

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 8 May 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 photographers are approved to cover question time today. A staff member of the member for Northern Tablelands has been authorised to take photographs from 10.15 a.m. during the member's valedictory speech.

## *Bills*

### **JURY AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

#### **First Reading**

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

**The SPEAKER:** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

#### **First Reading**

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

**The SPEAKER:** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

## *Announcements*

### **MEMBERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members that at 1.00 p.m. the next members' development session will be held in the theatre with Sharon Bent from Bent Psychology. While the intended audience is members, all staff members are welcome to attend, and a light lunch will be served. The event will also be streamed live.

### **DEATH OF DONALD FREDERICK CHARLES BECK, FORMER MEMBER FOR BYRON, FORMER MEMBER FOR MURWILLUMBAH AND FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise members of the death of Donald Frederick Charles Beck, on 21 April 2024, former member for Byron and former member for Murwillumbah and also a former Minister. I extend to the family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

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

## *Notices*

### **PRESENTATION**

*[During the giving of notices of motions]*

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members that the giving of notices of motions is not an opportunity for debate. Members will have the opportunity at another time to debate the points raised.

*Later,*

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I do not want the large number of visitors in the gallery to think we are an undisciplined rabble.

*Later,*

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members to stay under the time limit of 30 seconds when giving a notice of motion.

In accordance with the resolution of the House of 7 May 2024, business is interrupted for a valedictory speech.

*Members*

**VALEDICTORY SPEECHES**

**The SPEAKER:** Before calling the member for Northern Tablelands, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of former Minister George Souris. It is lovely to see you, George. I understand that somewhere behind me in the Speaker's gallery is former Minister David Elliott. I am always a bit fearful to have David Elliott behind me, but I will assume I am safe on this occasion. I welcome you, David. I also welcome former Minister Duncan Gay. It is wonderful to see you, Duncan. Former member for Coffs Harbour Andrew Fraser is also here. Andrew, it wonderful to see you. I also welcome former member for Northern Tablelands Ray Chappell.

I also welcome to the gallery students from Walcha Central School, who are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the Parliamentary Education and Engagement team. They are also here to listen to their local member's valedictory speech. As a personal aside, on the day that the member for Northern Tablelands makes his valedictory speech, I note with some irony that he has spent a lot of time breaching the standing orders by speaking directly to the gallery.

*[Interruption]*

It gives me great pleasure—well, some pleasure—to call my friend the member for Northern Tablelands to give his valedictory speech.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (10:23):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I love you too. There is no greater honour in life than to be entrusted to represent your community, no nobler pursuit than to serve your community and no greater responsibility than to advocate for the needs, desires and aspirations of the people you represent. Those were the first words in my first speech in this place almost 11 years ago to the day—on the other side of the Chamber. I hope that I have been able to live up to those bywords over those 11 years because they certainly have been bywords for the way that I have tried to undertake my work.

I acknowledge everyone who is in the gallery, particularly the students from Walcha Central School, who cannily changed their plans to make it work today. Thank you to those year 11 legal studies students. I am really going to miss all that banter that you all just witnessed, by the way—not. I am really heartened by everyone who has taken the time to come here today. It is a long way to travel from the Northern Tablelands. Now, without our regional seniors travel cards, it is just that little bit more expensive to get here.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Come on!

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** Trust me; that will be it. I just had to get that last one in.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Thanks, Adam.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I love you, Jenny; it's fine. I am the first member for Northern Tablelands to deliver a valedictory speech. Bill McCarthy unfortunately died in office, Ray Chappell was defeated at an election, and my immediate predecessor, Richard Torbay, resigned suddenly.

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

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** For me, today is not just about putting a full stop on 11 years in this place; it is about closing a chapter of 20 years in public office. On 28 March 2004 I was elected to Gunnedah Shire Council as a bright, wide-eyed and probably quite naive 19-year-old. It is wonderful to have Mayor Jamie Chaffey here from Gunnedah shire. He is continuing the fine tradition of mayoral leadership in that community and is also the chair of the Country Mayors Association. That experience of nine years on Gunnedah Shire Council stood me in good stead when I came into this place. Members who have come from local government know all too well what a great grounding it is in learning how to serve your community, fight for your community and speak up without fear or favour.

I still remember, quite vividly, the day after I was elected mayor of Gunnedah shire another great Country Party stalwart Roger Corfield Anson Wotton—he used to explain how to pronounce his last name by saying, "It's 'wotton' as in cotton, not 'wooten' as in rootin'"—pulled up in his old, conked-out Mercedes-Benz and said, "Jump in the car. I want to take you for a spin." He said to me, and I have never forgotten it, "Whatever you do in politics, remember this: If you always put people and their issues at the forefront, the politics will always take care of itself." Hopefully, I have not only taken that on board and lived by it but also been able to act it out. I will be forever grateful for Roger's wise advice and counsel.

I am also delighted to have here today in the gallery my year 6 teacher, Mr Gary Humphries. Like my parents, Mr Humphries is not a political person at all, but he instilled in me a great love of speaking and self-confidence—so it is his fault. Before that I was quite retiring; I sat at the back of the classroom and would not say much. Education has been a very important part of my life. I am also glad that the deputy principal from my high school days, Mr Lindsay Paul, is in the gallery. Ironically he ended up being principal of a high school in my electorate—and so life goes full circle. I always enjoyed Mr Paul's speeches at the annual school presentations, but I most enjoyed the fact that he always finished his school presentation ceremonies in under an hour and a half. As a country MP who, like others, did about 20-odd school presentations at the end of each year, I greatly appreciated that. It is great to have him here today.

When I came into this place, I felt blessed but also cursed, in a way. I took over the mantle of representing the Northern Tablelands from Richard Torbay. Whatever people may think about him, I know he was a good friend of yours, Mr Speaker, as he was mine. I watched closely how he serviced the electorate. Something in the way that he did his work resonated with me—going back to what Roger Wotton said about putting people and issues first and politics second. I have never seen, to this day, an MP who worked as hard, turned up to the opening of an envelope and actually took up the cudgels here in Macquarie Street for those issues without fear or favour.

I feel very strongly that when we are in this place representing our electorates, we are mere custodians of a very important office. There are only 93 of us in here; there are eight million people out there. How lucky are we. How fortunate are we, for just a blip in time, to be able to be the voice of our communities. When I came into the role, the bar was set incredibly high. That made me incredibly nervous, but it also made me determined not to let people down and not to really change a lot of how he did his work in the electorate. I hope, as I depart this place this coming Monday, that hopefully that bar is still just as high—maybe a little bit higher. But hopefully I have not let people down and that legacy is there of vigorous, vocal local representation.

On that, I know over the years I have enraged various people, particularly in my political party, with some of the stances I have taken. But I have done so because of my fundamental belief that when you come to this place, sure, you fight elections hard and they are won and lost, but when you take up your seat in this place, it is your job to be the voice and the advocate for your community—not just the people who you agree with, not just the people who voted for you, but everyone, from the large communities to the very small. Over the years I have worked with people from all walks of life, all backgrounds, and people that will never vote for me or my political party, but I do not care. That has been completely irrelevant. People are people and they deserve a voice and representation.

Today I know a lot of people are expecting a few mic drop moments, a few truth bombs and all of that, and David Elliott's presence today probably helps confirm some of that. But I am 39, and when I walk out of here I am going to hopefully have another career. In that vein, I have decided to save some of those stories for another time, away from *Hansard*, which will be on the record forever. But I have thoroughly enjoyed my 11 years, staying longer than I had thought I would and probably longer than many would have preferred. It has been an incredible ride. During that time I have been very privileged, I feel, to work with some amazing community groups and individuals, not least of which are my local mayors, deputy mayors and general managers. They are here today, all of them. Every single one of them is here today, and I want to acknowledge you all and your predecessors because the relationship, particularly in the bush, between a local member and their local mayors and councils is absolutely fundamental.

Back home, we have always tried to adopt a "team Northern Tablelands" approach. That is, it doesn't matter whether we agree or disagree or our different political stripes; we work together and we are stronger together. I always use the slogan that, in the regions, the deck of cards is always and will always be stacked against us. We are only a third of the population. Regardless of political stripe, the regional seats are a minority of the 93 seats in this place. To combat that, we need to be united as a region if we are to have our voice heard here and we are to extract as much cash as possible from this place and take it back home for important projects.

I think that "team Northern Tablelands" approach, if you will excuse my indulgence, has been incredibly successful. Over the last 11 years, the capital investment in the Northern Tablelands has been record-breaking—nearly \$3.3 billion worth of capital investment, 1,883 individual projects. I was looking through the figures just yesterday: 22,354 kilometres of new bitumen seal throughout the Northern Tablelands; 44 new bridges, retiring all those old timber bridges; four new hospitals, two that have been built and two that will be built, and we need a bit of extra money for the Glen Innes Hospital, Minister Park; 18 new fire stations; schools; ambulance stations; and the list goes on. But that, to me, is bread-and-butter stuff. That is what good local members should be doing, whether in government, opposition or otherwise. That is the job—to extract money from Macquarie Street to repair infrastructure, maintain infrastructure and help the community develop new projects and initiatives.

In that bundle of 1,883, there have been some incredibly memorable ones. It is good to have Duncan Gay here today because my most memorable one is a bridge that I drive over probably six or seven times each week.

It is called the Emu Crossing Bridge at Bundarra, if anyone is up that way. That community had to wait 98 years for their new bridge, so I blame all governments of various political persuasions over the years. We found a letter from the old Gostwyck Shire Council back in the 1920s petitioning the then Government—I do not know who was in government; Duncan was probably here, but who was in government I do not know—for a new bridge. It was a low-level crossing that used to flood over, which the schoolkids loved because they couldn't get to school.

But that community banded together. It was a real community effort—Bob Crouch, Dave and Mel Lowell and the whole community. During the by-election campaign for Northern Tablelands, Duncan actually came up and announced \$3½ million to fund a new bridge. The community was absolutely ecstatic. The media was quite cynical and said to Duncan, "Is this contingent on Adam Marshall being elected or the money does not happen?" He paused and he looked down the barrel of the camera and just said, "Adam will be elected". I thought that was a great way to not answer but answer the question. I put that one away in the back of my mind for a later time.

When that bridge was opened in October 2015, the whole community turned out. Every shop closed in the village, the school closed and everyone walked across that bridge. It was a great community day. Only 300 people live at Bundarra, but for them that project has been transformational. Every single member of that community has never forgotten that and never forgotten those who were involved. That, to me, is emblematic of projects like that, which we bandy around in this place and weaponise and stuff like that. But that is the transformational power of projects in a regional setting. That community has never looked back since then. Projects like the special activation precinct at Moree, the industrial park at Armidale airport, the funding that's been put aside for future water security projects around Armidale, the Malpas Dam pipelines—those are the projects that will truly benefit our region for many decades to come.

Also in my time in this place, I was very fortunate to serve for five years in Cabinet. I do not want to make a big deal of that because it is not why I got into this place; it was just the cherry on top—a huge opportunity. I infuriated Premiers and my ministerial staff because I hated being in Sydney and I could not wait to get back to the electorate—probably why I only lasted five years, among other reasons. But we will not canvass those here today—something else for the dinner afterwards.

In that time there were some significant challenges that I just want to dwell on for a few moments, particularly in the agriculture portfolio. Coming into that role after the 2019 election—right in the heat, literally, of the worst drought that this State and our farming communities had ever experienced—was a baptism of fire. To roll out over \$2.4 billion of direct financial assistance to our primary producers was not only difficult—and I still remember being grilled by Dom as the then Treasurer about all this money that was going out the door and the drought maps and all of that—

**Mr Dominic Perrottet:** That's only because they were fabricated.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** Unfortunately, all those documents are covered under Cabinet in confidence.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

Well, I always believe in a bit of gentle curation every now and again. It doesn't hurt. But Dom was great. He did not want to spend the money, but he did. That is all I will say about that. That assistance not only helped our primary producers get through the drought but to actually bounce back rather quickly when seasonal conditions turned around. If the drought was not bad enough, we then had a mouse plague and we also had COVID, which presented difficulties right across government. We had to try to make sure that we had flexible arrangements so that the agricultural sector could continue to function.

On that point, I will say this: I will never forget seeing how the sausage was made, to use a phrase, in terms of that COVID response. Unless you were there watching Brad Hazzard, Dom Perrottet and Gladys Berejiklian work through something that no leaders had ever had to confront, and being able to sit a little bit on the inside and watch how that played out and the leadership that was shown—gosh, we were very fortunate as a State to have those people in that room at the time. I say that with genuine sincerity. Those were difficult times and we came through. I pay tribute to that leadership.

While I am talking about those ministerial times, I also pay tribute to Scott Hansen, who has joined us in the gallery. Like me—well, he is actually unemployed; I am soon to be. It was lovely to see, by the way, that the person who sacked Scott was also sacked very recently as well. That was a bit of bittersweet justice. In my 20 years working in local government and State Government, Scott is without doubt the best public servant that I have ever had the pleasure to work with. He is someone who has the regions at his heart, but who is not afraid to tell a Minister quite frankly about what needs to be done or what should not be done. I thank Scott very much. Those times were quite heady—drought, mice and the COVID response. I thank him, not just for being here today, but for the service that he has given our State for 10 years in his role. It is very important.

Returning to the electorate, I cannot thank the community enough. I have been so blessed to be in this place and so blessed to have such strong support from the community. From the outside, people look at the numbers for the Northern Tablelands and think, "Oh, that's just a safe National Party seat." That actually belies the complexity and the diversity of the Northern Tablelands. It is not a rural constituency base. It is an electorate that is diverse and complex, and politically it has demonstrated that it will support anyone who is willing to stand up for it. Since its recreation in the 1980s, it has had Labor MPs, Independent MPs and National Party MPs. The electorate has been represented by various political parties, but once it picks, it tends to stick. That is, if the local member looks after the electorate, it will in turn support the local member.

I am very hopeful—in fact very confident—that the next member for Northern Tablelands, Brendan Moylan, who has joined us in the gallery today, will continue that legacy of fighting hard in this place for the community and speaking up, no matter how difficult the issue is, for what the communities need. I know that Brendan has the capability to do that because of his experience and his background. With Brendan, I think the electorate will be trading up in terms of the quality and calibre of the local member. That will send shudders through some people in this place. His background and experience and his commitment to the region will stand him in very good stead in this place. I look forward to working with him in the coming weeks, whenever the by-election date is set, to make sure that he is the one that I can pass the baton to to continue the work.

I have a few thank-yous to finish with. I thank my electorate office staff, who are all here today. I particularly thank Lisa Williams, who has been with me for the whole 11 years and was with Richard Torbay for six years before that. Lisa is absolutely magnificent. We live and we die based on our electorate office staff, and she is incredible. She knows everyone in the electorate and knows all the issues. I am not someone who likes to sit in the office. I hate being in the office, and when I am there I like to shut the door and write my little birthday cards—which I like doing. Lisa and the electorate office staff really hold the fort together across the Armidale and Moree electorate offices. To all my staff, I thank you very much. I have been very well backed up for many years by my staff, most of whom have been there since the very beginning. I do not know how they have put up with me, but they have, and I sincerely appreciate that.

I thank my ex-ministerial staff, who have all gone off to have amazing careers—Julian Luke; he is here today; and one of my chiefs of staff—Alex Hall, Amy Minahan, Jackson Busse and Jonathon Moore, and many others that will be coming along later in the day. Some members who are now in government will appreciate how we rely so heavily on those people to support us. In those people, I have had amazing support. Their job was always to reel me in on various things. Sometimes that did not work, but I thank them all the same.

As I leave this place, I do so with mixed emotions. I will miss this place. I will miss the people and I will miss the communities of the Northern Tablelands. I absolutely love them. They are amazing—the large communities, the small communities. I will miss that day-to-day personal interaction, there is no doubt about that, but I am very excited about the future as well. I never intended to stay a long time in this place. I always wanted to get in, give it 110 per cent, and pass the baton to the next person while I was still sprinting and—to use some acting parlance—while the audience was still clapping. I hope that I have been able to do that. I hope that I have not let the people of the Northern Tablelands down, that I have been as strong an advocate as I have tried to be, and that I have been able to deliver some outcomes. None of those outcomes have come about because of me; it is all about a team approach, and the team is absolutely essential.

Lastly, I thank the National Party very much for having me and for putting up with me. I thank the party for all the support. The history of our party is an interesting one. Way back in our history we were called the Progressives, and that is something—I did not mean that to be a joke! I actually meant that quite seriously. The history of our party and the reason I am a Nat, and a proud Nat, is because the party is not one that is bound together by an ideology. It is not bound together by a desire to fight wokeism or leftism or whatever is the latest phrase coined by Sky News.

The purpose of our party is to aggressively represent the people of rural and regional New South Wales: the most socially disadvantaged, the most geographically disadvantaged, the ones with the lowest life expectancy and the lowest educational outcomes. It is not about representing the big end of town or the business community or the unions or the workers or whatever; it is about representing everyone and doing so without a bias towards a certain core ideology. It is about simply representing people based on geography, and it is about representing people of all backgrounds to help them achieve their aspirations and their goals. That is why I am a member of the Nats, and that is why I am very proud to be so and will continue to be so.

I thank my colleagues in this place who have been with me along this journey. It has been a wonderful ride. I see Janetta Matchett, the State electoral council chair of the Northern Tablelands, in the gallery. Long suffering, she has put up with me, particularly during election campaigns. I have now patented my special technique of drilling corflutes into trees across the electorate. Matt Kean will be happy with that. For me to drill them into trees, the trees still have to be standing, so he would be happy with that.

We joke, but that is essentially why I love our political party. We are people from all sorts of backgrounds, and long may that be the case. If I could give any parting advice to the party room, it is to use the time in opposition wisely and avoid the temptation to be oppositional for the sake of being oppositional. Use the time to craft and think deeply about good public policy for the bush and to work constructively with any member of this place that is willing to help achieve that, whether it is the Government or otherwise. I have copped a bit of flack because I have been willing to work with the Government since it has been elected, but I have done so in the spirit of getting stuff done for my electorate.

I cannot thank the Premier enough for his help and the commitment he has shown to the Moree community to deal with serious and difficult youth criminal justice issues. Those solutions cannot come without the support of the Government. We do not control anything in opposition; the Government controls everything. If I want something done in my electorate, we have to work together. For that, I am very grateful. That is what our party needs to do in opposition: Be constructive, be practical, think of good policy and resist the temptation to throw stones because it is cheap and easy to do; actually do the hard work.

Again, I thank everyone. It has been an incredible ride. I will be leaving this place, but members might still see me around a little bit. I am closing a chapter on elected life. I have loved it; I do not regret anything for a moment. I will be cheering you all on from the side and wishing you all the very best. You can make an enormous difference in this place. The partnership with Greg Piper on the Port of Newcastle bill was a particular example where we skewered the government of the day. That was us, wasn't it? I knew that.

**The SPEAKER:** I will be looking forward to your resignation next Monday.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** It was us. That was to reverse a terrible public policy decision made by Mike Baird and it will be very good for our region. Members can make enormous change. Use the time you have here wisely. Most importantly, as I have done, enjoy the ride enormously and enjoy what comes next. Thank you and farewell.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

#### **MEMBER FOR ALBURY**

#### **MEMBER FOR HEFFRON**

#### **MEMBER FOR FAIRFIELD**

**The SPEAKER:** The members for Albury, Heffron and Fairfield celebrated their birthdays during the break. I hope they all had wonderful celebrations.

#### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the gallery Allison and Dallen Guille, guests of the member for Wollondilly. I also welcome Dylan McCarthy and his family, Dan, Lisa and Leon McCarthy, guests of the member for Blue Mountains. I acknowledge school students and teachers who are here to participate in the member for Badgerys Creek's senior school leadership forum, guests of the member for Badgerys Creek. I also acknowledge James Marshall, a guest of the member for Newcastle.

I welcome a civics program delegation, including Clement Meru from SydWest Multicultural Services, Om Dhungel from the Bhutanese community and Nalika Padmasena from the Sri Lankan community, guests of the member for Blacktown. I acknowledge Sofia Harper, a guest of the member for Gosford. I also acknowledge Kuber Thakur, a guest of the member for Leppington. Finally, I acknowledge student leaders of Heritage College Lake Macquarie and students from St Paul's Catholic College, Booragul, who are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature programs conducted by the Parliamentary Education and Engagement team, guests of the member for Lake Macquarie.

#### *Question Time*

#### **CHILD PROTECTION CASEWORKERS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:09):** My question is directed to the Minister for Families and Communities. Child protection caseworker vacancies have increased from 7 per cent to 11 per cent under the Minister's watch and the Public Service Association is asking for an additional 500 caseworkers to meet demand. How many caseworkers will be recruited by the end of the calendar year?

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (11:09):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and for his interest in

this area—an interest that was not shown for a very long time by those opposite. But this is a very important issue, so I will answer the question very seriously. I acknowledge that child protection workers are taking industrial action across the State today. Unlike the former Government, this New South Wales Government respects these essential frontline workers, and we continue to have productive conversations with their union, the Public Service Association. When we came into government, we lifted the punitive wages cap that the former Government imposed, and child protection workers gained their largest pay increase in over a decade. But we know more needs to be done, and we are committed to negotiating with these essential frontline workers in good faith.

Since we came into government, I have met with more than 1,000 caseworkers, I have visited more than 20 Department of Communities and Justice offices and teams, and a few months ago I held six full-day staff forums across the State, where more than 600 frontline workers were able to speak with me about their successes, their challenges and their frustrations. I would say that I have met with more caseworkers in the past 12 months than all the Ministers in the former Government combined. I have heard that they are exhausted and that they are having to work in a broken system. I have heard them, and I agree with them. We need to significantly reform this system. We know that any reforms we undertake will rely entirely on attracting and retaining high-quality, committed and passionate child protection caseworkers, and that is exactly what we are aiming to do. If the Opposition wants to start blaming us for the current situation—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129.

**Mr Paul Scully:** You're kidding.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wollongong will come to order. I will hear the point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** We are now three-quarters of the way into the time allotted and we still have not heard an answer to the question. How many caseworkers will be recruited? It is a simple question, and I raise the point of order of direct relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Canterbury will come to order. The Minister will resume her answer. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. The Minister has the call.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** I am happy to continue if those opposite want to ask for more time. But they do not want to.

### KNIFE CRIME

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (11:12):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on community reaction to new measures announced by the New South Wales Government to get knives off our streets and boost community safety?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:13):** I thank the member for Riverstone for his question. These measures are important for the administration of justice in New South Wales and to keep the public safe. NSW Police Force statistics show that from 1 April 2023 to 1 April 2024, as a result of police operations across New South Wales, 3,855 knives were taken from members of the public in public places, 2,392 people received a legal process or charge for knife possession, and 823 people received a legal process or charge for a secondary or subsequent offence. By any objective measure, these are large numbers. They indicate that a large number of illicit knives were circulating in our community. In 2023 there were 56 murders in New South Wales and 20 of those murders involved the assailant using a knife. In that context, the data suggests that the weapon most often used in homicides in New South Wales is a knife. To put that in perspective, firearms were used in the commission of 12 murders, representing about 20 per cent of all murders in the State.

Knife crime is obviously a major problem in the State. In response to the alarming number of illicit knives in the community uncovered during police operations, the New South Wales Government introduced legislation in April last year to double both the maximum prison sentence and the maximum fine for knife possession in the State. However, we want to get to a position where we are driving down to zero both the possession and use of knives in New South Wales. Effectively, we want to change the culture and the psychology, particularly of young people, around knife possession—if people know there is a chance they will be caught in possession of a knife in New South Wales, they will choose to keep it at home or not procure one in the first place. This is vitally important. We have decided that the only way to ensure that we change that psychology or behaviour is to introduce a bill into New South Wales based on the Queensland legislation known as Jack's Law. In Queensland, as a result of changes to the law, they have been able to identify and take off the streets about 500 illicit knives with a limited targeted program. We want to ensure that the same laws and regulations are in place in New South Wales. *[Extension of time]*

Jack's father, Brett Beasley, is a passionate advocate for law change in this space. He is articulate about the measures, knowledgeable about what works in different jurisdictions and passionate about reducing knife crime incidents and the number of young people, in particular, who choose to carry a knife in public in New South Wales and Queensland. We were won over by his passionate advocacy for a change in the law. In addition to that change in the law, the Government is proposing to increase penalties for adults who supply knives to children under the age of 18, and lifting the age at which a young person can purchase a knife from 16 to 18, with obvious exemptions in place for young people who are studying a trade or who may need to have a knife as part of their educational studies. We are pleased to note that these proposed changes have been welcomed by many stakeholders who have been concerned about the prevalence of knife crime in New South Wales. Kevin Morton, President of the Police Association of New South Wales, publicly said:

The Premier and Police Minister have responded to our calls for a stronger stance on knife crime.

Stewart Little, General Secretary of the Public Service Association of New South Wales, said, "Anything that can reduce the scourge of knife crime, particularly by young people, is welcomed." Gerard Hayes, Secretary of the New South Wales Health Services Union, said, "If you can't eradicate the issue of knife crime in the community, you have to be able to minimise the risk. Paramedics and health workers across New South Wales will welcome these changes." We hope to introduce this legislation into Parliament next week. We are hoping for bipartisan support when it comes to this important change.

While I have the attention of the House, I note the health challenges currently being faced by the member for Davidson, Matt Cross. I do not know Matt very well but he has made a major impact in the House since being elected and he will be a loss to the House as he takes time to battle this disease. We genuinely wish him all the best.

#### SUTHERLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (11:18):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Prior to the election, the Minister promised that a Labor government would, within its first term, build a school hall at Sutherland Public School which would allow whole-of-school assemblies. Will the Minister assure parents at Sutherland Public School that despite her \$148 million cuts to New South Wales public schools she will keep her promise and build a school hall that can accommodate the whole school?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:19):** I thank the member for Miranda for the question. It goes to the heart of what many school communities across our State need and have been calling on for many years. They have probably been calling on that hall to be built for the past decade, when, I note, the Opposition were in government. I confirm that we are working on fulfilling this election commitment with the incredible, hardworking and diligent member for Heathcote, who is at times very forceful on behalf of her community. I say that as a compliment. We will work through the detail of those concerns about the delivery of the commitment with that community. I give that commitment to this House. I will work with the member for Heathcote, that school and its community to ensure that the election commitment is delivered.

I take, head-on, the criticism in the question about the rebalancing of some of our school budgets in New South Wales. That has absolutely nothing to do with what is happening at Sutherland. The member for Hornsby was the Treasurer and he would have well known what was happening. Those opposite would have well known what was happening. That has absolutely nothing to do with the delivery of our commitment at Sutherland. Our change to a very small part of school budgets was about encouraging schools to get the proliferation of extra executives into classrooms as teachers. We do not make any apologies for that. As I may say in an answer that I may later give to this House, we will do everything possible to get teachers back in the classroom in front of our children.

At Sutherland, we will deliver a school hall. But what do Sutherland and our other 2,200 public schools need? They need teachers in the classroom to deliver the life-changing opportunity of public education for every child in New South Wales. In short, to the member for Miranda and, importantly, to the community of Sutherland represented by the member for Heathcote, I say that we will work with them on that commitment. That is what this Government does. At its very heart, our Government's major priority is public education, and we will work on the delivery of that important commitment.

#### ALTERNATIVE CARE ARRANGEMENTS

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (11:22):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Families and Communities. Will the Minister update the House on the action the New South Wales Government is taking in response to the special inquiry of the Advocate for Children and Young People into alternative care arrangements?



**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (11:22):** Yes, I will. I thank the member for Bega for the question, which is about a harrowing report released last week that gave us a rare insight into the experiences of some children in out-of-home care. As all members of this House would agree, when children and young people are not able to be safe with their family and are brought into care, they deserve to be placed in safe, loving, stable and secure homes. But for hundreds of vulnerable children who have been removed from their families, sadly, that is not the case. When we came to government last year, we inherited a broken child protection system that increasingly relied on kids living in shabby hotels, motels and caravan parks with 24/7 shift workers, instead of being placed in loving, safe homes. The over-reliance on high-cost emergency arrangements grew and grew under the former Government. Instead of getting kids out of those arrangements, they simply relabelled them, shifted them around and called them different types of placements. Shortly after we came to government, there were 506 children in those types of placements, a shocking result of a decade-long trend that was going up and up.

On coming to government, I said that such kids needed to be our priority, and they have been. Two months ago I updated this House with the welcome news that, at long last, the number of children in these types of high-cost emergency arrangements has reduced by 71. But I am the first to admit that we have a challenging road ahead to turn this system around to continue to reduce that number. The issue of children in emergency placements has also been the subject of a special inquiry by the Advocate for Children and Young People. Last week the advocate released an interim report that detailed a number of confronting stories from young people placed in hotels, motels and other high-cost emergency arrangements.

Children and young people across the State were interviewed. I acknowledge all the children who bravely shared their harrowing stories with the special inquiry and the advocate who created a safe space for them to do so. One young person described their experience in emergency accommodation as making them feel like a dog being moved from cage to cage, which was the title of the interim report. Another young person said, "It was just me on my own around ... full-grown adults on drugs, homeless people, people with mental illnesses ... it was disgusting." That says everything about the system we inherited when we came to government. The stories in the interim report reveal how unacceptable the conditions can be for these children, and they cost an obscene amount of money. [*Extension of time*]

High-cost emergency arrangements are called that for a reason, because they cost an obscene amount of money for taxpayers. They get poor outcomes and can cost upwards of \$2 million a year or more than \$38,000 a week. In the last two years alone, New South Wales taxpayers have forked out half a billion dollars to keep kids in these places. That is why last year I set up a dedicated team within the Department of Communities and Justice with the sole focus of getting kids out of these types of emergency placements. We have seen some success, but 400 children remain in such settings, so there is a lot more work to be done. That is why last week I announced an urgent review of the foster care system, particularly focused on the over-reliance on high-cost emergency arrangements. This Government has already begun the work to tackle the issue, but I do not want to leave a single stone unturned when it comes to getting these kids out of hotels and motels. We are looking at every single option.

The urgent review will be led by two highly respected women: Assistant Commissioner Gelina Talbot from the NSW Police Force and Lauren Dean, who has more than two decades of experience in all aspects of the child protection system. The review will have two priorities: first, uncovering new ways to get kids out of hotels and motels, and into safe and loving homes; and, secondly, ensuring that every single taxpayer dollar spent in the child protection system goes towards improving the lives of vulnerable children. The review will provide findings and recommendations within six months. They will inform the Government's out-of-home care reforms, which are desperately needed and which we will continue to progress alongside this important work. Finally, children deserve so much better than the system we inherited, and we are committed to delivering it for them.

#### ROZELLE INTERCHANGE

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (11:27):** My question is directed to the Premier. As the Premier knows, the construction of WestConnex has caused significant disruption to my community from prolonged street closures, loss of parking, traffic diversions, dust, noise and vibrations that have led to property damage. When it comes to supporting affected home owners and businesses, what lessons have been learnt from the previous projects, and what improvements will we see with more impending construction impacts with the Western Harbour Tunnel?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:28):** I thank the member for Balmain for her question. There is no doubt that it has caused significant disruption in the Balmain peninsula and Rozelle. Communities rely on that part of Sydney to get to and from work and move around the city. It is a very congested part of the city. Because it is a peninsula, there is not much opportunity to escape it, other than to traverse the WestConnex opening or Anzac Bridge entry point, so it has been a real nightmare for that community. I start my answer by acknowledging that.

I report that the Government has introduced a new lane to the City West Link—an additional bus lane on Victoria Road. The Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads have issued weekly travel time data to help motorists plan their trips. That is not a perfect scenario, but it is improving travel times, as some of the residents on the peninsula and across the road in the inner west are able to understand where the pinch points into the city are. The Minister for Roads has also prepared a report on rat-running in east Drummoyne. The report will work with the local council to ensure that, wherever possible, people do not avoid the City West Link part of the road network by using local roads and clogging communities and streets that have been empty and free of traffic for a long time.

The member for Balmain asked me what lessons have been learned—and there are lessons to be learned. If we look at the former Government's public rhetoric prior to the opening of WestConnex we would be under the misapprehension that there would be a profound change to traffic arrangements in the inner west. The former Minister for Active Transport, and Minister for Cities promised that commute times would be slashed while, "Victoria Road will become a vibrant boulevard with widened footpaths for pedestrians and a space for bike riders." In other words, there would be such a reduction in traffic in the inner west that there would be a renaissance on the streets rather than the gridlock we currently see. The member for Balmain would have loved it. There would have been pop-up Birkenstock stores, Tesla showrooms and goat milk lattes. That is what we were promised.

If we look a little more closely, it may be the case that the former Government would say publicly that it was unaware of what it called the "unintended consequences" of this major piece of infrastructure. That is certainly the misapprehension that everybody was labouring under after the chaos we saw in Rozelle and Balmain in the immediate aftermath. [*Extension of time*]

If we dig a little deeper, we see that the former Government was given detailed and specific information about the implications of opening WestConnex in the inner west, in particular on the Anzac Bridge. *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the predicted increases in traffic demands in all future scenarios cannot be accommodated without some form of traffic or network management. It went on to say that the former Government shelved plans to create moveable lanes on the Anzac Bridge to cope with the surge in vehicles and that the former Government had concerns about the impact of the final part of WestConnex on the broader road network well before it opened. None of that was publicly communicated to residents in the electorate of Balmain or to the people of New South Wales. In fact, programs to help with congestion in the inner west were deprioritised in the lead-up to the State election. We may ask: What was the reason for that?

Paul Forward, the former head of the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority, recently told a parliamentary committee that it was his view that the final design was an attempt to maximise the value of the motorway when it was put up for sale, when it was privatised. It was designed chaos by the former Government. It was meant to be this way. The big question that the member for Balmain has asked the Government is what lessons have been learned. The lesson here for this Government and for all future governments is transparency—be honest and open with the people of New South Wales, particularly about a major change to traffic and roads in their communities. That was not done by the previous roads Minister, and she deserves appropriate criticism for her behaviour.

## TEACHER WORKFORCE

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (11:33):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Minister update the House on the work of the New South Wales Government to address the teacher shortage and fix public education in New South Wales?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:33):** I thank the member for Cessnock for his important question. Before I answer it, I seek the indulgence of the House to acknowledge the girls from Caroline Chisholm Catholic College who are in the gallery. I am sorry to embarrass them.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Isn't that your old school?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That is my alma mater and I wanted to wave to them. I also acknowledge Kuber, a young man who is here with the member for Leppington whom I met when he was the captain of Cecil Hills High School. He is a massive star who is going places. I welcome all guests to the Parliament. In answer to the important question from the member for Cessnock, I will talk about something that the member for Cabramatta and I did on Monday. We met a gentleman by the name of Mark Barry at Les Powell School, one of our incredible schools for specific purposes. Many members will have schools for specific purposes in their electorates. They are incredible places where expert practitioners are giving every child, regardless of their ability—and many of these kids live with severe disabilities—the life-changing opportunity of public education. We met Mark at Les Powell. He had retired from teaching after decades in the service of public education.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Retired.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am going to go into that, Minister.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** I've got to get my numbers sorted out.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We won't really let you retire; you're not off yet. This gentleman, an expert teacher, had retired after contributing for decades, especially to special needs education, where we know there are particular shortages. He has come back to work a few days a week as part of our Teachers Re-engage program to actively get retired teachers back into our classrooms. Why are these teachers coming back? Did we call these retired teachers and say, "Please come back; we're in a shortage"? They are coming back now because they have a government that values them. They know that because they are coming back to a government that pays them fairly and that is once and for all getting rid of the workload that has driven so many of them from our classrooms. They are coming back because they have a government that respects their expertise in the classroom.

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

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I seek additional information.

**The SPEAKER:** A two-minute extension is granted.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It is very difficult for Opposition members to hear this, because for 12 years they drove our teachers into the ground and resignations outstripped retirements.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We know what the result was: falling academic and wellbeing outcomes. This Government was elected to fix that once and for all, along with making more teachers permanent not temporary, and awarding them the biggest pay rise in a generation. That includes casual teachers, like Mr Berry at Les Powell School, for specific purposes. I am sorry to tell those opposite, but there is a difference between casual and temporary.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** There is a difference. Casual teachers are relief teachers. Temporary teachers are those whom the Opposition put on contracts and would never make permanent. That is the difference. We are making them permanent. Before those opposite interject, they should think about listening to teachers. We are making them permanent. We are paying them more. We are respecting them. We are getting rid of their workload and we are listening to them about things like behaviour and explicit teaching. We are ensuring that teachers have better workplaces.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is very difficult for those opposite to hear. For 12 years they drove public education into the ground. They refused to build schools where they were needed, and as a result public school enrolments are dropping. This Government will rescue the situation because we are committed to restoring public education, including getting retired teachers back into our classrooms.

#### **PUBLIC SCHOOLS FUNDING**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:39):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. What response does the Minister have for parents in the Central West, including in Molong and Orange, who are furious because she has ripped hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding from their children's schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:39):** I thank the member for Albury for his question. It is an important opportunity to put on the record some of the allegations that are being made by—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Tamworth will come to order. He will allow the Minister to answer the question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** What happened under the previous Government and its failed Local Schools, Local Decisions policy was that millions of dollars were put into school bank accounts but many schools found it hard to actually use that money. Why? It is because they could not find the teachers to pay to put in the classrooms. So a lot of those bank accounts represent lost learning. But let me be clear. Basically, under that failed policy, principals were left to fend for themselves and to hire additional executives to deal with a system where the Government refused to support them. The mistruths peddled by those opposite need to be addressed. This

Government is giving more funding to public education than they ever did. In fact, in actual numbers—do not let the truth get in the way of a good story—we are spending millions and millions of dollars more than they ever did. We have record funding for public education. The difference is we are doing absolutely everything to get to the bottom of this cruel and sad fact.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** When we came to government, we went to our schools and asked, "How are you going with the merged and cancelled classes as a result of your teacher shortage?" Do you know what they told us? These are the facts that those opposite refused to even ask for the numbers on. They said, "Every single day we have 10,000 merged and cancelled classes." If those opposite expect me to do nothing about that, then they have the wrong Minister. Our children deserve to have teachers in front of them in their classrooms, and that is my number one priority. That is the Government's number one priority. So we are working with every single school and principal, and we are holding their hands through every single decision by—

**Mrs Wendy Tuckerman:** Why are they threatening to resign?

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Opposition has absolutely no credibility when it comes to teachers.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Why do those opposite not ask us questions about public schools every day of the week?

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They should, because we are rescuing the system that they tried to destroy.

#### VIRTUAL HEALTH CARE

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (11:42):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is utilising virtual care to relieve pressure on the State's busy emergency departments [EDs]?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:42):** I thank the member for Cabramatta. It was good to join him, the member for Prospect and the member for Fairfield recently at Fairfield Hospital and to see firsthand the enormous contribution they are making to the south-west community. That hospital will receive a record \$550 million upgrade—and it cannot come soon enough. I will paint a picture of the challenges that our emergency departments are facing right now. No doubt in a few weeks there will be a Bureau of Health Information report that I am confident will say we are continuing to see record numbers of people utilising and needing to use our emergency departments.

