flags at North Bondi and the council lifeguards down on numbers, Andrew and his patrol stood up when our community needed. With inclement weather and difficult surf conditions including changing tides and rips, Patrol 7 had their work cut out for them. At the end of the night, they saved four separate potential drownings and conducted first aid on a number of patients. It is a testament to their professionalism that they stayed till 7:45pm until an ambulance could arrive for a patient experiencing abdominal pain. This proves that training works but is made even more effective when it is met with teamwork, discipline, and an unwavering dedication to service. I commend Andrew and his entire patrol. Our community is extremely grateful for what you do.

EVAN KOSEFF

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)—I recognise the outstanding contribution of Evan Koseff, longstanding President of the Maroubra Synagogue, who retired from the Board this past November. Evan has played a crucial role in the management of the Shule for a decade and a half, helping to guide and oversee the transition of four Rabbis in that period. He joined the Board in 2009 as Acting Honorary Treasurer. He took on a variety of roles that involved careful management of the Shule's finances, before taking on the role of President in 2018. Throughout that time, his dedication to the Jewish faith and cultural heritage, anchored our congregation around the shared desire to come together and forge a strong connection to our history and each other, particularly during the pandemic, during which his leadership helped ensure the continuing relevance and resilience of Maroubra Synagogue to the more than 400 families it serves. I, myself, had the privilege of serving on the Board with him until my appointment as a Minister. On behalf of the Jewish community and the people of NSW, I wish to recognise him for his outstanding contribution to the community.

HELEN TE RATA

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)—With pride, I rise to acknowledge Helen Te Rata, 2024's Heffron Woman of the Year. Helen works hard to foster a sense of community and inclusivity at Mascot Public School, where she has been Principal since 2019. Under her leadership, Mascot Public has become known for their Harmony Day celebrations. Helen has pushed for to rename school sports houses to honour Indigenous heritage and collaborated with First Nations community members to design and construct the school's new incredible Yarning Circle, promoting connection and cultural understanding. Helen's values-driven leadership ensures a modern, inclusive school. Her holistic approach instils values beyond academics, in a nurturing and supportive environment. On behalf our community, thank you for your hard work and dedication to Mascot Public and congratulations on this well-earned achievement.

MOREE ARTS COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the foresight of Jojgan Havibi and Claus Bredow, the founders of the new not for profit creatives space, known as the Moree Arts Community Centre. This will be a creative space for artists from various backgrounds and mediums, to nurture, express, develop and share their art with the community. I congratulate Jojgan and Claus for seeing this idea through to fruition and on the opening of the centre in November. The opening was over a weekend period, comprising interactive workshops, music performances, as well as a pecan nut farm tour and bush tucker tour, in the Moree local area I commend all involved in the arts centre, especially the volunteers for giving of their knowledge, creative skills and talent and special thanks to Jenni and Peter Birch for supporting Jojgan and Claus with this wonderful community venture.

THE TICKLE FAMILY OF BUNDARRA

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the wonderful achievements of the Tickle family of Bundarra, for raising funds to purchase a Syringe Driver and gift this to Bundarra Community Health Service, to enable patients in the area to be cared for more comfortably in their own homes. I congratulate Dennis and Amy Tickle on this achievement, following the passing of their beloved wife and mother Lyn and note that the impact of this donation will be felt and appreciated by the community for quite some time. I commend Dennis and Amy, as well as local supporters who have kindly donated to this worthy cause. Regional towns cannot function without the enduring support and commitment given by people such as yourselves.

VOLUNTEER JILL SMITH

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of Jill Smith from Bingara on her outstanding volunteer service to the United Hospital Auxillary (UHA). Jill was celebrated at the recent 90th Annual State Conference where she was presented with a well deserved Life Membership. I congratulate Jill on her 39 years of service as President of the Bingara UHA, along with the other volunteers who work tirelessly to improve their local health services. The group's fundraising has provided much needed medical equipment as well as patient comfort items, additional training for nursing/medical staff, as well as any item used for general health care needs. I commend Jill for her contribution to the betterment of peoples lives in the Bingara district and surrounding areas. Regional towns cannot function without the enduring support and commitment given by such volunteers.