Last year 1.4 million people accessed our emergency departments for non-urgent or semi-urgent care. In simple terms, that means care that could often be delivered in a place other than an emergency department, such as through a GP in a medical practice. The problem with those people going to an emergency department is that patients who need critical emergency care are then in a queue in an overcrowded emergency department and do not get the care and attention they need. We have now developed a range of different solutions. We are rolling out 25 urgent care services across New South Wales, investing \$124 million. Sixteen of those services are now in place across our communities. To date, that has resulted in 41,000 people avoiding emergency departments in New South Wales.

We must continue to invest in this important alternative pathway to emergency departments. In Dapto, in the member for Shellharbour's electorate, over a three-month period just under 3,000 people used the urgent care service we have established with the Commonwealth. In Carlton in the Premier's electorate—it is always good for urgent care to be working well in the Premier's electorate when you are the health Minister—1,000 people have used the service in a month.

**Mr Mark Coure:** We funded that. That was us.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Just worry about the executive of the Liberal Party. That is all you have to worry about. Worry about that pesky admin committee. [*Extension of time*]

As a part of urgent care, we are investing in virtual care, which is real care delivered by real clinicians in a convenient, safe and effective way. In a 12-month period, 24,000 people have utilised virtual care. It is accessible through our Healthdirect line on 1800 022 222. People can go there, see what they might be able to do and speak with a clinician before going to an emergency department. Some people will always need to go to an emergency department because their care is critical in nature. But we are trying to lean in to alternative pathways to take pressure off very busy emergency departments. We have established the Emergency Department Taskforce, a

group of clinicians from across the system who are looking at every step of the ED process and working out how we can make that more efficient and move people through it more quickly.

Virtual care has a long way to go. But I am very pleased that, according to the data released by the Bureau of Health Information, just under 90 per cent of people say that they are comfortable with the care delivered. They understand it and they are satisfied. That is a start. There is more to do, but that is certainly positive. We are going to continue to invest in virtual care and urgent care services because they work but also because we need to do so. We cannot have emergency departments acting as quasi medical centres. They were never designed to act like that. We are saying to the Commonwealth that we need support in this, and we will continue to agitate for it. I thank those people who have been very strong advocates for urgent care services and virtual care services across New South Wales.

### CRIMES LEGISLATION

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (11:48):** My question is directed to the Attorney General. In exercising his powers of consultation under section 25 of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act, is he satisfied with the downgrading of charges from manslaughter to reckless driving causing death arising out of the Hunter bus crash, when 10 people tragically lost their lives?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:48):** On behalf of all members in this place, I begin by first reiterating that we send our condolences to the victims and families of people who lost their lives in the Hunter bus crash last year. Those of us who have not lost loved ones in those circumstances cannot ever imagine the pain and suffering that those people are going through. Our thoughts are always with them. Last October the Premier, a number of Ministers and members of this place and I attended a memorial service for those loved ones in Singleton. We were all struck by the enormity of the loss as we saw the photos of the loved ones lined up and heard their family members speak about them. We were also incredibly moved by the strength of those families as they commemorated their sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. It is something that we will not forget.

I have to say I was concerned last night to see media reports that some of the victims' families were not happy with the way the proceedings have been handled of late. Nobody in this place wants to see family members and victims displeased with or retraumatised by the criminal justice system. I will be asking the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] for a comprehensive briefing on all aspects of the matter when it is finally concluded. I know there is a public appetite and an appetite in this place for me to say more, but I have to reiterate that decisions about prosecutions are made by the independent DPP. The DPP is the independent prosecutor of the State and makes decisions about important prosecutions like this—and it can scarcely have been a more important prosecution—free from interference from the Executive or the Legislature. It has always been thus and it is still the case. That is the first thing to say about that.

The second thing to say is that live proceedings are before the court at this time and there were some developments today. The DPP has issued a statement. I do not want to see those proceedings compromised by anything that anyone in this place, particularly me, might say. It would be imprudent of me to say anything further. Once again, on behalf of the members of the Government and all members in this place, I say that our hearts go out to the victims and their families.

### DOMESTIC, FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE EDUCATION

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:52):** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the Minister for Women. Will the Minister update the House on the importance of education and awareness in addressing the rates of family, domestic and sexual violence across our State?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (11:52):** I thank the member for Parramatta for her ongoing interest and advocacy in relation to domestic and family violence and, in particular, the issue relating to education and community awareness. After the age of 15, one in four women and one in eight men have experienced intimate partner violence or family violence. Those statistics show how prevalent domestic and family violence is in our community. The news that we see of women allegedly killed by their partners or former partners is absolutely tragic. It is heartbreaking. What we see when women are murdered is just the tip of the iceberg because for every one woman who is murdered, thousands of other women are living in terror and in an ongoing state of fear and misery every single day. The women who were murdered were those women at some point. Let that sink in.

That is why this Government's package of \$230 million is incredibly important. It focuses on not just the crisis response but also prevention. Our package includes \$38 million for the Primary Prevention Strategy to

deliver programs and responses to address the drivers of domestic and family violence; attitudes which continue to condone violence against women. The prevention strategy will include work with community-based football teams, community organisations and corporations. Funding of \$8.1 million will go to the All In early childhood program, which is an innovative pilot project that works with childcare workers, parents and kids in early childhood centres to break down stereotypes which engender harmful attitudes towards women. It delivers workshops, fortnightly online sessions, resources and parent packs to support families to address gender equality. Twelve centres are already engaged in the program that support more than 550 families across New South Wales. *[Extension of time]*

We also have the Respectful Relationships Education in schools, which the Minister for Education spoke about at length yesterday. Kids from kindergarten to year 10 receive compulsory PDHPE Respectful Relationships Education learning. We also have our Make No Doubt consent campaign, and on National Domestic Violence Remembrance Day on 1 May, we launched the coercive control education campaign. As all members in this House know—because we supported it when the previous Government introduced the legislation—from 1 July coercive control will be a crime. New South Wales is the first State to have such a law because we did not play politics on it. We put women's safety first. We put women and children first. Coercive control is insidious. Indeed, only 26 per cent of people are able to spontaneously say what coercive control is. The ad campaign is important for raising awareness in the community.

Standing with me, Deputy Premier Prue Car and Attorney General Michael Daley that day were the member for Sydney, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Wakehurst, the member for Barwon, and the Hon. Emma Hurst from the Legislative Council. We had advocates and stakeholders; Dr Hannah Tonkin, the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner; Annabelle Daniel, the chair of Domestic Violence NSW; Karen Bevan, the Full Stop CEO; Olsen Carter from No To Violence; Cecilia McKenzie, an advocate against coercive control; and Jess Hill, also an advocate against coercive control. I thank everybody who was standing with us at the launch. The Government thanks them. The women and children who know now that it's not love, it's coercive control thank them. Finally, I thank the crossbenchers, who set a strong example.

#### TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN SPORT

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (11:57):** My question is directed to the Minister for Sport. Sporting bodies across New South Wales are asking for a direction with regards to transgender athletes competing in women's sport. What guidance, direction or other assistance will the Minister give?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:58):** I thank the member for Myall Lakes for her question. It is a complex question. I feel for any community members that feel disenfranchised or not included in the sporting community. Inclusivity is an important thing that we need to consider. We tend to allow the sporting codes to manage those issues within their relevant sporting code, because we have to appreciate that sport is about fairness and safety, and they are best placed to approach that. That is the position we have taken. The member mentioned that all the sporting codes are asking for direction on this issue but that is not necessarily the case. Most of them have a policy and a way of managing this issue. That is what is happening and I thank the member for her question.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY AND AEROTROPOLIS TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (11:59):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on the agreement struck with the Federal Government to deliver more funding for transport infrastructure to support the aerotropolis and Western Sydney?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:59):** Yes, I will. I thank the member for Leppington. There is no stronger advocate for delivering the public transport and roads infrastructure that is needed near the aerotropolis and, indeed, across Western Sydney.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** So many of my colleagues are continuing to speak not only with me but also with the Minister for Roads and with our counterparts in the Federal Government to deliver that critical infrastructure.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order and listen to the Minister's answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** We have great news for the people of Western Sydney. Our Government has secured a \$1.9 billion investment from the Federal Government to build the future transport infrastructure—the roads and the public transport—that Western Sydney needs as the fastest growing region in our country. We fought really hard for that agreement, and the people of Western Sydney are the big winners because it will mean the delivery of critical infrastructure that will continue to support that growth. It is a big win for passengers and commuters.

But what does it mean for new road infrastructure in the west? It means an additional \$500 million for Mamre Road stage two. That is added to the \$253.6 million that our Government has already invested. It means an additional \$400 million to deliver priority sections of Elizabeth Drive, and I know the member for Liverpool and the member for Leppington are pretty happy about that because it is a critical connection. We have already invested \$200 million and this is an extra \$400 million on top of that. We have secured an additional \$115 million for Mulgoa Road stage two. The member for Badgerys Creek will be interested in the additional \$115 million for that critical connection.

There is also an extra half a billion dollars for Richmond Road, Garfield Road and Memorial Avenue. They are absolutely critical links and the people of Western Sydney want to spend less time crawling along those roads or stuck in those intersections and more time at home with their families. We are delivering those game-changing investments for Western Sydney. The Western Sydney airport is an exciting opportunity. In government, members opposite were pretty excited about it too. They were constantly travelling out there to stand in a paddock with a big sign, hard hats on and shovels at the ready. They had all of the show, all of the fanfare—

**Mr Paul Scully:** All the gear and no idea.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** That is exactly right—none of the planning and none of the money to deliver the critical links that those communities need. We are absolutely turning that on its head. [*Extension of time*]

It is not just about those critical roads; it is also about making sure we have the public transport that we need. Sydney's south-west is growing rapidly, and it does not have the public transport links that other parts of Sydney have. But those are the communities that will take up the jobs at the new aerotropolis and the new airport, and we have a plan to make sure that they have a way to get there that is not reliant on toll roads. Instead, we will deliver the bus links that members opposite promised but absolutely failed to plan for. They said a lot about the deal that they had with Scott Morrison—an 80-20 funding arrangement. It was all going to be sorted out. Remember that one? What did it come to? Absolutely nothing. In fact, they missed the planning deadline and the investment deadline, but we are fixing up their mess.

Our \$1.9 billion agreement includes \$100 million from the Federal Government to secure the depot and the charging infrastructure for the zero emissions buses that we will use to connect the communities of Liverpool, Penrith and Campbelltown to the new aerotropolis when planes land in 2026. Not only are we making sure that the communities of Western Sydney spend less time in their cars, but there will also be public transport links to the new Western Sydney airport. We are delivering for families and delivering jobs in Western Sydney.

#### NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (12:04):** I must say you are rocking that new beard, Mr Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister for Health. With the statewide rollout of safe staffing levels for nurses and midwives beginning soon, does the Minister think it is reasonable for the northern beaches community to expect the same increase in staff resourcing at Northern Beaches Hospital as at other public hospitals, given that it is, in effect, our local public hospital? If so, will the Minister ensure that the Safe Staffing Levels Taskforce considers all available avenues to extend safe staffing levels to the Northern Beaches Hospital?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:05):** I thank the member for Wakehurst. Yesterday I had a very productive meeting with him and the local Federal member. I will talk a little bit about his hospital because it is important. In opposition, there are not many good moments and not many moments that are seared into one's brain. Members opposite have three years to enjoy that.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** But the members on this side who were here would remember that one day the former health Minister walked into the Chamber with a bill and a Dixie around the privatisation of five hospitals. From memory, they included Shellharbour, Wyong, a couple on the northern beaches—

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Maitland.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Maitland. It was such a good idea that when that Minister left office, the new Coalition Minister scrapped that idea in about a week. It was a disaster. We will never be delivering a Northern Beaches Hospital contract the way it was delivered under the Coalition Government because, weirdly, we believe public hospitals should be properly funded by the public. I understand that the member for Wakehurst is a very fierce advocate for his community. I understand that health services are very important for the northern beaches.

We do have a contract where the public instrumentality purchases services off Healthscope, which runs the hospital. It is very important for people to understand that it runs the hospital. We purchase services to enable

the public to utilise those services at the hospital. But Healthscope must continue to ensure that staffing is adequate there. We have seen increases in nursing staff there, and we have seen some reductions in nurse vacancies. We are rolling out safe staffing. The first two hospitals will be Liverpool and North Shore. We have started recruitment for those positions, and I will ask the taskforce that is looking at it to make sure that we meet that commitment as a result of the 2,480 positions that are coming online. The commitment is to roll out safe staffing, a ratio-based system, at five or six EDs and then through a number of other areas of our hospitals. [*Extension of time*]

As a part of the taskforce that will guide the rollout of that reform—the largest reform in the way in which we staff hospitals in New South Wales—importantly, we will focus primarily on our public hospitals. We have more than 220 of them, so I have to focus on those. I acknowledge that the advocacy of the member for Wakehurst has been very strong, because it is important to acknowledge. Both he and I inherited a model that we would not be prepared to use again, but we have a model in place and we have to work with it. However, I will ask the taskforce looking at the rollout of the ratio-based model of State staffing to have a look at the Northern Beaches Hospital to assess what we can do in that space. Importantly, that involves working with the private provider, Healthscope—not stepping into that role, but working with them. But my primary focus is on the public hospitals, because this rollout is critical. It will see a ratio of one to three in our emergency departments, which is major change in the way in which emergency departments are staffed.

To be honest, the change cannot come soon enough. We have been working closely with the Nurses and Midwives' Association. We know this reform is going to take time, and we know that there will be bumps along the way. There will be challenges along the way because we are essentially reinventing the way in which we staff hospitals, and that takes an enormous amount of effort. But I and Anthony Schembri and his team from the Northern Sydney Local Health District are prepared to work with the member for Wakehurst and the Federal member to see how we can deliver improved services and staffing for the community that I know the member for Wakehurst has been a tireless advocate for.

#### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (12:10):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's plans to increase housing supply across the State?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:10):** I thank the member for Strathfield for his question, and I acknowledge the constructive approach he has taken to expanding housing supply in his own area. He has worked with his council and with my department to deliver a good outcome for his area. I am sure that approach will be repeated when it comes to the Homebush accelerated precinct. It is an approach that some members opposite could learn from. Before I touch on what the Government is doing in terms of the policy changes around housing supply, it is probably important—particularly for the students in the gallery, who are the sorts of people who are being locked out of housing in New South Wales—to say just why the Government is doing this.

Between 1992 and today, the number of housing completions in New South Wales was the lowest on the east coast. That means there was less housing available for people, even though we were the most populous State. Worse than that, over the past five years the number of people in the key 30- to 40-year-old age demographic leaving New South Wales was double the number coming here. We were losing people: workers, people starting families, people starting businesses and employing people and the like. So the Government set about developing a series of policy initiatives, culminating recently in the announcement of the Transport Oriented Development State Environmental Planning Policy—the snappily named TOD SEPP. That has led to changes in planning controls around 37 train stations in Greater Sydney, the Hunter, the Illawarra and the Central Coast, matched up with where there is already infrastructure capacity ready to go.

Those planning changes have been amended so that we get more mid-rise housing around transport hubs, near to jobs, services, amenities and good public spaces. The range of outcomes within those 37 sites reflects the fact that the Government has worked constructively with 12 of the 13 councils involved. Local decision-making has very much come into it, contrary to the claims of some others. We are not talking about mega high-rises in these areas, which are the subject of great fear campaigns. We are talking about buildings of up to about six storeys, the sort of mid-rise apartments that Sydney has grown on. Those housing outcomes were part and parcel of Sydney's housing past, and I am sure they are going to be Sydney's housing future. Members will be able to think of examples from their own electorates of these sorts of buildings: modest density that is delivering good outcomes. [*Extension of time*]

To help people get an idea of what we are talking about, recently the Government Architect and I launched a website that gives over 100 examples of that sort of low- and mid-rise building—the good density that we are looking for all over the place. Those buildings are already in our communities. They are already in our backyards.



They are buildings like those in Roseville and Lindfield. They are really nice places. They are the sorts of buildings that people walk past every day. I am sure the member for Ku-ring-gai can identify them. They are the sorts of buildings that people want to live in. They have good design, good urban amenity and represent a good opportunity for people in the age group of the students in the gallery to get a home in the future—the sorts of things that are being blocked by members opposite.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Members opposite do not want people to have homes. They want higher house prices, higher rents and less opportunity for young people and families to get into a home.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** That is why they are objecting with every fibre of their being.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Wahoonga to order for the second time. I remind the member for Hawkesbury that she is on two calls to order.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** They are fighting against housing in their communities because they hate giving people an opportunity. They want to lock it up for themselves.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Wahoonga that he is on two calls to order.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Members opposite want to make little enclaves, and they do not want to give people opportunities. It is contrary to what they say in public. The Leader of the Opposition has previously supported density. I recall that he said, "Absolutely, we want to see more houses built in New South Wales, and more apartments as well." But the Government does not just want to build more homes; it is building stronger communities. Vibrancy reforms will be part and parcel of the plans for those areas. We on this side are making sure that there are job opportunities, and we are doing it in areas where there are existing transport opportunities and water, sewer and drainage infrastructure is already in place. We are locking in affordable housing as part of that, delivering a mandatory 2 per cent to begin with and increasing over time. That is much more than has ever been delivered in New South Wales before. I am happy to keep going, Mr Speaker, but I am sure I will have other opportunities in the future.

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure the Minister would be happy to continue, but the time for questions has expired.

#### **KIAMA ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** By leave: Pursuant to Standing Order 131 (7), I table a written response from the Premier to a question asked by the member for Kiama on 21 March 2024.

#### *Ministerial Statements*

#### **DOMESTIC, FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:16):** The statistics paint a stark picture: One in four women and one in eight men in Australia have experienced violence from an intimate partner or family member since the age of 15. The events of the past few weeks have brought home the reality behind those statistics. Behind each are individual stories, lives impacted directly and indirectly. We know the costs of intimate partner and family violence. We know the toll it takes: the devastating and indelible impact not just on victim-survivors but also on their family, their friends and our entire community.

When that violence reaches a horrific peak—when a woman loses her life to violence in New South Wales—it resonates right across the entire State. There is grief, there is rage, there is horror and there is understandable frustration. There is frustration from the countless tireless advocates who have worked in this space for so long to see yet another woman lose her life. There is frustration from the loved ones of the women lost to violence about the slow pace of change in preventing the next death. There is frustration from the broader community. I understand that frustration and I feel it too, as I am sure each and every one of us in this place does. One life lost to intimate partner or family violence is one too many.

We owe it to these women—to those we have lost and to those in danger—to feel the grief, the rage and the frustration and to use it to fuel a movement for change. I do believe that right now there is a wave sweeping through our communities, and we in this place must harness that. We are witnessing an urgency to undertake sustained change and a willingness to take responsibility. I believe in this wave because, especially over the past few weeks, I have seen it. Over the past few weeks I have seen men recognise the reality that women have lived with for far too long. The reality for far too many women is that to be a woman is to be scared in your own home and in the streets.

I have seen many of my parliamentary colleagues, from all sides of the Chamber, step up and take a leadership role in this recognition. Leadership on this, from men in particular, is to be applauded. It is essential. I have seen women take to the streets wielding signs and raising their voices to call for justice and for safety. There can be no doubting that it has been a dark time, but on National Domestic Violence Remembrance Day, thousands of people, in groups large and small, lit candles to mourn the women and children lost to violence, symbolically and literally holding back the dark. It is devastating, but it is inspiring. I join with my Government colleagues in refusing to let the moment go by.

I have been the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault for just over a year. Having been the shadow Minister in opposition, I came to the job knowing exactly how difficult it would be. I know that is not lost on the Leader of the Opposition, who has also held the portfolio. There was investment by the previous Government and law reform, yet the prevalence of domestic, family and sexual violence in the community has not shifted. The most extreme form of it, domestic and family violence-related homicide, remains high. There is no doubt that we need more, but we also need different. We need action now, and we need sustained action over and into the future to reduce prevalence and to prevent domestic abuse before it begins.

On Monday the Government announced the "now"—an emergency package in response to the ongoing, longstanding scourge of domestic, family and intimate partner violence. It is important to say that Monday's announcement is the first phase of the Government's reforms to prevent domestic, sexual and family violence in New South Wales. It starts with the expansion of two of the State's flagship programs: Staying Home Leaving Violence will be expanded to every one of the 128 local government areas across New South Wales, and the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services Program—a crucial program that meets women and children victim-survivors where they are and provides flexible, sustained support in recovering from violence—will be expanded to the areas in our communities that need the support the most.

The package gives certainty to the specialist children's workers currently working so brilliantly in 20 refuges across the State, and 10 more refuges will benefit from the program. Let us be clear about the importance of those workers to the most vulnerable victim-survivors. They recognise children as victim-survivors in their own right, working with them to reduce the impact of the trauma those children carry and helping to end a cycle of violence. The package includes support for innovative perpetrator responses, which is fundamental to addressing violence against women. It is vital to recognise the importance of countering the belief and attitudes that accept, condone and, in some cases, support violence against women.

It is gratifying that the Commonwealth announced a commitment to consider what further work needs to be done across the country to prevent and respond to violence against women after the National Cabinet meeting last week. There are discussions to be had about the efficacy of men's behaviour change programs. That does not mean that we should not invest, but it means that we need a greater focus on learning what works. That is crucial. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work in this space. We need to know what works for whom. The Department of Communities and Justice will develop an evidence-based typology of domestic and family violence perpetrators that will enable us to better understand which perpetrators might be most suited to intervention.

The package announced on Monday includes an additional \$5 million to develop a New South Wales perpetrator strategy and risk assessment tool; to undertake research to better understand the risk factors that may lead young people to perpetration or victimisation in adulthood; and to trial an innovative behaviour change pilot. The package also includes \$45 million in justice system responses, which the Attorney General will expand upon in coming weeks.

As members of the House would be aware, I am incredibly passionate about expanding the focus to primary prevention and early intervention. The package is also a down payment on safety for future women in this State. It commits \$38.2 million to fully fund the implementation of the first dedicated New South Wales domestic, family and sexual violence primary prevention strategy. The strategy is in the final approval stages, and that work will begin in earnest in the near future. The investment announced on Monday will be complemented by \$48 million that will be delivered with the Commonwealth under the domestic and family violence national partnership agreement. I will be working closely with peak bodies and experts, in particular with No to Violence, on future action in this space. I will have more to say in coming weeks.

Talking about a whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach to the prevention and response to domestic, family and sexual violence is not a platitude; it is fundamental. The Government will continue the work that it has started on cross-agency collaboration. The early signs of domestic, family and sexual abuse turn up across the community in preschools, classrooms, GP clinics, hospitals, mental health services and family support services. Crucially, those interactions occur, in many cases—though not all—before a victim turns up at a police station, at an emergency department or, indeed, in a morgue. We need systems to be able to recognise and respond to the early signs to prevent escalation and disrupt the cycle. The people who work in those spaces see the impact of domestic and family violence in their everyday work. They know better than anyone that services sharing

information, working together and ensuring that victim-survivors do not fall through the cracks of the very systems that are meant to support them is critical to reducing the prevalence and impact of domestic and family violence.

Currently a review of the governance of domestic and family violence policy and programs in New South Wales is underway, ably led by the Women's Safety Commissioner. That work is important because it is about who is at the table and who influences what gets prioritised. We need the expertise of victim-survivors and leaders in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector at the table—people who know firsthand how the systems work and, importantly, how they fail. We must address the barriers that prevent government and non-government organisations from working effectively with each other, with victim-survivors and with people who use violence. Government agencies need to be on the same page on delivering safety outcomes for women, children, families and communities. That cannot be achieved without an authorising environment.

I know that my colleagues and I have the Premier's absolute support in delivering on that work, and I acknowledge his heartfelt commitment. Another area in which we need to do much better is in relation to Aboriginal women and children. First Nations families and communities experience family violence at much higher rates, which can compound a long history of colonisation and devastation of culture. In the delivery of this package, the Government will be working with communities to ensure that implementation meets the cultural needs of First Nations women, children and families. Let me be absolutely clear: The implementation of the primary prevention strategy for First Nations communities must be led by First Nations people.

I thank the Premier for his support in the development of the package. I thank my many parliamentary colleagues who continue to advocate for women and children in their communities. I thank the frontline workers who turn up every day with hope and compassion and the victim-survivors who have shared their experiences so that other women might be spared those experiences. I feel the rage, the grief and the frustration of so many in our community. I share it, but when it comes to the New South Wales Government's response to the scourge of domestic and family violence, let me be absolutely clear that this is only the beginning.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:29):** I thank the Minister for her statement. All of us in this House are united in our horror at the stain that continues to exist in Australian society where we have, on average, one woman killed by an intimate partner every 10 days—at the hands of someone who is meant to be a protector of that person—where it is a spouse or domestic partner who is the perpetrator in 45 per cent of hospitalisations of female assault victims, and where domestic and family violence is the leading reason for seeking help from specialist homelessness services. That is a scourge and a stain right across Australian society. Addressing domestic and family violence is a whole-of-government and, indeed, a whole-of-society obligation. It is not just up to the Government, the Opposition and governmental structures to address this. The responsibility is on each of us. It is also on men. This is not a women's problem; this is a societal problem. Men have to step up and call out bad behaviour when they see it.

Under the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government, New South Wales signed up to the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. In doing that, like governments all across Australia, we recognised that you need a holistic approach to tackle this problem. As the Minister said, that starts with primary prevention: changing the attitudes, the systems and the gender biases that drive violence against women and children. It also requires early intervention for high-risk perpetrators and victim-survivors. It requires holistic responses to supporting victim-survivors with frontline services, police and the justice system, and it requires recovery and healing.

As important as it is, we understand that the criminal justice system can only do so much in tackling domestic and family violence. You cannot have a police officer in every bedroom and on the corner of every street. As important as a criminal justice response is, you have to start with changing attitudes. That includes changing the structures that impede women in their economic achievements, because female victim-survivors are left vulnerable when they cannot afford to escape. It means respectful relationships education in schools, making sure that future generations respect each other and respect women in particular. That may take a generation to change, so this is a marathon. Of course, that is no excuse for a lack of immediate action or early intervention with perpetrators and victim-survivors who we recognise as being at high risk.

Women also need a place to flee to. That is what they have to do to be safe, and that is why investment in housing and in crisis accommodation is so important. That is why, when the Coalition was in government, we doubled investment in women's refuges with a Core and Cluster model that will see the approximate doubling of the number of refuge spaces for women in the next few years. Ideally, women in danger would not have to leave their homes in the first place, and that is why Staying Home Leaving Violence is such an important program that we were pleased to expand dramatically. I am pleased to see that the Government is finishing that expansion so that it will operate right across New South Wales, so that, where it is safe to do so, women can stay in their homes with appropriate security and, just as importantly, with appropriate wraparound services.

What is the Opposition's role in all of this? We do not want to be bickering or whingeing at the sidelines, because people expect all of us in this sensitive, high-stakes area to be statesmen and stateswomen. That is not to say that Opposition members do not have a job in holding the Government to account. We welcome the funding announcement that has been made, but it is our job as the Opposition to make sure that the good intentions that have been announced are implemented, and we will be holding the Government to account on that. We welcome the announcements. In particular, we welcome the emphasis on primary prevention, because the criminal justice system can only go so far. When in government, the Coalition had a number of significant reforms in this area. We introduced legislation to criminalise coercive control with almost unanimous support, if not unanimous support. Coercive control is obnoxious in its own right because it deprives the victim-survivor of their autonomy and their liberty, and we know it is almost invariably a red flag for domestic violence and intimate partner homicide.

The Coalition Government introduced landmark legislation for affirmative consent in sexual assault matters. It criminalised revenge pornography. It reformed apprehended domestic violence orders by doubling their standard length from one year to two years, allowing indefinite ADVOs to be issued in the worst cases, and giving police power to vary ADVOs where there was an urgent situation, exclusively protecting pets. I know that a lot of people say ADVOs are not worth the paper they are printed on—and there are some dreadful cases where perpetrators have been on ADVOs and yet breached those ADVOs with the ultimate shocking act—but they do reduce the risk of domestic violence. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] data establishes that. It is important that we do everything we can to strengthen ADVOs.

Domestic violence victim-survivors will often not want to go to court because the process is so traumatic. The Coalition tried to make that less traumatic by banning direct cross-examination by self-represented accused in criminal cases and associated domestic violence cases, having closed courts, having rapid expansion of audiovisual links so a complainant can give their evidence away from the alleged perpetrator, and allowing the evidence-in-chief to be in the form of video evidence from police body-worn video camera rather than traumatising the complainant by having them give their evidence all over again. I do not pretend for a moment that it is not a traumatic experience for a complainant to go to court. That is why we need to do as much as we can. That is why we see such a high dropout rate in domestic violence complaints, like we see with sexual assaults. Maybe only 3 per cent of sexual assaults end up in the form of a complaint dealt with by the police going to court and ending in a conviction. We need to do everything we can to support victim-survivors.

When the Coalition left office, BOCSAR was involved in a large research project to look at the experiences of victim-survivors. I look forward to what that shows and the way we can help those who are among the most traumatised in our community. We acknowledge the Government's package this week and we welcome extra spending in this area but, sadly, at the end of the day, this is a marathon. While primary prevention and respectful relationships education in schools are important to make sure that the next generation is not as problematic as ours, we cannot wait that long to fight domestic violence. This will be a marathon. It is a scourge on our society.

Unless someone has been through the trauma of domestic and family violence, it is probably difficult to imagine what it must be like. You think you should be in the safest place possible. You are in your own home with someone who is meant to love you and says they love you. As the advertising campaign says, "It's not love, it's coercive control." You might have closed-circuit TV and you might have locks on your door, but there is a barrage of insults, coercion and threats via the internet and the telephone. Most abusers will use those. It is impossible for someone who has not been through that to imagine what it must be like fearing for your life and fearing for your autonomy under that barrage.

The vast majority of men are not perpetrators, but the vast majority of perpetrators are men. That is why men, in particular, need to call it out. While we must look at the effect of online pornography and gambling, gambling is unlikely to be the cause of domestic and family violence but clearly it exacerbates domestic and family violence. We must look at what online pornography does to the minds, brains and attitudes of boys, in particular, who are learning about sex for the first time in that aggressive and obnoxious format.

There are many things we have to do. I think we are all united, no matter whether we are members of Labor, the Liberals, The Greens, The Nationals or Independent members. No matter who we are, what we are, or our background, we must keep fighting and tackling this scourge. In Opposition, I want to be constructive, which means we will from time to time criticise the Government or call the Government to account, but I want to do that in a constructive way because this is such an important issue. The public expects us to be at our very best by acting in the public interest, saving and enriching the lives of victim-survivors.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

**Broadwater Public School**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly to call on the Government for urgent action to rebuild Broadwater Public School, received from **Mr Richie Williamson**.

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

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:41):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday 9 May 2024 to permit, when general business notices of motions (for bills) are called on, the maximum time limit of 20 minutes to not apply and the following items of business take place in the following order:

- (1) The member for Murray to complete her second reading speech for the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2024.
- (2) The member for Barwon to introduce and complete his second reading speech for the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Amendment (Renewable Energy Sector Plan) Bill 2024.
- (3) The member for Wairoa to introduce and complete his second reading speech for the Bail Amendment (Serious Personal Violence and Electronic Monitoring) Bill 2024.

This suspension motion seeks to do two things: firstly, to ensure that tomorrow private members' business is done in an orderly way for the introduction of bills that are important to non-Government members; and, secondly, in the spirit of multi-partisanship, which has just been so eloquently expressed by both the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the Leader of the Opposition, will allow members and stakeholders the benefit of hearing an introduction speech of the shadow Attorney General and member for Wairoa on his proposal relating to bail reform, on which many members are engaged in active consultation but have not yet formed a position. Bail reform will be taken seriously as well as the intent of the proposal, but more work needs to be done. We would all benefit from hearing an introduction speech by the member for Wairoa. This motion has been moved in the spirit of organisation and multi-partisanship.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS) BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

**Second Reading Speech**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury)—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:44):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Local government plays a crucial role in communities across New South Wales. It is the closest level of government to the people. It is concerned with critical matters such as roads, footpaths, buildings, infrastructure, libraries, waste, water provision, clean amenities, the provision of a range of programs and activities, and the regulation and administration of a large number of regulations. It is about delivering important infrastructure and community services to the people. There are 128 local councils, employing between 40,000 and 50,000 people. They are a very significant employer for the communities they serve. It is vital that local government serves the needs of communities and builds trust across communities. Rigorous, transparent and fair employment practices in local government at all levels, especially for senior staff who are key decision-makers, are vital to serving the needs of the communities and to building trust across communities. Regrettably, there have been instances where local government has fallen short of communities' expectations and that has reduced levels of trust.

On 22 March 2021 the Independent Commission Against Corruption published its report on an investigation into the conduct of councillors of the former Canterbury City Council. ICAC identified a potential

corruption risk with "no reason" termination clauses in standard contracts under the Local Government Act 1993. Currently, standard contracts are approved by the Departmental Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government. Following the release of the ICAC report, the parties to the Local Government (State) Award advocated for amendments to the Act, in particular, removing the ability for councils to determine positions in their organisational structure to be "senior staff" positions. Currently, under the Act, the holders of positions determined by councils to be "senior staff" positions must be employed using standard contracts with a duration between one and five years. Under the bill, only the general manager would be employed under a standard contract and all other employees, including senior staff, would be employed under the award.

Broadly speaking, the bill seeks to reduce potential corruption risks arising from the insecurity of employment of senior staff previously identified by the ICAC that leaves them exposed to improper influence and to address concerns raised by all parties—employer and employee—to the award, who have requested amendments to the Local Government Act to address the insecurity of employment of senior council executives and allow them access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission. Specifically, the bill will amend the Act to remove the option for governing bodies of councils to determine "senior staff" positions within the organisational structure of a council and will restrict the requirement for holders of "senior staff" positions to be employed under a fixed employment contract, based on a standard contract approved by the Departmental Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government to general managers of councils and executive officers of joint organisations of councils.

The bill will also allow all council staff, other than general managers of councils and executive officers of joint organisations, to seek redress in the Industrial Relations Commission for "industrial matters", as defined in section 6 of the Industrial Relations Act. It will extend employment protections for staff affected by council amalgamations to all council staff, other than general managers of councils and executive officers of joint organisations. The bill also will provide senior staff currently employed under a standard contract with the option to remain on the contract until it expires. Staff who choose this option will have access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission, including unfair dismissal and disputes provisions. The bill will provide that no award or enterprise agreement made by the Industrial Relations Commission will apply to staff who remain on the standard contract. However, the standard contract will be taken to be an industrial instrument for the purposes of unfair dismissal under the Industrial Relations Act 1996.

The bill will provide senior staff currently employed under a standard contract with the option to make a request to their employer to be transferred to the award or enterprise agreement before their current contract expires. Where the employer receives such a request, they must not unreasonably withhold their agreement to the transfer. The bill will also amend the Act to: allow a decision by the employer who refuses the employee being transferred to the award or enterprise agreement to be reviewed by the Industrial Relations Commission; allow the Industrial Relations Commission to order the council to transition the staff member's employment to employment under an award or enterprise agreement within the time specified in the order; and allow councils to offer employment to senior staff members under the award or enterprise agreement when their current contract expires without advertising the role.

The bill offers the following benefits. It will provide all council employees other than the general manager the security of being covered by the award or another industrial instrument approved by the Industrial Relations Commission, and access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission in the regulation of their employment. It will remove the insecurity in the employment of senior executives that makes them susceptible to improper pressure from councillors and others by providing them access to the "unfair dismissal" jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission. It will ensure that all council employees other than the general manager have the same minimum terms and conditions of employment. It will assist with attracting and retaining executive level employees other than the general manager by giving councils flexibility to offer terms and conditions of employment that are not available under the approved senior staff contract.

The form of the current contracts has compromised the ability of senior staff to give advice without fear or favour or being threatened. The intention of the bill is to transition those employees to coverage under the relevant award or enterprise agreement without disadvantage to those employees, in a seamless process. The bill is the result of extensive consultation by the Government over the past year and good faith collaboration with our partners, some of whom are represented in the gallery today. I pay special tribute to the United Services Union and its secretary, Graeme Kelly, who has led the work on the bill in conjunction with Dariea Turley, AM, President of the Australian Local Government Association, and her team. I also recognise Gordon Brock, Director of the Local Government Engineers' Association, a division of Professionals Australia, and Ian Robertson, Secretary of the Development and Environmental Professionals' Association, who are in the gallery. The bill makes important changes for their members.

I also acknowledge the collaborative work of government agencies such as the Office of Local Government. I acknowledge the Minister for Local Government, Ron Hoenig, and his wonderful staff, my Industrial Relations team from the Premier's Department and, of course, the amazing team from my office. I thank everyone who has been involved, especially the employer associations and the unions, for working together to achieve consensus on the bill. We have also briefed the Opposition. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **BETTER REGULATION, FAIR TRADING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anoulack Chanthivong, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:54):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Better Regulation, Fair Trading and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill will introduce several miscellaneous amendments to 22 principal Acts, one amendment Act and seven regulations across the Better Regulation, Fair Trading and Gaming and Racing portfolios. The bill will ensure that the legislation in the portfolio remains relevant, fit for purpose and in line with twenty-first century technology and practices. The bill will also ensure that existing legislation and reforms passed by the Parliament that have yet to commence can operate as intended.

The amendments in this bill are minor housekeeping amendments that aim to: modernise outdated provisions; create more future-fit laws and ensure they stay relevant in today's digital world; ensure legislation is harmonised and consistent across the portfolio; clarify legal requirements; and reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and improve customer outcomes. These proposed amendments are based on feedback from stakeholders and NSW Fair Trading staff who apply the legislation daily. This is also a result of taking a stewardship approach to ensure our legislation remains fit for purpose. The laws in this State need to reflect evolving and emerging technology that impacts how we live and work. Through this bill, the Government is committed to creating a regulatory landscape that better keeps pace with change and embeds best practice in our legislation.

I will now turn to the amendments in the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill amends seven Acts to enable certain documents currently required to be published on the website of a particular agency or department to be published on a New South Wales Government website or by other appropriate electronic means. The Government is in the process of updating and consolidating its websites. More information is being provided to the community on the popular [nsw.gov.au](http://nsw.gov.au) website. Laws that require certain information or documents be made accessible or available to the public, or published on a particular agency or department website, are inflexible and outdated.

To address this problem the bill futureproofs the requirements to publish documents on a specific website by updating website references, where appropriate, to refer to a New South Wales Government website in general terms. The bill also adopts technology-neutral language to give regulators more options to consider and use alternative technologies in the future—for example, the option to make information, documents, notices or forms accessible using other online technology such as portals or apps. These amendments will provide more flexibility for regulators and allow legislation to keep up with the rapid pace at which technology keeps evolving.