DYLAN LITTLEHALES

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Central Coast Para Canoe athlete Dylan Littlehales who has recently been announced as the Regional Academies of Sports 2024 Athlete with a Disability Athlete of the Year. Each year the Regional Academies come together to celebrate and recognise the achievements of their athletes and coaches in NSW across five categories. Dylan's award comes on the heels of a very successful 2023, clinching the ICF Canoe and Para-canoe World Championships in Duisburg, Germany in August. With over eight years' worth of world championships under his belt, Dylan is in great form for the upcoming Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Congratulations Dylan on your achievements and wishing you all the best for your preparation for the upcoming games.

BOMADERRY HIGH SCHOOL

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Bomaderry High School P&C Committee. The incoming 2024 Bomaderry High School P&C Committee includes: President Brent McKean, Vice Presidents Karen Woods and Racquel Remnant, Secretary Charlotte Prinsloo, Treasurer Daniel Hundt, Executives Melanie Lay and Ceirwen Harris, Canteen Convenor Kylie O'Neill. I also acknowledge and thank outgoing P&C President Cath Philpott for her many hours of hard work, energy and dedication to supporting Bomaderry High School. It is also outstanding news that local students will continue to benefit from having a passionate and enthusiastic P&C Committee to support them in their education at Bomaderry High School. All parents are welcome to attend the P&C meetings and connect with your family's educational experience at Bomaderry High School. There are a number of other initiatives happening at the school including an open day for 2025 students, a free breakfast every morning in the Canteen area to support Bomaderry High students sitting their NAPLAN tests and the Student Representatives Council is hosting an easter egg hunt on Thursday 28th March 2024. I acknowledge the Principal Mr Ian Morris, the amazing teachers and office staff at Bomaderry High School.

GERRINGONG CRICKET CLUB

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Gerringong Cricket Club for its outstanding contribution to our local community. Gerringong Cricket Club has transformed its traditional over 35s T20 competition into an inclusive event for players over 18, igniting a resurgence of interest in local cricket. With over 50 people from the community playing, the competition has become popular with locals. The final game of the season kicked off on Friday 8th March 2024 at Gerringong Cricket Field in an exciting conclusion to the summer season. Team names like Omega, Gerringong Crooked River, Toolijooa and Foxground reflect on the history of the club, which was founded in 1924. The recent expansion has re-energised the community cricket scene in Gerringong and demonstrated great sportsmanship. After an undefeated run the Toolijooa Strikers (12 for 43) lost to Gerringong Seagulls (4 for 85). In an impressive fielding effort from the new Mega Bowl champs took 12 wickets. The battle for 3rd and 4th was much closer and saw the Omega Sixers (2/100) take third place over the Crooked River Scorchers (3/95) in a last over battle. I acknowledge and thank club spokesman Rich Warfield.

GERRINGONG LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Gerringong Library and Museum. Over 100 people attended GLaM's exhibition space for the Gerringong & District Historical Society's "Lloyd Rees Revisited" A Night at the Museum event on Thursday 14th March 2024. Back in 2013, Bobbie Miller instigated the concept with a three-day festival celebrating Lloyd's connection to our local area; the Society's patron Sandra McCarthy OAM and Louise Croker of South Coast Arts. The exhibition is an homage to Lloyd's The Road to Berry (1947) – 63 paintings by 28 local artists, a mix of styles, media, various local settings and aspects – traditional, contemporary, realistic, abstract, dreamy, oil, watercolour, pencil, acrylic across combinations of hills, plants, trees, coastline, roads, dwellings and including two striking indigenous works by

Gerrington-based Wiradjuri artist Kay Andonopoulos. I thank guest speaker architect Mr Richard Leplastrier AO, a great friend of Lloyd's. I also acknowledge Mr Alan Rees (Lloyd's son) who officially opened the exhibition, the exhibition curator Sue Blanchfield, local Artists Kerry Suttonberg and Heather Philpott and Indigenous Artist and Elder Auntie Jodie Stewart who performed a brilliant Welcome to Country address. Congrats to all who made it a huge success.

1ST WILLOUGHBY SCOUTS CENTENARY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—It is my pleasure to warmly congratulate the 1st Willoughby Scouts on the celebration of their centenary. This is a remarkable milestone and testimony to not only the vision of its founders, but also to the dedication of its successive leaders and volunteers whose commitment to local Scouting have kept this group running to the present day. Since its founding in 1924, the 1st Willoughby Scouts have faithfully championed the founding principles of Scouting by raising up young people who are adventurous, hardy and resilient, yet honourable, loyal and helpful to others. Our community is proud of all the wonderful work the 1st Willoughby Scouts have done to enrich the lives of our children and youth, teaching them new skills and activities from tying knots, building campfires and pitching tents, to orienteering, camping, rock climbing, abseiling, bushwalking, sailing and canoeing, not to mention service to their community. I thank Adam Parker and the dedicated leadership team of the 1st Willoughby Scouts whose selfless contribution ensures that a now century-old institution continues to thrive and flourish.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND NSW WOMEN'S WEEK

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—On Friday 8 March, my community of Willoughby joined with others around NSW and the world to celebrate International Women's Day. It was a wonderful opportunity to honour and thank all the local women who do so much for our families, communities, businesses, schools, hospitals, churches, charities and a plethora of other organisations. In addition to serving their families, workplaces and communities, Willoughby's women excel in all fields of endeavour and we are so proud of their achievements. On personal note, I am so grateful to the many women who do so much for my family, community and me personally too. Often our women are our society's unsung heroes whose daily contributions, both inside and outside the household are not adequately recognised. I welcome International Women's Day as an opportunity for us to pause and collectively give thanks to the women in our lives. My congratulations once again to the 2024 Willoughby Woman of the year, Solveig Coulon of the Le Marche French markets, whose remarkable contribution typifies that of so many of our women.

CASS SENIORS ACTIVITY GROUP

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—I am always encouraged by the contribution local seniors make to my community, and on Monday 19 February I was very pleased to attend the Chatswood CASS Seniors Activity Group for their Lunar New Year celebrations to welcome the Year of the Dragon. Standing for the 'Chinese Australian Services Society', CASS has been providing a very comprehensive range of social and community services to the multicultural community since 1981. Catering to people's needs from infancy to old age, CASS provides services in home ageing, residential aged care, disability, settlement and health, childcare, vocation and training. CASS now serves over 6,500 families every week and has a team of over 680 staff members and more than 350 active volunteers working together to provide services and activities. In recognition of its impressive contribution, CASS was the winner of the Not For Profit Business Excellence Medal at the Premier's Harmony Dinner. I congratulate and thank all those leaders, staff and volunteers of CASS both locally and beyond.

MARG HORWELL

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—A theatre, opera and film designer who cut her artistic teeth at Wagga Wagga's Koorimal High School is in the running for one of the highest honours in British theatre, making her family, friends and hometown immensely proud. Marg Horwell has been nominated for Best Costume at this year's Olivier Awards for her work on the acclaimed play, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Marg designed the costumes for the sole performer, Sarah Snook, who also starred in television's *Succession*. Making it even more remarkable, Ms Snook is in the running for an Olivier as Best Actress in the play. Marg has described her nomination as incredibly exciting and, in my view, it is more than deserved. Ms Snook played 26 different characters in the show so the costume design challenge must have been immense. Marg has paid tribute to her school drama teacher, the late Peter Cox, who was an instrumental force in Wagga's arts scene for decades. And showing that talent runs in the family, Marg's parents Robyn and Phillip Horwell are active figures in Wagga's arts community. Congratulations, Marg, and on behalf of Wagga Wagga, best of luck when the Olivier Awards are announced in April.

ST GEORGE CREATIVE ART AND CRAFT CENTRE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I rise to celebrate a fantastic local win from the long-standing community organisation, St George Creative Art and Craft Centre. I'm pleased to say that they have had their lease renewed at Pole Depot, Penshurst! I wrote to the General Manager of Georges River Council in December last year, asking that the groups lease agreement would be renewed, so they could continue to support our community in their current location. I am pleased to say that St George Creative Art and Craft Centre aren't going anywhere, anytime soon! They play an absolutely vital role in our local art sector and are an asset that many other communities do not have access to. Operating at a low cost to the community, St George Creative Art and Craft Centre offers a variety of programs and services, designed to provide local artists with a space to create, collaborate and stay connected. I'd like to thank Gilbert Sant, President of St George Creative Art and Craft Centre, and every member who has been a part of the Centre. I wish them every success in our community for many years to come.