Schedule 2 to the bill omits references to outdated technology across various legislation in the Fair Trading portfolio. Where necessary, it updates the provision to be technology neutral to support the use of new technologies. Currently there are references to facsimile machines and other obsolete technologies like microfilm, floppy discs, videotapes, computer diskettes, typewriters and even lithographs. I have to say, I did not know what a lithograph was. Our technology has certainly changed. That form of printing was invented in the 1700s. These references are generally used in the context of communicating. The provisions have been modernised to remove references to outdated technologies while ensuring there is flexibility to communicate using other means.

Embedding technology-neutral language in legislation helps futureproof the laws, as it provides the flexibility needed to accommodate new technologies. This will also assist businesses to innovate, adopt and realise the potential of emerging technologies without having to seek permission from regulators. The amendments reflect modern communication practices and improve readability of the law that is supported by useful technology. Ensuring that New South Wales laws reflect the way we live and work today helps to keep laws relevant and fit for purpose.

Schedule 3 to the bill amends six Acts and two regulations to standardise the definition of "business day" and remove confusing references to "working day". Currently, there are several different definitions of "business day" and "working day" used interchangeably in a number of Acts. Some Acts do not even provide a definition. To address this inconsistency, schedule 3 to the bill inserts a definition of "business day" and amends eight pieces of legislation to rely on the new standardised definition. The amendments will make the law clearer and more consistent for customers, reducing the risk of confusion and inadvertent noncompliance. Streamlining the terms to a single reference of "business day" will also benefit customers by creating a common meaning that can be more easily prescribed.

Schedule 4 modernises provisions in the Funeral Funds Act 1979 and the Storage Liens Act 1935 that currently require contributory funeral fund operators and storage companies to publish notices in newspapers in order to comply with the law. The bill reduces red tape by giving those businesses the option to provide those notices online and by removing, where redundant, the obligation to give a public notice. Similarly, the bill also amends the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002 to remove the obligation for the regulator to place newspaper advertisements about making a claim against the Property Services Compensation Fund. Instead, it will require the regulator to publish a notice on a New South Wales Government website or by other electronic means that is appropriate to bring the notice to the attention of persons likely to be affected by it. Importantly, the bill preserves the ability to use the media to improve public awareness where necessary.

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

#### *Committees*

### **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS**

#### **Reports**

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

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (13:01):** As Chair: I speak to the report entitled *Interim Report: Adequacy of Current Procedures to Protect Parliamentary Privilege (Law Enforcement and Investigative Bodies)*, Report No. 2/58. The report is an interim report of the committee in its inquiry into the adequacy of current procedures to protect parliamentary privilege in circumstances where law enforcement and investigative bodies seek to use coercive, intrusive or covert investigatory powers. The interim report is focused on the powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to compel members and former members of Parliament, the Clerks or other persons to produce "documents or other things" for the purposes of its investigations, carrying out compulsory examinations or the conduct of public inquiries.

In appendix 3 to the report the committee proposes a draft interim protocol, setting out the processes to be followed where the ICAC seeks to compel the production of "documents or other things" under section 22 or section 35 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, where the "documents or other things" may be immune from production because of parliamentary privilege. The draft interim protocol is intended to update and formalise the Legislative Assembly's processes for dealing with section 22 notices and section 35 summonses, including by ensuring that members, former members and the Clerk are given proper opportunities to raise claims of parliamentary privilege for the House to determine or, where confidentiality is required, for the Clerk to exercise a role in screening potentially privileged material from production, as authorised by the House under this protocol.

Any disputes with the ICAC on a claim made by the Clerk during a confidential phase of an ICAC investigation that cannot be resolved between the Speaker and the chief commissioner will be the subject of review by an independent arbiter to be appointed by the House, who will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider and decide the claim. It is relevant to note that the independent arbiter process would apply solely in relation to disputes over parliamentary privilege that cannot be considered and determined by the House due to constraints of confidentiality. The protocol makes it clear that the independent arbiter's decision is binding until such time as confidentiality ceases to apply to the investigation, and questions can be determined by the House, if required. Nothing in the protocol prevents legal proceedings from being commenced in circumstances—for example, where the production of material is legally unreasonable—nor does the protocol in any way "diminish, constrain or expand the scope of parliamentary privilege".

The proposed interim protocol is intended to ensure that members, former members and the Clerk can validly exercise their rights to challenge a notice or summons in a court of law, including on the basis that a notice or summons fails to sufficiently disclose the nature of the ICAC's investigation and how the "documents or other things" relate to that investigation. The draft interim protocol also provides important clarity that parliamentary



privilege cannot be waived except according to law and that material held by third parties on behalf of the Legislative Assembly is to be regarded by the ICAC as material in the possession of the Legislative Assembly. Of particular note are the processes in the draft interim protocol for the Clerk to deal with notices that require the production of large volumes of electronic material. Large datasets that cannot be satisfactorily processed by the Parliament's Information Technology Services section would be "quarantined" by the ICAC's digital forensics officers for the purposes of narrowing the material into a manageable dataset using keywords or other search terms.

While material is quarantined, the ICAC's investigators would not be able to access or use it, and any material tagged as relevant at this stage would not be produced until after the screening process has occurred. Once the quarantining and screening process is completed and the material is no longer needed for the investigation, the ICAC would need to destroy or return to the Clerk any material that was not formally screened and produced. Where repeated screening of the same material is needed as new lines of inquiry unfold, the ICAC would not need to obtain a new section 22 notice. However, the original extracted data would remain quarantined for the duration of the investigation, and only tagged material, from which potentially parliamentary privileged material has been removed, would be produced to the ICAC.

The committee recommends that the House adopt the protocol in appendix 3 as soon as possible. I am pleased to report to the House that the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC has reviewed the draft interim protocol and, on 29 February 2024, agreed with its terms and with the committee's view that it provides a sound basis for dealing with section 22 notices and section 35 summonses. On 4 March 2024 a copy of the draft interim protocol was sent to the Legislative Council Privileges Committee for its views, including in relation to the possibility of the draft interim protocol becoming a joint agreement between the Parliament and the ICAC.

In closing, I thank my fellow committee members—including you, Mr Assistant Speaker, and the member for Auburn, who is in the Chamber—for their contributions to the development of the draft interim protocol. On behalf of the committee, I express our appreciation to the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM, for his cooperative approach in reaching agreement on the terms of the draft protocol and to the other officers of the ICAC for their assistance. I am especially grateful to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Ms Helen Minnican, for her advice on formalising the draft protocol with the ICAC and for tirelessly reviewing vast amounts of material while it was pending. I thank the entire committee secretariat of the privileges and ethics committee, who do such amazing and detailed work that really helps this Parliament to function and helps to protect this Parliament and its members. I commend the report to the House.

#### **Report noted.**

### **JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES FROM PRIVATISATION**

#### **Reports**

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

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (13:08):** I speak to the report of the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation entitled *Protecting local water utilities from privatisation*. Last year the New South Wales Parliament passed the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 to ensure the continued public ownership of Sydney Water and Hunter Water and their main undertakings. The Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation was subsequently appointed to consider the question of how best to safeguard public ownership of the 92 local water utilities responsible for servicing the State's regional communities. The committee received 34 submissions from local councils, county councils, joint organisations, member associations, government agencies and members of the public. The committee also heard from 45 individual witnesses at public hearings held in Sydney, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo.

Participants in this inquiry overwhelmingly opposed privatisation of local water utilities and their assets, and advocated for continued local government ownership and control. The committee heard that privatisation and a profit-driven model would likely lead to poorer infrastructure investment, inferior service levels and price hikes for customers. We also heard that higher water costs in the regions would have knock-on effects for the State's economy, including driving up the price of food. Stakeholders made compelling arguments in favour of continued local government ownership of water utilities in regional New South Wales. Those included that local governments have a better understanding of local demographics and can integrate water services and infrastructure planning within a broader urban planning context, and that they are well placed to achieve the best outcomes for regional communities. Not being driven by profits, councils are able to work collaboratively and form regional

alliances to achieve economies of scale and address strategic challenges more efficiently through sharing resources and best practice.

Having considered stakeholder input to the inquiry, the committee has recommended that the New South Wales Government develop new legislation to protect local water utilities from privatisation, forced amalgamations and sell-offs. Many stakeholders, though not all, recommended a constitutional amendment similar to that enacted for Sydney Water and Hunter Water. We heard that legislative protections for water utility assets provide greater stability and reliability for water services, and long-term security for assets and the sustainability of water supply. The committee also heard additional protections may be required for county councils, which are more vulnerable to privatisation. That is because, unlike a local water utility operated by a general purpose council, county councils are standalone entities and can therefore be privatised more easily.

Almost all stakeholders agreed that any new legislation to protect local water utilities must not impact their capacity to engage private sector services when needed. The flexibility to contract in certain services, such as the construction of capital infrastructure, is essential for local water utilities to be able to operate effectively and efficiently. The local water utility sector must be consulted on any new legislation to ensure that it is fit for purpose and does not result in unintended adverse consequences. Although the inquiry was primarily focused on protections against privatisation, the committee also heard considerable evidence concerning the challenges that local water utilities in New South Wales face, and how the level of financial and strategic support they receive impacts their capacity to manage risks sustainably. Ageing infrastructure, population growth and climate change are growing challenges to water scarcity and water quality in regional communities, yet local water utilities remain chronically underfunded. Strong capital investment remains critical to ensuring secure and efficient delivery of water services, but there is also the need for capacity building to innovate and optimise infrastructure performance and whole-of-life costs.

Further, many local water utilities in New South Wales experience significant challenges attracting and retaining skilled water utility operators to service their communities. To address the widespread shortage in trained operators, the committee has recommended that the New South Wales Government develop and introduce minimum training requirements and/or competency standards for water operators in recognition of the critical role they play in safeguarding human health; find ways to promote the uptake of training and create further employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in the water utility sector; and consider establishing regional water industry training facilities at suitable locations across the State to boost the supply of trained operators to service regional and remote utilities.

On behalf of the chair of the committee, I thank my fellow committee members for their valuable contributions and hard work throughout the inquiry. I also thank the secretariat and acknowledge the Department of Parliamentary Services research service for preparing a background paper for the committee on the privatisation of water utilities in other jurisdictions. I thank the staff of the Riverina Water treatment plant in Wagga Wagga and the John Gilbert Water Treatment Plant in Dubbo for facilitating site inspections of the facilities for the committee. Those visits gave members a deeper understanding of the issues and challenges faced by local and regional water utilities and the communities that they serve. I thank all the stakeholders who participated in this inquiry. The committee hopes that the report and its recommendations will translate into improved outcomes for local water utilities across New South Wales. The committee greatly appreciates the time and effort of all those involved and thanks them for their valuable contributions. I commend the report to the House.

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (13:13):** I take note of the report of the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation entitled *Protecting water utilities from privatisation* dated March 2024 and tabled on 28 March 2024. Water is the lifeblood of our regional communities. It not only sustains us but powers our economy and fuels our ability to grow and thrive. It was the Premier who said, "A guaranteed right to a safe, reliable supply of clean water—provided by the Government of this State—should be a constitutionally protected right for the people of New South Wales." Indeed, truer words were never spoken. But there continues to be a very real concern that the Premier has one set of standards for those living in the cities and another set for those in the regions.

Last year the New South Wales Labor Government passed legislation ensuring continued public ownership of assets supplying water to Sydney and surrounds. However, that legislation falls alarmingly short of protecting the rights of all citizens to safe and secure water, namely the 1.85 million residents who get their water from utilities other than Sydney Water and Hunter Water. In light of that glaring omission, the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation was established—following pressure from the Opposition, it must be said—to investigate and report on what can be done to safeguard and support local water utilities [LWUs]. The member for Albury and I were the only committee members who are lower House Liberal-Nationals Coalition members. We were honoured to represent the people of regional New South Wales on that committee,

but fundamentally we already knew what needed to be done to protect our local water utilities and their assets. Indeed, the Chair's foreword to the report states:

Overwhelmingly, inquiry participants opposed privatisation of LWUs and their assets. They presented compelling arguments in support of continued local government ownership and control.

In the final report the committee's first recommendation is for the Government to develop legislation to protect local water utilities from privatisation, forced amalgamations and sell-offs. In other words, the committee recommends exactly what the Opposition had been advocating for from day one. Importantly, the committee recommends that the Government "consult extensively with local governments on any new legislation". As the report highlights, close to 107 drinking water systems in New South Wales currently serve one million people who face a very high water-security risk, while 179 regional town systems, which service about 5,000 people, are facing water-quality risks. The committee's report not only validates the Opposition's position regarding the inclusion of LWUs in the Government's 2023 legislation but also vindicates our view that the Government must do more to address the risks associated with water quality and supply in the regions.

The committee heard from a wide range of stakeholders and received 34 submissions from local councils, county councils, joint organisations, member associations, government agencies and members of the public. We heard from 45 individual witnesses during public hearings held in Sydney, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo. I thank them all for their contributions and involvement. I also thank my committee colleagues for their diligence throughout the inquiry process. Findings aside, it was a constructive process that has enabled the Parliament to once again hear directly the challenges we are facing with ageing water supply and service infrastructure across the regions. The committee's work has concluded. It is now time for the Government to act and introduce legislation to protect LWUs once and for all from privatisation, forced amalgamations and sell-offs.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (13:18):** I also welcome the committee's report *Protecting water utilities from privatisation* and take the opportunity to respond to comments made by the member for Cootamundra. Before the last election, the now Opposition did not have any concern about privatisation of any water supply. In fact, it did not promise to introduce legislation to protect even Sydney's water supply. This Government did that. The Opposition wants to claim credit for the outcome of the committee's inquiry and for the legislation that it proposed earlier when it introduced to the House a hastily and ill-considered bill. That legislation would have had an amazing number of side effects, including potentially making Griffith's water supply illegal because it sources its water supply from private infrastructure—irrigation channels and associated infrastructure. The Opposition simply had not thought through how that would work.

Labor has consistently been committed to protecting government entities from privatisation. In writing its bill, the Opposition did not consider that county councils changed and that the arrangements for water supplies around country New South Wales sometimes involved only councils, combinations of councils or entities made up of councils. The Opposition had not considered a whole range of different arrangements when it introduced this legislation, so it was sensible for this Government to refer the bill to a committee. I served for about a week on the committee and then had to step away because I got my current position.

Water supply in New South Wales is an issue I have had a huge interest in over a considerable time. Labor governments have delivered high-quality water supply for rural communities for the past century or so, because it was Labor governments that built most of the dams that guarantee the water supply for country communities. Labor governments have put those in place as government-owned entities and this Government continues to be committed to keeping those publicly owned, so it is pretty rich for the Opposition to claim credit for all of this. I acknowledge that the Opposition welcomes the report and participated in the committee in a positive way, but let us be clear about why we got to this point: It is because Labor started the process of protecting our public water supplies from privatisation.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (13:20):** I briefly contribute to debate on the report from the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation. From the outset I thank and acknowledge the members of the committee. In particular I acknowledge the Chair, the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, from the other place, for his leadership and how he conducted the committee's work. I acknowledge the member for Cootamundra and her advocacy in promoting the issue of the protection of water utilities for Sydney and the Hunter, and the seeming lack of protection for water utilities across the rest of regional New South Wales. But, as I said, at the end of the day there was a collegiate approach to this committee. I thank the Chair and the committee members in that regard. I thank and acknowledge the secretariat for its hard work and thank the witnesses, particularly those who attended the hearings on site.

As the member for Albury, I acknowledge those in my area, the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation and Riverina Water County Council. I acknowledge the strong sense of protection. I acknowledge also the importance of water utilities for our community. I had the great privilege of being the Chair of the Legislative

Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development during the previous Parliament. We held an inquiry around the time of the 2019 drought, and one of the key themes coming out of that particular inquiry was the importance of water utilities to our regional communities. I think a lot of the work done in that regard by this committee dovetails with the work and findings of that previous committee.

Obviously the intent of the committee was to examine the constitutional protections around the privatisation of regional water local utilities. I draw the attention of the House to a couple of recommendations and findings that stem from the need for protection from privatisation, and members in this House have spoken of that. But the real thing we need to look at is funding water utilities to assist them in building capacity so that this generation and the next generations are well served. I think one of the findings from when we were in Dubbo was around the benefits of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program. It was certainly well received by the sector, and there is a strong desire to see it expanded, which leads to recommendation 4, calling on the Government to continue to fund the program.

We just heard the member for Monaro speaking about Labor's contribution with regard to water utilities, so we look forward to the current Government continuing the good work of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program of the previous Government and funding it well beyond phase two. The other recommendation I call out in that regard is recommendation 5, around the regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities. I feel that one of the key findings was the challenges of regulatory burdens faced by our local water utilities. I acknowledge the accountability of governments of all sides in that regard, but I think we will find support on both sides of this House to reduce regulatory burdens on local water utilities. Again I thank the Chair, committee members and all others involved in this committee.

**Report noted.**

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

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

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:25):** As Chair: It is with great pleasure that I address the House today as the Chair of the Legislation Review Committee. The committee tabled *Legislation Review Digest 12/58* yesterday. In the digest the committee examined six bills introduced during the last sitting week. It also reviewed 26 regulations and statutory instruments, commenting on five. 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 Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024 would amend the Property NSW Act 2006 to clarify and expand the functions and powers of Property NSW, including the power at proposed section 14A, to compulsorily acquire land under the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991. The committee acknowledged that it is not uncommon for a government agency like Property NSW to have the power to compulsorily acquire land for the purpose of carrying out its objectives and functions. However, the committee noted that similar land acquisition powers held by other government agencies are often accompanied by legislative limits to the exercise of that power. The committee considered that this bill provided Property NSW with a broad remit to compulsorily acquire land, which may trespass on an individual's property rights. The committee therefore referred this provision to Parliament for consideration.

Turning to private members' bills, the committee also reported on the Automated External Defibrillators (Public Access) Bill 2024. The bill seeks to create an Act that would mandate the installation, registration and maintenance of defibrillators in certain buildings and vehicles. The committee reported on five issues with that bill, referring four issues to Parliament for its consideration. I will highlight two of those issues. Firstly, the bill proposes a number of new offences, including absolute liability offences, offences resulting in significant custodial penalties and penalty notice offences. The committee acknowledged that the bill may be intended to ensure that potentially life-saving medical equipment is accessible during medical emergencies.

However, the committee noted the significant classification of new offences under proposed section 9 as serious indictable offences, the possibility of disproportionate imprisonment sentences, and the impact of custodial sentences on an individual's rights. The committee therefore referred the new offences with significant custodial penalties to Parliament for its consideration. Secondly, the bill establishes a number of regulation-making powers under section 15, including a general regulation-making power that allows regulations to be made about anything required or permitted to be prescribed or necessary or convenient. This may effectively allow regulations to

prescribe matters with little limit or inappropriately delegate legislative powers. For these reasons, the committee referred these matters to Parliament for its consideration.

Finally, the committee commented on the Local Government (General) Amendment (Tendering) Regulation (No. 2) 2023. The regulation amends the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 under the Local Government Act 1993. It provides for the conditions of employees who provide domestic or other waste management services which have been subject to a tender process. The regulation requires a tenderer for domestic or other waste management services to give an undertaking about employee conditions and makes provisions for enforcing that undertaking. The committee recognised that the regulation may be intended to protect employees of local government contractors from being offered or treated with less favourable employment conditions than they are currently entitled to. However, the committee considered that an employer's freedom to negotiate and enter into contracts is a fundamental common law right arising from the freedom of contract. Further, requiring a tenderer to give an undertaking may undermine the operational autonomy of businesses.

For those reasons the committee referred that matter to the Parliament for its consideration. The Legislation Review Committee's twelfth digest is available on the committee's webpage, and I encourage everyone to read it. I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions to the digest and, as always, the secretariat for its ongoing hard work and support. I commend the digest to the House.

**Report noted.**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

*Bills*

**BETTER REGULATION, FAIR TRADING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (14:32):** I continue my second reading speech on the Better Regulation, Fair Trading and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Provisions that require a notice to be published in a newspaper were introduced decades ago. Some have been in force for over a century without any substantive change, including some commencing before consumers could access radios, let alone mobile phones and the internet. Newspapers are no longer the only way to reach the public, nor are they always the most effective way. In today's market readers are increasingly using digital services to access information quickly. The bushfires, floods and the global pandemic have resulted in digital channels becoming critical as readers are constantly seeking up-to-the-minute information. During the global pandemic, digital subscriptions increased 23.5 per cent. It is now more likely that a notice will come to the public's attention if it is prominently published online instead of as a one-off ad in a daily newspaper.

The bill will not only improve the effectiveness of these newspaper notices but could also reduce unnecessary costs, estimated from around \$300 to \$3,000 per notice or more. This is money that businesses could be using to improve services, and money that could instead be flowing through to consumers. In particular the bill amends the Storage Liens Act 1935 to remove the newspaper notification so that a storage business only needs to serve notice of unpaid charges to the owner of the goods. While the current newspaper ad requirement was important in 1935 as a fail-safe in case the owner was not able to be reached by post, the methods of serving notice now include email and other electronic methods accessible 24/7 from almost any location.

It is highly unlikely that, when all other contact methods have failed, a consumer will happen to see a one-off newspaper ad. The bill also removes the cost of the newspaper ad from the money that can be recovered from the owner, which may result in more money being returned to them following the sale of the unclaimed goods. Schedule 5 modernises various Acts and a regulation to enable electronic record keeping and provide that information can be exchanged electronically between parties without the need for in-person contact. Currently, several laws contain or imply solely paper-based record keeping for businesses. The laws also contain requirements for records to be provided or distributed in hard copy or using outdated methods to share records, such as making records available on request for physical inspection at any reasonable hour.

For example, the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1990 provides that it is a duty for the owner and tenant to keep accounts in connection with the tenancy and each party has a right to inspect the other's accounts at any reasonable time. There is no recognition that these records could also be kept electronically or that information can be exchanged between the parties without the need for a personal home visit. The bill also updates a small

number of provisions that only allow for the physical inspection of documents. The Funeral Funds Act 1979 currently requires a funeral contribution fund to provide for physical inspection at its office of a number of documents, including a copy of the latest annual return and a copy of the rules of the fund.

The bill will allow funeral funds to publish these documents on their website if they wish. This amendment recognises and will support the needs of these funds and their contributors and provides cost savings. It will also make this information more readily available to members through modern means of communication. Similarly, the Funeral Funds Act 1979 requires the secretary to make available certain documents for public access. The provision is outdated in that it only provides for physical inspection. The bill will allow the secretary to determine the form or manner in which these documents can be made available. This amendment will provide oversight, while also allowing the public to access information more quickly and efficiently by removing the requirement to physically visit an office.

Modernising these provisions to complement existing methods will support digitisation initiatives and also benefit both businesses and consumers as they can save time and reduce unnecessary costs. Schedule 6 modernises and harmonises the service of documents across 21 Acts in the Better Regulation and Fair Trading portfolio. The bill will futureproof the law by providing the option to serve documents by electronic means, not just email, and allowing extra methods to be added in the regulations. The changes will benefit industry by creating clearer and more consistent rules that support automation.

Consumers will have more choice in how they want to be contacted, creating a better experience and reducing the risk of delays. For example, the Strata Hub is an online hub that consolidates information about 82,000 strata schemes. Thousands of builders, owners, tenants and workers can access and send information through one customer-friendly portal. By inserting a standard electronic service method in every other Fair Trading Act, the bill will support future digitisation projects, including the adoption of technology like the Strata Hub, so documents can be electronically served in other regimes. While the bill modernises the service of documents, it also retains important protections for consumers and businesses.

In order to serve a document using electronic means, the recipient will need to consent to the service of documents in that way and provide the address or location. The bill does not replace methods like sending documents by post, but simply seeks to increase the range of options available for individuals and businesses to use. The bill also inserts the standard general service of documents provision in other Acts that do not contain a service of documents provision despite making references in the Act to serving notices. Specifying the acceptable methods of service in the Acts that are currently silent on the matter will provide legislative certainty and clarity.

Schedule 7 to the bill makes various miscellaneous amendments to modernise provisions and reduce the regulatory burden and to clarify the law so it remains fit for purpose and can operate as intended. I first turn to the amendments in schedule 7 to the bill relating to the Associations Incorporation Act 2009. The bill introduces several amendments seeking to provide greater flexibility, clarity and certainty for incorporated associations in New South Wales. Associations represent a diverse range of activities, including sporting clubs, music groups, charities, childcare services and migrant support services. By bringing people together for a shared purpose, associations are pivotal in weaving the social and cultural threads of the community, particularly in rural and regional areas.

Schedule 7.1 to the bill aims to increase privacy protections for association committee members and the public officer while reducing the potential for identity fraud or harm. The bill does this by removing unnecessary requirements from the Associations Incorporation Act 2009. First, it removes the requirement that the association's official address must be the address where the public officer can generally be found. Instead, it clarifies that an association's official address should be an address located in New South Wales at which documents can be served by post. Secondly, the bill removes the requirement for certain personal information about committee members and the public officer to be notified to the secretary and recorded in a register that can be made available to the public.

These amendments will increase protections for these groups as the date of birth and residential address of members will no longer be required or recorded in the register of committee members, which can be made available to the public. Similarly, it removes the requirement for the public officer's date of birth and address, where they can generally be found, to be notified to the secretary. A copy of the notification is available to any person who searches the public register. Details of a public officer's date of birth are not considered to be necessary for the proper administration of the Act. Stakeholders have raised concerns about publishing this information, including women's refuges, associations with members who are judicial officers, Corrective Services staff and staff who work in child protection. Many people in these fields do not ordinarily disclose their personal details to the general public due to safety concerns.

The bill also makes another important change for associations which clarifies that the process for finalising an association's affairs following involuntary cancellation is different from winding up an association. Section 77 deals with the finalisation of an association's affairs and the distribution of surplus assets following involuntary cancellation of an association's registration. However, the section uses the term "winding up", which potentially misrepresents the functions of the secretary under this provision. Distribution of surplus property in winding up an association is provided for under section 65 and applies a different process as it is undertaken in accordance with the applied Commonwealth provisions of the Corporations Act 2001. The amendment in the bill will remove the confusion between the application of sections 77 and 65 and will address the issue where an association has assets it cannot distribute.

Further, the bill also enables combined electronic and postal ballots for incorporated associations. Currently, associations can only choose one of these methods to carry out ballots. This is impractical and does not reflect the modern ways in which voting can be conducted. The amendment will allow more associations to use both postal and electronic ballots. It is likely to reduce red tape and expense for the administration of incorporated associations. I now turn to the miscellaneous amendments in schedule 7, which focus on improvements which modernise provisions, futureproof the law so it remains up to date and reduce regulatory and administrative burden. Schedules 7.1, 7.5 and 7.9 to the bill include amendments to the Associations Incorporation Act 2009, the Co-operative Housing and Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1998 and the Tow Truck Industry Act 1998 to remove the need to provide a statutory declaration where it is unnecessary. These Acts are the only Acts left in the portfolio that still contain references to provisions to submit statutory declarations.

The need for statutory declarations is unclear, given that false or misleading declarations are already general offences under the Crimes Act 1900. Some Acts also have specific provisions, making it an offence to make a false or misleading statement on a form. For example, the Tow Truck Industry Act 1998 authorises the secretary to require additional information to be verified by statutory declaration as part of an application. However, separately, it provides that it is an offence to make false or misleading statements as part of that application. The Associations Incorporation Act 2009 and the Co-operative Housing and Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1998 allow a person to provide a statutory declaration to fulfil certain requirements when there is already an approved form with a declaration section that can be used. The requirement to use a statutory declaration in these instances is unnecessary.

This reform will reduce the regulatory burden for customers by omitting unnecessary statutory declarations. It will also allow documents to be signed electronically without needing a witness, helping to create a more seamless customer experience. The reforms will not impact the integrity of the process nor the ability of NSW Fair Trading to actually take action as the specific dishonesty offences in the Act can be called upon as required. These amendments will complement work that has started nationally to modernise statutory declarations by removing redundant requirements. Where statutory declarations remain necessary, the national reforms create a more customer-friendly experience by allowing for electronic execution.

Schedules 7.3 and 7.4 amend the Biofuels Act 2007 and regulation to enable the regulation to "apply, adopt or incorporate a publication as in force at a particular time or as in force from time to time". The Biofuels Act currently relies on the international industry standard for biofuel sustainability and is the only Act in the portfolio to rely on external publications. This means that the regulation needs to be amended every time a new version of the publication is released. This amendment will reduce administrative effort and resource allocation spent on amending the regulation, allowing those resources to be allocated to other priorities. It will also avoid situations where a regulation, if not amended in time, refers to out-of-date documents.

Schedule 7.5 amends the Co-operative Housing and Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1998 to allow members to interact with the board using electronic means rather than only in person. Currently, a member can appear before the board in person to show why they should not be fined for breaching the society's rules. The only other option a member has is to send written statements to the board. There is no recognition that a person can meet this obligation virtually, such as via a video call, if that is their preference. Videoconferencing software on phones and computers has been available for years, yet people resisted its use as they would prefer to have a voice-only telephone conversation or meet in person. The COVID-19 lockdowns have now swept this all away, along with many outdated rules that required physical presence. Schedules 7.6 and 5.3 amend the Co-operative Housing and Starr-Bowkett Societies Act 1998 and the Funeral Funds Act 1979 to remove the need for businesses to keep and provide a copy of the regulating Act and regulation when requested by a person attending their office. This amendment will remove outdated and redundant provisions as copies of all Acts and regulations are available online via the NSW Legislation website and at other places.

I now turn to the miscellaneous amendments in schedule 7, which improve clarity of the law to ensure that it operates as intended. Schedule 7.7 corrects the wording in schedule 1 [56] to the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Act 2023 to clarify that, under the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013, parties can make claims

on the compensation fund to enforce a tribunal order, not just a judgement or an order of a court. Schedule 7.8 clarifies that the period in which a person can be disqualified from being involved in directing, managing or conducting business under the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002 can be either temporary or permanent. Currently, a person can be disqualified from being involved in the direction, management or conduct of the business of a licensee, but it does not specify a time period for the disqualification. The lack of a time period for this disqualification makes it difficult for Fair Trading to implement disciplinary decisions. The proposed amendment will improve clarity and is consistent with disciplinary provisions in other Acts that specify a time period.

Finally I turn to schedule 8 to the bill, which finalises amendments to the Liquor Act 2007 first proposed late last year under the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Act 2023. The vibrancy reforms Act was a major package of reforms, returning vibrancy to New South Wales' night-time economy and cutting red tape. It included amendments to part 12 of the Liquor Act 2007 to permanently grant local councils powers to temporarily allow outdoor dining and performance on local roads and public spaces. This amendment finalises that initiative by clarifying specific language about powers and correcting an administrative issue. Schedule 8.1 [1] inserts a new part 12 into the Liquor Act 2007 to continue to allow councils to temporarily allow the use of certain spaces for outdoor dining, performance and extension of foyer spaces. These amendments are of a savings and transitional nature, and schedule 8.2 will repeal the Liquor Amendment (Savings and Transitional Arrangements) Regulation 2023 on the commencement of the new part 12. It is important that we get these amendments right so we can deliver the full intent of the vibrancy reforms to the people of New South Wales.

This bill is an important step in the Government's stewardship approach to managing legislation. The amendments in the bill will improve the digital relevance of legislation and help to deliver world-class services for the people of New South Wales, now and in the future. I am confident that the reforms will reduce the regulatory burden and improve public confidence in the law. They will do this by modernising legacy provisions, recognising the evolving capabilities of technology and providing greater legislative clarity and consistency. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **PROPERTY NSW AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 20 March 2024.**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (14:48):** On behalf of the Opposition, I contribute to the debate on the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024 and confirm that the Coalition will be supporting the legislation. We are at a critical juncture in this State—indeed, across the entire country. Our population is growing and with it the demand for the fundamental elements that go into creating a functional, productive, and thriving society—namely, housing, water, schools, parks, hospitals, roads, footpaths, shopping centres and the like. It is no secret that this Government is struggling to meet these demands in New South Wales. The land use audit promised by the Premier last year is still nowhere to be seen. Finding viable options for housing is one thing; issues surrounding development and planning are another entirely. I will speak more on that in a moment.

First, I turn to the specifics of the bill. Property NSW was formed in July 2016 under the Baird Government, amalgamating four separate property agencies: Government Property NSW, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Teacher Housing Authority of NSW and Waste Assets Management Corporation. Now known as Property and Development NSW, or PDNSW, it is the central property agency for the New South Wales Government. PDNSW is a statutory corporation established under the Property NSW Act. It regularly acquires, holds, manages, maintains, repurposes and disposes of property for the Government and government agencies. The purpose of the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024 is to make amendments to the Property NSW Act 2006. The changes are to make clear the functions of Property and Development NSW, having regard to its role as the State's central property agency, and to improve the operational performance of Property and Development NSW. In other words, as the Minister has stated, the bill seeks to "improve efficiencies" in the operation of Property and Development NSW.

To "improve efficiencies" are the operative words. With a stated aim of "reducing red tape" together with "eliminating delays in the delivery of service", the bill represents a very rare glimmer of hope that the Government recognises the need to try to alleviate the infrastructure bottlenecks we are seeing. As the Minister outlined in his second reading speech, the changes proposed by the bill "are not controversial". But that is not to say they are inconsequential. The bill, taken in good faith, contains commonsense changes in a portfolio often beset by stagnation. But I caution that any changes to legislation, controversial or otherwise, should never be taken lightly, and that any amendments should be enacted responsibly.



The Minister outlined in detail in his speech the specific changes to the legislation, so I will not repeat what has already been said other than to briefly outline, as the Minister stated, "the various miscellaneous amendments to the Property NSW Act," that are expected to pave the way for Property and Development NSW to better manage the Government's vast property portfolio. The changes include changing the name of Property NSW to Property and Development NSW throughout the Act in order to avoid confusion, and reflecting the primary objective of PDNSW to promote development of property that accords with best practice environment and planning standards, that is environmentally sustainable and that applies innovative environmental building and public domain design.

The bill confers new functions including developing, holding and managing land use information technology, and entering into agreements with non-government entities. It clarifies existing functions exercisable by PDNSW, such as designing workplaces for government; acquiring property for development; and acquiring, holding and managing contaminated land; and providing services and doing other things in relation to contaminated land for certain purposes. It enables PDNSW to share information technology that it has developed and maintains, such as the Land iQ system—an important point I will elaborate on in a moment. The bill outlines that PDNSW may compulsorily acquire land in accordance with the relevant Act for the purposes of PDNSW's functions and also clarifies that a private subsidiary corporation cannot compulsorily acquire land. It clarifies the status of land subject to a lease under the Crown Land Management Act 2016 on the vesting of property in PDNSW.

The bill allows the creation of wholly owned subsidiary corporations to hold property on behalf of PDNSW with the approval of the Treasurer. I put on record the Opposition's reticence towards the creation of additional and potentially duplicate layers of bureaucracy and urge that this function be used sparingly in the future. The bill simplifies the vesting of property between government entities to allow the Minister for Lands and Property, by order published in the *Government Gazette*, to transfer property specified in the order to PDNSW. It allows PDNSW to ask the Valuer General of New South Wales to provide advice or conduct a valuation of land and assets. It makes valuations for the New South Wales property register consistent with Treasury policy, and it makes minor grammatical changes to the Act.

I make the following comments regarding Land iQ. Introduced under the previous Coalition Government, Land iQ is world-leading, innovative technology. Described as "supercharging" the Government's response to the housing crisis, it played a key role in the previous Government's work in response to the 2022 floods in northern New South Wales. It is award-winning technology that streamlines the planning system, helping government agencies make faster, smarter decisions about the use of land. The bill allows PDNSW to make that service available to government agencies and others, something that is hoped will improve planning outcomes across the State. Technology like Land iQ will hopefully enable the Government to honour its promise to deliver the long-awaited property audit as soon as possible, while also ensuring that commonsense solutions are at the forefront of any and all development and planning decisions, which must be taken in consultation with stakeholders at all levels.

We thank the Minister's office for organising a briefing on this legislation and for the helpful examples provided by Mr Leon Walker, Deputy Secretary of Property, Development and Valuation, and Chief Executive Officer of Property and Development NSW, outlining some of the practical challenges his organisation has faced and how the changes made in the legislation will help PDNSW manage the property portfolio it administers on behalf of the New South Wales Government. The Coalition supports the bill to help reduce red tape within PDNSW. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (14:56):** I speak in support of the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024 and commend the Minister for Lands and Property for his work in this space. The bill amends 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. Property and Development NSW is a statutory corporation established under the Act. It is the State's central property agency and is responsible for the management and delivery of large-scale or complex real estate projects, transactions, workplace strategy, design and delivery, including the management of the New South Wales Government's significant property portfolio.

The bill makes various miscellaneous amendments to the Act to reflect the increasingly broad range of roles and responsibilities of Property and Development NSW, to resolve deficiencies in the Act that have become evident over time and to support better use and efficiency of the whole government property portfolio. Specific provisions of the bill include changing the name of the Act from the Property NSW Act 2006 to the Property and Development NSW Act 2006, better reflecting the current role of the corporation. The bill also amends and inserts definitions for the purposes of the Act as well as consequential amendments of other legislation to change the legal name of the corporation to Property and Development NSW. That change will avoid confusion for stakeholders.

The bill also introduces minor miscellaneous amendments to update the language of the Act in accordance with current plain English drafting styles. Several amendments provide that the following are functions of Property and Development NSW. First, to design workspaces for use by the Government or government agencies; secondly, to develop, hold and manage information technology relating to land use analysis or the management, maintenance or improvement of land; thirdly, to enter into agreements in certain circumstances; fourthly, to acquire property for development; and, lastly, to acquire, hold and manage contaminated land, and to provide services and do other things in relation to contaminated land for certain purposes. Such amendments provide Property and Development NSW with the flexibility to deal with both government and non-government parties.

The bill also provides that Property and Development NSW may ask the Valuer General to provide advice or conduct a valuation of land and assets, which may be needed if a valuation is noncompliant or if an agency is unable to provide one. That will ensure consistency in land valuations and ensure that the corporation is able to fulfill its obligations to maintain the government land register. The House can make a difference. The bill will enable Property and Development NSW to better manage the Government's vast property portfolio by supporting the improvement of its operations. The amendments in the bill will aid in reducing delays in the administration of property owned or managed by Property and Development NSW. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:00):** I make a contribution to debate in support of the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024. The bill aims to clarify and improve the functions and services provided by Property and Development NSW in its role as the State's central property agency. The bill will update the name of the Act from the Property NSW Act 2006 to the Property and Development NSW Act 2006 to better align with the role of Property and Development NSW and the development that the Act authorises the corporation to undertake in appropriate circumstances. Further, the bill changes the name of Property NSW to Property and Development NSW to better align with its role and to eliminate any confusion for stakeholders. The bill also makes consequential amendments to other legislation to update reference to the corporation and the name of the Act.