OATLEY WRITER'S GROUP

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I rise to recognise and congratulate a wonderful local organisation, the Oatley Writers' Group. They do some incredible work in our community! The Oatley Writers' Group launched in 2014 after a few locals decided to come together, united by the common desire to write. Now, the group has grown in numbers greatly, with over 20 members attending their monthly meetings. The group welcomes people of all ages and levels of skill - both new and experienced writers. They also publish yearly anthologies based upon an agreed theme, which I must say, are always a good read! Community-run organisations like the Oatley Writers' Group are so important, as they provide a space for individuals to come together over shared passions, allowing artists to refine their craft and gain confidence in their abilities. I would like to thank all members of the Oatley Writers' Group, both past and present, for contributing their time and efforts towards making our community a better place. I wish them every success in 2024 and look forward to reading this year's anthology!

2ND ST GEORGE ARTS & CULTURE FESTIVAL AND CELEBRATION FOR LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to visit the 2nd St George Arts & Culture Festival and Celebration for Lunar New Years. I must say, I had a wonderful time! Held at the Hurstville Entertainment Centre, this event gives local Chinese artists the opportunity to showcase their Lunar New Year artworks. The talent on display was second-to-none and I had the privilege of enjoying some amazing cultural performances, whilst also viewing many of the different art exhibitions. Lunar New Year is always one of my favourite times of the year and that is all thanks to events such as this. I always enjoy gathering with our state's diverse communities, celebrating joy, prosperity and good health. We are one of the most successful multicultural states in the entire world! It's certainly encouraging to see this playing out so close to home. I would like to thank Councillor Nancy Liu, who invited me to come and participate in this wonderful celebration. I'd also like to thank all of the performers and artists that got involved on the day. I look forward to attending next year!

FLYNN MOLINARO - TOCUMWAL

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—It's truly inspiring to hear about Flynn Molinaro's remarkable efforts in conservation at such a young age. His dedication to raising funds for the Dutch Thunder Wildlife Rescue's Wildlife Signage campaign demonstrates a deep understanding of the importance of protecting our native animals and their habitats. By collecting cans and raising \$150 for this vital cause, Flynn has not only made a tangible impact on wildlife protection but has also set a shining example for others, showing that individuals of any age can make a difference through their actions. The Wildlife Signage campaign's goal of installing signage in roadkill hotspots is crucial for preventing further harm to our native wildlife, and Flynn's contribution is undoubtedly a significant step towards achieving that goal. Furthermore, Flynn's continued support for Dutch Thunder Wildlife Rescue, especially considering its importance in safeguarding one of Victoria's largest Koala populations, underscores his unwavering commitment to wildlife conservation. Congratulations, Flynn, on your commendable work and the positive example you set for others.

CRONULLA SURF FESTIVAL

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate organisers of the inaugural Cronulla Surf Festival held last Saturday. The festival was a family friendly event organised to celebrate the spirit of community and the community's love of surfing. The event included a board demo, live music, surf comps and activations and an inclusive surf session for kids with special needs. The festival culminated with a special ticketed event at Sealevel Restaurant celebrating the extraordinary achievements of Blakey Johnston and the support he received from the community that helped him achieve the world's longest surf. It was inspiring to be there to see the passion Blakey has for our youth and helping them live fulfilling lives. The festival helped raise money for the Chumpy Pullin

Foundation's youth mental health initiatives, particularly SWELLBEING, a program teaching actionable mental health skills to help youth not just cope but thrive and 'be the best versions of themselves'. Well done to Blakey and the organising team for bringing the community together on Saturday to highlight and support such an important cause.

LEANNE WHITE

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Leanne White, who was highly commended in the 2024 Maitland Local Woman of the Year Awards. Leanne's nominee for the award noted that her first thought on meeting Leanne was WOW, this woman is a dynamo! Leanne selflessly puts others before herself and she is on a mission to make life easier for those less privileged. Leanne is of aboriginal heritage and talks of learning from her aboriginal elders. She is determined to make the world better. In 2012 Leanne started as a volunteer at the Maitland Neighbourhood Centre working with families from Rutherford to Woodberry, providing meals, information, a listening ear and a warm heart. Leanne has volunteered at Rotary and the Anglican Church at Rutherford, supplying food for the disadvantaged, a cuppa, a listening ear and a caring heart. She delivers care packages and does welfare checks on the vulnerable in our community, providing not a handout, but a hand up. Thank you Leanne for your dedication to the community of Maitland.

ALANNA VIAL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Alanna Vial, who was nominated in the 2024 Maitland Local Woman of the Year Awards. Alanna works in talent management and is a passionate advocate for mental health. She became a Mental Health First Aid officer to support her colleagues through their experiences and challenges in their time of need. Beyond her professional endeavours, Alanna's heart lies in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. Alanna is a devoted volunteer for Hunter Wildlife Rescue. She spends all her free time rescuing and caring for sick, injured, and orphaned macropods. This includes around the clock care of joeys, nightly feeds, and the provision of food and medical supplies. This exemplifies her altruistic spirit and drive to make a positive impact in the natural world. Alanna is committed to developing career pathways for our healthcare workers and supporting vulnerable people through significant mental health challenges. Thank you, Alanna, for your dedication to the community of Maitland.

JUDY HICKS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Judy Hicks who was nominated in the 2024 Maitland Local Woman of the Year Awards. Judy Hicks is a long-time member of the Rotary Club of East Maitland having served as Club President, Board member, hosting Rotary Youth Exchange students and volunteered in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Cambodia, utilising her nursing skills. Ten years ago Judy began Wesley Women's Shed providing re-usable sanitary packs for disadvantaged women and girls both locally and overseas as well as knitting beanies for premature babies, toys for children and polar fleece blankets for the homeless. Judy has also volunteered for school canteens, P&C's, Brownie and Guide Leader, Maitland and District Garden Club. At the Uniting Church East Maitland Judy supports local disadvantaged people by cooking meals, and providing catering services for church and community functions. Judy is a quiet achiever, the first to chip in and help clean up, she works quietly in the background never expecting accolades or recognition. Thank you, Judy, for your dedication to the community of Maitland.

UPPER HUNTER WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2024 - GAIL SOLMAN

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—I want to congratulate Gail Solman of Singleton, who is the Upper Hunter Woman of the Year for 2024. Gail has been contributing to her community for more than 40 years, most notably through the sport of netball. After playing the game as a teenager, Gail stepped-up to coach when her daughter, Tracey, started playing the game. Over the following decades Gail has performed just about every off-court role that netball requires. She has served on the committee, been a convener of coaching and umpiring and coached representative teams. Gail Solman's efforts with the Singleton Netball Association are so revered that she was inducted into the Singleton Hall of Fame in 2019. Gail's citation notes that the Association recognised her with Life Membership in 2018 and that she was pivotal in establishing Singleton's debut into representative netball. In addition to community sport, Gail has coached school teams with Singleton Heights Public School making it to state-level competition twice. Gail has also volunteered with Family Insight to support young mums raising their children. Thank you, Gail Solman for all that you have done for the Singleton and Upper Hunter communities.

DUNGOG SHIRE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS 2024

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—Community spirit takes many forms so congratulations Erin Fitzgibbon and David Neilson of Clarence Town on being honoured with the Dungog 2024 Citizen of the Year

Award. David and Erin are well known for their annual Christmas lights display which has been a feature at their home since 2006. The display now includes neighbouring properties sparkling with over 300,000 LED lights. 18-years-old, Claire Harvey, is Young Citizen Of The Year after the Dungog High School HSC student topped three of her classes and volunteers with Stroud SES. The Volunteer Service to the Community Award was presented to Rita Garland and posthumously to Thomas James Banister. Rita has been an active volunteer badge seller for Legacy for almost 20 years. Thomas, who passed away in October 2023 aged 76, was the Secretary of the Dungog RSL sub-branch for 18 years. Ken Rubeli received the Community Award for Environmental Citizen of the Year for being an environmental champion in and around Dungog for many years and a long-term member of the Bendolba-Salisbury Rural Fire Brigade. Andre Stengl's significant contribution promoting and sustaining soccer in the Dungog community was recognised with the Senior Sports Award.