The bill makes various minor amendments to the language used in the legislation for the purpose of aligning it with current plain English drafting and creating uniform legislation. The bill specifies the roles and services of Property and Development NSW, which include designing workplaces for use by the Government or government agencies; developing, holding and managing information technology relating to land use analysis or the management, maintenance or improvement of land to obtain property for development; acquiring, holding and managing contaminated land; and being responsible for the service of contaminated land for certain purposes. Specifying those functions provides clarity and flexibility to Property and Development NSW to deal with government and non-government parties, particularly relating to agreements for the use of land that has been vested in, managed or held by the corporation.

The amendments in the bill will permit Property and Development NSW to disclose information technology that it has created and maintains, such as the Land iQ system. Land iQ is a data platform that assists government agencies to make faster and smarter decisions regarding the use of their land. The bill ensures that Property and Development NSW has the authority to compulsorily obtain land in accordance with the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991 for the purpose of the corporation's functions. Further, it clarifies that a private subsidiary corporation cannot compulsorily obtain land, unlike a wholly owned subsidiary corporation.

The bill will limit the time frame and costs involved with the compulsory acquisition of land by excluding the need for Property and Development NSW to depend on other agencies to obtain land on its behalf and transfer the land to the corporation. Clarification is made to the status of land that can be leased under the Crown Management Act 2016 for the vesting of property in Property and Development NSW. Land that is to be vested in Property and Development NSW will cease to be a lease under the Crown Management Act 2016 and will instead become a lease between the lessee and the corporation on the existing terms before the transfer of the property to the corporation. It is important to note that any existing rights and terms, including native title rights, will remain in place as they were immediately before the transfer of land and property to the corporation.

The bill will empower Property and Development NSW, with the approval of the Treasurer, to establish wholly owned subsidiary corporations for specific purposes, which will allow the separation of assets held by Property and Development NSW and allow it to focus on other functions. Currently, for property to be transferred to Property and Development NSW, approval from the Minister for Lands and Property and the Governor is required. The bill simplifies the vesting process by allowing the Minister to transfer property as specified in the order published in the *Government Gazette* and removing the need for approval from the Governor.

Under the Act, Property and Development NSW may request advice from the Valuer General about the details in the land register. It may also request that a land valuation be conducted and provided. The amendments in the bill serve to assist Property and Development NSW in managing the vast property portfolio of the

New South Wales Government. They will reduce time and costs relating to the administration of the Government's property portfolio and provide the corporation with the tools needed to efficiently carry out its duties. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:06):** On behalf of The Greens, I speak in debate on the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024. The bill makes a series of seemingly non-controversial amendments to the Property NSW Act 2006 to streamline and expand services provided by Property NSW and to rename the agency Property and Development NSW. The Greens recognise that the State's central property management agency must be able to perform its functions in an efficient manner and that the provisions set out in the bill enable that. Beyond renaming Property NSW to Property and Development NSW, the bill allows the agency to compulsorily acquire land, engage in leases of Crown lands, negotiate access to data by other agencies and persons and acquire, manage and remediate contaminated lands. Property and Development NSW would also have the new power to request valuations of land from the Valuer General and to establish wholly owned subsidiary corporations for the purposes of land management.

In principle, that is a suite of functions that The Greens consider appropriate for the State's central property agency. That said, we are concerned that the drafting of the bill is light on specifics on some of the new functions of Property and Development NSW, specifically those pertaining to compulsory acquisition, dealings with land and requirements relating to particular leases. The Greens understand that the Government will be moving amendments to address those concerns, and we support those sensible amendments. Because of concerns raised by The Greens, the amendments to the bill will restrict Property and Development NSW's ability to enter into a lease agreement with a private entity unless the property will be used in a manner that delivers benefits to the State. It will also require the agency to give public notice, by way of the *Government Gazette*, within 14 days of entering a lease of more than 20 years with a lessee that is a private entity.

The bill will limit the scope of Property and Development NSW's proposed compulsory acquisition powers so that they can only be used to achieve the principal objectives of Property and Development NSW in section 10 of the Act. I note that that refers to both environmental and social community considerations. The Greens will not oppose the bill in this Chamber and even though we support the Government's amendments that address some of our concerns, we have additional concerns over the new powers conferred in relation to "development". Specifically, we note that the bill allows for Property and Development NSW to provide access to "information technology relating to land use analysis or the management, maintenance or improvement of land" to "government agencies and other persons". It raises obvious questions as to who those other persons are and whether private entities and corporations will be able to use the tools and data produced by the Government for their own private interests and profits.

That would be a complete reversal of the commitment that the New South Wales Labor Government had to end the privatisation agenda of the former Liberal-Nationals Government. The Greens would have serious concerns if those "other persons" included private entities being able to access that data. I recall a time when the then Minister for Housing, Melinda Pavey, announced one of the flagship changes to the New South Wales housing strategy that identified a database that would allow property developers to look at what public land was available to put in place unsolicited proposals as a way to further privatise public land. That is the last thing we want to see in New South Wales.

The Greens also note that the bill does not provide an avenue for parliamentary oversight of leases entered into by Property and Development NSW that have a term of more than 20 years. It is absolutely necessary and in the public interest for the Parliament to have oversight of long leases entered into by the agency to ensure that they are in line with the objects of the Act and deliver public benefit. To that end, I understand that my Greens colleague in the upper House, Ms Sue Higginson, will move amendments to the bill that would grant the Parliament a disallowance power on any lease entered into by Property and Development NSW with a term of more than 20 years. That is a sensible transparency measure that I urge the Government to carefully consider and support.

I note that Property and Development NSW is currently undertaking an audit of all public lands in New South Wales to identify unused or underutilised land that is appropriate for residential development. The Greens look forward to further updates on the progress and findings of that audit, which is happening against the backdrop of what we know is a worsening housing crisis and a renewed Government focus on increasing housing supply. We hope that the powers the bill grants Property and Development NSW in relation to development and compulsory acquisitions can be used strategically to achieve that goal by allowing the compulsory acquisition and consolidation of land adjacent to vacant public lands to create larger sites for residential, public, social and affordable housing developments.

I have said it many times before and I will say it again: The Greens accept that new supply is part of the solution to the housing crisis, but the type of supply is what matters most. It is crucial that we focus particularly

on building public and genuinely affordable housing for those on lower incomes who are struggling in these hard, private rental market times and in a cost-of-living crisis. The Greens reaffirm their calls that all appropriate public land identified through the audit must be developed entirely as public housing and that anything less than that is a privatisation agenda and is something that should not be supported by the Parliament. The public land that is part of that audit should not be sold off in part or in whole to private developers to add to their profits while the community is struggling under the private rental and housing markets that are failing to provide safe, secure and affordable homes for everybody in New South Wales to live in.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (15:12):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024. The bill is an important step in improving process and removing red tape related to the administration of the Government's vast property portfolio. That burden lies with Property and Development NSW. I take this opportunity to thank both the corporation for its continued commitment to the delivery of that aim and the Minister for introducing the bill to the House. As the Minister said in his opening remarks, a dominant purpose of the bill is to remove red tape and simplify processes related to management of the Government's property portfolio.

Since its establishment, Property and Development NSW has played a crucial role in managing the Government's property portfolio. Over time that role has expanded to accommodate the changing needs of government and government agencies. In turn, that has required Property and Development NSW to undertake a range of activities related to the acquisition, management and maintenance of land. Certain activities such as the remediation of contaminated land have required Property and Development NSW to navigate significant hurdles in order to carry out development or provide services related to that work. More often than not, Property and Development NSW is required to expend considerable time and resources in achieving its aims. That is not an effective or efficient means through which Property and Development NSW should be asked to work. It is vital that the Government remove barriers which hinder the capacity of Property and Development NSW to exercise its functions, having regard to its expanded role and responsibilities in recent years.

The bill aims to improve efficiencies in the administration of the Government's property portfolio. It does that by, among other things, clarifying or otherwise amending the functions of Property and Development NSW and the circumstances upon which the corporation may exercise those functions. More importantly, the bill removes red tape and improves efficiencies by: first, 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; secondly, providing Property and Development NSW with the power to acquire land by agreement or by compulsory process in accordance with the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991; thirdly, allowing Property and Development NSW to enter into agreements with both government and non-government parties for the use of land vested in or managed by Property and Development NSW; and, fourthly, allowing Property and Development NSW to create wholly owned subsidiary corporations for specific purposes.

It is important to understand how those efficiencies will be created. I now turn to consider them in detail. With respect to the vesting of property in Property and Development NSW, the bill removes the role of the Governor in the administration of vesting properties and instead enables the Minister to transfer property to Property and Development NSW by order published in the *Government Gazette*. Those amendments will enable Property and Development NSW to more efficiently vest properties from other agencies for program and project delivery, such as future delivery of housing or other Government objectives. The removal of the Governor's approval will remove duplication of process and improve the overall efficiency of vesting property in Property and Development NSW.

With respect to the compulsory acquisition of land, I note that Property and Development NSW does not currently hold any compulsory acquisition powers and presently relies on the compulsory acquisition powers of other agencies, such as the Planning Ministerial Corporation, Office of Strategic Lands and NSW Public Works, or direct negotiations with non-government parties to acquire land or property. The current process is inefficient and results in lengthy negotiations, complex approval processes, additional administration, extra costs and the unnecessary involvement of multiple Ministers. The lack of compulsory acquisition powers has resulted in unnecessary delays and costs to government.

That is perhaps best illustrated by the State's acquisition of the former Truegain waste oil refinery, where the Government was forced to step in and acquire the land for remediation purposes. As Property and Development NSW did not have the power to compulsorily acquire the site, it had to acquire the site via the Planning Ministerial Corporation before it could provide services for the remediation of the land that had become contaminated. Another example involves the land acquisitions and transfers required to enable development of Frenchs Forest town centre on the former Forest High School site. Property and Development NSW was again required to utilise the Planning Ministerial Corporation to acquire the land subject to multiple agency and ministerial approvals and a protracted and costly transaction process. In both instances compulsory acquisition

powers would have enabled the transactions to have been achieved far more efficiently and cost-effectively, saving months in resource time and tens of thousands of dollars in consultant and legal fees.

The bill provides Property and Development NSW with the power to compulsorily acquire land to reduce the cost and complexity of existing arrangements, ultimately benefiting the New South Wales taxpayer, increasing the efficiency of government operations and freeing up resources to pursue the Government's objectives. Providing compulsory acquisition powers to Property and Development NSW will enable it to fulfil its objectives more efficiently, ensuring effective use of land and property in the most cost-effective manner possible for the Government. With compulsory acquisition powers, Property and Development NSW can accelerate services without a reliance on other government agencies, which requires considerably more financial and human resources and multiple approval processes. The bill will also reduce the administrative burden experienced by agencies in the land valuation process. It does this by clarifying that the value of land is to be determined in accordance with all applicable Treasury policies as well as any directions issued by the Treasurer. The bill, therefore, reduces the potential need for an agency to procure more than one land valuation.

The bill also allows Property and Development NSW, with the approval of the Treasurer, to establish wholly owned subsidiaries for specific purposes. The creation of these 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 re-use. Examples of this are Parramatta North, the former Manly hospital, and Lot 4B, Royal North Shore Hospital. The bill will also support a greater focus on adaptive re-use projects and separate strategies and reporting. The bill also enables Property and Development NSW to grant interests, such as leases on land held by the corporation, to government and non-government parties. This allows Property and Development NSW to more effectively manage the use of the Government's property portfolio, particularly in circumstances where the agreement is necessary for a related government purpose.

The benefits of making this change include reducing vacancies in underutilised spaces within property held or managed by Property and Development NSW; improving the management of precincts, such as the Parramatta North Precinct, to ensure the right mix of tenants is achieved having regard to the needs of the area; and additional economic and environmental benefits related to agreements for the use of land held or managed by Property and Development NSW. Together, these amendments improve efficiencies in the administration and management of the State's vast property portfolio. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (15:21):** I am pleased to support the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024. As the Minister stated previously, the bill responds to the evolving list of responsibilities undertaken by Property and Development NSW, particularly given its role as the State's central property agency. Therefore, it is paramount that the Property NSW Act is updated to reflect the increased role and scope of responsibility of Property and Development NSW. The bill does just that by amending, or otherwise clarifying, the functions of Property and Development NSW to ensure they remain current and fit for purpose.

The Property NSW Act was enacted in 2006. It established Property and Development NSW as the central land and property agency of the New South Wales Government. Its primary mandate is to improve efficiencies in the management of the Government's property portfolio, particularly in relation to generic properties held by the State, such as government owned and leased office space. Since its inception, Property and Development NSW has played a crucial role in securing office spaces for the Government and government agencies. It has also taken a lead role in the management of government workplaces as well as other land held by the State. Over time, that role has become more onerous, particularly given the evolving needs of government and its agencies. It is, therefore, crucial that the Government provides Property and Development NSW with the tools it needs to continue its work. The bill does exactly that.

The bill proposes key changes that will enable Property and Development NSW to more efficiently manage the Government's vast property portfolio. The bill does this by clarifying the circumstances in which Property and Development NSW can exercise its functions, including in relation to the vesting of property in Property and Development NSW. Where appropriate, the bill expands the scope of existing functions to ensure they remain fit for purpose. A relatively new role of Property and Development NSW is leading the development of property-related technology. Property and Development NSW has established and manages Land iQ, which is a land use evaluation tool with applications for government, local councils and the private sector. This reduces duplication and cost across government by consolidating existing New South Wales Government databases and methodologies in a spatially enabled and collaborative online platform.

The bill will clarify that Property and Development NSW is able to develop, hold and manage information technology, like Land iQ, and share it with other agencies and key government stakeholders, including local councils and Aboriginal land councils. In addition, Property and Development NSW is often tasked with remediating contaminated land. This includes where Property and Development NSW has been issued a

management order by the Environment Protection Authority, such as in the case of the former Waratah Gasworks and the Hunters Hill Radium Hill refinery. The bill amends the Act to make it clear that Property and Development NSW can carry out this important work. [*Quorum called for.*]

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

Property and Development NSW manages the New South Wales Government's workplace portfolio, with approximately 1.2 million square metres of government office space spread across the State. This is currently the largest component of Property and Development NSW's operations, with a rent roll of approximately \$610 million per annum. To avoid doubt, the bill clarifies the scope of existing provisions within the Act dealing with the acquisition and management of land by Property and Development NSW. In particular, the bill provides that Property and Development NSW can enter into agreements with government agencies or other persons for the use of property vested in or managed by Property and Development NSW. The bill also provides that Property and Development NSW can design workspaces for use by the Government or government agencies, including the fit-out of the workspaces—a core function that is regularly undertaken by Property and Development NSW.

In its role in managing the Government's workplace portfolio, Property and Development NSW is also a national leader in sustainable practices and development, reducing water and electricity usage and carbon emissions. The bill amends the Act to include new objectives that promote development that accords with best practice environmental and planning standards, is environmentally sustainable and applies innovative environmental building and public domain design. To reduce the administrative burden and delays associated with the acquisition of land and the transfer of that land to Property and Development NSW, the bill includes provisions to enable Property and Development NSW to acquire land by agreement or by compulsory acquisition in accordance with the Land Acquisition (Just Terms) Compensation Act 1991. This function will also be exercisable by wholly owned subsidiaries of Property and Development NSW, further minimising the costs associated with the acquisition and transfer of land between government agencies. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (15:31):** I am pleased to speak in support of the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024. As the Minister for Lands and Property noted, this bill will support better and more efficient use of the whole-of-government property portfolio. It will improve efficiencies in the operations of Property and Development NSW by clarifying the scope of those functions, and it will enable Property and Development NSW to better manage the Government's vast property portfolio. One of the ways it will achieve this is with information technology. The bill confers new functions for Property and Development NSW including developing, holding and managing land use information technology. By empowering Property and Development NSW to develop, hold and manage information technology relating to land use analysis or the management, maintenance or improvement of land, we ensure the benefits of that technology are available for use by government agencies and the people of New South Wales.

The bill will also clarify that Property and Development NSW can share technology with other agencies and key government stakeholders, including local councils and Aboriginal land councils, and the people of New South Wales. Property and Development NSW leads the development of property-related technology. Property and Development NSW has established and manages Land iQ, a land use evaluation tool with applications for government, local councils and the private sector. A significant number of bespoke methodologies, tools and systems are used across government for land use analysis. Land iQ brings all of these into one place, which streamlines existing planning and pre-development processes. It is a spatially enabled, whole-of-government strategic land use evaluation tool.

Property and Development NSW led the development of this groundbreaking data platform designed to enhance the planning system and has received recognition for its innovative approach. Land iQ won the Technology and Digital Innovation category at the Planning Institute of Australia Awards for Planning Excellence 2023. It also won the Innovation in Property Award at the Australian Property Institute Excellence in Property Awards 2023. The tool was developed to reduce the number of related, yet different, methodologies and tools used across government to assess the impacts of different land uses and reduce due diligence timeframes and government spending on consultants. It leverages a common database of inputs and assumptions to inform evidence-based decision-making on land use. It enables users to analyse land and property assets in a more consistent and strategic way. Land iQ is an in-house tool developed and tested in collaboration with agencies across New South Wales government and in partnership with private sector partners WSP Australia, Giraffe, and Aerometrex.

Land iQ provides a holistic and strategic approach to land use decision-making; a centralised and comprehensive data register of relevant data sources; a robust digital visualisation planning tool that leverages urban analytics to support scenario planning and business cases; an in-house solution that makes it easier for government to work together with a collaborative environment for sharing projects, datasets and developing scenarios to test potential use of land; and improved community outcomes. It is a tool accessible to all government

agencies with a licence. While the platform is currently only available to government agencies, it is intended that this tool will continue to be refined and consideration be given to developing licence options to make it available more broadly to councils, local Aboriginal land councils, researchers and industry. Changes to the Act are required to clarify that Property and Development NSW is able to do this.

Land iQ is different from other government tools as it has integrated over 40 land use typologies into one platform, which enables place-based scenario analysis. This functionality provides a standardised approach to creating, sharing and evaluating land use scenarios against one another and measuring potential impacts. The tool can be used to identify sites with a set of criteria, undertake site layouts/feasibilities, make preliminary assessments of business cases, and assist strategic planning and development assessments by analysing the local context from street/suburb scale to local government area and regional context to understand the existing economic, social, demographic, cultural and environmental contexts.

Land iQ empowers government agencies to make informed decisions about land use, expedite planning processes and explore practical solutions across the State. Notably, the Housing Recovery Taskforce used Land iQ to identify and analyse sites for temporary accommodation following the Lismore and Northern Rivers region floods in 2022. The tool will be utilised for identification of sites for long-term residential dwellings. Land iQ provides a consistent, whole-of-government approach to site identification. The tool will allow users to understand planning context and identify sites with acceptable environmental risks when delivering residential development. Land iQ is being used to support the Government's audit of public landholdings to identify land that can be repurposed for housing, as the State grapples with an unprecedented housing emergency.

Land iQ reduces duplication and cost across government by consolidating existing New South Wales Government datasets and methodologies in a spatially enabled, collaborative online platform. The bill will clarify that Property and Development NSW is able to develop, hold and manage information technology, like Land iQ, and share it with other agencies and key government stakeholders, including local councils and Aboriginal land councils, and the people of New South Wales. I am pleased to speak in support of the bill because it improves operational efficiencies and ensures that Property and Development NSW can more effectively manage the Government's vast property portfolio. The bill is a proportionate response to the expanding role performed by Property and Development NSW. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (15:38):** In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Newtown, Fairfield, Mount Druitt, Camden, South Coast, Cootamundra and Cabramatta for their meaningful contributions to this debate on the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024. I address some matters raised during debate on the bill. I thank my colleagues for raising key points, including the important role Property and Development NSW plays as the central government property agency for New South Wales; the great contribution that Property and Development NSW can make to improve efficiencies and manage the whole-of-government property portfolio; the importance of Property and Development NSW in developing technology, such as Land iQ, to improve practices across all government agencies; and the justified reasons that Property and Development NSW requires the need to compulsorily acquire land.

I also address a matter raised by the member for Cootamundra relating to the wholly owned subsidiaries and reaffirm the Government's commitment to reduce red tape and confusion in the Government's property portfolio. It is important to note that there is cross-party support to ensure better and more efficient use of the whole-of-government property portfolio. To conclude, the Property NSW Amendment Bill 2024 will better reflect the broad range of services provided by Property and Development NSW to the Government and its agencies. It will improve efficiencies in the operations of Property and Development NSW by clarifying the scope of those functions and enable Property and Development NSW to better manage the Government's vast property portfolio. The amendments contained in the bill represent required reform to how the New South Wales Government manages its property portfolio.

To address the concerns raised by the member for Newtown, I foreshadow that the Government will move amendments to the bill to improve drafting that could otherwise result in ambiguities if not addressed. I will discuss the amendments during the course of debate. This Government is committed to ensuring efficient and improved management of the New South Wales Government's property portfolio. The Property NSW Act has not been amended since its establishment in 2006 and requires change to ensure that it is more able to adapt to the needs of the New South Wales Government.

The Government wants to improve efficiency of the management of the New South Wales Government property portfolio and modernise the Act for the needs of the Government. The bill contains important reforms to update and clarify functions to support the New South Wales Government, such as providing information and advisory services like the Land iQ platform; enabling compulsory acquisition of land to reduce red tape and time

delays; and enabling the creation of public subsidiaries to ensure easy identification of agencies responsible for the management of government-owned properties.

The reforms will also improve efficiency, such as by clarifying and simplifying the process to vest land to Property and Development NSW, including leases; reducing administrative burden to government agencies by clarifying that land is to be valued in accordance with NSW Treasury policy; and enabling leasing to non-government entities to fill short-term vacancies or to ensure better use of government-owned property. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of efficiently managing its extensive property portfolio. The bill will reduce red tape and improve the administration of the New South Wales Government's property portfolio, making it easier to support government property priorities.

The Legislation Review Committee has reviewed the bill in accordance with section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987 and has referred one matter for consideration by Parliament. I will now respond to that matter. The committee provided comment on the proposed compulsory acquisition powers of Property and Development NSW. The committee noted that existing acquisition powers held by other government agencies often define how or when that power can be used by the agency. The committee noted that there does not appear to be a similar provision for Property and Development NSW and referred the matter for consideration. In response to that, I will outline a proposed amendment to provide clarification for how and when Property and Development can use that power.

The reforms will make a meaningful improvement to the management of the New South Wales Government's property portfolio across the State. Lastly, I thank Francesca Leverkus, the Director of Operations, Property and Development NSW. Her stewardship of the bill has been first class. I thank Francesca and her team for the many hours they put into the crafting of the bill. Their great work is reflected in the fact that the bill has support across all parties. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

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

#### **Consideration in Detail**

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (15:45):** By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-054D in globo:

#### **No. 1 Requirements in relation to particular leases**

Page 5, Schedule 1. Insert after line 3—

#### **[15A] Section 11A**

Insert after section 11—

#### **11A Requirements in relation to particular leases**

- (1) Property and Development NSW may enter into a lease in relation to a relevant building with a lessee that is not a government agency only if the area the subject of the lease will be used under the lease for a purpose that—
  - (a) is not inconsistent with, or is complementary to, the building's existing uses, and
  - (b) delivers benefits to the State.
- (2) If Property and Development NSW enters into a long-term lease with a lessee that is not a government agency, whether or not the lease is in relation to a relevant building, Property and Development NSW must publish notice of the lease in the Gazette—
  - (a) within the period prescribed in the regulations, or
  - (b) if a period is not prescribed in the regulations—not later than 14 days after entering into the lease.
- (3) In this section—
 

*long-term lease* means a lease with an original term of more than 20 years.

*relevant building* means a commercial building—

  - (a) owned by Property and Development NSW, and



- (b) used for the purpose of providing offices for government agencies.

No. 2 **Land dealings**

Page 5, Schedule 1. Insert before line 4—

**[15B] Section 13 Land dealings**

Insert after section 13(1)—

- (1A) Property and Development NSW may dispose of or deal with land under subsection (1) only for the following purposes—
- (a) the achievement of Property and Development NSW's principal objectives under section 10,
  - (b) the exercise of Property and Development NSW's functions under this part.

No. 3 **Compulsory acquisition of land**

Page 5, Schedule 1[16], proposed section 14A(1), lines 7–9. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

- (1) Property and Development NSW may acquire land, by agreement or compulsory process, under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* for the following purposes—
- (a) the achievement of Property and Development NSW's principal objectives under section 10,
  - (b) the exercise of Property and Development NSW's functions under this part.

The amendments are necessary to remove legislative ambiguities that would arise if the bill were passed without amendment. Amendment No. 1 provides additional requirements for leases to non-government entities and requires Property and Development NSW to ensure that uses are consistent with, or complementary to, the building's existing uses and that they deliver a benefit to the State. Amendment No. 1 also requires leases for a term exceeding 20 years to non-government entities on land owned by Property and Development NSW to be gazetted. This provides additional visibility of any long-term leases entered into with non-government entities. Amendments Nos 2 and 3 provide further clarity that dealings with land and compulsory acquisitions of land must be in connection with the functions and objectives of Property and Development NSW, which are set out in the legislation. I commend the amendments to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that Government amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-054D be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

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

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

**Third Reading**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (DE-AMALGAMATIONS) BILL 2024**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 6 February 2024.**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:48):** On behalf of the Opposition, I contribute to debate on the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024, which the Government has taken almost 12 months to produce. Originally we heard the Minister say he was not prepared to legislate due to his inability to bring the crossbench to the table, but I am pleased to see the Minister has decided to introduce legislation to provide a pathway as was originally in the road map prepared by the previous Government.

As history tells, the decision to demerge Cootamundra-Gundagai was made on 23 August 2022, and only after that decision was the roadblock in section 218CC identified. It was clear that, with the election looming, time to legislate that anomaly was running out. A road map was put in place to clearly identify the need for the incoming Government to prioritise legislation to enable the demerger process. As we now know, the Minister failed to pursue that road map and instead kicked the can down the road, with an announcement on 3 October

2023 to redirect the Cootamundra-Gundagai council and its communities to yet another pathway. In his second reading speech we heard him criticise the former Government for this mess, but we must not forget that it was the Labor Party in opposition who moved the 218CC amendment in the first place. And now we see the Labor Party repeal that section, including the important clause requiring the Government to fund the demerger.

We heard the Minister in his second reading speech decry the former Government's merger policy and praise the Labor Opposition's warning of the likely negative consequences at the time. Of course, the wise counsel came from the previous members of the Carr Labor Government, who are on the record as claiming that the 2004 Carr Labor Government's policy of the forced merger of councils would substantially improve the financial performance of local governments. But we all know that there are some success stories in the Coalition's merger policy, as I am sure there were in the former Labor Government's merger policy.

As an aside, I recall a conversation I had during the 2016 mergers with an administrator who relayed then Opposition leader Foley's view at the time, which was that, if it was not the Coalition Government's policy moving on mergers, it would have been the Labor Opposition's move when elected to government. As much as we can stand in Parliament pointing out the faults of times past, what is important is the future, and equally important is our current opportunity to work together to ensure that councils across New South Wales are enabled to successfully serve their communities.

I agree with the Minister that this bill recognises the importance of democracy and the role of councils in shaping the future of their local government areas. The bill will require that any de-amalgamation proposal be led by the council elected by its community. But I note that the Act still retains the ability for community-led proposals under section 215. The bill will require the council to prepare and consult on a business case that informs the community of the consequences, including financial impacts, of a proposed de-amalgamation. The business case must include details about how the de-amalgamation will occur and how two or more viable councils will be created.

It must include details of the estimated financial impacts of the de-amalgamation, how the amalgamated council will finance the de-amalgamation, an estimate of the rates and charges that the councils for the de-amalgamated areas may levy, and any further details, such as the division of assets and liabilities and electoral ward boundaries reasonably required to bring a demerger about. This is vitally important to ensure that community members are informed about any likely increases or decreases in their rates before going to vote on the issue through a community plebiscite. The plebiscite requires compulsory voting for electors on the electoral roll. If the majority of electors across the council area supports the de-amalgamation proposal, it can proceed.

The Minister stated in his second reading speech that he thought it was inappropriate for a responsible State Government to finance a local issue such as council de-amalgamation and pass those costs on to other communities. The bill removes a section of the Act that would suggest that the State has financial liability for council demergers. This is in stark contrast to the Labor Party's previous stance, while in opposition: It was a Labor Opposition that moved the amendment to enshrine that responsibility in the first place. The Olympic qualifications are well and truly underway, and it is indeed an Olympic-standard backflip by this Government. I encourage the Minister to prepare himself for his presentation in the gold medal ceremony if he allows this legislation to go through as is. But I digress.

It is for this reason that the Opposition will move amendments to this bill, allowing the Minister to make a grant not exceeding \$5 million to offset the financial impacts of de-amalgamation and a loan to the new council at interest rates determined by the New South Wales Treasury Corporation to defray de-amalgamation costs. Further to that, the business case as prepared by the council is to assume that a grant will be made by the Minister to the new council to offset the financial impacts of the de-amalgamation and the amount of the assumed grant, and to indicate whether it assumes the amalgamated council will receive a loan from the Minister to defray de-amalgamation costs and, if so, the assumed amount and terms of the loan.

The Local Government Boundaries Commission is critical to the independent assessment of the business case and proposal by the council. The commission will examine the business case and proposal, having regard to the factors currently set out in the Act, and will report to the Minister on its findings. The Opposition will move an amendment to ensure that, upon receipt of the commission's report, the Minister will ensure that it is publicly released within 48 hours after it is provided to the Minister, as is currently in the legislation. From the report, the Minister will determine whether to approve the council proceeding with the constitutional referendum for de-amalgamation. I note that the bill provides for transitional arrangements of de-amalgamation proposals submitted to the Minister before the commencement of the amendments and that this recognises the substantial effort that has already been made by Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council.

Importantly, clause 11 of part 4 extends chapter 11, part 6, of the Local Government Act to de-amalgamations to ensure that council staff members are protected during and after de-amalgamation proposals.

Amongst other things, this means that there are to be no forced redundancies of staff members during a proposal period, that staff members transferring to a new council keep all of their entitlements and, importantly, that there are no forced redundancies of non-senior staff members for three years after the de-amalgamation takes effect. Overall, the bill will provide for a transparent, council-led process and, with amendments proposed by the Opposition, a fair and supportive process. If the Government is genuine in wanting any de-amalgamation process to be a success, it will contribute funds. I encourage all members to support the amendments.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (15:56):** I support the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. In 2017 I was elected to an amalgamated council. During my time serving as a local councillor and the Lord Mayor of the City of Parramatta, I heard from residents and councillors living in and representing other amalgamated councils from across New South Wales about their local challenges. Some local communities felt voiceless and disempowered by the amalgamations forced upon them by the Coalition. As an amalgamated council the City of Parramatta experienced its own set of challenges. However, most of these have been of a political nature as a direct result of the deliberate gerrymandering by the former Liberal-Nationals Government, which, ironically, in a sweet twist of fate spectacularly backfired when the Liberal powerbrokers barred Liberal Party members from running at the 2021 elections. They completely shot themselves in the foot, because it resulted in a Labor majority council and my election as a Labor lord mayor.

But for the residents and representatives of other amalgamated councils across New South Wales the experience has differed. Many have continuously raised the fact that they feel they have no say in what happens in their local area, that decisions are made for them and not with them, and that their views simply do not matter. Today we have the power to change that. We have the opportunity to put power back into the hands of local communities and local democracy, where it rightly belongs. With this bill we are giving councils, once and for all, the authority to decide their own future, alongside their communities.

This bill provides for early and ongoing consultation. A central feature of this bill is how, at its core, it incorporates community consultation throughout the de-amalgamation process. It includes dialogue with the local community at the very start and continues that engagement at key steps throughout the process. The first step in the Government's framework, which sets the tone for the entire process, requires a council to develop and consult with the local community on a business case for de-amalgamation. A council cannot seek to de-amalgamate without consulting with and considering the views of the whole community. A decision as weighty as demerging a council demands consultation with the people who will be directly impacted by its consequences on a daily basis.

Consultation on the business case gives the community full visibility of three critical matters: one, the financial impacts of the de-amalgamation and how they will be addressed; two, the long-term strategic plans and service delivery of the standalone councils that will be formed by the demerger; and, three, the future sustainability of the new councils. Early consultation, led by democratically elected councillors, ensures the community fully understands and can provide feedback on the consequences of the de-amalgamation before the proposal even gets to the Minister. That demonstrates the significant importance of the community voice in the Government's proposed process, but it is not the only stage at which the community has a say.

The bill provides that the boundaries commission will review the business case following its usual processes. The boundaries commission will also have the option to hold a public inquiry calling for further community input, which it may choose to do if considered necessary to support the commission in forming views on the viability and suitability of the proposal. However, the bill also allows the boundaries commission to proceed without a public inquiry—for example, if it is satisfied that appropriate and adequate community consultation has already occurred. That flexibility is sensible because it prevents unnecessary time and money being expended on a public inquiry if the boundaries commission determines that is not needed.

Finally, following review by the boundaries commission and subject to the Minister's approval, the council may engage the Electoral Commission to hold a de-amalgamation constitutional referendum, which will provide the ultimate opportunity for the local community to have its voice heard. At that point each eligible member of the local community votes on whether they want their council to de-amalgamate. Voting in the referendum will be compulsory, which means that all community members will have their voices heard, not just the most vocal. If a majority of electors in a local government area vote in support of de-amalgamation, the proposal will proceed to the final stage of the process. If it is not supported by a majority of electors, then it will not go any further. That shows how much weight the community voice has throughout the process—local decisions must be made by the local community. The Government cannot and will not repeat the mistakes of the Opposition by having decisions for communities made by government or by appointed bureaucrats who have no understanding of the unique characteristics of those communities. Members have seen the consequences of that on morale and community unity across New South Wales.

The Minister for Local Government said that communities have a "democratic and legal right to have a say in determining their own identity and future through a de-amalgamation process". The bill gives them that say and provides a clear, robust process. It provides timely and recurring consultation and demonstrates the significant influence and importance of the community voice. The bill puts the power back into the hands of the people—the whole community—to decide whether de-amalgamation is in their best interests. The bill puts to bed an issue that has plagued councils and communities for far too long by providing a clear and democratic pathway for local democracies to decide their own future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (16:03):** On behalf of The Greens and on behalf of my local community, I speak in debate on the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. The Greens oppose the bill as it currently stands. Schedule 1 [4] to the bill repeals section 218CC of the Local Government Act, which currently deals with de-amalgamation proposals. Schedule 1 [5] inserts new section 218CD, which provides that amalgamated councils may lodge a business case containing a de-amalgamation proposal with the Minister for Local Government and the Local Government Boundaries Commission in relation to the proposal. The new section also sets out steps to be taken by the amalgamated council, the Minister and the boundaries commission after a business case is submitted, including enabling the Minister to give approval to the holding of a referendum on the proposal. If a de-amalgamation proposal is supported by a majority of the enrolled electors in the approved referendum, the Minister may recommend to the Governor that proclamations be made to give effect to the de-amalgamation proposal.

The remainder of the bill includes a range of amendments, including provisions on public inquiries and other consequential amendments. Local democracy is incredibly important, and local councils are the closest level of government to the people. Local government is a core part of a functioning society, with councils playing a vital role in providing services to our communities from early childhood education to libraries, sporting centres and more. The decisions made by local councils shape our communities, so it is important that communities have a say in the councils that represent them. The forced amalgamation of councils imposed by the former Government had a detrimental impact on the ability of residents to participate in local democracy and on the ability of local councils to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.

As a local resident and councillor on the amalgamated Inner West Council, I have seen firsthand the impact of forced amalgamations on local communities. The forced amalgamation of the Inner West Council has resulted in poorer services and reduced representation for residents. The disastrous merger resulted in a reduction in participatory democracy at the Inner West Council: a loss of council meetings, limitations on the ability of residents to speak and highly curated democracy groups with limited remits to do meaningful work. That context has created distrust of council and a general lack of satisfaction among residents, who feel their interests are not being properly represented.

The negative impact of forced amalgamations has also been felt by regional councils. My colleague in the other place Dr Amanda Cohn referred to it when she spoke of the impact on councils, including Snowy Valleys Council—formerly Tumut and Tumbarumba shire councils. Dr Cohn made the point that Snowy Valleys Council is facing a dramatic decline in cash reserves, with staffing efficiencies decreasing and rates rising by up to an extraordinary 75 per cent in some cases from special rate variation and rates harmonisation. That is despite the merger proposal promising a three-year payback period when merger benefits would exceed merger costs, which clearly has not eventuated. Meanwhile, councillor representation for residents of Tumbarumba was reduced more than fourfold.

Although it is important that we introduce changes to address the problems and make de-amalgamation easier for local councils, both in the metropolitan area and in the regions, the Government bill as it currently stands raises significant issues and is unlikely to address the problems caused by forced amalgamations. First, the focus on a de-amalgamation process led by local council disenfranchises smaller communities such as those in Pittwater, Guyra and Bombala. Those smaller communities whose councils were amalgamated into larger councils will effectively lose their voices if the amalgamated council and the larger community do not support their calls for demerger. Larger communities are impacted when the elected council opts to ignore the outcome of a referendum. The inner west community voted overwhelmingly in support of de-amalgamation. Over 62 per cent of residents supported the proposal. Despite that compelling result, the ruling majority on the council has chosen to ignore it and will not allow the demerger to proceed. That is fundamentally undemocratic and disenfranchises local residents.

The Greens want a bill that includes an option for community-led de-amalgamation to ensure that the voices of communities like those in the inner west, as well as smaller communities like Pittwater and Bombala, are not silenced. In addition to disenfranchising local communities, the bill creates uncertainty regarding costs. The cost of any de-amalgamation should be fully funded by the State Government, but the bill requires councils to develop a business case that includes how costs will be covered. That approach is unacceptable. If councils foot

the bill, local communities will pay the price through cuts to local services as a result of rate pegging. Those communities have already paid multiple times through dysfunctional local democracy over the eight years since many councils were first merged. The Greens want a clear commitment to State Government funding for demergers. Communities should not bear the cost of demerging councils that were forcibly amalgamated by the State Government.

Finally, The Greens are concerned that the bill gives discretionary power and does not bind the Minister. There is no requirement on the Minister to follow the outcome of a referendum on de-amalgamation. That is incredibly disappointing and could result in a local council following the recommended process to the letter, including incurring initial administrative costs associated with the referendum and the preparation of a business case, only to have the views of its community ignored. The Minister should not have veto power and should be bound to follow the outcome of a referendum on council de-amalgamation. Ultimately, The Greens do not support the bill as it stands. The bill risks a continuation of the disenfranchisement of local communities. It fails to bind the Minister to act on referendum results that support demergers and it creates uncertainty around who will bear the cost of amalgamation. I indicate that, in order to address some of these concerns, I intend to introduce amendments to the bill during the consideration in detail stage.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:09):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. The bill amends the Local Government Act 1993 to make further provision for the de-amalgamation of amalgamated local government areas, and for related purposes. The bill requires that any de-amalgamation proposal must be raised by a council elected by its community. It requires the council to consult with the community and prepare a business case before resolving to support the proposal and submit it to the Minister. The business case must inform the community of all related consequences, including the financial impacts, of a proposed de-amalgamation.