SINGLETON 2024 AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—Congratulations Diana Thorning and Joss Davies for the recognition you received in this year's Singleton Australia Day Awards. Diana Thorning named the 2024 Citizen of the Year for volunteer work with Uniting Elizabeth Gates Village, the Singleton Branch of Australian Red Cross, Singleton Tidy Towns and as a foster carer. Diana has been an Elizabeth Gates Village auxiliary member for over 30 years, and providing care services to residents since 2001. She also coordinates Singleton's Red Cross Trauma Teddy program in as well as being a foster carer to 15 children and providing emergency respite to countless children in need since 1997. Joss Davies was named Young Achiever of the Year, recognising her commitment to PCYC Singleton, supporting local youth through the PCYC's school holiday program and her work with the Singleton Disability Advisory Committee. Joss is regarded as a role model for young people living with disabilities, like herself, in the Singleton community. In 2017, she was a shy teenager with low self-esteem and has grown into a confident young woman with a passion for helping others. Diana and Joss, you are both a credit to Singleton.

MEN'S SHED

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—Happy 10th Birthday Parramatta District Men's Shed. A space for men to talk shoulder to shoulder, the Men's shed provides a safe space in Fleet Street for the men of Parramatta to gather, develop new skills and build awareness for men's health issues. The celebration on 16th March included an open day and a garage sale. Founding Members Dave McKay, Kerry Boyce and Laurie Flood can proudly boast the establishment of a Parramatta institution that has grown to 73 members with the shed open 4 days a week. This is all achieved as the men master skills including woodworking. The products they make are often sold for charity or given to those in need. I have purchased garden implements and am always keen to check out the range of items they produce. Parramatta District Men's Shed is making a profound difference and after a decade of operation it is safe to say they have touched a great many lives. Congratulations on your anniversary and a big shout out to everyone who volunteers to make the Men's Shed a reality.

SOHAS

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—The Support Organisation for Homeless and Asylum Seekers, or SOHAS for short, was founded in 2020 during the pandemic and is a charity that has made an impact in the Parramatta electorate and the broader Western Sydney area. The organisation recently received the 2024 City of Parramatta Community Group Award recognising that the organisation provides practical support for many of our most vulnerable citizens who are in need including seniors, asylum seekers, international students, temporary visa holders, people experiencing homelessness, and refugees. SOHAS provide help in a myriad of practical ways including free counselling for newly arrived refugees, helping job seekers find suitable employment, distributing essential groceries for people struggling with cost of living, supporting victims of domestic violence and connecting people with services in the broader community. There are many people in my community facing hardship and its organisations such as SOHAS who help to rebuild people's lives. I congratulate them for their award and thank them for all they do, particularly their leadership team, Moses Vedamuthu, Immanuel Selvaraj, John Bosco, Mithun Chakraborty, Sriram Venugopal, Harmeet Singh, Rupinder Singh, Tania Moses, Gani Mathi, Marina Bethel and Arul Murgan.

JANNALI EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the student leadership team of Jannali East Public School for 2024 on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and be professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the student leadership team for 2024, namely School Captains Josephine Kirkby and Archer Padfield, and Prefects Rosie Kettler, Toby Graham, Isabella Allen and Riley Orrell. With the guidance of their incredible Principal, Katherine Horner, I have every confidence

that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Jannali East Public School's motto of 'Inspiring Excellence – Achieving Personal Best'.

COMO WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the student leadership team of Como West Public School for 2024 on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and be professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the student Parliamentarians for 2024, namely Prime Minister Lachlan Symons, Deputy Prime Minister Annabelle Francois, Parliamentarians Alexander Barker, Ashleigh Greening, Khaleel Jadwat and Ryker Lynton, Bradman Captain Adam Toolin and Vice-Captain Alex Collins, Freeman Captain Payton Baard and Vice-Captain Jonah Milagre and Thorpe Captain Henry Howard and Vice Captain Annalise Hughes. With the guidance of their incredible Principal, Felicity Young, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Como West Public School's motto of being '(their) best always'.

MOSMAN HIGH STARS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker, I spend a lot of time in this place talking about the amazing transformation of Mosman High that has taken place over the last few years, and for those that haven't seen, it truly is a sight to see. And yet today I want to acknowledge some of the recent 'Mosman High Stars' who have been recognised by Mosman High for their achievements. Brody Roberts in Year 11 recently auditioned and was accepted to the Sydney Conservatorium of Music 'Rising Stars of Jazz' program. Will Wilkinson who is also in Year 11 recently attended the Victorian 420 State Sailing Championships, where Will and his crew had an immensely successful time training and racing and were awarded the Victorian State Champions. And last but certainly not least, is Alberto Allan in Year 8 who recently won the Austrian Biathlon Championships, which is an outstanding result. Congratulations to Brody, Will, and Alberto we look forward to seeing what else you accomplish in the future.

RHODES MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I recognise the Rhodes Multicultural Community Association which this year is celebrating its tenth anniversary. The Association supports the Rhodes community through regular group exercise, dancing, weekly English classes, assisting the organisation of the annual Rhodes Lunar New Year celebrations, hosting the annual Rhodes Moon Festival and more! The Association began when a group of Chinese speaking women informally met at Rhodes. The Association has become a strong and vibrant community group. I always look forward to the celebrations they organise annually at Rhodes Foreshore Park for Lunar New Year and the Moon Festival. It is always fantastic to see the colourful performances, taste the cultural food on offer and join the community on these special cultural celebrations. I take this opportunity to recognise Yiping Zhang, President of the Rhodes Multicultural Community Association. Yiping has served the Rhodes community in this role for the past five years. I sincerely thank Yiping and the Committee for their leadership of the Rhodes Multicultural Community Association. Alongside the Rhodes community, I say thank you for the events and services you have brought to Rhodes. Wishing Rhodes Multicultural Community Association all the very best in the future.

ALEXANDER MILLER

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Alexander Miller, from Cabarita, who recently competed at the 2023 School Sport Australia Track and Field Championships. Alexander is a rising young athlete and ran in the 1500m event, representing NSW Primary Schools Sports Association in the event - a wonderful achievement. On behalf of the Drummoyne electorate, I sincerely congratulate Alexander and commend him for not only competing at the highest level, but for his hard work and determination. In the year of the Olympics, it's wonderful to celebrate our local rising stars with a bright future ahead. I wish Alexander all the very best for his success. Keep up the great work!

TOUCHED BY OLIVIA FOUNDATION

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—On Saturday 16 March, The Biggest Ever Pink Flamingo 18th Birthday Party was held by the Touched by Olivia Foundation to celebrate the legacy and loving memory of Olivia, who passed away at the age of only eight months old. The event fundraised for the vision of a

community meeting space and social enterprise at Timbrell Park in Five Dock, The LIVVing Room. The work of the Touched By Olivia Foundation, led by Olivia's mum, founder and Director Justine Perkins, has been nothing short of incredible. Partnering with government, corporate organisations, and community groups, the Foundation has created more than 42 inclusive play spaces for families across Australia to enjoy. The Foundation continues their connection with the Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick by investing in medical support to help other children. The funds raised have gone toward equipment as well as clinical trials and research, positioning the Hospital as a Centre of Excellence in Vascular Malformations. I want to acknowledge the Perkins Family, Justine and John and their children, and The Touched By Olivia Foundation for the important work that has been done in our community and across Australia.

RADIO NORTHERN BEACHES - 40 YEARS ON AIR

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—Congratulations to Radio Northern Beaches (RNB), who are celebrating 40 years on air. After being founded in 1975 and displaying it had the necessary skills, equipment and content, RNB received a community radio license in 1984. From their beginnings broadcasting from Narrabeen High School to Belrose Bowling Club and now, their studio in Terrey Hills, over the years RNB has remained committed to providing a platform for locals to speak to their community. Run entirely by volunteers, the station broadcasts from 7am to midnight seven days a week. Not only do the volunteers work hard to run the broadcast, they also hold fundraising events, apply for grants and sponsorships and run a radio skills training course to raise all the funds required to cover rent, equipment, broadcast fees and other running costs associated with running RNB. The diverse programming offers something for all members of the Northern Beaches community, from talking finance to faith to how to age fearlessly, RNB celebrates everyone in our community. Thank you to the many volunteers who have served RNB over the years, I'm sure RNB will continue to be a success for many more decades to come.

PENINSULA SENIORS TOY RECYCLERS

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I acknowledge the Peninsula Seniors Toy Recyclers and congratulate them on almost 50 years of service. Since 1975, the Peninsula Senior Toy Recyclers have been refurbishing toys, games, dolls and bicycles donated by members of the community and businesses. Volunteer specialist toy repairers then assess and refurbish each toy to ensure they are safe and good as new. These toys are then able to be donated to various children's charities across Sydney and other communities. In many cases, these toys would have ended up in landfill but, thanks to the generosity of the Peninsula Seniors Toy Recyclers, they are given a new life, bringing joy to more kids. Originally established by a handful of retirees looking to use their skills and time to bring joy to children, the group now welcomes dozens of volunteers who have repaired thousands of toys over the years, donating them to charities including Vinnies, women's refuges and community kindergartens. I am pleased that President, Terry Cook, was recently awarded with a Northern Beaches Outstanding Community Service Award. I thank Terry and all the volunteers for their service.