The bill requires the Minister to refer the proposal to the Local Government Boundaries Commission for independent review and report. The bill enables the Minister to approve a compulsory referendum that requires a majority of electors in the council area to support the de-amalgamation. The bill gives the Minister the discretion to not pursue a de-amalgamation proclamation to take into account any extraordinary issues. The business case must include details of how the de-amalgamation will occur and how two or more viable councils will be created. It must include details of the estimated financial impacts of the de-amalgamation; how the current amalgamated council will fund the de-amalgamation; an estimate of the rates and charges that the councils for the de-amalgamated areas may make and levy; the division of assets and liabilities and electoral ward boundaries; and any further details that would be reasonably required to bring about a separation.

These requirements ensure that, before they vote, a community is made aware of any financial changes that may happen to their rates, as well as any other consequences associated with the de-amalgamation. Once the council and councillors have composed their business case, the Local Government Boundaries Commission will investigate whether the de-amalgamation proposal is viable. Before the holding of a referendum can be approved, the Minister is required to consult with the Electoral Commissioner. If the boundaries commission has recommended a different proposal for de-amalgamation, the Minister must also consult the council.

The bill requires electors on the electoral roll to vote for or against de-amalgamation in the referendum. For the de-amalgamation to be carried out, the referendum will require a majority vote from electors across the entire council area, rather than one of the previous councils. If the de-amalgamation constitutional referendum is successful and achieves the required majority vote, the Minister will determine whether to recommend a proclamation of the de-amalgamation proposal to the Governor. However, if the constitutional referendum does not achieve the required majority vote in support of the proposal, the de-amalgamation proposal will not progress further.

The bill enables local government elections to be postponed for a local council in the event the council is subject to a de-amalgamation proposal that is under consideration by the boundaries commission. This change allows sufficient time to conduct a referendum prior to a council election. Finally, the bill guarantees the safety of council staff during the de-amalgamation process. It prohibits redundancies of staff during the proposal period and ensures that staff transferring to a new council keep all of their entitlements. Further, it prohibits forced redundancies for non-senior staff for a three-year period after the de-amalgamation comes into effect. This bill enables a fair and transparent process for de-amalgamation. The provisions in the bill ensure that councils that choose to de-amalgamate advise their communities of the changes associated with a separation as well as set expectations for future years. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:14):** I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the communities I represent—in particular the Snowy Valleys and Murrumbidgee—and all the councils that have been merged. I acknowledge the people of those communities and the impacts council mergers have had on them over the past several years. As a

local member I have had a special opportunity to witness my community's journey firsthand. I acknowledge the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Cootamundra, who have been strong advocates for their communities, which are close to my own.

I acknowledge the communities of the Snowy Valleys. I think my area of the Snowy Valleys is the better part, but the member for Wagga Wagga might disagree. The identity of the communities of Rosewood, Khancoban, Jingellic and Tumbarumba has shone through during this journey. They have shown such strength and vibrancy. The Mayor of Snowy Valleys Council, Ian Chaffey, has shared with me—and also the member for Wagga Wagga, I am sure—his concerns for the wellbeing of residents, the community and council officers. He acknowledges the financial challenges that councils face and the effort and costs associated with preparing submissions to the Government and the Local Government Boundaries Commission for demerger.

Over the past several years I have interacted with Mayor Ian Chaffey and other Snowy Mountains councillors, including former councillors Bruce Wright and Cor Smit and current councillors Brent Livermore and Julia Ham. They have put their hearts into leading their community through difficult decisions. They have strived for balance and positive solutions. I commend them for that. In one of my recent conversations with Mayor Chaffey he spoke of the need for certainty. At the end of the day that is what these communities are seeking. I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Local Government for his recent visit to the Snowy Valleys local government area at Tumut to hear from the community. When delegations have met with the Minister, he has shown concern and interest in this matter.

I acknowledge that the member for Wagga Wagga is present in the Chamber. Last time I saw him we got a photo together under a wedding bower in a sugar pine forest that had been decimated by bushfires. I am not sure what that means but, at the end of the day, we are passionate advocates for our communities. I was not in this role when the amalgamation policy was implemented in 2016, but I was a resident of the Hume Shire Council area when it was forcibly merged by the previous Labor Government to form the Greater Hume Council. The "Our History" section of the Greater Hume Council website states:

Our journey started on 26 May 2004 with the creation of Greater Hume Council as part of the local government reform process. The creation of Greater Hume Council was a particularly complex merger with areas of the former Hume Shire Council split three ways between Greater Hume, Albury and Corowa. Most of the growth areas of the former Hume Shire were lost to Albury and Corowa whilst Greater Hume inherited 75% of the Hume Shire road network but only 56% of the rate revenue.

I say that because that was my lived experience as a resident of that community. In that sense, I feel there is responsibility on both sides of the Chamber for the policy in this space. I thank the Minister for Local Government and the shadow Minister for their work together to address that policy. In my time as a local member, I have put my faith in process—for the review of the merger of Tumbarumba and Tumut LGAs, for boundary inquiries, for ministerial oversight and, most importantly, for the recognition of the depth of emotion and opposition that continue to course through the veins of the Tumbarumba community. It would be an understatement indeed to say that mergers have provided a challenging and bumpy road for everyone. But by 2022 the Coalition had delivered a pathway for de-amalgamation, saying that the State Government, not councils, should bear the costs. I again acknowledge the former Minister for Local Government, the member for Goulburn.

That brings me to the present, and I will focus on three areas: the mechanism for de-amalgamation, the cost of de-amalgamation and the financial viability of councils. With regard to the mechanism, the bill creates a clearer pathway to de-amalgamation. It involves a number of distinct steps. The council is to consult with the community, as provided by schedule 10, part 2, clause 2 (2). The council must develop a business case, as laid out in new section 218CD (1). It is to provide estimates of the financial impacts of de-amalgamation. The council must explain how the amalgamated council will finance the de-amalgamation. It must provide an estimate of the rates and charges that the councils for the de-amalgamated areas may make and levy, and how assets and liabilities will be divided. The plan must look at impacts on electoral ward boundaries. What follows must have scrutiny by an independent boundaries commission, and there will ultimately be a referendum of the total number of enrolled electors, as laid out in new section 218CD (7). That sets out the mechanism, but one regional council mayor commented:

We do not have the funds to put together a demerger business case, let alone cover the demerger costs.

In *Government News* on 6 February 2024, Judy Skatssoon wrote of the concern around how councils could afford the demerger process in a piece called "Councils to foot bill for de-amalgamation under 'cunning sleight of hand'". The author wrote:

The Local Government Association of NSW says the decision not to fund de-amalgamations will make it virtually impossible for councils wishing to de-amalgamate.

In that sense, I welcome the amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Minister that give financial support to those LGAs considering demerger. I hope that members on both sides of the House will support those

amendments, which give important balance to the bill. I briefly touch on the financial sustainability of councils more broadly. The Minister for Local Government said:

The amendments we have introduced are more pragmatic than other legislative proposals being put to Parliament and ensure de-mergers can be effectively managed by councils and that any new councils are financially sustainable.

When we look back we find that part of the original intent was around sustainability for councils, and at the end of the day both sides of the House still face a real challenge regarding financial sustainability for our local government areas. We need to work together in that regard, and I acknowledge Councillor Charlie Sheahan, the Mayor of Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council. I was at a recent forum held by—

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Good Labor man.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** Good Labor man, very much so—I acknowledge the interjection. I call out Charlie as a passionate advocate for his community over several years. He has been working well with the member for Cootamundra, and I hope that the bill sets out a pathway for the needs of his community.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** The only challenge now is Ron Hoenig.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** I seek a very short extension of time, given the interjections. *[Extension of time]*

I thank the House for its indulgence. Councillor Sheahan made the point that we need to look at financial sustainability for our councils, particularly in our regional areas. He touched on one example around sharing resources. Perhaps there is a way to look at more of a county council model in certain areas around, for example, shared planning resources. We need to look for innovations in that regard to help put our councils on a sustainable financial footing.

I know this will be covered in other areas, but I briefly mention the impacts on our local government from the emergency services levy, the cost of the red fleet and cost shifting in general. I focus on rates determinations and special rate variations. They are having a significant impact, particularly in the Snowy Valleys. I mention Maria Anderson, who is the president of the Tumbarumba Chamber of Commerce, Andrew Street, Karen Lonergan and Kate Sutherland. They have all reached out to me about their concerns around special rates variations and the impact of changes in valuation. They pointed out some of the idiosyncrasies—for example, agricultural land being valued at completely different rates from private forestry land, and yet the private forestry land is on former agricultural land. That is baffling, and we need to address it because our people deserve fairness and equity when it comes to valuations of their property.

The Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024 provides a framework for de-amalgamation, which will be pleasing to those who want that door opened. My journey with the people and businesses of Tumbarumba has carried both the legacy of the 2016 amalgamation and the hope that it can be unwound to reach a better and healthier position. Today the Government has structured a process to achieve a large part of that. I welcome the work of the shadow Minister, particularly around financial support. It is important to get the process set now so that councils can work with their communities and make their plans. It seems that the ongoing financial pressures on councils and their service delivery must wait for another day, but we must address those issues. That will continue to concern me and I will continue to demand more support, not just for the costs of de-amalgamating but to strengthen regional councils so they can continue to deliver essential services and community wellbeing across the State. I support the bill.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (16:27):** I speak in support of the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. The forced merger of councils by the Liberal Party and The Nationals, contrary to the advice of the Labor Party at the time, was a disappointing chapter in the history of local government. That policy continues to have significant consequences for councils and their communities right across this State. While we cannot undo the actions of the previous Government, the bill provides communities with a clear pathway to demerge if it is in their best interests to do so. The current section 218CC of the Local Government Act is a roadblock to de-amalgamations. The bill is the fair and reasonable solution that councils and communities have been waiting for. It addresses the legal block in the Act and for the first time provides a clear and robust de-amalgamation process that is led by the community. There is no more ambiguity or uncertainty for councils and communities, but instead a clear pathway forward to implement the will of communities that want to demerge.

This Government has always stood opposed to the forced amalgamations of councils. At the centre of our opposition was the argument that the State Government had no right to force its will on local democracies. Councils are the tier of government closest to the people and therefore have the deepest understanding of what is best for their own communities. The State should have no role in telling local democracies how to govern or what the service levels or the rates of a council should be. Unlike the former Government, we feel that the local

community is best placed to make local decisions that will impact their everyday lives through a democratic and respectful constitutional referendum.

That is why this bill depends upon a community-led process. It will be voted on by the community, and it will ensure decisions are made by an informed community. The role of the State in the process is to certify that a council-led proposal does not produce a council that is likely to fall over. That means the State is not sending bureaucrats or consultants to demerge a council—to divide assets, determine service standards or make decisions that are rightfully in the remit of the elected local councillors.

First and foremost, the bill provides that a de-amalgamation proposal must be led by the council democratically elected to represent the community. It is important that councils lead those proposals, with input from the community, as they have the necessary expertise and oversight to develop a robust case for de-amalgamation. They understand the complexities and what it takes to run a council effectively. As a first step, the council must develop, publish for 28 days and consult with its community for 42 days on a business case setting out the financial impacts and service delivery implications for that council and community.

That means the community has the opportunity to form a deep understanding of the consequences of the de-amalgamation, including financial and service delivery impacts, and can respond with any concerns. Following consideration of community feedback, the council must then resolve to support the de-amalgamation proposal before submitting it to the Minister. Following that initial phase of community consultation, and if passed by council resolution, the de-amalgamation business case proposal must be submitted to the Minister for Local Government, who will refer it to the boundaries commission for review and report.

The robust processes in the bill ensure that there is independent, expert scrutiny of the business case and de-amalgamation proposal from the New South Wales Local Government Boundaries Commission. That is to ensure that the proposal is viable with consideration of key factors within the Local Government Act. Those include important factors such as financial advantages and disadvantages, community of interest and geographical cohesion, impact on staff employment, impact on rural communities and, of course, community views. That is also consistent with other boundary change processes in the Local Government Act.

The boundaries commission process may make its determination based on the business case and other evidence sought and provided, noting the significant public consultation undertaken by the council at the front end of the process. However, also consistent with other processes, the Minister has discretion to approve or require the boundaries commission to conduct a public inquiry process if appropriate. That is necessary to ensure the viability of demerged councils so that communities are not left with a council that is not up to the task of providing services in a cost-effective way to its residents.

The Government acknowledges the significant impacts of de-amalgamations on communities. For that reason, once the Minister has received the report from the boundaries commission, he may approve that a de-amalgamation constitutional referendum be held, to be conducted by the Electoral Commissioner following appropriate consultation with the commission. The referendum will require a majority of electors across the entire current council area to be in favour of the de-amalgamation for the question of de-amalgamation to be carried.

If majority community support is achieved, the Minister will then determine whether to recommend to the Governor that the de-amalgamation proposal be implemented via proclamation. If, however, the majority vote in support is not achieved, that is the end of the process for that de-amalgamation proposal. That is the appropriate outcome if the community as a whole does not support de-amalgamation. Demerging a council is a significant undertaking with consequences of its own. Any decision to do so must be supported by the community and the democratically elected council.

This step-by-step process is clear, robust and provides transparency and accountability as well as safeguards via the impartial review by the independent boundaries commission. It also provides full and open consultation that enables the community to decide if it is in their best interests to de-amalgamate. The bill before us today makes it clear that any de-amalgamation process must be council-led. It sets out clear roles and responsibilities for everyone involved in the process—from councillors, the community, the Minister for Local Government, the boundaries commission and the Electoral Commissioner, right through to the Governor of New South Wales.

Importantly, councils must be able to demonstrate that any new councils are financially sustainable and can stand on their own two feet. Unlike the current flawed de-amalgamation process and alternative approaches suggested, there is no guesswork in what this bill proposes. Councils and communities wanting to de-amalgamate and determine their own destiny have been waiting for years for a way forward. The Government has listened and produced this bill in answer to their appeals. Beyond that, the bill is not just about those communities; it provides a solution for all councils and communities who may one day wish to explore de-amalgamation.



Today we are faced with not just an opportunity but also a responsibility to fix a critical error in the Local Government Act. Today we can get the de-amalgamation process right once and for all to provide certainty for councils and communities that have been crying out for answers on how their de-amalgamation proposal may proceed. This bill is the answer. It provides a best-practice de-amalgamation process that is clear, robust and transparent for all. It puts local democracy and local decision-making at the centre, which is where they always should be. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (16:36):** The circumstances surrounding the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council are, in a word, unique. Having been given the green light to demerge by the previous Minister for Local Government in August 2022, it is the only council to have received that declaration. I think it is important for me to retrace the journey to this point and revisit the lengths the community has gone to in order to arrive at this juncture, and to highlight why it is important that this demerger be finalised as soon as possible. I came into office towards the end of 2017, some 18 months into these merged council arrangements. Our council area of Cootamundra and Gundagai has been fighting to demerge and establish the independence of those two council areas ever since.

It has been a long journey. As the local member, it has been my responsibility to represent the communities of Cootamundra and Gundagai when it comes to this issue. Throughout the journey there have been five local government Ministers and four Premiers. I have engaged with both sides of politics and lobbied Ministers and Premiers directly to advocate for this community, which has been through so much. It is not overstating the situation to say that the issue and its impact is now intergenerational. I get students approaching me during school visits telling me they support the de-amalgamation of the councils. We certainly find ourselves in a unique situation, and it is our unique circumstances that I continue to fight for. With the introduction of this legislation, my main focus now is on achieving a timely resolution to these matters and bringing to an end the uncertainty that has hung over these communities for too long.

It has been the culmination of several years of toil for a great number of people to arrive at this point. Through sheer tenacity and perseverance, our community was able to secure the decision to demerge from the former Minister for Local Government, Wendy Tuckerman, in 2022. The work had been done and we had a decision. Now it is about how to actually implement the decision of the former Minister. It would seem that the new Minister for Local Government has recognised the uniqueness of our circumstances.

In his second reading speech, the Minister for Local Government made specific mention of the situation facing Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council. The Minister recognises that it cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach, particularly when it comes to the communities of Cootamundra and Gundagai, which are by far the furthest down the road in their de-amalgamation journey. I acknowledge the Minister's willingness to engage constructively with me, with members of the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and with the Gundagai Council in Exile to help chart a way forward that satisfies all stakeholders. He has visited the electorate twice now.

I assure the House that my communities have worked hard to pull together the required documents—a detailed implementation plan, transition plan and financial sustainability plan—that have again been asked of them. The Local Government Boundaries Commission now has to look at that information for the third time. We are hoping that process will satisfy the Minister that the de-amalgamation should—and needs to—proceed. I specifically recognise the respective leaders in local government for Cootamundra and Gundagai, as well as current and former councillors and council staff, who have been doing their level best in trying circumstances. I also acknowledge the commissioners of the Local Government Boundaries Commission for their ongoing work. The communities of Cootamundra and Gundagai have done and continue to do everything asked of them as part of the process. It has been several years of toil for a great number of people. I once again assure the communities of Cootamundra, Gundagai and the many beautiful surrounding villages that I remain with them every step of the way.

**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) (16:41):** I contribute to debate on the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. It is an important bill that is well overdue. I draw attention to the fact that forced council mergers were one of the biggest clangers of the former Government, and there were a few. Privatisation is coming back to bite the community where we would rather it did not, particularly their hip pockets. There was the situation where the former Government banned greyhound racing and then had to backflip on it. There was a whole line of poor policy decisions, but forced council mergers are at the top of the pile.

I argued against the proposed merger of Wyong and Gosford councils. I was at one of the "consultation" meetings at the Wyong Golf Club. I use that term loosely because the former Government was not interested in consultation; it had already made the decision. The former Government was ticking boxes and saying that people

could put their view, but it was not interested. I said at the time that if you take two ordinary councils—which, financially, both Wyong and Gosford were—and push them together, it is not necessarily going to make a good council. I outlined a number of reasons, including the size of the proposed local government area and the distinct geographic and community differences across an area that large. I acknowledge the member for The Entrance, who is in the Chamber. Unfortunately, our voices were not heard, but we were absolutely correct.

It came to be that a new council was formed. I distinctly remember the former Liberal member for Gosford, Chris Holstein, saying in a meeting with the Minister that the councillors have to vote in favour of it because they were basically holding a gun to our heads. Miraculously, the then Government said that the Wyong-Gosford situation was not a forced merger because the two councils voted to do it, but they were given no choice. It was not classed as a forced merger even though the community had no say whatsoever. They were never given a vote. A new council then started under administration and was handed over to the new elected councillors. It basically had no money. The staff was terribly divided across the two former council areas, policies were not consistent across the whole area, and issues were never addressed, such as the fact that there was a joint water authority that suddenly became a combined water authority.

Because of those factors, poor decision-making and a north-south divide where councillors could not agree on a range of issues, the council went broke. It wrote to the Minister at the time and said that it could not pay the bills for its staff. The Minister then made the decision to put the council into administration, and it has been in administration ever since. It has been a big job to get the council to a point of being financially viable again. The community will go back to the polls in September and vote for their councillors. I know that there will be candidates advocating for a demerger.

The bill is important because, unlike with the previous process, if the new councillors go to the community and talk about a demerger, the constituents—the ratepayers, the residents—will get a vote and decide what they want for themselves. There will be differing views—some people would like to go back to two council areas and others think that we have gone too far and would like the council to stay together—but under this Government the community will get a voice in making that decision. The bill creates a road map for that to happen. One of the most important factors is that, for the first time in a long time, if the new council chooses to go down that pathway, there are set conditions and a process that must be followed to get to whatever decision the community reaches.

I know that these things are complex. I particularly support the words of the member for Albury about shared services. If that option had been on the table when the forced merger happened, there would have been a better outcome for ratepayers on the Central Coast. There already was a joint water authority. There was already cooperation on waste. If some of the back office functions had been combined, like in the Hunter—where a group was set up to function as a back office organisation for a number of councils in the area—the two councils may have been able to keep going and remain financially viable. We certainly would not be in the position we are in now. I hope that if the ratepayers of the Central Coast decide they want to demerge, a big part of that is keeping joint services to save money and ensure that those important services are delivered so that we get a better outcome.

Because of the former Government's policies, there has been eight years of community unrest, debate and lack of unity. First of all, there were issues around the council and the arguments when there were elected councillors. Since then, the councillors have united and targeted the administrator, so every problem on the Central Coast is the administrator's fault. It would be great to go back to an elected council where people have a voice and can vote for who they want. Personally, I do not think it is going to fix all of the problems because there are issues around how the wards are set up. Some of those structures keep in place that north versus south debate, particularly around resources. Up in the north, we often say, "We are the forgotten north." They probably say a similar thing down in the south. It is all about where the money is being spent, and there really has not been a sense that we are here for the whole Central Coast. There has always been that old council boundary thinking.

I hope that whatever they decide after the election—whether they decide to look at demerging—we actually get a great outcome for ratepayers. The Central Coast is a great place to live. It has so much going for it and so much potential, but when people spend all of their time arguing with each other instead of making decisions that benefit the whole community, we get poor outcomes. The previous council members would sometimes argue about two flies walking up a wall because they thought they needed to have an argument. That created so much disruption in our community; it did nobody any favours. I thank the Minister for Local Government and I acknowledge the shadow Minister's amendments. Hopefully, as a Parliament, we can put in place a proper pathway for community decision-making so we get an outcome that benefits and unifies communities, whether it is in separated councils or if councils stay combined. That is the sort of thing we need; not all the other stuff that has gone on year after year. I support and welcome the bill. I look forward to our community having a say.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (16:51):** I make a contribution to debate on the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024, which finally begins to address the issue of demergers in New South Wales legislatively. I acknowledge the comments of the member for Albury, who I have shared many

conversations with on this topic. As he indicated, we share a council—the Snowy Valleys Council. Tumbarumba is in his electorate and Tumut is in mine. He made reference to the fact that both of us were recently at the unveiling of a wonderful part of the sculpture trail at Laurel Hill, and we had a photo taken together under a wedding bower. I reassure the House that we are not getting connected, but I hope that the omen to which the member for Albury referred is that this will be the beginning of the end of the forced union of Tumut and Tumbarumba in the Snowy Valleys Council.

I begin by recapping the history of that merger, which is well known to members in this House. The decision in 2016 was based on the fairytale that bigger is better and that corporate is better than democracy, and the fairytale has proven to be just that—19 out of 20 merged councils are in financial difficulties and have special rate variations. Has it led to efficiencies, better communities and harmony in those communities? Are those communities seeing benefits? Apart from the Northern Beaches Council, it would be hard to find any merged councils that could point to genuine benefits. In fact, the whole merger process has been another obstacle for those communities and councils to negotiate. For the Snowy Valleys Council it has been particularly difficult. Since 2016 it has not only had to deal with the ongoing problems with the merger process, it has also been subjected to the horrific Black Summer fires, followed by the COVID pandemic and, finally, the nightmare of dealing with the HumeLink Transgrid proposal. But now there is a light on the horizon and, hopefully, we can disband the fairytale.

Perhaps one day we will see the Cabinet-in-confidence documents on which the original decision was based—the so-called proposals that suggested all of the benefits that would come from the merger. Perhaps one day we will see the basis for the fairytale. When one reads the publicity material associated with the Snowy Valleys Council merger that was issued back in those days, the idea that there was a community interest and that there would be financial benefits in the long term was clearly nothing but fairy dust. The reality is that none of those financial benefits have eventuated, and clearly the council would be much better if it was demerged.

This bill and the changes to the Act represent a significant step forward on the road to undoing the wrong of that merger process. The bill creates a clearer pathway, but I would not say it creates a perfectly clear pathway. I would not say it is a perfect solution. However, I acknowledge that the Minister has addressed some of the issues in the Act and has outlined a council-led process. I accept that there should be provisions for the preparation of a business case. That process should lead to the construction of viable councils, and communities must be presented with that information. I also accept that the decision should go to the people in those communities and that before they make their decision they are aware of the costs and possible benefits they are going to face. It is a shame that sort of work was not done when the merger was originally decided on. As far as we can tell, it was not done. We do not have the documentation to prove it, but the results suggest that it was not done.

Those aspects of the bill are appropriate. It will create a discipline but, given the financial viability of councils and the threats that the merger process has created, the last thing communities want is to go down the path of further rate rises and further financial issues. I also highlight the importance of the Opposition amendments, which I understand the Government is receptive to—the member for Wyong indicated that. The Opposition has proposed an amendment that will provide critical financial support to councils in the demerger process. The amendment provides for grants of up to \$5 million, and the possibility of loans on top of that. That has been a critical issue since the legislation was first put forward, and I have personally taken that issue to the Minister on numerous occasions. I formally wrote to him in February this year outlining that for small councils in rural areas with fewer than 20,000 residents, the concept of preparing the documentation and going through the demerger process without some assistance was ludicrous. They need assistance. The idea that they would somehow find the resources within their current resource base is ridiculous.

I congratulate the member for Goulburn on her work. I also congratulate the Opposition on developing and advocating for the proposed amendment that will provide for those grants and, in addition to that, the possibility of loans to assist councils going down that route. It is critical that councils be supported. Communities were not responsible for those decisions; they should not have to pay to have them undone. The Government should have their backs. The amounts indicated in the amendment are certainly consistent with support for rural and regional councils. They may provide some assistance to city-based councils but, importantly, they will be critical to achieving the demerger process for regional and rural councils.

Unfortunately, there is not an inclusion in the bill for plebiscites for sections of smaller councils. I know that has been a key requirement for those advocating in this area. There is a mechanism for a plebiscite to go down that route by getting 10 per cent of voters across the entire council area but, given that often there are small communities that are affected by this, it is disappointing that there is no requirement in the bill that would allow 10 per cent of those smaller areas to request an examination of this process. I think the member for Balmain has indicated that The Greens may have an amendment that will address this.

I acknowledge and thank a number of people who have been involved in this. I acknowledge the member for Cootamundra who, right from the start of this process, has been an absolutely strong advocate. I have appreciated working with her and the previous Government on this issue. I also acknowledge former Minister Tuckerman, the member for Goulburn, for her work with Cootamundra-Gundagai and the decisions she took on that. I also acknowledge the work that Dr Amanda Cohn in the other place has done on behalf of The Greens. There are too many people to thank in my own community, but I acknowledge the leadership of Ian Chaffey and the deputy mayor of Snowy Valleys Council, Trina Thompson, and the work they have done with the current council.

I acknowledge the advocacy of the Save Our Shire group in Tumbarumba, led by Doug Gee and Neil Hamilton. There will be many members of that group who I cannot name, but I acknowledge their work over many years. I hope this will mark a path forward for them. I know how frustrating this has been, but, with the financial support available, we finally have a clearer path forward. I acknowledge in the gallery Brian Halstead and Pip Hinman from Demerge NSW, who have been tireless advocates in relation to this issue.

Clearly this is not the end of the road. We are not celebrating the end of a journey, but in this bill we finally have a glimmer of light at the end of a long dark tunnel. I commend the Minister for his work on this matter. I have met with him frequently when he has visited Snowy Valleys and he has been open to discussion. We have not always agreed, but I have to say he is coming around to my view, which is not easy for the Minister. I commend him for having foresight and insight, and I thank him for the work done on the bill.

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

**DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (17:02):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Federal Government committed \$17.118 million in funding for New South Wales in 2022-23 and 2023-24 to recruit 118 additional frontline domestic violence workers under the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses 2021-27.
- (2) Notes that since signing up to the National Partnership Agreement the New South Wales Labor Government has delivered only five of these additional 118 funded frontline domestic violence workers.
- (3) Calls on the Premier and the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault to deliver the 113 frontline domestic violence workers they committed to ahead of the 30 June deadline so victim-survivors in New South Wales are not left behind.

I begin by acknowledging the incredible work of our frontline workers across the domestic and family violence sector. As a local member—and I know this would apply to all members of this House respectively—I have always considered it an incredible privilege to have regular and ongoing interactions with a service in my electorate, the Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services. I acknowledge the presence of the Minister in the House. I know she has met with that service provider and understands the incredible work that those people do. Each and every one of the workers at this service, and those across this State, do an incredible job. I know that each and every one of them goes above and beyond to do everything possible to support the women and children who are impacted by domestic and family violence in our communities.

I stood alongside them in solidarity at a private remembrance day event last week to remember the women who have lost their lives to gender-based violence. Their voices, and those of the police and others who joined us as we read out the stories and the names of each of those women whose lives were taken by violence, reflected the personal impact of the work they do and the interactions they have with women and children, who just do not feel safe in our communities anymore. But, like every service provider I have spoken to across the State over the past month, they are under-resourced. Their services are being stretched and they need and deserve to be supported by additional frontline domestic violence workers. That is why I moved the motion in this House. Those additional 118 frontline workers funded under the National Partnership Agreement will provide much-needed support for the women and children impacted, but will also provide much-needed support for the frontline workers in our communities who are struggling to meet demand. Yesterday the Minister acknowledged that "the Government, along with the sector, wants those positions filled as quickly as possible." The Minister went on to say:

... the last thing we need is a poor implementation of those workers. We need those workers in locations where they are required.

The Minister added:

The Government has worked to ensure that those workers go to the places where they are most clearly needed ... The department undertook rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis to determine the correct locations for the workers.

My initial response is to ask is there anywhere in this State that a domestic and family violence service would not welcome additional frontline workers? That brings me to the National Partnership Agreement, because the agreement has already determined where the workers should go. Given the Minister's response yesterday during question time, it is important that members of this House understand the Federation funding agreement and how the money is to be allocated. It is very clear, very specific and very prescriptive. I will read directly from the agreement:

By 2024-25, New South Wales must allocate the specified number of workers towards the below cohorts:

- 69.5 workers must be allocated to rural, regional and remote areas;
- 21.3 workers must support people from CALD communities;
- 4.6 workers must support people with disability;
- 5.5 workers must support LGBTIQ+ people; and
- 20.5 workers must support First Nations people.

It goes further:

By 2024-25, New South Wales must allocate the specified number of workers towards the below regions reflecting needs in these locations.

- 18- Sydney
- 13- Illawarra/Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven
- 10- Coffs Harbour ...
- 10- Newcastle and Lake Macquarie ...

The list goes on to cover all geographical areas of the State of New South Wales. In addition, the agreement states:

49.4 workers are unallocated to a specific geographic location, and can be allocated based on local need.

The agreement, which also provides a measure of flexibility, states:

Workers cannot be allocated to roles providing perpetrator intervention or mens behaviour change programs. However, workers can be allocated to roles providing victim-survivor support within a perpetrator intervention service.

The funding relates to new frontline and community sector workers who can provide support to those experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence. The agreement goes on to state:

... funding bolsters frontline workers directly engaged in the FDSV specialist sector as well as workers that intersect with FDSV services, including ... shelters and crisis services, financial counsellors, and specialist services to support children. Workers can perform a variety of roles within these organisations, but roles must include engagement with victim-survivors.

...

The 500 workers initiative has been developed on the basis that half of the workers will be trainees and half will be fully qualified.

Given this broad scope, it is understandable that services in places like Wagga Wagga, Bourke, Forbes, Parkes, Condobolin are wondering how they are not eligible under the scheme. It is concerning that the Minister also has confirmed that the Government would not hit the 30 June target for the new DV support staff rollout. Under the agreement, the Government was also required in February this year to provide a progress report on allocation and expenditure of its 500 workers funding to date, including which organisations received funding, including location, the number of workers, and so on. I think it is reasonable for the sector, existing frontline workers and victim-survivors to ask what progress has been made by the Government to deliver the new workers under the national funded plan.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (17:09):** I welcome the opportunity to address this issue directly and on the record. The Government wants these frontline domestic violence worker positions filled as quickly as possible, but we need to do it right. We need to make sure that these workers are fully resourced, properly located, correctly trained and supported. We need to make sure that the process is transparent, that procurement requirements are met and that these workers, once in place, are able to stay in place.

The Department of Communities and Justice has undertaken rigorous geographic and demographic analysis to determine where these workers should go and what experience, training and support they will need to be able to properly support domestic and family violence victim-survivors when they most need it. It has done this alongside the Federal Government. This is a complex process because the needs of victim-survivors are complex. Many victim-survivors of domestic violence exist at the intersection of a range of different social and economic factors, and that is what the department's analysis has been about. That intersectionality compounds the complexity of needs, and the diversity of victim-survivors needs to be matched with a diversity of support workers.

The department made a commitment to the sector to be open, transparent and consultative, and that is exactly what it has been.

The department has engaged with the Federal Government on its methodology, and with a range of organisations throughout this process, including Domestic Violence NSW, No to Violence, ACON, People with Disability Australia, Yfoundations, Settlement Services International and, of course, the Aboriginal Women's Advisory Network, because it is of paramount importance that the work in First Nations communities is led by First Nations people. The evidence is clear: The outcomes for Aboriginal victim-survivors are better when domestic, family and sexual violence support services are delivered by Aboriginal organisations. The Productivity Commission has been very clear on that. We will work with First Nations communities to ensure that positions are filled in areas where there is the most need. As I said earlier today, the last thing we want to do is compound centuries of dispossession and colonisation. This process takes time, and we want to do it right.

I am not interested in denying the urgency of this issue. It is urgent. But I am absolutely committed to making sure that we get this right. There is no room to rush the rollout of these workers. Racing through a tender and recruitment process would be counterproductive for the domestic violence support sector as a whole, for the workers and, most importantly, for the victim-survivors they support. No-one wants to see these workers in place more quickly than I do, but it has to be done in a responsible, sustainable way. We have to make sure that the right workers are deployed to the right places. We have to make sure that the sector is supported, so that workers can provide the support services that are so desperately needed. The people who do this work are tireless advocates for victim-survivors in every sense of the word. But as wonderful and committed as they are, this work takes its toll. It would be doing the workers and the organisations they work for a disservice to do anything less than be fully transparent and consultative.

This morning I told the House about widespread frustration in the community over the stubbornly high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence. I understand this frustration because I share it. In the face of this wave of frustration, grief and rage we are all experiencing about the prevalence of domestic and family violence, the temptation to rush through solutions is incredibly strong. But we cannot afford to give in to that temptation. The Government has not been standing still. The department has not been standing still. I have not been standing still. We are making progress and we are doing it right. We expect contracts to be in place by June and then we will be recruiting. We can then get the workers on the ground, where they need to be—workers who are supported in their roles and who are delivering their services to the communities who need them most. Doing a half-hearted or rushed job just to reach a number sooner would be doing it wrong, and I will not let that happen on my watch.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (17:14):** I speak in support of the motion put forward by the member for Port Macquarie acknowledging the commitment of just over \$17 million by the Federal Government to recruit an additional 118 frontline domestic violence workers under the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses 2021-27 and noting that only five out of the 118 have been delivered. Two in five women have experienced violence since the age of 15. One in two women has experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. Women who have experienced violence are more likely to experience multiple incidents of violence. On average, one woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner. These are alarming statistics that we continue to hear and continue to share but seemingly—and disappointingly—we continue to ignore until, of course, we reach a crisis point.

But we have been at crisis point, particularly at a regional level, for quite some time. In the Mid North Coast, domestic violence rates have increased by 9.6 per cent in the past five years alone, surpassing the State average by 1.5 per cent. Within the Myall Lakes electorate, we were fortunate enough to have both the Great Lakes Womens Shelter and the Taree Women's Refuge. However, the implementation of the Going Home Staying Home program in 2014 resulted in the merging of domestic violence and homelessness services, and we lost vital resources in Taree. Women in the Manning region are now deprived of the support they once received. In an area with a low socio-economic demographic and a high proportion of Indigenous residents, it is vital that funding is made available for the restoration of our refuge in Taree to provide support services to women and children fleeing domestic and family violence situations.

The Great Lakes Womens Shelter operates under severe financial uncertainty. Along with the Forster Neighbourhood Centre, the shelter relies mainly on the support of community partners to bridge the gap left by inadequate government funding. When I asked its CEO today specifically about the benefits gained under the National Partnership Agreement, the flat response was, "Nothing." The number of clients serviced through the Great Lakes Womens Shelter has doubled. Sadly, the funding from the department has not increased and the feeling is that there is no hope for immediate change on the horizon from this Government.

Over the past five years the Great Lakes Womens Shelter has implemented two very successful programs outside of its core funding, supported solely by community partnerships. But now these programs—a child support outreach program and an educational program aimed at violence prevention—will need to be cut back as the

funding gets harder and harder to obtain. During 2023 the Great Lakes Womens Shelter received over 250 requests for assistance and only had the capacity to respond to half of them. Secure and ongoing government funding for service delivery is a necessity to protect the vulnerable and to break the cycle of violence.

Additional frontline domestic violence workers are essential to the running of these organisations. Service data shows that the Great Lakes Womens Shelter had the highest number of presentations by women requiring support across the Women's Community Shelters network. It had the highest number of clients identified as "at serious threat" of domestic homicide and delivered the most "safe bed nights" of the entire network at its current location. Investing in our frontline workers and our support staff, those who work with women to rebuild their lives, should be at the forefront of any package presented by this Government. But it is also important to continue to invest in sustainable solutions addressing the core issues that can often lead to domestic and family violence.

Families are dealing with cost-of-living pressures, homelessness, inadequate health services and mental health issues. While there is no silver-bullet fix for any of these issues, if we do not tackle these systemic core problems, domestic and family violence will sadly continue to rise. I acknowledge the Coalition's investment of over \$700 million in 2021-22 to prevent domestic and family violence. I also acknowledge that there has been a lot of positive work over the years in legislative reform to improve women's safety. I am thankful for the emergency package announcement from the Government on Monday.

I am hopeful that the Minister will stand by her words that "this is just the beginning", because the job is never done, and we are all in this place to support and be a voice for our communities. When I hear from a woman in my community who is trapped in her home because she cannot get financial assistance to leave a violent partner, or I see an abuser plead guilty to years of horrendous abuse and then be released on bail to be free to go about his life, receiving home detention and continuing to have the same freedoms and liberties as the man next door to him, then I know something is truly amiss. I feel that we are not doing our jobs properly. As a survivor of a violent relationship, afraid to leave and afraid to speak up, I can say that we must do better. There is no room for politics when we are talking about saving lives and increasing women's safety.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (17:19):** I address an issue of grave concern that permeates the very fabric of our society: domestic and family violence. In my electorate of South Coast, police officers are called to manage, on average, 12 domestic violence incidents each day in and around Nowra—just one suburb. That distressing figure is not unique but a stark reflection of a broader epidemic affecting towns and suburbs across New South Wales. We must confront the harsh realities. One in three women in our nation endures physical violence post-adolescence. One in five women suffers sexual violence. Each month police in New South Wales report approximately 2,500 instances of domestic violence—a figure that, tragically, likely represents only a fraction of incidents due to chronic under-reporting. Marginalised groups, including those with disabilities, First Nations people, the LGBTQIA+ community and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, are disproportionately affected.