NARRABEEN LAKES SAILING CLUB

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I acknowledge the Narrabeen Lakes Sailing Club, who have consistently served and brought together the local sailing community. In Pittwater, enjoying the water is an integral part of our way of life. In late 2021, a fire destroyed the building that the club called home, destroying the club's learn to sail boats, committee boat and most members boats that were stored at the club. Despite this awful setback and delays to rebuild of the building, the club have remained active and in good spirits, gathering outdoors and using storage containers acquired with the assistance of Northern Beaches Council. The club has worked with and received generous support from the broader sailing community, including assistance organising fundraisers and using donated or borrowed boats. I recently had the opportunity to attend the Heron Junior NSW Championships, hosted by the Narrabeen Lakes Sailing Club in conjunction with the NSW Heron Sailing Association. It was a fantastic event for the sailing community, and great to see the club continue to grow and thrive. I wish the club all the best for the 2024 season.

DENNIS AND JOSEPHINE CHENG

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Hurstville residents, Mr Dennis and Mrs Josephine Cheng, who together celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in March this year. Mr and Mrs Cheng grew up in Hong Kong and met in primary school, some 60 years ago. Not long after, they married at the age of 23 and 20 respectively, having two beautiful children along the way. In 1978, Mr Cheng migrated to Sydney and was joined by Mrs Cheng and their two children, Yvonne and Billy a year later. It was here in Australia, that they welcomed their third child, Kimberley Cheng. After settling in Rose Bay in 1981, the Cheng family moved to Dover Heights in 1982, Kogarah in 1983 then Panania in 1994, before settling in Hurstville in 2000 where they have lived ever since. Dennis and Josephine have two grandchildren, Claudia Au and Kurt Cheng. The personal journal of Mr and Mrs Cheng is truly inspiring and serve as a fine example of the

modern Australian Story. Congratulations to Dennis and Josephine on this special milestone and I wish the Cheng family good health, happiness and peace of mind for the future.

JAMES AND MARGARET ROSSITER

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mr James and Mrs Margaret Rossiter, who will be celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary in April this year. Mr and Mrs Rossiter grew in Campbelltown and met at the local tennis club. Not long after they married at St Peters Church in Campbelltown and had four beautiful children. Throughout the years, James and Margaret have continuously given up their time and energy to help the local community. Volunteering at the local school, church, Lions Club and many other community organisations, the Rossiter's were well known amongst their community as people who were always willing to support those in need. In 1976, they moved to Kogarah and ran their own newsagency, before retiring in Caringbah. Last year, they moved into a nursing home where they are enjoying the quiet life with each other's company. James and Margaret have reached the special milestone of 70 years together and are surrounded by much love from their 4 children, 4 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. The personal journey of Mr and Mrs Rossiter is truly inspiring and I wish the family good health, happiness and peace of mind for the future.

LUNAR NEW YEAR CARD COMPETITION

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I once again held my annual Lunar New Year Card Competition in January 2024 and received almost 700 entries from local primary and high schools, art schools and language schools from the Kogarah Electorate. All artwork was thoroughly reviewed and judged by the President of the St George Art Society, Jim West, St George artist Sarah Kalidis and Curator of Chinese Art at the Art Gallery of NSW, Ms Yin Cao and myself. The student entries were all of a very high standard, making our job very difficult. We chose 20 finalists and invited them into the NSW Parliament for the announcement of the two winners. The senior winner was Hannah Xin from Creative Arts Education Academy in Hurstville and the Junior winner was Jaydan Zheng from Inkwell Art Studio in Hurstville for their outstanding entries. I would like to thank Luca Iemma who hosted the event in English and Clare Liu and Jayden Li from the Blakehurst Mandarin School who translated in Mandarin. I would like to sincerely thank Jim West, Sarah Kalidis and Yin Cao for their professionalism, advice and hard work in assisting me with the judging.