The statistics underscore a harrowing narrative—one where, on average, every 10 days a woman in Australia is fatally harmed by her intimate partner. This is not merely a statistic but a clear call for urgent action. This scourge of violence does not discriminate and affects individuals in every community, irrespective of social status, area or demographic. Although some groups experience such hardships more acutely, the repercussions are felt across all socio-economic divides in our State. That is particularly true in regional areas like those I represent, where the lack of resources is palpable, with deficits in health, policing, education and transportation, which extend significantly into domestic and family support services. After so many years—in fact, decades—of not giving this issue the attention and funding it deserves, it is up to us as elected representatives to make sure that we do the right thing by victims and survivors. And we need to do right by the workers who support them.

Our commitment, as legislators, to bolster domestic and family support services is not merely necessary; it is imperative. We need to put the workers where they are needed most. We need to support them properly so they can do their jobs. As representatives of our communities, it is our duty to address the crisis head-on. We must enhance support not only for the victims but also for the workers who dedicate their lives to aiding those individuals. Our focus must be on equipping those professionals with the tools and resources they need to serve our communities effectively. The Government's dedication to deploying additional workers in this field marks a critical enhancement of our social support framework. The National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence is an initiative I wholeheartedly support. It guarantees increased funding and resources, providing our communities with the robust support network they so desperately need.

We are committed to engaging with victim-survivors, frontline workers and all relevant stakeholders to sculpt policies that genuinely reflect and address the needs of those most vulnerable. This motion underlines our unified stance against domestic violence and our collective commitment to ensuring that no victim-survivor is left behind. The resolve of this Government, the tireless advocates and the voices of those affected will not wane. We will not allow the injustices to persist unchallenged. I thank the member for Port Macquarie for moving the public

interest debate motion. I urge all members of this Parliament to stand together not just in condemnation of this violence but also in proactive, persistent pursuit of solutions that will uphold the dignity and safety of every citizen in our great State.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:24):** I make a contribution to the debate because, as we all know, domestic violence is a national crisis that cannot and should not be ignored. We have heard the shocking statistics that a woman is violently killed by a current or former partner every four days, amounting to 27 women who were mothers, sisters, daughters, colleagues and friends and whose lives were cut short. This is happening in all of our backyards—it does not matter whether we are from the city or the bush. With that comes a need to talk about what is not happening to prevent it. It is disappointing, to be honest, to hear that the Government has delivered only five of the 118 additional frontline domestic violence workers that were funded by the Federal Government up to 30 June. It is actually 148 in total, with 118 up to 30 June.

It makes things even worse to hear that women's shelters across many areas of New South Wales—including the Central West, in Forbes, where Molly Ticehurst was killed—were not even considered qualified to tender. We heard from the Minister, who is no longer in the Chamber, about consultation. Stakeholders surely should include providers working in the space, not just those who advise the Government and maybe some providers. The reason I mention that is a number of groups like CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes and, as mentioned earlier, the Great Lakes Womens Shelter were among those that missed out because they were deemed ineligible by the Government. Let me tell the House what that decision means on the ground, and I back in what we heard from the member for Myall Lakes. The Great Lakes Womens Shelter had 250 requests for assistance last year. Unfortunately, it was able to respond to only half of them. That means in this case more than 100 women were scared and in desperate need of help, but help could not reach them.

Great Lakes is one of the 11 shelters run by Women's Community Shelters across New South Wales, and it is the only one in the network that is based in the regions. It also had the highest number of presentations by women requiring support and, as we heard, it had the highest number of clients identifying as being under serious threat of domestic homicide. The demand is clearly there, yet somehow that centre did not qualify for extra support staff. One of the workers said that funding needs to go to place-based services with a physical presence, because women need a physical door to walk through to get help. They need specialist support staff to walk alongside them on their journey. They are currently not getting that. One that is more familiar and in my part of the world is CentaCare Wilcannia-Forbes. That organisation has been doing amazing work for some time.

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** That would be CatholicCare.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** That is what I said.

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** You said CentaCare.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** My apologies, Minister. It is good to see you back in the Chamber. CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes thought the department had made a mistake when the organisation was told which areas it would be invited to tender for. It was informed that it could compete for roles within the Snowy Valleys local government area, about 900 kilometres from where its shelters are located. To be clear, CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes operates in regional and remote communities in western New South Wales like Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Narromine, Nyngan, Cobar and Condobolin. They are vulnerable communities in desperate need of resources. Why on earth would that group be invited to apply in the Snowy Valleys area?

The centre was also told that priority for additional staff had only been given to Aboriginal community controlled organisations, which meant it did not even get a look in. That is weird given the incredible work it does. A staff member reiterated what we all know: It is hard for women to escape domestic violence in the country because they often have nowhere to go. When they leave, they need to restart their whole life. They need a place, a fridge and clothes, and are often caring for children who are also in a bad state. The children are another part of this issue that do not get mentioned enough. I am sure we all know people who have been in that situation.

Organisations like CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes offer support to such women and children, but they need the extra support for the frontline staff to be able to do what they do so well. They are overcome by a sense of helplessness in not being able to help some of the women for whom they have been doing that job for so long. As a father of two daughters, I want my kids and all women to feel safe in their own communities and homes. It is up to us to do something about this. Our partners, daughters, sisters, mothers and all the amazing women in our lives are counting on us to get this right.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:29):** I guess that the bipartisanship is out of the shop. I give a big shout-out to Marion Hosking, from Taree, who recently won the Elsie award. She would be scratching her head about the argument we have heard from the other side of the Chamber. The reality is that the Manning River women's refuge was one of the best in Australia. It was dealing with an area that had a huge issue with domestic



violence—probably one of the biggest. In 2014 those on the other side of the Chamber ripped the funding from the highly qualified domestic violence workers who worked out of that refuge. A qualified child psychologist worked with children in a childcare centre there and a woman would go with police officers to domestic violence incidents and to court, and there was emergency accommodation. Members on the other side of the Chamber decided that shelter was not good enough to provide domestic violence services and ripped its funding from it.

I have been around the Parliament for a long time, and I have seen successive governments of those on that side of the Chamber rip up processes that are well established. The Greiner Government completely devastated the Department of Community Services, and we had to re-establish 1,000 DOCS workers. There were 40 refuges across New South Wales. After what the Coalition did in 2014, the advocacy groups contacted 62 of the agencies that had homelessness services and found that only 13 provided services exclusively for women and children fleeing domestic violence. They found also that the reforms had led to cutbacks to 24-hour crisis support and forced women into other types of short-stay accommodation, such as motels, without specialist support. That was particularly true in Taree. Immediately after the service was given to someone else, the refuge closed outside of business hours. When experienced workers are taken out of a service, it takes time to re-establish the service. It cannot be done overnight. The member for Sydney will recall what happened because he was fighting for his refuges and very few of them got to hang onto their money.

People argued for a royal commission. The Victorian royal commission into domestic violence found that highly qualified specialists are needed in domestic violence cases. There is a five-year transitional period and they do not always last. The census shows what is happening with the workforce, and the reality is that in crucial incidents 48 per cent of workers dealing with domestic violence are bullied, harassed or facing violence. When they are dealing with perpetrators, it is 66 per cent. So we must give these workers a fair go, make sure they are highly qualified and put in the best position. That is what the Government is arguing for. I amend the motion and move:

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

- (2) Notes the New South Wales Government's commitment to deliver 118 frontline domestic violence workers as allocated by the Federal Government in the national partnership.
- (3) Notes the New South Wales Government will provide \$230 million over four years as part of an emergency package to enhance support for domestic, family and sexual violence victim-survivors and expand programs that reduce the rate of violence against women and children.

We are talking about this Government, which has actually committed money to domestic violence, not because of a recent incident—there is always a recent incident. Two years ago Government members said, "We have to start investing in this." The State Government is now putting in \$230 million. That is a good thing. Every member in this Chamber should be saying that is a good thing. Those opposite should not drag up the past, because they might not like what they see. We need to get these workers back and get them experienced. This Government is only 12 months into its first term. What did members opposite do in 12 months? They destroyed the workers compensation system and stopped public service workers from getting a fair wage. Within three years they destroyed the refuge services. Labor has been in Government for only 12 months. We want to get this right, and we want qualified workers.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:34):** I thank the member for Port Macquarie and shadow Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault for bringing this important public interest debate to the Parliament. This week we have spoken a lot about domestic, family and intimate partner violence, but we cannot talk enough about it, given the crisis across all of our electorates. I acknowledge that the Minister is in the Chamber. I thank her for her dedication, commitment and her open-door approach to all members of Parliament to help deal with the unique challenges that our electorates face. The Sydney electorate deals with a variety of different challenges. We have a large LGBTQ community, which experiences domestic, family and intimate partner violence, which I will speak more about soon. We have many people who are non-residents who experience domestic violence from their partners who are Australian residents or citizens. Those women—transwomen, in many cases—are sometimes trapped in the terrible position of not being able to access many government services because they are non-residents, and that is what their partners hold over them.

Sydney is also the catchment for a lot of the State, as it has many services, whether they are health services provided by St Vincent's Hospital or wonderful day refuges like Lou's Place. People travel from across New South Wales to Sydney to be supported with case management and crisis management. I know that we all wish those services were located across the State and we all need to work for that. Lou's Place used to be located in Potts Point in my electorate, but it is now in the Newtown electorate. I note the strong support the member for Newtown has for Lou's Place after our many visits there. In the past two years the refuge has experienced a 100 per cent increase in women accessing its services, which averages 900 visits per month.

Lou's Place is a day refuge. It is not a refuge where people can be provided with accommodation, although it does seek to source emergency accommodation for many. Although it is a safe space for women, I am one of the few men who has been invited into Lou's Place. The stories are heartbreaking, but the services that it provides are heartwarming. Lou's Place is seeking financial support of only \$300,000 a year from the Government to address its burden of casework and to hire additional caseworkers. I continue to work with the Government to achieve that funding and to identify opportunities. I have taken Premiers such as Premier Berejiklian and many Ministers to Lou's Place over the years. In the 12 years I have been a member of Parliament, Lou's Place has received zero government funding, apart from the occasional Community Building Partnership grant I have worked on with the refuge.

I will briefly talk about domestic violence in the LGBTQ community. One in three LGBTQ people experience violence from a partner, ex-partner or family member. We experience domestic violence at the same rate as any other member of the community, with the exception of transwomen. A transwoman is 2.2 times more likely to experience serious violent assault from an intimate partner. So when we talk about the trans community in this place, sometimes in a denigrating way, it is important that we remind ourselves that it is a very vulnerable community, particularly for those in intimate relationships. It is an area that the Government is focused on supporting. I was grateful to join the Minister and the Federal Assistant Minister Justine Elliot at ACON where we saw the National Partnership Agreement in effect. As part of that agreement, the Government is giving ACON \$2.5 million to help it provide support, including frontline support, to the LGBT community. I look forward to working with the Government and with all members to continue to do better.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:39):** By leave: On behalf of The Greens, I speak briefly to the motion. I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing this public interest debate to the House. Too often in this Chamber, as occurred in debate on the suspension motion yesterday, it is not women's voices that are leading debate. I acknowledge the member's work. I also acknowledge Minister Harrison and recognise her work and her commitment to drive change. I pick up where the member for Sydney left off regarding Lou's Place. While members want to take a multi-party, cross-party and unified approach to addressing family and gender-based violence, it is critical to realise that in doing so we often erase the critiques and the challenges about what is not being done and what is not being sorted.

Members may be in complete unity in expressing disgust and outrage at gender-based violence in society and in communities, but it is important to recognise that we have a role to play as political leaders and community representatives to push government to do everything possible to deliver the changes needed to address violence. I did not intend to contribute to this public interest debate, but as I listened I felt that I had to. My concern is that in pointing to the past 12 months or 12 years we overlook the reality that violence against women has been an ongoing challenge in the community for far longer than that. It is with much distress that I say there is another report of a stabbing of a woman who was attending a gym in Alexandria, just outside my electorate of Newtown. She was attacked with a knife by a man known to her, and my understanding is that she has been taken to hospital. At the moment media headlines are focused on the issue, but that attention will ebb and flow.

The problem is that the solution is already known but no government, as yet, has been willing to deliver on what the services and experts are asking for. It is important to put that in context. In response to the National Cabinet meeting, Domestic Violence NSW released a statement that compared the Federal Government's commitment of \$925 million over five years with its \$4 billion to \$5 billion expenditure on upgrading a fleet of six submarines. It puts the value of women's lives in perspective. The New South Wales Labor Government's commitment of \$230 million over four years as part of an emergency package must be compared to its \$120 billion annual expenditure. How critical are the lives of women when we compare small amounts of \$5 million, \$10 million, or \$100 million with \$4 billion to \$5 billion for six submarines at a Federal level and a \$120 billion annual turnover in New South Wales?

As members we can lament the tragedy, say that we feel horrified by what has occurred and have stories of the experience of family and gender-based violence, but the reality is that money talks. The experts in the sector are saying that if we deliver them the money they require and follow their advice, gendered violence in our community will be eliminated. It is as simple as that. The New South Wales Labor Government has the choice to prioritise women's lives, unlike any previous government, and deliver what the sector is asking for.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:45):** By leave: I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing the debate to the Chamber. From the many conversations I have had in Hawkesbury, I know that frontline workers dealing with domestic violence incidents play a critical role in saving the lives of women and children. When victims of domestic violence are at their most vulnerable and in danger of harm, those incredibly resilient and dedicated people on the front line step up and provide a lifeline.

Hawkesbury has a range of services to support women experiencing family violence, including Nureen Women's Accommodation and Support Service, the Women's Cottage, Link Wentworth, Hawkesbury Family

Support Service, Hawkesbury Community Services Centre, Hawkesbury Hospital, the women's health service, NSW Police Force, Department of Communities and Justice and many others. They do their best and I recognise their commitment in very difficult circumstances. I hear their stories of burnt-out support workers and underfunded organisations. I hear their stories of family violence touching all levels of our society. Most of all, I hear their fear of perpetrators not being held to account by the courts and of dangerous offenders being released back into the community. The power of smartphones and other technologies to enable harassment and intimidation is striking. Connectivity has been a boon but it can also be a curse. Some women find it incredibly hard to leave. When they do, the offenders continue their aggression through social media and on mobile phones.

The intent of the motion is to encourage the New South Wales Government to honour its statements and announcements to recruit more frontline domestic violence workers but, unfortunately, it is falling short. Why can it not recruit? Are there enough recruits coming through the training systems? Are the services receiving enough funding to offer attractive careers to workers? Are salary levels competitive in an economy with nearly full employment? Are career pathways and wellbeing support being provided to those workers? There has been much debate in this place about the causes of domestic violence and what needs to be done. The motion addresses the resources we need to commit to respond to family violence.

Domestic violence is one the few crimes growing in scale. In the 12 months to December 2023, 36,072 domestic violence assaults in New South Wales were recorded by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, which is an increase of 2,275, or 6.7 per cent, on the number recorded for the 12 months to December 2022. The Hawkesbury local government area alone recorded an increase of 23 incidents over that same period. We need to act on causation, but to save lives we need an emergency-level focus from Federal and State governments. To date we have had targets and funding commitments. That is a start—and I commend the Government for it—but it is not the response of a government dealing with an emergency. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (17:48):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate. I thank the Minister, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for South Coast, the member for Dubbo, the member for Sydney, the member for Newtown and the member for Hawkesbury. The contribution by the member for Auburn was incredibly disappointing. It is such a shame that she did not speak to the motion we are debating in the Chamber today. The suggestion that the previous Government did nothing for 12 years is quite offensive. Could we have done more? Is there more to do in the domestic violence space?

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Order!

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** As I said, it is pretty offensive.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: I ask the member for Port Macquarie to withdraw her comment that my remarks were offensive and that I did not speak to the motion.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** That is my personal opinion.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** The reality is the motion mentions a refuge that the previous Government did not fund. I raised that in my speech. It is outrageous behaviour during this kind of debate, especially for someone who goes on about bipartisanship.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** There is no point of order.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** Point of order: I ask for my time to be reinstated. More than half of my time has been wasted. That is not what usually occurs during a public interest debate.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** To the point of order: I asked the member to withdraw her comment that my remarks were offensive.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** They were offensive to me. I am allowed to say how I feel.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** There is no point of order. I will reinstate one minute of the member's speaking time.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** First of all, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition—along with other members on this side of the House—made it very clear that we support and welcome the \$230 million in emergency funding. We absolutely support this funding agreement. We absolutely support the investment by the Federal Labor Government in more frontline workers in our State. I moved this motion because I—like the Minister and the sector—want to see those workers on the ground. We know only too well that our frontline workers are struggling.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Members on both sides of the House will assist the member for Port Macquarie by remaining silent.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** They are struggling under the demand. All members know that. Members spoke passionately about their communities. All members—no matter what side of the House they are on—feel burdened by the stories of women and children impacted by domestic violence in their communities. It is a burden to all of us because we know we can do more. We must do more. I only hope we can continue to work in a unified and bipartisan way.

*[Interruption]*

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The member for Auburn will cease interjecting.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I have run out of time. I hope that the member for Auburn appreciates what she has done. *[Time expired.]*

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Order! The member for Auburn will come to order. The member for Port Macquarie has moved a motion, to which the member for Auburn has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

### *Bills*

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (DE-AMALGAMATIONS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:55):** I support the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Local Government and his staff for the work they have undertaken. The bill amends the Local Government Act 1993 to allow de-amalgamations in amalgamated areas. The right for communities to vote on issues affecting how they are governed is at the heart of Labor's aims for local government in this State. When Labor came to office, it discovered an unpublicised statutory barrier to the process of council demergers. Section 218CC of the Local Government Act, which was introduced by an amendment bill in 2021, created a process that the Government must follow to consider a demerger, but there was no clause to make a recommendation to the Governor and put it into effect. Demergers were made unworkable and impossible by the amendment. Notwithstanding the vaguely interesting but very long story of how the sausage was made by the Minister, the sausage is unworkable for amalgamated councils that want to unwind the process.

The actions of the former Government have slowed the aspirations of a whole bunch of people in this State. More than simply correcting that legislative error, the Government hopes this bill will be a durable and useful addition to the State's local government framework. It hopes it will provide a pathway to undo the mistaken mergers that occurred in 2016 and 2017. It hopes it will provide a pathway also for decades to come if a future government ever tries to repeat the mistake made by the previous Government to forcibly amalgamate councils without community interest. This framework, which has no expiration date, will enable a community-led demerger to take place should a future council choose to go down that path. The bill creates a fair, equitable and democratic process to enable any amalgamated council across New South Wales, together with its community, to make an informed choice about whether it is in the community's best interests to de-amalgamate.

It is highly appropriate that the council and councillors lead the process of de-amalgamation, as the bill suggests. A de-amalgamation involves more than drawing new lines on a map. It involves the division of assets, deciding which services and staff may be shared between councils, setting the levels of rates and charges, and laying out the likely service levels. The appropriate body to make those decisions is the council and its elected leadership, in consultation with the community. Consistent with any healthy democratic process, the bill builds in consultation points to keep the community informed and involved every step of the way. Under this legislation, a council must develop, publish and consult on a business case with the community for 42 days to ensure the community understands all consequences of de-amalgamation.

The business case must include future sustainability, long-term strategic plans and the service delivery capacity of the proposed future councils. This ensures the community has the opportunity to have its say from an informed perspective. Following resolution by the council to support the business case, the proposal is referred to the Local Government Boundaries Commission for independent scrutiny to ensure viability. If approved by the Minister, the council must then hold a de-amalgamation constitutional referendum to formally ask the entire local government electorate whether it wants the council to demerge. Finally, and also consistent with the principles of

democracy in important matters of this type, voting will be compulsory and a de-amalgamation proposal may only proceed when there is a majority vote of all electors across the entire electorate.

In speaking to the bill, I will talk about the Central Coast experience of the former Government's policy of forced amalgamation and some of the consequences that we are confronting. The former Gosford and Wyong councils shared a water and sewer service as a joint authority. On amalgamation, that joint water authority became subsumed within the amalgamated council. As a consequence, Central Coast Council's water and sewer services were regulated not only by the Local Government Act but also by the Water Management Act. It was the only water supply service in the State to be so regulated. Hunter Water and Sydney Water are regulated by the Water Management Act, and other local governments that provide water and sewer services are regulated by the Local Government Act. Central Coast Council is regulated by two Acts.

That complexity contributed to the financial difficulties of Central Coast Council in 2020, in part because the council accounted for revenue collected by its water and sewer operations as unrestricted—as it was arguably entitled to do under the Water Management Act—when the preferred view was that it should have been counted as restricted funds under the Local Government Act. In addressing financial difficulties, dual regulation meant that surpluses in the sewer fund could not be used to meet deficits in the water fund as both were restricted. The issue remains relevant and council advises me, by way of example, that \$82 million of upgrades to Mardi Water Treatment Plant had to be funded by borrowing money against the water fund, even though the sewer fund had sufficient reserves to meet the upgrade requirements.

Amongst all the other things that my colleague the member for Wyong has talked about, amalgamation created a huge problem for our water and sewer service. It was not addressed by the former Government even though Central Coast Council has been amalgamated since 2016. My colleagues and I are seeking to address that issue with the Minister for Local Government. Instead of separating the water and sewer services into some sort of separate entity—or, worse, a corporation—we prefer to keep it retained in local ownership and regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. The regulation of our local water and sewer services by IPART has seen Central Coast residents pay some of the lowest water and sewer charges across the State, compared with other councils that operate their own water and sewer services. More importantly, it protects them from the possibility of privatisation down the track if they were separated off and put into a corporation, as is the wont of those opposite from time to time. We are hoping to address that issue sooner rather than later.

In summing up, the bill gives us an opportunity to bring forward a de-amalgamation process that is fair, equitable, democratic, transparent and, more importantly, workable. The bill enshrines local democracy and ensures that communities have a say in whether their merged council will demerge. They will be fully informed as part of that process. I acknowledge that amendments are proposed by The Greens and the Opposition, and I understand the Minister will address those on behalf of the Government. But, as it stands, the bill will improve regulation of local government in this State, making the demerger process more democratic and reflecting the community's desires. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (18:04):** The Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024 represents a broken promise by the Government. In the lead-up to the 2023 election, the Government promised that it would fund any approved de-amalgamation in full. The bill breaks that promise. I am pleased that the Coalition is proposing amendments to the bill that will provide certainty as to funding for councils de-amalgamating. I thank the shadow Minister for Local Government for her efforts in that regard. When it comes to demergers, it is reasonable to suggest that communities should be able to have a say if they wish. Under the current law and the Government's bill, it is up to an amalgamated council to commence the de-amalgamation process. Smaller communities amalgamated into a larger community face a challenge where they might not be able to explore that process because other areas outweigh them in size and in number. It makes sense that there is a way for those smaller communities to commence the demerger process.

In a letter dated 4 May 2024, I have been asked by the Demerge NSW Alliance to support two changes to the Government bill. The first amendment is that funding be provided to demerging councils to help meet the costs of demerger, and the second is that 10 per cent of former local government areas, such as the former Pittwater Council, be allowed to petition to commence that demerger process. The effect of the Demerge NSW proposal is that, first, the demerger process could be initiated by a council or by 10 per cent of electors in a former local government area such as Pittwater. In Pittwater that would require about 5,000 petitioners. Secondly, the boundaries commission would examine and report on the proposed demerger. The Minister would then decide whether to allow a demerger referendum to be held. After the referendum, the Minister would have discretion to permit the demerger to take place. That is the proposal of Demerge NSW.

On a positive note, it is my understanding that the Government might accept an amendment to allow funding to be provided to demerging councils, and that is a significant win. It will allow a number of councils on the demerger path to do so successfully. On a negative note, it is my understanding that the Government is not

prepared to accept an amendment where 10 per cent of electors in a former local government area can commence the demerger process. I simply cannot understand the Government's refusal to accept such an amendment. There is no prejudice to any party in allowing 10 per cent of electors in a former local government area to petition for the demerger process to commence because, even under the Demerge NSW proposal, the Government could still veto a referendum and could veto a demerger following any carried referendum. If that amendment were inserted into the bill, the bill would likely be withdrawn by the Government. Demerging councils would receive no funding and communities across New South Wales would be worse off than they are now.

The member for Northern Tablelands delivered his valedictory speech today and wisely noted that the Government has all the power. Even if the Opposition could muster support in the other place for the 10 per cent amendment, the Government would ultimately withdraw the bill, and that would be a death blow to other demerger processes that are currently underway. We cannot sacrifice other communities' demerger processes at the altar of this Government's broken promises. In that context, I have done my best to see the requests of the Demerge NSW Alliance carried. Unfortunately, the Government, which has the ultimate power of veto in this House, is not prepared to play ball. If those words play a part in changing the Government's position, it will be a good outcome.

I will continue to advocate for former local government areas being able to instigate the demerger process via 10 per cent of electors petitioning government—about 5,000 electors in my community. That said, I make some observations to my Pittwater community. I note that one of our local councillors, Councillor Miranda Korzy, is in the gallery tonight. The first observation I make is that under section 215 of the Local Government Act, 10 per cent of the electors in an area may commence a proposal to constitute a new area, and that avenue remains available to Pittwater residents. In practical terms, it would require about 20,000 electors in the Northern Beaches Council area to commence that process. That is about 40 per cent of the former Pittwater Council area and is less than what would be needed to carry a referendum exclusively in the Pittwater area. That said, signatures could be obtained from outside Pittwater to commence that demerger process. I encourage those in favour of a demerger in Pittwater and the northern beaches to avail themselves of this option, in the absence of the Government allowing another. It will be hard work, but it is one of the few available avenues.

My second observation is that the boundaries of the former Pittwater area need to be redrawn—if the Pittwater area is to be reconstituted in one form or another—so that the entire Narrabeen Lagoon catchment is included within its area. The past situation of the lagoon and its catchment being split between two councils was absurd. It led to blame shifting around the lagoon's management. The impact of development in the catchment area became a political football, which was not acceptable. My third observation is that the Northern Beaches Council is currently going through a process to decide if it will poll northern beaches residents on demerger. The poll will cost about \$170,000. The council has decided to prepare a business case based upon material available to it and will propose community consultation before agreeing to spend \$170,000 on a poll. A final decision will be made at the council's June meeting. I implore Pittwater residents who are concerned about this matter to engage in that process and make sure that councillors know their views.

I want to be clear that I am not advocating for or against a de-amalgamation of the Northern Beaches Council. I will wait to see any business case, any boundaries commission inquiry recommendations and the outcome of any referendum or poll. Ultimately, my role in a representative democracy will be to consider the views of my community together with all information available. I supported the amendments to this bill that were suggested, but sadly the Government will accede to only one. I will continue to advocate for the right of my community to have a say, and I look forward to the progress of the bill.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:11):** I speak in support of the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for his work in bringing the bill to the House. Today we have the opportunity to right a wrong in local government. We have a chance to correct the deficiencies of the current legislation that are preventing councils from being able to de-amalgamate and, worse, are leaving those communities in an unacceptable state of limbo while they wait for legislative issues to be resolved. This Government has put in the work to fix this once and for all to provide certainty to councils in New South Wales.

Councils have a right to determine their own identity. In fact, a cornerstone of local democracy is that councils and communities have the responsibility to determine their own identity and future. That includes determining the services their community needs and the level of rates their community will accept. Councils that want to de-amalgamate should be able to do so with the support of their community as confirmed by a compulsory popular vote. The boundaries commission must also certify that the resulting council is financially sustainable. That is exactly what this bill does.

The forced amalgamations have unequivocally failed. In 2016, 44 councils were forcibly merged by the Opposition when in government to form 20 new councils, with promises that those amalgamations would result in efficiency savings that would enable councils to deliver stronger services and infrastructure and provide the best possible value for money for their communities. Despite more than \$600 million funnelled to those councils

in tied and untied grants, some councils and communities are saying, predictably, that the promised efficiencies have not been realised. Instead, the forced amalgamations have caused upheaval and ongoing issues for those local councils and communities.

We have all heard reports of inefficient, overly bureaucratic local government areas and concerns that amalgamated councils are unable to adequately serve their diverse local communities. We also know that some amalgamated councils continue to experience financial difficulties, consistently applying for special rate variations to raise rates by 20 per cent, 30 per cent or more than 50 per cent just to keep basic services going. That begs serious questions about whether forecast economies of scale and efficiency targets were ever achievable.

Current provisions fail to enable councils to de-amalgamate. In 2021 amendments to the Local Government Act setting out a de-amalgamation process were introduced by Labor when in opposition in recognition that the forced amalgamations were not working for some councils, and that councils and communities that want to de-amalgamate should have the opportunity to do so. Yet, while the policy objectives of those amendments are undisputed, the legal deficiencies of the current provisions mean that councils wanting to de-amalgamate have been prevented from doing so, even if the appropriate steps have been followed and the de-amalgamation proposal has been supported by the Minister. There is no question that that needs to be fixed so that councils, communities and the local government sector can move on.

Councils and communities have been left in limbo. For over seven years we have been hearing stories from councils and communities that have suffered because of the forced amalgamations. The deficient legal process for de-amalgamation that was introduced in 2021 was left unresolved by the previous Government, which has meant that those councils and communities have been left in limbo. They have been left without any sense of when and how they will be able to take the next steps towards building a thriving and sustainable community.

An important feature of the Government's bill is how the new de-amalgamation process will apply to existing proposals that the Minister has received. Under the proposed framework, councils like Snowy Valleys will have a fair way forward, with the bill providing that their existing de-amalgamation proposals can be transitioned over to the new laws without having to start again. Equally fair, given the significant progress Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council has made on its proposal, that de-amalgamation will be implemented via other provisions of the Act. It will be a more efficient, cost effective and practical way to determine the best outcome for that community, which was failed by the Opposition.

This bill is a significant step in the right direction to finally provide clarity and certainty to those councils and communities that have waited patiently for a solution that will allow them their democratic right to have a say in their future. It sets out a de-amalgamation process that is transparent, founded on the principles of local democracy by being council-led and involving community consultation, includes suitable independent scrutiny and safeguards and, importantly, is legally robust. Moreover, the bill provides an equitable framework that is available to all councils that have been formed through amalgamation at some time. It clearly sets out how the de-amalgamation provisions will apply to those councils and communities that have already started the process of seeking to de-amalgamate. The bill before us today will once and for all give councils and communities wanting to de-amalgamate a clear path forward. For that reason, I thank the Minister for the work involved, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:17):** On behalf of The Greens, and as the member for Newtown, I oppose the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. As many members have already said, the issue of council de-amalgamations has been a fraught one for many communities, including in the Inner West Council area, part of which I am fortunate to represent. I acknowledge that the member for Balmain is present in the Chamber. She is a councillor on the Inner West Council as well as serving as the member for Balmain. Mr Temporary Speaker, as the member for Sydney, you will recall that under the former Labor Government, prior to the de-amalgamation enthusiasm of the most recent Liberal-Nationals Government, we saw the amalgamation of what was then the South Sydney Council with the City of Sydney to create the mega City of Sydney council area. That was a long time ago, but it is sadly the domain of all State governments to attempt to play with the boundaries of local councils and intervene with local democracy. That is nothing new.

Over 80 per cent of Inner West Council residents turned up to vote in a poll on de-amalgamation in December 2022, with nearly 63 per cent casting their vote in favour of demerging the Inner West Council and bringing back the Ashfield, Leichhardt, and Marrickville councils. The Greens and those in favour of de-amalgamation are supportive of bringing back local democracy. The community made it clear that the inner west local government area is too large to effectively represent the community and voted in support of de-amalgamation. In spite of that, the New South Wales Government officially rejected the Inner West Council's demerger proposal in March, citing the issue of cost. Understandably, that is a disappointment to those who have campaigned for so long to make the demerger happen. I acknowledge Newtown locals and inner west residents

Pip Hinman and Peter Boyle of the Inner West Residents for De-amalgamation, the Demerge NSW Alliance, the Save our Councils Coalition and the representatives in the gallery watching the debate today.

It is deeply disappointing that rather than listening to and acting on the voices of the community, NSW Labor has again chosen to set up procedural barriers that restrict and undermine local government and community wishes. While it is disappointing that the bill falls far short of the mark when it comes to listening to our communities, it should come as little surprise. There is a reason that we have independent electoral commissions. There is a reason that there are independent and transparent processes for determining electoral boundaries. It is cause for concern that the process in the bill allows for elected representatives, either elected councillors, mayors or members of Parliament who become local government Ministers, to have the final determination as to whether a council will amalgamate or de-amalgamate. It raises genuine questions about potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

There are a number of reasons why electoral boundaries are decided by independent bodies. Elected representatives, mayors, Ministers and councillors have vested interests in who controls a council, how the votes of a newly amalgamated or de-amalgamated council will fall and who will be the mayor of the larger Inner West Council or the larger City of Sydney council. It is important that we remove political interference from those decisions and listen to local communities and their concerns. The bill requires demerger processes to be kickstarted by amalgamated councils themselves and for councils to make a business case of how the costs of de-amalgamation will be covered. We have heard a number of serious concerns about that. Clearly, those councillors and the mayor would be aware of how an amalgamated or de-amalgamated council would impact their chances of keeping their jobs as elected representatives on that council. There is no way that they could make an objective assessment as to whether or not that would be the case. That mayor and those councillors would determine the scope, scale and preparation of the business case that would set that out.

As we have seen in many discussions about the use of business cases, business cases are a bit like legal advice: You can always ask for the business case that supports the position that you would like to take. Crucially, the bill gives the Minister for Local Government the power to veto the results of a referendum, which itself could only take place following a council-led business case and analysis from the boundaries commission. The idea that local communities can express their will clearly and resoundingly, as the inner west community did in 2022, and have this summarily overturned by the Minister is not accepted by The Greens nor the local community.

I note the amendments foreshadowed by my Greens colleague the member for Balmain that would address significant issues around binding the Minister to act on the result of a referendum on de-amalgamation and allow communities to initiate the demerger process themselves. The Greens will no longer be moving those amendments in this place. Our Greens colleague and spokesperson for local government, Dr Amanda Cohn, will be moving those amendments in the other place. The Greens withdraw the proposal to move those amendments in this place. Those positions are supported by residents and groups across the State, from the inner west to Gundagai, from Pittwater to Canterbury-Bankstown, from Bombala to the Snowy Valleys. I urge all members in this place and the other place to closely examine the amendments that The Greens will move in the Legislative Council.

I urge the Government to consider and pass the amendments in respect of local communities. After all, this is the same Labor Government that is trying to rush through undemocratic planning changes that would remove the rights of local councils and communities to have their say on developments that affect them. It is the same Labor Government that is pressing ahead with the demolition and privatisation of public housing in Waterloo and South Eveleigh despite local residents making their opposition clear and, in the case of Eveleigh, despite local Labor members telling residents that their houses would be saved if Labor was elected.

In the early stages of this Labor Government, it is critical to ensure that we do not see a return to the dark days of the former Labor Government, where communities were overridden, local democracy was overshadowed by corruption and there was an endless commitment to people wanting to deliver for their own interests, and not the interests of the community. I understand that my Greens colleague in the other place Dr Amanda Cohn will move amendments to the bill to establish a community-led pathway to demergers, remove the Minister's veto rights and ensure that the direct and immediate cost of de-amalgamation is borne by the State Government, given it was the State Government, in almost every case, that imposed this on local communities. The Greens hope that the Labor Government will listen to communities in making its decision clear and call for local democracy that reflects local communities' interests and decisions. I urge the Government to listen to local communities and not provide a veto power to the Minister or override the decisions of local communities with vested or personal interests instead of the community's interests and public good.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:26):** The Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024 seeks to implement the Government's commitment to provide a solid legal pathway for councils to de-amalgamate, including councils that have already submitted their de-amalgamation proposals under the existing provisions. It will repeal the legally flawed section 218CC of the Local Government Act 1993 and replace



it with a clear, democratic process for de-amalgamation. That includes requiring all de-amalgamation proposals to be council led, be independently reviewed by the boundaries commission and have majority community support via a de-amalgamation constitutional referendum. The relevant council and community will also be responsible for funding the de-amalgamation.

In that process, there will be a requirement for a business case that must propose entities that are more efficient, not less. That is important. I reflect on the 2016 proposal under the previous Government's Fit for the Future reforms that reduced 44 councils across New South Wales down to 20 and claimed that they would all deliver massive efficiencies, which they did not. I represent an area that covers parts of two councils that were created through the amalgamation process in 2016: Cumberland City Council and City of Parramatta. I was a councillor on the former Parramatta City Council, which was abolished in 2016, so I am familiar with the proposal and the promises about efficiencies that have not been delivered and will not be delivered. All that has been delivered in large parts of the State, including in much of my electorate, are rate increases.

When Cumberland City Council was created by merging Holroyd council and parts of Auburn and Parramatta councils, the rates were lifted to match the most expensive part of that council area, the former Holroyd area. That has probably happened in a lot of other places. It is an important proposal as we head towards local council elections in September. Candidates will be campaigning for de-amalgamation. If that is supported by their communities, there must be a pathway to deliver that. Importantly, it requires councillors who campaign for de-amalgamation and then never mention the subject once they get elected to put their money and their community's money where their mouth is.

I particularly refer to Councillor Greg Cummings from Cumberland City Council, who campaigned against the amalgamation of the former Holroyd City Council, as was his right. He was the former mayor of Holroyd council, and as soon as he was elected as a Labor councillor on the new Cumberland council after promising to fight against amalgamations, he never mentioned it again. At the first meeting of the Cumberland council he ratted on the Labor Party to become the Independent Mayor of Cumberland. At the last council elections he told everybody he was the former Mayor of Holroyd and he was going to bring back Holroyd. He did not mention at pre-poll that he was the first mayor of the new city of Cumberland. It was a novel approach and one that secured his re-election. I hope that we will not see that sort of idiocy repeated now that people will be accountable for the commitments they make because there is a clear path to amalgamation.

I also put on record some of my concerns about the merged councils and, in particular, some of the issues that have been in the news today about Cumberland council. I am incredibly disappointed with its approach to libraries, which is utterly in breach of the statewide guidelines for how councils operate libraries. Book bans are unacceptable, and the idea that people would ban a book that they have not even read is offensive nonsense. Only two weeks ago Councillor Steve Christou was on Twitter denouncing the eSafety Commissioner for attacking free speech by asking social media companies to take down footage of the attacks on the bishop at Wakeley and at Bondi—videos arising from those disgusting and terrifying incidents that took place in Sydney and used to spread hatred around the world. To say that taking those videos down is an attack on free speech, yet a book about same-sex parents is sexualising children, without even reading the book, shows priorities that are completely wrong.

I am very disappointed that the council voted to remove those books. I believe it goes against the Anti-Discrimination Act and it clearly goes against the guidelines for libraries. Libraries are supposed to provide books for everyone. If you do not like the books, do not read them. Steve Christou does not really read books very often. He is not a reading kind of person. I am disappointed that so many councillors voted for that. It certainly does not reflect the values of the community, but they will have an opportunity to have their say on who would better represent them in September. Those councillors who have often said they want to bring back the former Holroyd or Auburn councils or that they want to go back into Parramatta council because Cumberland is sometimes a bit embarrassing will have that opportunity. It is really important that we present that opportunity to people.

I also note that there were real concerns about the form that the new City of Parramatta Council took, and that a gerrymandered city was created by taking away the most Labor-voting part of the city, putting it into the Cumberland council and then merging with parts of the Hills Shire Council. Interestingly, after creating a council where it was almost a fait accompli that the Liberal Party would be in control, they did not nominate any councillors at the next council elections. Nor did they nominate any for Cumberland. So what has happened at Cumberland council is not the fault of members opposite. This is an important process. Obviously, local government is close to the hearts of many of us. It is where so many members in this Chamber gained their initial political experience and came to know their communities more closely. It is important that we provide good structures and processes for councils to run in an effective and democratic way, and I think the bill does that. I look forward to the passage of the bill.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:34):** I speak in support of the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the contribution of my colleague the member for Wyong. He and I are on a bit of a unity ticket, and I think the member for Swansea also joins me on this local government issue sometimes. Sadly, what we saw with the amalgamation of Central Coast Council was vested interests playing out like a tragic Shakespearean soap opera. Both Wyong and Gosford city councils voluntarily voted to merge. On 28 October 2015 Wyong Shire Council voted 5-4 in favour of merging, and on 16 November 2015 Gosford City Council voted 7-3 in favour of merging. There was no forced amalgamation for Central Coast Council. Both councils went in with eyes open and merged voluntarily because, after the final report of a lengthy Fit for the Future process, it was put forward by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal that the two councils would not have been fit for the future had they remained separate.

One of the reasons people were so pleased about the merger in the first place was that all they had seen was two councils fighting over everything. If one came up with a good idea, the other would can it out of sheer spite. This had gone on for decades. Sadly, our region and our people continually missed out on investment from State and Federal governments of all persuasions because of the bickering that had gone on with those two councils. The Fit for the Future process clearly identified that the region of the Central Coast would be better served by one regional council. I note again that the member for Wyong and I are on a unity ticket with this. We agree that a golden opportunity was handed to the incoming councillors. It needs to be remembered that both councils went into the amalgamation with debt. One council was not better off than the other. One was not in the black while the other was in the red. Gosford City Council had \$155 million worth of loans in 2015, and Wyong had \$178 million worth of loans. Prior to amalgamation, both councils were also seeking double-digit special rate variations, which the community had no idea of at the time.

Let us be clear, we had two councils who were squabbling publicly all the time over the most minute things. The region was missing out on vital infrastructure funding from both State and Federal governments of both persuasions, and the community was sick and tired of it. People welcomed the formation of one Central Coast Council to represent the entire region. We have one local health district, which covers the entire region. We have two fantastic local police commands that do an absolutely brilliant job looking after our region. But what we saw was a voluntary amalgamation of two councils, which received \$20 million to amalgamate in 2015. That is almost double what metro councils were given to help form one council.

I also agree with the member for Wyong when it comes to the water authority. This was a council that had overcomplicated their water authority. We agree that it is a multibillion-dollar public asset, owned by the ratepayers of the Central Coast, but it is poorly managed and is covered under two Acts, both the Local Government Act and the Water Act. Central Coast Council has been working on the best way for that authority to be managed—which Act is the best way forward for the people of the Central Coast. I also correct the record and say that at no point were members on this side of the House, including me, ever talking about privatising the water authority of the Central Coast. I am not sure where that was generated. I have been a firm advocate for the Central Coast water authority remaining a multibillion-dollar asset for the ratepayers of the Central Coast—of which I am one.

But we saw an almost Shakespearean tragedy. We saw councillors who had publicly campaigned against amalgamation then get elected to council and spend years fighting internally and externally to destroy the amalgamation. That was clearly outlined by Commissioner McCulloch's report, which I will touch on shortly. We saw the infighting, and I note the member for Wyong's comment about the argument over two flies. That was an understatement. It was appalling. To watch the behaviour of the elected officials week in, week out was nothing short of painful. They would spend hours arguing over the most ridiculous things rather than concentrating on the job that was at that hand for them, which was to deliver for the 365,000 people of the Central Coast region. One night councillors spent two hours—I kid you not—arguing over one tree at Erina Fair. If this was not a perfect example of how they were completely incapable of delivering the most basic services and responsibilities to the people who elected them, I do not know what is. Literally no-one wanted to watch this train wreck of a council because of its appalling B-grade politicking that went on week in, week out. It was really sad. It had been handed the greatest opportunity of any amalgamated council in New South Wales.

I note that the Minister is in the Chamber. He and I have spoken about Central Coast Council multiple times. What is interesting is the fact that this council has functioned better in administration than it did post-amalgamation with elected officials. There have been calls that ratepayers have lost their democratic voice because they have got an administrator. I was talking to the convener of a function not that long ago when someone made that comment. I asked the convener, "How many times have you met with the administrator?" who was effectively the mayor and councillors all in one. He said, "We've met with Rik Hart"—the administrator—"at least five or six times. When we've asked, he's made himself available." I said, "How many times did you get to meet a councillor when we had them for three years?" The answer was never—they never saw them. This was a perfect example of how this elected body was completely detached from the people it was supposed to represent.

We were shocked and appalled about what we saw and what played out secretly behind locked doors. This was a group of people that time and again voted in a bloc of eight to withhold the financial situation of this council, until a phone call was made on a Thursday by the general manager to the Minister for Local Government saying, "We have a problem. We actually can't make wages for the week." The wages bill for the week for Central Coast Council was \$6 million. Effectively, the council was trading while insolvent. This had gone on for months and months. The elected body, in a bloc of eight, voted time and again to hide this behind confidential meetings until it was all too late.

There was a council elected that had every opportunity to be a shining light of regional councils. In contrast, that council now has the dubious record of racking up the largest debt of any council in Australian history—more than half a billion dollars worth of debt. That is the burden those elected officials left the ratepayers of the Central Coast. To date, not one of them has ever apologised publicly for their incompetence and mismanagement of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of ratepayers' funds, including accessing illegal restricted funds to the tune of \$238 million. That is the legacy of poor councillors who did not focus on the job at hand, which is to represent the community that elected them. What we saw was a disgrace.

I thank former Minister Hancock for putting the council in administration and allowing a public inquiry. Under the Local Government Act, it is a public inquiry that allows the Minister the trigger to sack councillors. I welcome the fact that a public inquiry was then held by Commissioner Roslyn McCulloch. I congratulate Roslyn on her incredible work during what were difficult times. There were very angry people on the Central Coast who wanted people held responsible for this. How it was withheld from the public for so long is obviously an indictment on the elected body at the time. Her 91-page report, handed down on 10 February 2022, makes for very sobering reading indeed. Commissioner McCulloch's first recommendation states:

1. All civic offices at Central Coast Council be declared vacant, effective immediately.

Much to the relief of everybody, all of those people were relieved of their jobs that same day. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House for its indulgence. We saw a complete failure by the elected body to do the duty it was elected to carry out. I encourage those members who want some light bedtime reading to read the eight recommendations made by Commissioner McCulloch on page 88 of the 91-page report. The report outlines some of the most basic principles of governance that were completely lacking. We saw a complete lack of empathy from the elected body and no contrition whatsoever from councillors. It was everybody else's fault but theirs, even though they voted time and again to withhold this information from the public.

Quite frankly, members will probably need to review the Local Government Act as to whether, when councils get put into administration, councillors should be suspended for a period if there is no contrition shown for mismanagement. I raised that with former local government Minister Tuckerman, because I have grave concerns that people who go into these positions can rack up literally half a billion dollars worth of debt and walk away with no consequences. In fact, all the people who were responsible for the financial situation at Central Coast Council can recontest this current round of elections, even though not one of them has ever apologised. It was gross mismanagement.

I commend the former Minister for her very sensible proposed amendments to the bill. I know she has worked closely with the Minister for Local Government, and I thank him for the time he has spent with the shadow Minister on this. It is important that there is an understanding about the costs and responsibilities involved in de-amalgamation. Obviously people are jockeying for position with the upcoming council elections. But what we have seen in a short space of time, under good management, is that Central Coast Council's financial situation has been turned around. Of course, it is the ratepayers who have got it in the neck and have borne the costs of that incompetence through rate rises as well as sell-offs of surplus assets to help reduce the debt. I congratulate both the administrator and the CEO on the tough decisions they have made to turn the ship around in an extremely short time.

The people of the Central Coast want their regional councillors to represent them, not themselves. I say to anybody seeking elected office that everybody on the Central Coast will be looking carefully at what the candidates are espousing and what they believe should be happening. The region has benefited from millions of dollars worth of regional funding as a regional council. All electorates on the Central Coast have benefited from that infrastructure. We have also seen a change in the culture at council. This was a top-down toxic environment, from the elected body down. It was sinking through into the staff, who were on the front line coping the abuse in response to the poor management of the elected body.

We all remember the day the mayor stood there, like Neville Chamberlain holding up a piece of paper, saying, "We've got a 100-day plan to solve this problem." It was a joke, it was a farce and it was embarrassing. The best thing was that she and the other elected members of that body were sacked accordingly. It is just a pity

that more could not be done to prevent them from recontesting, in some cases. Quite frankly, the public has lost complete faith in them to do their jobs and focus on what they were elected to do.

Again, I commend the Minister for this bill. De-amalgamation is something that every area has the right to do, but they need to go in with their eyes open. The benefits and the consequences of those decisions are very important. Our region is going from strength to strength because we have one council focused on one job for our entire region. I thank the shadow Minister for her sensible amendments. They are important amendments to this bill. Absolutely nobody disagrees with a community and elected bodies having their say. The great thing is that future Central Coast councillors, should they be elected and wish to then look at the path of de-amalgamation, will have to be open and transparent with the public about the costs and processes involved, rather than it just being a catchcry in the lead-up to the 2024 council elections in September.

The people want to know how their money is spent, and that it is being spent wisely. For over three years we saw the complete opposite. The former elected body was nothing short of an absolute embarrassment and a disgrace. Many members will be encouraging people to look long and hard at how they vote. We want a council that focuses on the 365,000 people of the Central Coast. That is council's job. It is not a Parliament; that is not what councillors are employed to do. They need to focus on those people to do the right thing.

This bill goes some way to making sure that there is transparency and a process involved in a de-amalgamation, should people wish to do that. I say to members that we have a lot of people in the region who are very parochial about the Central Coast. We love our region. The divide needs to be broken down. One of the best ways to get rid of the north-south divide is to bring everybody together as one: not councils in the north and south but one council delivering for the entire region. I commend to the House both the bill and the amendments proposed by the shadow Minister.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (18:49):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamations) Bill. I thank the member for Parramatta, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Heathcote, the member for Wyong, the member for The Entrance, the member for Riverstone, the member for Newtown, the member for Terrigal, the shadow Minister and member for Goulburn, the member for Balmain, the member for Albury, the member for Cootamundra, the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Pittwater all for their contributions. This bill is part of the election commitments Labor made going into the 2023 elections, which was to provide for a council-led de-amalgamation, subject to the business case and approval of the local community in terms of a referendum. I think we used the word "plebiscite" in our election commitment.

This bill provides for effectively a constitutional referendum. Since my election prior to decisions to amalgamate councils, I was repeatedly very critical of various decisions of the former Government. I have expressed my view forcefully on the decisions to merge councils. Various Ministers for Local Government over that time have felt the brunt of my tongue in terms of the language I may have used. I do not detract from any of that and I adhere to those views. However, those decisions have been made and are now eight years old. There is a sector that needs to operate on behalf of the people in this State. Councils have to either take the option to demerge or they have to move on, on behalf of the people they represent.

The former Government, which effected those mergers, paid a heavy political price. They did not just lose the election in 2023. They would have gone further with the mergers had Premier Berejiklian not stopped them in their tracks. They lost a number of Coalition seats, probably partly, if not chiefly, as a result of their amalgamation decisions. They paid the political price, and that is the price paid in a democracy. Now is the time to try to repair what in my view was an error. In that respect, I thank the shadow Minister and the Opposition for recognising the Government's mandate, working with the Government to provide a mechanism for the sector to move on and making very worthwhile suggestions and amendments, particularly to provide assistance for rural and regional councils that want to go down that path.

Local government amalgamations are extremely unpopular in communities. During my time, both in local and State government, I have always cautioned governments against proceeding with council amalgamations. I have cautioned previous Labor governments and I cautioned the former Government privately as well because it always ends in tears. There is no return to a government of New South Wales for making efficient councils, but the communities that lose their councils never forgive.

In my electorate, where the former Botany council was merged with Mascot council in 1948, there are people in Mascot who do not forgive the government for that merger in 1948. As one moves through New South Wales where mergers have occurred, not only in the most recent amalgamations but in previous mergers from previous governments, people still speak with contempt about the amalgamations of their councils. The reason for that is a local council is a local council. When the council is relatively small, the councillor is only around the

corner and the town hall is around the corner. Those smaller councils are very responsive to the communities they represent.

Those of us who travel the length and breadth of this State and who communicate with many of those small rural and regional councils, despite their lack of capacity—which I suppose the former Government used to make its decision—see that the people would not have it any other way. In other words, their view is that they are content with the service standards being provided by that council with that capacity. I have not been to a small rural or regional council where those small communities have been demanding a merger with another council to give them more capacity. I am sure my predecessor, the member for Goulburn, has not been to one either. I have never heard that and I am not sure any other member of this House has.

The sector either demerges, de-amalgamates and utilises the provisions that exist within this Act or they get on with it. The sector can no longer utilise the decisions made eight years ago as an excuse to provide the service standards they choose to provide to the communities they represent. I also take this opportunity to fix up an inherent misunderstanding, which I find somewhat bizarre. At a budget estimates hearing, I was asked by members of the other place about what small communities can do to effect a demerger and why I had not incorporated that into this bill. I pointed out that there is already a provision in the Local Government Act that enables communities to proceed to demerge. Section 215 of the Local Government Act states:

- (1) A proposal may be made by the Minister or it may be made to the Minister by a council affected by the proposal or by an appropriate minimum number of electors.
- (2) An appropriate minimum number of electors is—
  - (a) if a proposal applies to the whole of an area or the proposal is that part of an area be constituted as a new area—250 of the enrolled electors for the existing area or 10 per cent of them, whichever is the greater, or ...

Those words are abundantly clear. Applying the rules of statutory construction applies those ordinary words. If there is some confusion, one can try to give effect to the legislative intent. But that is pretty clear when I read to the House these words:

- (b) if a proposal applies only to part of an area—250 of the enrolled electors for that part or 10 per cent of them, whichever is the lesser.

Those words are abundantly clear. I will read them to the House again in case anyone has difficulty understanding words that I think are quite simple. It states:

if a proposal applies only to part of an area—250 of the enrolled electors for that part or 10 per cent of them, whichever is the lesser.

I have heard from people from Pittwater and other people who want to demerge that they have submitted previously in 2016, 2017 or 2008, or they have submitted proposals under section 215 to the Government and have been told that they need 10 per cent of an entire area, and that is how section 215 is being interpreted. If they were told that, it is wrong. If it is an approach to the Office of Local Government while I am the Minister, I will proceed in accordance with the Act. I have a sneaking suspicion why they might have been told that and why they think it is accurate, but it is wrong.

I thought I was clear at budget estimates hearings that there is an opportunity to proceed under section 215. I do not need to read the words to the House a third time for it to be clearly understood. I say clearly to all those who think that they do not have an opportunity that they can proceed under section 215. If 250 people in Pittwater signed a request under section 215, I am not sure on what basis they would persuade a Minister for Local Government to refer that to the boundaries commission. But the opportunity is there to have the Minister at least consider it, as a Minister is required to do.

I note the proposed Opposition amendments foreshadowed by the member for Goulburn relating to financial support in the de-amalgamation process. I thank her for her well-crafted amendments that have been well thought out. They deal precisely with what was raised by a number of regional and rural councils. We all recognise that the Government of the day has a responsibility to ensure that the local government sector remains financially sustainable in its own right in the long term. As many members have commented during the debate, we all agree that we need to find a sensible and workable solution on the issue that has been forced on local communities through the amalgamation process. We all agree that we need to find certainty for councils and communities to be able to move forward on this issue.

As the debate has highlighted, the bill finally provides a robust way forward to support communities and councils that have been waiting to exercise their democratic right to decide their future. The bill enables a fully informed council and community as a whole to determine whether de-amalgamation is in the best interests to a clear and transparent process that contains appropriate checks and balances along the way. I am pleased to note the number of members who wished to contribute to debate on the bill. Some have done so in positive terms in relation to their councils. It is reassuring to know that many members share my regard for the value of local

councils and understand the importance of providing councils and communities with a clear and fair pathway to determine their own future. The bill sensibly addresses existing deficiencies in the Act. Those deficiencies are contained in section 218CC of the Act, which was effectively forced onto a local government by the other place through an amendment moved by the Labor Party in opposition.

The bill allows a fully informed council and community to vote on whether it is in their best interests to de-amalgamate. More importantly, the bill mitigates the risk and uncertainty to local councils, their communities and the Government by ensuring that de-amalgamation proposals demonstrate that, once de-amalgamated, the newly formed councils will be financially sustainable and able to continue to deliver the services and infrastructure that communities need and expect. The sector would have paid attention to the boundaries commission report in relation to Inner West Council and the observations that the boundaries commission made. It indicated that as part of a business case it expects an implementation plan. Simply getting a consultant to write a report will not be sufficient to enable the boundaries commission to make a determination.

Should the bill be enacted, councils that think that they will just have to provide a consultant's report, the report will be written, the boundaries commission will magically determine a division of the councils and that the Governor will proclaim them will need to carefully consider the path forward by the boundaries commission. I make an observation to the member for Balmain, who is in the Chamber and who contributed to this debate. Her council also impacts the Newtown electorate. I am aware that the created Inner West Council—the merger between Leichhardt, Marrickville and Ashfield—was incredibly unpopular. There were a number of very vocal protests as a result of that merger and there was a substantial reduction in service standards to that part of the council that impacted my electorate. The Inner West Council covers the suburbs of Tempe, Sydenham and St Peters in my electorate. Their reduced service standard was consistent with the reduced service standard of Bayside Council, which was created when the City of Botany Bay Council was amalgamated with Rockdale, although that reduced service standard was far worse for my electorate.

As far as the Inner West Council is concerned, over the past eight years I have seen an improvement in its service standards. I have also noticed in that area of my electorate, because I am consistently in that community, that the hostility seems to be dissipating. I do not know how the member for Balmain or the member for Newtown feel about it. I know that the Inner West Council received the Bluett Award for its service, which is the highest accolade a council can receive. Therefore, the local government sector has determined that the Inner West Council is probably the best council in the State if we are to go by that judgement. I have to say to the mayor and councillors that, despite what their internal politics might be, they should be proud of the council's achievements considering it was set up to fail. That includes the member for Balmain and others who might share her view about the council. So there is a way, through some difficulty, for a council to achieve a measure of success. We will know how successful it is in four months time when the council goes to the polls in September.

The member for Wakehurst—whose view is different to the views of Pittwater residents—assures me that the Northern Beaches Council merger is successful. Even though I have the highest regard for the member for Wakehurst, and did as mayor, I know he is not impartial in his judgement because I also know from a variety of members in this House who cover that area that they too are quite pleased with the progress of that council. The opportunity exists for elected representatives—and I hope they take that opportunity when they go to the polls in September—to take the mandate they will be given to move on. The bill gives an opportunity to those who think they should proceed otherwise to allow their communities make an informed decision. I commend the bill to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that this bill be now read a second time. A division has been called for. There being only three members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Noes, 3**

Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mrs Wendy Tuckerman.**

**Consideration in Detail**

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

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:14):** By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-010B in globo:

**No. 1      Costs of de-amalgamation**

Page 3, Schedule 1[4], lines 10 and 11. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

**[4]      Section 218CC, heading**

Omit the heading. Insert instead—

**218CC      Costs of de-amalgamations**

**[4A]      Section 218CC(1)–(5)**

Omit the subsections.

**[4B]      Section 218CC(6)**

Omit "this section is fully funded". Insert instead "section 218CD is funded".

**[4C]      Section 218CC(6A)**

Insert after section 218CC(6)—

(6A)      For the purposes of subsection (6), the Minister may make either or both of the following—

- (a)      a grant, not exceeding \$5 million, to the new council to offset the financial impacts of the de-amalgamation,
- (b)      a loan to the new council, at interest rates determined by the New South Wales Treasury Corporation, to defray de-amalgamation costs.

**No. 2      Boundaries Commission report**

Page 3, Schedule 1[5], proposed section 218CD. Insert after line 33—

(3A)      The Minister must ensure that the Boundaries Commission's report is publicly released within 48 hours after it is provided to the Minister.

**No. 3      Costs of de-amalgamation**

Page 6, Schedule 1[8], proposed Schedule 10, clause 3(b). Insert after line 24—

- (iii)      whether the business case assumes a grant will be made by the Minister to the new council to offset the financial impacts of the de-amalgamation and, if so, the amount of the assumed grant,
- (iv)      whether the business case assumes the amalgamated council will receive a loan from the Minister to defray de-amalgamation costs and, if so, the assumed amount and terms of the loan,

I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for his indulgence in listening to my concerns relating to the bill. It is a great relief to councils that are currently in the process of a demerger that these amendments focus on allowing for a grant of up to \$5 million that the Minister may make on their behalf to assist in any demerger proposal. It is important to recognise that the Minister has moved from his original position. It is also important to recognise the struggles of regional and rural communities in the sector in this regard. I know the assistance is welcome. I thank the Minister for adopting a collegial approach with the Opposition in supporting the amendments.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (19:16):** The bill addresses the existing deficiencies in the Act and allows a fully informed council and community to vote on whether it is in their best interests to de-amalgamate. The bill mitigates the risk and uncertainty for local councils, their communities and the Government by ensuring the de-amalgamation proposals demonstrate that, once de-amalgamated, the newly formed councils will be financially sustainable and will be able to continue to deliver the services and infrastructure that the community needs and expects. The amendments proposed by the Opposition complement and enhance that intent. They require a council to define how much it assumes it will receive from the Government in the form of a loan and in the form of a grant as part of its business case that goes to the boundaries commission.

The bill also provides a mechanism for the Government to provide an allocation of up to a maximum of \$5 million and/or additional funding to be provided as a Treasury Corporation loan, if it is necessary for the Government to seek funding to support new councils. As I have said many times, the Government continues to strongly support the ability for any council formed by the amalgamation of two or more former areas to de-amalgamate, if that is the view of their community. The amendments recognise that in some circumstances the Government may be able to contribute to de-amalgamation and give the Government the mechanism by which to do so. However, unlike other proposals, this is not an unrealistic, uncapped, open chequebook for councils to

demerge; instead, the member for Goulburn has proposed a sensible mechanism for the Government to make a budget decision to contribute in certain circumstances.

The mechanism that is provided in this bill, together with the amendments, means that the community will have ample opportunity to clearly understand the financial and service delivery advantages or disadvantages, and will have the ability to voice their support or concern. The Government understands that the proposed amendments will ensure that councils and their communities have access, in a timely manner, to the same information being used by the Government to inform its decisions about an amalgamation proposal. Therefore, the Government supports the Opposition's amendments.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-010B be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended be agreed to.

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

### **Third Reading**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (19:23):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. The bill is part of Health's well-established miscellaneous bill amendment program that ensures legislation is fit for purpose and continues to respond to the needs of the community. Many may think a miscellaneous bill is not important; that is not the case at all. It is about agencies and the Government making sure that our legislation is fit for purpose. I acknowledge the team at NSW Health and the Ministry of Health for their work on the bill. I also acknowledge Melanie Haskew and Vivienne Moxham-Hall from my office, who are here today, for their work on the bill.

I turn to the detail of the bill. The bill will repeal the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Act 2015, which I will refer to as the amending Act. It was passed in 2015 and never commenced. The amending Act would have amended the Health Services Act to allow a person providing supported non-emergency patient transport to provide these services without the consent of the Health secretary. Having legislation uncommenced for close to 10 years is not appropriate and could create confusion for the public when they are trying to understand what their responsibilities are under the law. Repealing the amending Act is an important tidy-up of this historical legislation to streamline legislation and eliminate unnecessary regulatory complexities. To be quite honest, I do not know why the amending Act was passed in the first place. But that is for others to reflect on.

In relation to the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act, the amendments in schedule 1 to the bill aim to ensure that children born from IVF using donated gametes, being sperm or ova, only have a limited number of half siblings, and to reduce the risk of a child unknowingly entering into a relationship with a blood relative. Under the Act, providers of IVF services must ensure that gametes from the one donor are not provided in IVF services to more than five families. To enable providers to comply with this requirement, they can request and disclose non-identifying information with other providers and the Health secretary about the number of women who have given birth, or plan to give birth, from gametes from a specific donor.

The bill will allow the Health secretary and providers of these services to share this non-identifying information with providers and regulators in other States and Territories to ensure there is a limit on families created from gametes of the one donor. Importantly, the proposed amendments to the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act will not affect a woman's privacy rights. I think all of us in this place regard that as important. The bill will ensure that only de-identified information can be shared, which relates specifically to the number of women who have given birth or are pregnant using gametes of the one donor rather than personal or health information about the woman herself. I recognise the assistance of the Privacy Commissioner, who was involved in providing advice to NSW Health on this amendment.



I turn to schedule 2 to the bill. In 2022 the Crimes Act was amended so that offences for assault against frontline health workers would carry a higher penalty than the general assault provisions in the Crimes Act to recognise that violence against these workers warrants express recognition. Members of the Opposition will remember the amending legislation. These offences currently apply to certain frontline healthcare workers, including workers in hospitals, paramedics, community health workers and pharmacy staff. However, it is important to note that these offences do not currently extend to medical practitioners, such as general practitioners and their staff, including nurses and receptionists, who work in private practice. I am proud that the bill will address this gap. I acknowledge that certainly the former Government did not deliberately set out to produce this result, but there is a gap. That is why miscellaneous bills are important—to make sure that such gaps are closed.

The bill will ensure these workers are protected under the strengthened assault offences to recognise that violence against these workers will not be tolerated. I thank the Australian Medical Association (NSW) for its advocacy for this change, especially Dr Michael Bonning. It is unfortunate that such a law is necessary, but we recognise that safeguarding healthcare providers in private practices ensures uninterrupted access to essential medical services. As a Parliament, we need to protect these hardworking health practitioners. Legal protection encourages healthcare practitioners to continue to provide crucial medical services without fear of reprisal or harm, bolstering the healthcare system's resilience and our overall healthcare system.

Schedule 3 to the bill is a minor administrative amendment to the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act to clarify that a person may be appointed to act in the role of principal Official Visitor where the Principal Official Visitor is unwell or otherwise unable to fulfil their statutory functions. Those functions include overseeing the program for Official Visitors, who act as advocates for patients in the drug and alcohol treatment system. I now turn to schedule 4 to the bill, which will amend the definition of a public sector agency in the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 to include a State owned corporation not otherwise subject to the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. The changes are intended to align with recent changes to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 to ensure that the complaints process against a State owned corporation in relation to both personal information and health is aligned, and to streamline processes and ease clarity for the public, an important issue for all of us in health care.

Schedule 5 to the bill contains two minor amendments to the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 to tidy up small drafting errors—again, an important feature of miscellaneous bills. Firstly, the bill will ensure that corporations receive a penalty five times higher than an individual for all different tiers of offences under the Act. Currently, for one of the offences, the penalty for a corporation is six times that of an individual. The bill will also ensure that a reference to the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act in the Public Health (Tobacco) Act will be replaced by a reference to the new Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act when the new legislation commences.

I turn now to schedule 6, which people who are following will realise contains two amendments to the Mental Health Act with regard to community treatment orders. I acknowledge the work in this space of the Minister for Mental Health in the other place, the Hon. Rose Jackson. I thank all those who took part in consultation around these changes, especially BEING – Mental Health Consumers and Mental Health Carers NSW. The Government's priority for our mental health system is always to provide a person-centred, client-led and recovery-oriented practice. Our mental health system works under the policy of least restrictive practice—an important thing for legislators in this place to understand and be aware of. That means involuntary mechanisms such as community treatment orders are only ever used as a last resort and with the interests of an individual's health, wellbeing and reputation in mind.

Community treatment orders and other restrictive practices are by no means an ideal aspect of our mental health system. The Government acknowledges that. However, they can be critical in mitigating the need for much more restrictive practices in the future because of poor early engagement in treatment. Community treatment orders can potentially mean avoiding lengthy involuntary hospital admissions or even more adverse outcomes, such as entering the forensic health system due to unmet health needs resulting in antisocial behaviour. Having spent a great deal of time with Justice Health, I know firsthand the work they do under very difficult circumstances.

Community treatment orders are made by the Mental Health Review Tribunal and set out the terms upon which a person must accept medication, therapy and other types of rehabilitation when living in the community. Where a person is not compliant with the order, a mental health service can take steps to breach a person and, if necessary, require that they be taken to a hospital for treatment. There are important procedural steps that need to be taken before this can occur, including giving notice to the patient that they may be breached. The bill will broaden the methods of serving breach notices of community treatment orders to encourage a person's compliance with the order—something that we all want to see.

Currently, when a community treatment order is breached, a breach notice must be handed directly to the patient or, if that is not practicable, posted to the person's last known address. The breach notice will state that the

person must accompany a member of NSW Health to a facility for treatment or further action will be taken. In a situation where a person's whereabouts in the community are not known or they do not have a fixed residential address, service of the notice can be difficult, and if a person does not receive the notice, they cannot comply with it. The bill will ensure that a breach notice can be served in more flexible ways, including through email and with consent of the patient, but recognises that personal service is the preferred method to encourage the patient to comply with the notice.

The second amendment that the bill makes to the Mental Health Act with regard to community treatment orders is to make it a requirement for a person's designated carer or principal care provider to be notified when a community treatment order is made or breached in respect of a patient. Carers play an important role in the support and rehabilitation of a patient. I think all members, particularly in this House, have met with many people who are caring for loved ones dealing with a mental health crisis or situation. It is important that this notification occurs to allow the carer to assist a person to comply with the order or to take steps to protect themselves. Under the bill and existing requirements in the Mental Health Act, safeguards are in place to ensure that if a patient does not want a person to be notified of the making or breaching of a community treatment order, that will be respected, subject to the request not causing potential harm to the patient or that person.

The amendments to the Mental Health Act aim to enhance accessibility and efficiency of mental health care delivery by broadening methods of service of community treatment orders. In addition, mandating that a patient's designated carer or principal care provider be notified on the making or breaching of a community treatment order involves caregivers in the treatment processes and recognises the invaluable role that they play in supporting a patient with mental illness and maintaining continuity of care beyond clinical settings—something that is critically important in the delivery of mental health care. The final amendment in schedule 6 to the bill is a minor administrative change to clarify that acting arrangements can be put in place for the principal Official Visitor under the Mental Health Act when they are unable to perform their functions, for example, due to illness or unavailability. That is a commonsense change.

Schedules 7 and 8 to the bill make administrative amendments to the Public Health Act 2010 and Private Health Facilities Act 2007. The rationale behind the amendments is to allow regulations to properly support the Acts, particularly given that they are technical and include requirements that need updating from time to time, such as compliance with standards. The Government notes the amendment that passed in the other place in relation to schedule 8. The bill will ensure that there is an explicit ability under the Act for these types of regulations to be made and is not intended to impact upon the existing processes of NSW Health.

Lastly, schedule 9 to the bill makes a minor amendment to the Public Health (Tobacco) Act to ensure that tobacco inspectors can be appointed under that Act rather than under the Public Health Act. That change aims to address a situation where there is potential confusion when a tobacco inspector, while conducting tobacco inspections, produces identification documents that currently provide that the inspector is appointed under the Public Health Act. We cannot do enough tobacco and e-cigarette inspections at the moment. The changes in the bill are all minor but will ensure that the legislation in the Health portfolio remains up to date and relevant. I thank the staff teams from NSW Health. I thank my personal staff for their work on this legislation. Whilst being miscellaneous legislation, I believe it is important legislation to ensure that our laws, particularly around health care, remain contemporary in 2024 and beyond. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (19:38):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. The Coalition supports the bill now that it has been amended in the Legislative Council. Carers and frontline healthcare workers play a vital role in our community, and we welcome these changes to help protect them. The bill repeals the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Act 2015, which never commenced, and ensures that health Acts are operating effectively in New South Wales.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 amends the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act 2007. This amendment stipulates that only five gametes—sperm or ova—can be provided from each individual IVF donor. Coupled with enforcement measures requiring providers to request and disclose non-identifying information from and to other agencies, this schedule will ensure that a minimal number of half-siblings are created through the IVF process. This in turn limits the chance of inadvertent relations between unknowing half-siblings.

Schedule 2 expands the types of frontline workers included in the 2022 Crimes Act amendments, which imposed higher penalties for assault on these workers. This expansion will include GPs and their staff, including customer-facing staff members, who face a high risk of violence. I should note that this was introduced by former health Minister Hazzard to recognise the incredible work of our frontline healthcare workers, and expanding the provision to include GPs is right and appropriate.

Schedule 3 provides an important administrative change relating to Official Visitors, who are advocates for patients in the drug and alcohol treatment system. The amendment will allow for a person to be appointed to act as a temporary principal Official Visitor if the principal Official Visitor cannot perform their duties due to reasons such as illness. Schedule 4 amends the definition of a public sector agency in the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2022. It will now include a State owned corporation not otherwise subject to the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. The Opposition supports this change, which ensures that the complaints process is streamlined and in line with the changes in the Privacy and Personal Information Act.

Schedule 5 contains two minor amendments to the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022, which the Opposition supports. The first change is to correct a simple error that sees one offence carry a penalty six times higher for a corporation than for an individual. This will be amended to state that all offences are meant to be five times higher for a corporation under the Act. The second change to section 5 sees a reference to the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act in the Public Health (Tobacco) Act replaced by a reference to the new Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act when it commences and replaces the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act.

Schedule 6 contains amendments to the Mental Health Act 2007. One amendment will mirror the changes in schedule 3, along with two further changes relating to community treatment orders. These orders are set out by the Mental Health Review Tribunal and are used to specify the terms upon which a person must accept medication, therapy and other types of rehabilitation when living in the community. Complications arise when it comes time to notify the person receiving the order when a person does not have a fixed residential address or provides only electronic contact information. A person cannot take the necessary action to comply with an order if they do not receive it. The first part of the schedule requires handing a breach notice directly to the patient whenever practical. Posting it to the person's last known address will be used only as a last resort.

Schedule 6 also requires that a person's designated carer be informed when a community treatment order is made or breached. This is an important change because it allows carers to assist with compliance and helps keep carers safe by better informing them. The amendments made in schedules 7 and 8 relate to the Public Health Act 2010 and the Private Health Facilities Act 2007. The Coalition proposed an amendment in the Legislative Council, which was adopted by the Government. I thank the Minister for accepting that amendment. The original bill sought to remove parliamentary oversight of the responsibilities of principals of schools with respect to immunisation. Given the public attention around these matters following the COVID pandemic, any reasonable person would prefer that the responsibilities of principals of schools and childcare facilities be subject to the full oversight and scrutiny of the Parliament.

The requirement that those responsibilities be drafted, gazetted and subject to disallowance motions as regulations is the best way to achieve this. Allowing the Health secretary to make these determinations is not. The Minister's explanation for the rationale for these amendments was not clear in the second reading speech, which was given in the upper House. The Minister said:

The rationale behind these amendments is to ensure that the Health secretary has clear authority to approve matters under regulations, and to allow regulations to be made that can require compliance with a document as amended from time to time. The bill will ensure there is an explicit ability under the Act for these types of regulations to be made and is not intended to impact upon NSW Health's existing procedures. Rather, the amendments will provide certainty in relation to these matters being dealt with under regulations.

If the Health secretary is, in fact, making determinations outside the powers currently available, this needs to be addressed at the department's end. It is not the responsibility of the Parliament to ratify the department's processes after the fact. The regulation process is not significantly cumbersome or slow, and it cannot be that difficult to make it function according to the relevant laws. So we appreciate that the Minister has adopted this amendment, and we make clear that regulation is the appropriate way in which to do these things. It is particularly sensitive in the public domain. To ensure public confidence in our system, it should still require parliamentary oversight, and that goes to the areas of immunisation and vaccinations also.

Finally, schedule 9 makes a minor amendment to the Public Health (Tobacco) Act to allow tobacco inspectors to be appointed under that Act rather than under the Public Health Act. This will reduce confusion when tobacco inspectors perform their enforcement functions, clarifying that they are doing so as inspectors under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act. The bill makes minor but important changes that will ensure that carers and frontline workers are better informed and protected. The Opposition supports the schedules in the second print of the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the work of the Minister and his team. Of course, Vivienne was excellent during this process, but the Minister worked constructively with the Opposition to address the concerns raised in the Coalition party room. I thank him for that and congratulate him on his good work on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (19:46):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. The bill will make amendments to various Acts and repeal

the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Act 2015. That Act was proposed to amend the Health Services Act 1997. However, it was concluded that the Act would be unable to reach its intended goals and, therefore, was never commenced. Repealing the Act will prevent any confusion for individuals trying to understand the law and their responsibilities. It also keeps our laws updated and appropriate.

The bill amends the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act 2007 to reduce the risk of children born through IVF unknowingly entering a relationship with a blood relative. This will be done by mandating that donated gametes—sperm or ova—from one donor are not supplied in IVF services to more than five families. In order to comply with this requirement, the bill will allow providers to disclose or request non-identifying information regarding the number of women who have given birth or plan to give birth using gametes from a specific donor. It will also allow providers or the Health secretary to disclose this non-identifying information to providers and regulators in other States and Territories.

The bill will amend the Crimes Act 2022 to include medical practitioners and their staff in the list of frontline healthcare workers, to recognise that acts of violence against these workers warrant a higher penalty rate and to acknowledge that customer-facing staff members of medical practices can be victims of violence as well. The bill amends the definition of a public sector agency in the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 to include a State owned corporation not otherwise subject to the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. The change will streamline the process of complaints against a State owned corporation by ensuring that both personal information and health is aligned with the recent changes to the Privacy and Personal Information Act 1988. The bill will amend the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 to guarantee that a corporation that commits any offence under the Act will receive a penalty five times that of an individual. The bill will also ensure that reference to the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act within the Public Health (Tobacco) Act will be replaced with a reference to the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act when it commences.

Various amendments will be made to the Mental Health Act 2007. The bill will ensure that a person may be appointed a temporary principal Official Visitor in the event that the principal Official Visitor is unable to fulfil their duties due to illness or other factors. To encourage a person to comply with breach notices of community treatment orders, the bill will enable the breach notices to be served in more flexible ways such as by email. Community treatment orders refer to the terms under which an individual must accept medication, therapy and other forms of rehabilitation whilst living in the community. The orders are made by the Mental Health Review Tribunal and state that the individual must accompany a member of NSW Health to a facility to receive treatment. The bill requires that an individual's carer or principal care provider be notified of a community treatment order that is made or breached by the patient. Mandating that notification allows the carer to assist the patient in completing that order; however, a carer will not be notified of the order or breach if the patient requests that the matter remain private. The request will be granted as long as it does not have the potential to harm the patient or the carer.

The bill makes amendments to the Public Health Act 2010 and the Private Health Facilities Act 2007 to clarify the authority of the Health secretary to approve matters under regulation as well as allow regulations to be created. Those regulations are not intended to interfere with the current functions of NSW Health. Lastly, the bill makes a minor amendment to the Public Health (Tobacco) Act. Tobacco inspectors are currently appointed under the Public Health Act as authorised officers and are required to carry an identification card that states that they are appointed under the Public Health Act. To eliminate any potential confusion, the bill will allow tobacco inspectors to be appointed under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act instead. NSW Health is integral to the care of community. The bill makes important amendments to various health Acts to provide clarity and streamline functions in our health system. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (19:53):** I am pleased to speak to the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. The bill will introduce minor amendments to various health Acts to ensure that health legislation remains up to date. I limit my contribution to the amendments proposed to the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act. It is of particular interest to me professionally as well as personally. I have always been an altruistic donor, from whole blood to a monthly plasma donation during parliamentary sitting months. Not only did I deliver my first baby as a medical student in 1980 but, like many of my medical student peers, I was an anonymous sperm donor in that year. At that time, few questions were asked and probably few records kept—hence the importance of the amendments.

The Assisted Reproductive Technology Act in New South Wales governs the use of assisted reproductive technology, including procedures such as in vitro fertilisation, artificial insemination and embryo transfer. It establishes regulations and guidelines to ensure the safety, ethicalness and legality of assisted reproductive procedures, protecting the rights of all parties involved, including donors, recipients and resulting children. Currently, the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act lacks provisions addressing the sharing of de-identified data regarding donor sperm or gametes with other States and Territories. That limitation could lead to the creation

of multiple families with the same donor material, potentially raising ethical concerns and complicating issues related to genetic relatedness, medical history and potential consanguinity.

NSW Health has identified the need to update the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act to allow for the sharing of de-identified data. The proposed amendments to the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act will ensure that non-identifying information about the number of women who have given birth using gametes—being sperm or ova—from the same donor can be shared between regulators and service providers in other States and Territories. This is to ensure that there is a limit on the number of women using donated gametes from the same donor so that a child born using donated gametes only has a limited number of genetic siblings or half siblings, to both reduce the risk of the child unknowingly entering into a relationship with a blood relative and to reduce the emotional strain of having a large number of half siblings.

Importantly, the proposed amendments to the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act will not affect a woman's privacy rights. The bill will ensure that only de-identified information can be shared, which relates specifically to the number of women who have given birth or are pregnant using gametes of the one donor, rather than personal or health information about the woman herself. Allowing the sharing of de-identified data can promote transparency, accountability and responsible practices within the assisted reproductive technology industry. It can also facilitate better management of donor resources, reduce the risk of inadvertent consanguinity and provide valuable information to donor-conceived individuals regarding their genetic heritage and potential health risks.

We recognise that any changes to the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act must carefully balance the interests of all stakeholders, including donors, recipients and donor-conceived individuals. As such, it is important to note that it will not jeopardise any existing privacy protections and will continue to protect the identity of donors and women using assisted reproductive technology services. I recognise the assistance of the Privacy Commissioner, who was involved in providing advice to NSW Health on the amendment.

As has been raised before, this is not the only amendment in the bill. The bill introduces a range of other minor changes, including to the Public Health (Tobacco) Act to ensure tobacco inspectors, who are currently appointed under the Public Health Act, can be appointed under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act. It will also clarify a drafting error to ensure that the Public Health (Tobacco) Act will correctly reference the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act when it replaces the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act, among other small changes. The bill is part of NSW Health's regular miscellaneous bill program, which ensures legislation is fit for purpose and continues to respond to the needs of the community. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:57):** I am pleased to speak to the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024, which will introduce minor amendments to various health Acts to ensure that health legislation remains up to date. As outlined by the Minister in his second reading speech, the Acts that will be amended are the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act; the Crimes Act; the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act; the Health Records and Information Privacy Act; the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act; the Mental Health Act; the Private Health Facilities Act; the Public Health Act and the Public Health (Tobacco) Act.

I speak to, and commend, the amendment to the Crimes Act 1900, which will afford greater protections to private sector health workers. The Crimes Act was amended in 2022 to recognise the severity of assaults against frontline health workers and emergency workers. A report by the NSW Sentencing Council highlighted the inadequacy of existing laws in protecting frontline health workers. However, medical practitioners and their staff working in private rooms and medical centres were not included in the definition of "frontline health workers".

The bill aims to address this gap by including medical practitioners and their staff in the definition of frontline health workers. This amendment ensures that medical practitioners and their staff are protected by the strengthened assault offences against frontline health workers. I acknowledge the advocacy of the Australian Medical Association, which has campaigned tirelessly on this issue. It is unfortunate that such a law is necessary, but we recognise that safeguarding healthcare providers in private practices ensures uninterrupted access to essential medical services, contributing to the overall public health and wellbeing of the community. Legal protection encourages healthcare practitioners to continue providing crucial medical services without fear of reprisal or harm, bolstering the healthcare system's resilience.

Part 3, division 8A of the Crimes Act contains specific offences for assaults against law enforcement, frontline emergency and health workers. The list of offences includes hindering or obstructing a frontline health worker in the course of duty; stalking, harassing or intimidating a frontline health worker; and causing grievous bodily harm to a frontline health worker. These offences carry a maximum penalty of up to 12 years imprisonment. That is an appropriate sentence. If the worker is not on duty at the time of the assault, the action will still be considered a division 8A offence if the assault is a consequence of or in retaliation for actions undertaken by the worker in the course of their duty or because the worker is a frontline health worker.

This amendment empowers healthcare workers to seek legal recourse and justice in cases of assault or obstruction, holding perpetrators accountable for their actions and deterring future occurrences. Closing gaps in legislative protection ensures that all frontline healthcare workers are equally safeguarded, irrespective of their practice setting. This change reflects equitable treatment and support for healthcare professionals. The bill recognises the vital role that health workers in private facilities play in our community and sends a message that assaulting these people will not be tolerated. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:01):** As noted by previous speakers, the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024 introduces minor amendments to various health Acts to ensure that health legislation remains up to date. I note the amendment to the Public Health (Tobacco) Act. I thank our current tobacco inspectors and recognise the work they do in our community to seize illicit tobacco and vaping products. Of late there has been a lot of commentary about the concerning increase in vaping, especially amongst children and young people. Recent statistics indicate that one in five people over the age of 14 have used e-cigarettes at least once in their lifetime. The percentage of people who vape increased from approximately 2.5 per cent of the population in 2017 to 7 per cent in 2023. Those statistics are concerning when the health and social impacts of vaping are considered.

NSW Health currently employs 50 authorised inspectors across New South Wales and is actively recruiting more. The inspectors partner with NSW Police Force officers and the Therapeutic Goods Administration on targeted operations. In the first quarter of this year, NSW Health inspectors have already conducted 435 retail inspections, including large-scale raids across metro Sydney. The inspections resulted in the seizure of about 125,000 nicotine vapes and e-liquids, valued at more than \$3.9 million. An additional 2.8 million cigarettes and 760 kilograms of other illegal tobacco, valued at more than \$3.2 million, were seized also.

This huge amount of work exemplifies the Government's commitment to continuing compliance, enforcement and seizure efforts for illicit tobacco and vapes. The Government remains vigilant in clamping down on any nicotine being marketed at young people. Currently, tobacco inspectors are appointed under the Public Health Act. It causes confusion when their certificate of authority states that they are appointed under the Public Health Act because they are appointed to exercise functions under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act. The bill creates a new provision allowing the secretary to appoint inspectors directly under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act, aligning with existing requirements in the Public Health Act.

This change aims to ensure clarity when a tobacco inspector displays their certificate of authority during tobacco inspections and premise searches. The bill will not affect a tobacco inspector's ability to carry out their functions. The Government is making significant investments in not only awareness and prevention campaigns but also support for those who want to quit nicotine. The New South Wales Government has invested \$25.55 million in tobacco and e-cigarette control. That investment includes an additional \$6.8 million to bolster enforcement, including \$4.3 million over the next three years. It also includes \$2.5 million over the next 12 months to increase services to help young people quit vaping.

This work will help support areas where smoking is socially discouraged and where those who do not comply with non-smoking zones go unaffected. One of my former colleagues on Liverpool City Council refers to Macquarie Mall in the centre of Liverpool as the city's largest publicly funded ashtray. Some smokers' unrepentant flouting of the no-smoking zone discourages other members of the public from accessing that space. Some of these amendments will not only have a health impact but also create more public amenity and welcoming public spaces for a broader cross-section of our community. We welcome that with great joy. The amendment ensures that our authorised staff and inspectors can get on with the job of keeping harmful and addictive substances out of the hands of young children. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (20:06):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to debate on the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2024. I thank the member for Hornsby, and shadow Minister for Health; the member for Mount Druitt; the member for Bega; the member for Shellharbour; and the member for Liverpool. I acknowledge the organisations that were involved in the consultation and development of the bill with NSW Health. I thank the Medical Services Advisory Committee, the Australian Medical Association, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Information and Privacy Commission, the Health Services Union, BEING - Mental Health Consumers, Mental Health Carers NSW and State owned corporations.

The bill repeals the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Act, which passed in 2015 and never commenced. The bill allows the Health secretary and providers of assisted reproductive technology services to share non-identifying information with providers and regulators in other States and Territories to ensure there is a limit on families created from gametes of the one donor. The bill also ensures that medical practitioners and their staff are protected by the strengthened assault offences against frontline health workers under the Crimes Act. I thank the Australian Medical Association and Michael Bonning for their work in this area. The bill ensures

that a person can be appointed to act in the role of principal Official Visitor under the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act 2007 when the principal Official Visitor is unwell or otherwise unable to act.

The bill amends the definition of a public sector agency in the Health Records and Information Privacy Act to include State owned corporations not subject to the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. That mirrors recent changes to the Privacy and Personal Information Act 1988 to ensure that complaints against personal and health information are treated in the same way. The bill makes two minor amendments to the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 to fix drafting errors. The bill makes two amendments to community treatment orders in the Mental Health Act 2007. First, the bill will allow community treatment orders, which currently must be served in person or to a person's last known address, to be served in other ways, including, novelly, by email. Second, the bill will make it a requirement for a patient's carer to be notified when a community treatment order is made in respect of a patient or breached by the patient. The bill will also amend the Mental Health Act to ensure that a person can be appointed to act in the role of principal Official Visitor when the principal Official Visitor is unwell.

The bill will amend the Public Health Act and the Private Health Facilities Act to clarify the manner in which regulations can be made under those Acts, to formalise existing processes within NSW Health. It is important to ensure that technical matters that may change from time to time can be appropriately addressed in regulations, including where those regulations need to reference other documents such as standards. Schedule 8 to the bill provides clarity in that regard. I appreciate the comments made by the Opposition and, while the proposed provisions of the schedule were not intended to undermine the role of Parliament, the Opposition amendments have been accepted by the Government. The bill will amend the Public Health (Tobacco) Act to ensure that tobacco inspectors, who are currently appointed under the Public Health Act, can be appointed under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act.

I thank and congratulate those who have contributed to the bill. I thank all of the hardworking staff at the Ministry of Health, especially Hugh Percival and Harriet Alexander, for all their hard work in the drafting stages of the bill and for hanging around this place for long periods. It would be remiss of me not to also thank Minister Jackson from the other place and her office for their valuable contribution in shaping the mental health aspects of the bill. She is a tireless advocate for people living with a mental health challenge, and I know that she will continue to be a strong advocate for those people, their families and the system broadly. The changes in that area will ensure that New South Wales legislation continues to respond to the needs of the community and those living with mental illness.

I also thank all the family, friends and carers of people with mental health concerns across the State, not to mention our invaluable clinical staff, for sharing their experiences firsthand with Minister Jackson and I as we have travelled across New South Wales. I also thank my personal staff, including Vivienne and Bill, and Janelle, who is with me this evening. Those of us in this place who are Ministers or have been Ministers know that we can only do this role because of the hard work of our personal staff, and I thank them enormously for their contribution to this legislation. The bill is part of the Government's regular review of legislation to ensure that it remains up to date and fit for purpose. The changes in the bill are minor but will ensure the legislation in the Health portfolio remains up to date and relevant, which should be important to all of us. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **JOHN EDMONDSON HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (20:13):** With Anzac Day having just passed, I congratulate John Edmondson High School in my electorate, which was the 2023 national winner of the Anzac Day Schools' Award. Hosted by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the award recognises the work of students, teachers and schools who engage with veterans and honour our nation's wartime history. The theme for 2023 was "Commemorating Australia's Vietnam War service". Students from John Ed made an original website containing research, poetry and artwork on the Vietnam War, the role of Australian women and the stories of national servicemen. The school and our nation's wartime history are closely intertwined, with the school taking its name from local Victoria Cross recipient John Hurst Edmondson, VC. The theme for this year is "Discover the stories

of veterans in your local community", with entries closing at the end of the month. I encourage all schools in Leppington and right across New South Wales to enter.

#### **TIRION WILKINSON AND CHLOE MCKENZIE-MATTESON**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (20:14):** I recognise the inspiring efforts of two best friends from Yowie Bay Public School, Tirion Wilkinson and Chloe McKenzie-Matteson. Tirion and Chloe are year 6 students and have been friends since year 1. Last year Tirion was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer. She has had several rounds of surgery. Chloe says her friend has become a symbol of courage, hope, resilience and determination. Today, on World Ovarian Cancer Day, Chloe shaved her hair off to raise money for the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation. The girls aimed to raise \$10,000, but not long after Chloe had shaved off her hair in the 2GB studios their fundraising tally had soared above \$150,000. They have motivated people from around Australia to contribute to what has become one of the largest ever donations to the fund. I send Tirion my very best wishes as she continues her fight against ovarian cancer.

#### **MARSDEN ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:15):** This week I had the opportunity to visit my alma mater, Marsden Road Public School, to meet with the principal, Manisha Gazula—something I had been looking forward to for a long time. When she started her tenure as principal, most students were moving into high school without the necessary level of reading skills. Today Marsden Road boasts results above the State average in writing and is making strides in reading and numeracy. Its NAPLAN results speak for themselves, with both year 3 and year 5 students outperforming the State. It was such a success story that Manisha's approach was recently spotlighted by 7.30, Channel 7, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Mrs Gazula calls her approach "The Marsden Way". It emphasises discipline and explicit teaching, and every minute of students' time is planned in order to make the most of their education. That has lifted up students at Marsden Road, many of whom are from refugee backgrounds. For them, education is the great enabler. I credit Mrs Gazula and the incredible staff at Marsden Road for their dedication to our community.

#### **GET HEMMED**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (20:16):** After almost 16 years of business in Bathurst, the team at Get Hemmed will be putting down the sewing needles and turning off the sewing machines for the last time. Get Hemmed has become a staple store in George Street as a family-owned and family-run business providing sewing services to a grateful community. They have done everything: hemmed pants, sewn cushions, tailored suits and fitted dresses. The mother-and-son duo have always been so accommodating, helpful and happy to do even the smallest jobs. For many people it became a vital service that they use regularly. It is no wonder they have been involved in some of their customers' biggest events, from hemming wedding suits to creating new curtains for someone's dream house. Get Hemmed has become a household name and a go-to place for Bathurst residents. I congratulate Leanne and Andrew. The Bathurst community wishes them all the best on their next adventure.

#### **TRIBUTE TO ANNA GARDNER**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (20:17):** I inform the house of the passing of Anna Gardner of Callala Bay. Anna's recent passing at the young age of 46 has left a void in our hearts, yet her legacy of service and compassion will remain indelible. Anna's commitment to community service was exemplified through her dedicated involvement with the Callala Bay Community Association. Since 2016 Anna has wholeheartedly contributed to the association's mission to promote the welfare and the physical and intellectual development and advancement of the unique, pristine coastal township of Callala Bay. That dedication culminated in her election as president of the association in March 2023. Before her tenure with the Callala Bay Community Association, Anna served as president of the Callala Brumbies soccer club, illustrating her absolute commitment to community engagement. Anna's passing is mourned not only by her immediate family but also by her parents and extended family and friends. Anna will be dearly missed. However, her legacy will endure in the hearts of all who knew her.

#### **PICTON CARS AND COFFEE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (20:18):** Car enthusiasts rose with the sun on Sunday 14 April to congregate in the Wollondilly suburb of Picton for the monthly Cars and Coffee meet-up. Fuelled by caffeine, members of the community joined together to celebrate and connect over a shared love of vehicles. It was amazing to see all the cafes and shops bustling with activity and energy. The early morning start might seem insignificant, but it was chosen deliberately by the founders of the group to encourage healthy habits for those who might need a bit of motivation. Being able to bounce out of bed bright and early on the weekend means a sensible Saturday night, cognisant of the early start on Sunday morning. Picton Cars and Coffee was founded to offer people an opportunity to come together and form connections. In regional areas like those in Wollondilly, which are lacking



in public transport, private vehicle transport is often the only way to get around. An event such as this is a chance for people to take their interest out of their garage and connect with others over car culture, strengthening communities and providing a boost to local business.

### THE POYER'S

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (20:19):** One of the very first functions I attended after being elected to represent Port Stephens in the New South Wales Parliament in 2015 was the opening of a new local restaurant. Opening a fancy French restaurant on the prettiest and quietest peninsula at the very point of Port Stephens was a brave move, but it was executed in style by Ludovic and Mandy Poyer. For almost a decade, The Poyer's has perched on the edge of the water at Lemon Tree Passage marina. It is well known and loved by locals and visitors alike. Now it will likely be loved by many more because at the Sydney Fish Market Seafood Excellence Awards 2024 last week, The Poyer's restaurant won best restaurant in the State. Locals from Lemon Tree Passage and further afield all knew The Poyer's was the best of the best; now it is official. And rightly so, because The Poyer's is the real deal: authentic French food cooked by an authentic French chef sourcing local seafood delivered by authentic, lovely people. I offer huge congratulations to Ludo and Mandy on a well-deserved win. My hot tip is to book now because the secret is out.

### HAWKESBURY MARINE RESCUE

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (20:20):** I recognise the wonderful volunteers of the Marine Rescue Hawkesbury unit and the work they do protecting people on the river in all conditions. Because of its stunning natural beauty, the Lower Hawkesbury River is a playground for many visitors, particularly in the warmer months. In addition, the Hawkesbury is still a working river used for a wide variety of industries. Being one of the most beautiful places in the world to live, various residential communities are also located on the Hawkesbury River—the majority without road access. With all this there are inevitable incidents and accidents that need urgent attention. Crucially, the Hawkesbury unit, under the leadership of Peter Moore, is able to respond to emergencies quickly. That can sometimes be the difference between life and death. I take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers at Hawkesbury Marine Rescue. I particularly thank deputy commander Ian Harding; Dereck Worlow, who has served for 30 years; Craig Staff; Mike Bevan; Ken Batte; Greg Groppenbacher; Mark Neller; my friend Carmelo Sciberras; James Philips; Luke Clay; David Hytche; and Ryan Sharp. They do an incredible job. Our community is very grateful.

### JIM AND MITCHELL BAILEY

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:21):** I congratulate Picnic Point resident Jim Bailey and his son Mitchell. They have made history as world champions in the World Long Range Rifle Championships held in South Africa. The pair showcased their incredible talents as part of the 2024 Australian Target Rifle team and, in a rare feat, both father and son clinched the top medal in their divisions. Jim, a 2018 Commonwealth Games silver medallist, secured the Veterans World Championship title as well as winning the Top World Team Coach. Mitchell was awarded the Under-25 World Championship title. Both men made the finals of the Open World Championship, with Mitchell securing fifth place. Their dedication to the sport, honed through regular practice sessions at the ANZAC Rifle Range in Malabar, reflects a passion passed down through generations—Jim also learned straight from his father. I heartily congratulate Jim and Mitchell Bailey on their outstanding achievements. I wish them continued success as they prepare for the upcoming State titles in Townsville.

### GRAFTON SHOW AND MACLEAN SHOW

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:22):** In my electorate of Clarence over the past couple of weeks it has been show time, with the running of the 150th Grafton Show. It was an honour to have the Governor and Mr Wilson present to open the show this year. I congratulate the winner of the Woman of the Land, Ruby West, and the Junior Woman of the Year, Tayla Willis. I congratulate Rex Green and his team. The Maclean Show was also on. Mr Brian Ferrie and his team put on an excellent show this year. I congratulate the Young Woman of the Year, Bonnie Everson, and the runner-up, Alyssa Chisholm. I congratulate everyone. We all got a hot dog, a Bertie Beetle showbag and a dagwood dog. We went on the rides, made ourselves sick and went home. It sounds like a wonderful show.

### NATIONAL NETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:23):** I congratulate the New South Wales State 19U netball team on their recent domination in the 2024 National Netball Championships held in Victoria. They were undefeated and won an amazing nine from nine games throughout the tournament, and they finished off with a 10-goal grand final victory over Queensland—always a personal favourite. I especially highlight the three Penrith District Association players—Isabella Degei, Katarina Sincek and Olivia Harris—along with Sam May, who is an

apprentice coach. It takes strength, resilience and a lot of dedicated teamwork to achieve that level of performance. No doubt the many dedicated volunteers at the Penrith District Association will still be celebrating that great win. We need to acknowledge the huge amount of effort and hard work that goes into those tournaments, so I thank all the teams behind the teams.

#### CHRIS ROE

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:24):** Artists have tackled controversy since the dawn of time, but only one has dared to take on the challenge of the Chiko Roll. For this task, Wagga Wagga turned to pop artist Chris Roe, who celebrated the roll in his latest exhibition, writing another chapter in the contest of ideas that is the origin of the Chiko. Wagga Wagga has claimed to be the home of the roll since 1951, when a Bendigo boilermaker first sold this dubious delight at the Wagga Wagga Show. Bendigo and Bathurst have since claimed to own the roll, but Wagga is standing firm. Struck by the absurdity of this deep-fried claim to fame, Chris created a human-sized inflatable Chiko for his exhibition *Rogue Thoughts*. "Is this oversized spring roll really how we define ourselves in Wagga?", Chris asked himself before answering, "Apparently, it is!" His oversized roll became a centrepiece of *Rogue Thoughts*, a courageous retelling of Australian stories that even dared to reimagine Ned Kelly in confronting new ways. Chris's art speaks for itself and I encourage people to see it. But when it comes to the Chiko Roll, I stand with my city. Back off, Bathurst and Bendigo—the Chiko is ours!

#### CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (20:25):** On 10 March 2024 I had the opportunity to partake in the community Clean Up Australia Day held at Cabra-Vale Memorial Park. The event brought together numerous local youth groups and residents from our community, fostering a sense of collective responsibility toward preserving and enhancing our environment. Witnessing the enthusiasm and dedication of individuals coming together to care for their local area was truly inspiring, reaffirming the power of grassroots initiatives in effecting positive change. During the event, I had the privilege of presenting certificates of appreciation to commend the hard work and commitment of those involved in the clean-up efforts. It was wonderful to see their efforts acknowledged and celebrated, motivating them to continue their invaluable contributions to our community. I extend my deepest gratitude to Peter Thien Nguyen for his commendable organisation of the event, as well as to Mr Walter Robinson, Mr Michael Foulkes and the entire team at Cabra-Vale Diggers Club for their generous support and assistance.

#### MIRANDA ELECTORATE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (20:26):** I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of Justices of the Peace from the Miranda electorate in serving our community for 50 years. Over the last half a century, Nicola Lo-Russo, Jill Lovett, Robert Proctor, Raymond Mumby, Giuseppe Di Francesco, Kevin Hackett, Wayne Butler and Roselyn Gardner have all played an important part in the legal system by helping hundreds of people at key moments in their lives. Justices of the Peace provide their services on a voluntary basis, witnessing affidavits and statutory declarations and certifying original documents so members of the community may buy property, access superannuation or apply for a passport. These selfless community members are among the volunteers who celebrated their golden jubilee of service recently. During the 50 years that these Justices of the Peace have been witnessing documents, even the way people find a Justice of the Peace has evolved, with people now using online registers rather than relying on word of mouth. I congratulate and thank these Justices of the Peace for their dedication to our community.

#### WORLD OVARIAN CANCER DAY

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:27):** Today is World Ovarian Cancer Day. The day highlights this silent killer: a cancer most women only recognise the symptoms of after the disease has reached an advanced stage and is largely incurable. It is vital that we know and can recognise the early warning signs. The four key symptoms to look out for are bloating or increased abdominal size, pelvic or abdominal pain, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly, and the need to urinate frequently or urgently. Those are all things we are very reluctant to talk about and usually ignore as women. Greater awareness is the path to earlier diagnosis and treatment. If a woman experiences one or more of those complaints almost daily for more than a few weeks, they should see a doctor and ask for a pelvic exam. That one action could save their life. Five women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer today, and three women will lose their lives. Please know and recognise the symptoms. It could save a life.

#### AYEMIN KAWKUHTOO

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:29):** The Coffs Coast is proud to have Ayemin Kawkuhtoo living and working in its community. Ayemin is a Karenni refugee who provides interpreting services in Coffs Harbour, and his important work has led to statewide recognition. He is the winner of the 2024 Regional Unity Medal, part of the Premier's Multicultural Community Medal program. The award

recognises the contribution of an individual who has significantly benefited the economic, social and cultural wellbeing and unity of a regional community. It was great spending time with Ayemin and Coffs Harbour support worker Robin Ashley recently. I am supporting Ayemin's plans for an annual festival, Kay Htoe Boe, to celebrate the Karenni culture in Coffs Harbour in April 2025. The festival is held every year to encourage a bountiful harvest, favourable weather, good health and peace. I also put on the record my best wishes for our colleague Matt Cross, who undergoes treatment tomorrow.

#### AVENUE PARRAMATTA

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (20:30):** The official opening of the Avenue Parramatta microbusiness, co-located at St Ioannis Greek Orthodox Church, represents a real investment in flexible work options for people with a disability who do not currently participate in the workforce, enhancing our social participation fabric and better use of human capital within the local area. The program provides co-working space, profit sharing and socialisation opportunities for eligible participants. Avenue has already provided support to over 100 individuals, 32 per cent of whom live in Parramatta. The microbusiness team will support four discrete employment options, including fulfilling customer orders, flyer delivery, development of social media content, and doggy day care and photographic services. It was a pleasure to cut the ribbon to officially open Avenue and chat to participants who are so proud of the new space. I thank the hosts Adrian Brown, Laura O'Reilly—who is the founder of Fighting Chance—and Ravi Ramjas, as well as the entire Avenue team, for inspiring the lives of others.

#### DOMINIC RYAN

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (20:31):** I acknowledge the amazing efforts of McMahons Point local Dominic Ryan, who is on a mission to reduce plastic waste across our community. Dominic has spearheaded an innovative grocery delivery service called Restore, which is centred around reducing plastic waste and bringing fresh produce directly from farm to table. The service provides plastic-free fresh milk, oat milk—which is my favourite—and yoghurt. It is delivered in re-used glass bottles every Friday morning. After discovering that 95 per cent of locals are concerned about plastic packaging, Dominic decided to start a business, which is now flourishing across the North Shore. He aims to help reduce local plastic waste by an astounding 3,000 kilograms in the next year, which is slowly but surely becoming a reality. Dominic is single-handedly bringing back a sense of nostalgia to the community while reducing plastic waste and directly supporting farmers. I congratulate Dominic on his efforts to reduce plastic in the local community. Keep up the good work. I wish him the best of luck in all his future business endeavours.

#### AUBURN-LIDCOMBE GIRL GUIDES

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (20:32):** Tonight I celebrate the centenary of the Auburn-Lidcombe Girl Guides. Since 1924 the extraordinary organisation has been empowering young girls in my electorate through the unwavering dedication of its volunteers, like Faye Connell, who has spent 50 years as a district manager and passionate volunteer. Girl Guides is more than just an institution; it is a community builder that has, for a century, equipped countless young women with the skills and confidence to lead, innovate and contribute meaningfully to society. By fostering a supportive environment, it encourages girls to take on challenges, develop teamwork and leadership skills and grow into resilient and compassionate leaders. As we honour the 100 years of service of the Auburn-Lidcombe Girl Guides, I pay tribute to the volunteers who have dedicated their time and energy selflessly. Their commitment ensures that the Girl Guides remain a vibrant and essential part of our community's fabric. This Saturday in Lidcombe, there will be a celebration reflecting on the 100 years. Whether you were once a Girl Guide or are interested in becoming a new member, I encourage all to attend.

#### TRIBUTE TO ALAN SHARP

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:33):** Jugiong citizen, able seaman and gunner Alan Sharp joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1942, aged 17. He did so undeterred by the horror stories from his father, who served in France in World War I. Alan served in the Royal Australian Navy from 1942 to 1946 as a gunner on the HMAS *Shropshire*. Most vividly in Alan's mind was a five-day battle in Lingayen Gulf, where ships were peppered by kamikaze fighters and the *Shropshire* was almost torpedoed. Alan recalled the torpedoes narrowly missing the ship's hull, a terror he would never forget. Alan was in the last naval battle in World War II, with his gunner crew impacted by 32 direct hits. Alan passed away peacefully in early April 2024 having celebrated his 100th birthday in February.

#### KAY KELLY

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:34):** Kay Kelly, a well-known and respected leader within the Blacktown community, retired as president of the Workers Lifestyle Group, formerly known as the Blacktown Workers Club. Kay has been involved with the workers club for more than 50 years. She has been a staff member

and director, and has been the longest serving club president for the past 16 years. In 2023 Kay was recognised with a ClubsNSW Industry Lifetime Achievement Award. Kay has forged the way for women in the club industry and, importantly, successfully guided the club during the COVID crisis. Kay's passion for the people of Blacktown was evident through her leadership, guidance and dedication to the club in ensuring that club grants went to worthy causes such as health, homelessness, domestic violence and vulnerable youth. Kay was awarded the great honour of being club patron. I wish her well in her retirement from active club duties to spend time with her family. Kay will always keep an active watch over the club.

#### **PITTWATER ELECTORATE SPORTING GROUPS**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (20:35):** The Pittwater community loves its sport. Whether playing, watching early Saturday morning winter sports or cheering on the Sea Eagles, sport is for everyone. It would not be possible for so many in our community to enjoy such activities without the countless local clubs and associations and their many volunteers. I am excited to announce \$50,000 of funding for brilliant sporting groups across Pittwater, which will see the groups continue to thrive. I announce \$20,000 for the Terrey Hills Tennis Club to upgrade its tired and outdated women's and men's bathrooms; \$3,635.50 for the Manly Warringah District Baseball Association to upgrade its batting nets at Rat Park in Warriewood; \$8,997.50 for the Avalon Sailing Club to upgrade its bathrooms and changing room facilities; and \$17,367 for the Manly Warringah Basketball Association for wheelchair equipment for its wheelchair basketball program.

#### **GREG AND SUE WALSH**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:36):** I congratulate Greg and Sue Walsh from Mount Warrigal on winning the 2024 Shellharbour City Council Good Neighbour of the Year Award. Shellharbour City Council announced the winners of the 2024 Good Neighbour Awards at a special celebration at the Shellharbour Civic Centre on Friday 12 April 2024. The annual awards recognise and celebrate community members who reach out, support and help care for people in their neighbourhoods. The Mount Warrigal couple, who have lived on the corner of Cotts Parade and Thrower Avenue since 1978, said that their neighbourhood is a lovely little community that supports and helps one another. Both Greg and Sue are happy to go out of their way to help their neighbours, either helping with car problems, assisting with groceries or giving neighbours something out of their garden. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I congratulate Greg and Sue Walsh on their award and wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

#### **WEST RYDE EASTER CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (20:37):** I ask the House to join me in recognising the success of the West Ryde Easter celebrations, made possible by the dedicated efforts of some incredible locals in my electorate. Philip Brown and Lindsay Mar from Neighbourhood Watch Ryde District, Pastor Philip Fong from the Chinese and Australian Baptist Church in West Ryde, May-sze Zuo from Captivate Presbyterian Church in North Ryde, Mark Kong from West Ryde Community Church, and Artin and Nora Etmekdjian from West Ryde Chamber of Commerce all played pivotal roles in orchestrating the celebration of togetherness and festivity. From captivating performances, the animal farm and pony rides, a broad array of food trucks, and songs and performance, the day was brimming with excitement. The singing competition was a highlight of the event, as was the Easter bonnet competition. It is always a challenge for me, as one of the judges, to pick a winner. The celebrations were more than just a gathering; they symbolised our unity and shared values. They allowed us to come together, celebrate Easter and forge enduring memories. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed to the event's success.

#### **MOTHER'S DAY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:38):** This weekend our nation will come together to celebrate our fantastic mothers. Although my mum is not here with me anymore, I love celebrating Mother's Day. I enjoy getting together with my family and recalling our beautiful memories of Mum. Being a member of Parliament, I have the privilege to work with so many mums in our community, and I watch the working mums, the carer mums and the volunteer mums who work so hard to better our society. To the mums who work and wear many hats to juggle work and family life, I see you. To the mums who stay home and care for their families doing unpaid domestic labour, I hear you. To the mums who are grieving their loss, I feel you. To the mums who are looking after their grandchildren so that their children can go back to work, I praise you. Mums play an unreplaceable role in our society, and it is not every day they get the recognition they deserve. I thank all mums for their incredible efforts and sacrifices to build a strong Australia.

#### **BONNIE HURRELL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:39):** I take this opportunity to acknowledge the incredible Bonnie Hurrell, a truly remarkable young student from Avoca Beach Public School with a very big heart. At just

nine years of age, Bonnie decided to shave her long locks in solidarity with her dear friend Sienna, who battles leukaemia, after seeing the World's Greatest Shave advertisement on TV one night while watching a movie with family. Bonnie's act of kindness not only symbolises her unwavering support for Sienna but also serves as a beacon of hope for countless individuals facing similar challenges. Her fundraiser, which initially aimed to raise \$1,000, has soared to over \$25,000, making her one of the top fundraisers for the Leukaemia Foundation in New South Wales and across the country. But Bonnie's impact extends beyond fundraising. She has inspired her community, school and even strangers to join her in spreading love and support. From her school principal, Ben Thomas, to residents donating their hair for wigs, Bonnie's compassion has ignited a ripple of goodwill that transcends boundaries. Bonnie's actions remind us of the power of empathy and the difference that one person can make in the lives of others. Her community commends her for her wonderful support of her friend.

#### **LAKEMBA SPORTS AND RECREATION CLUB**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (20:40):** I am excited to announce that the Lakemba Sports and Recreation Club has received \$6,680 under the Local Sport Grant Program, which aims to support grassroots sporting clubs. I congratulate the club and its coaches, volunteers and players. That important funding will enable the club to provide coach education, uniforms and equipment to underpin the four new girls' teams that are being created. The club has a very long history. It was established in 1917 and is one of Australia's oldest soccer clubs. Today it not only organises sport but also, more importantly, serves the community by assisting migrants to integrate into their new lives in Australia. I was also delighted to play a bit of soccer with the girls, and they had lots of fun. But we need more female players. We want to ensure that we make sport more inclusive and supportive for all. I thank Tanvir Murshed and congratulate the wonderful team.

#### **MOULTON GALLERIES, MOSMAN**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (20:41):** Today I say a sad farewell to a local Mosman treasure, Moulton Galleries. The award-winning business opened its doors for the last time at the end of March after more than 30 years of operating on Military Road. I note how gracious they were when, in the 2017 by-election, they were next door to pre-poll. Marcia Moulton has owned the building since 1994 and has been a pillar of our community ever since, managing one of the longest-running businesses in our area. Although we are all sad to see the gallery close its doors, we do not have to say our final goodbyes yet. Marcia has announced that the business will be moved online. I would like to thank Moulton Galleries for always bringing vibrancy and culture to our local community, and I thank Marcia Moulton personally for her ongoing support of Australian artists as well as her loyalty and friendship to her customers. Farewell, Moulton Galleries. I wish Marcia good luck with her future endeavours.

#### **SINGING BRIDGE**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (20:42):** For 50 years, the Singing Bridge has connected the two beautiful communities of Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest in my electorate of Port Stephens. For 50 years, the bridge has sung its song into the souls of locals and visitors when the south-westerly wind comes up. For 50 years, locals have let out a sigh of relief as they cross the bridge knowing they are almost home. For 50 years, visitors have crossed the bridge, filled with anticipation knowing they were about to arrive at one of the most peaceful places on the planet. I am very pleased to report to this House that, 50 years from when it first opened on 6 April 1974, the bridge is still singing. Alongside the local communities of Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest, who came together to celebrate the bridge's fiftieth birthday, this Parliament recognises the Singing Bridge's 50 years of service. We acknowledge the efforts of those who made the celebration possible—I am looking at Ben Hanson and Margie Tierney backed up by the wonderful teams at Galleries in the Gardens, The Pearls of Port Stephens and the local historical society, and the Myall Lakes Aquatic Club, which organised the sail past to recreate the event at the bridge's opening 50 years ago.

#### **ELECTRIFY BOUDDI**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:43):** I take this opportunity to celebrate the launch of Electrify Bouddi over the weekend and congratulate Jem Cox, Susan Biggs and everyone involved in that fantastic event. The not-for-profit association in my community has emerged as a beacon of hope, inspiring residents and businesses to take meaningful action at a local level to reduce their energy costs. Electrify Bouddi's commitment to empowering local communities to build resilience and save on energy costs is truly remarkable and commendable. By generating and sharing reliable information, knowledge and guidance, it has become an invaluable ally in our collective journey towards sustainability. Recognising the strength in unity, Electrify Bouddi has fostered a network of engaged community members offering inspiration and opportunities for positive action. Its workshops and resources provide the guidance needed to make informed decisions that benefit our community.

I was delighted to hear about the Electrify Bouddi's youth leadership initiative, which is part of Electrify Bouddi. I look forward to meeting with this group of youths soon to hear their concerns and listen to their ideas. I congratulate Electrify Bouddi.

*Private Members' Statements*

**TRIBUTE TO TONY BLEASDALE, OAM**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:44):** Devastating news hit our community when the Mayor of Blacktown City, Tony Bleasdale, passed away on a plane returning from a sister city council delegation. Tony grew up in Liverpool, England and came to Australia in the Big Brother Movement of the 1960s. He was 15 years old, and he was put to work in the building industry. Tony spoke fondly about his first encounter with Nina, who was working in a pie shop. Obviously, they hit it off well as he got the first pie free. But when he went back for seconds, there were no more freebies. Nina and Tony were married for 56 years. They raised four children—Frank, Nick, Christina and Catherine—and had many grandchildren. Tony was a strong, loving family man who often had either his children or grandchildren accompanying him at council events, but there was one constant. Nina was always by his side; the two were inseparable.

Tony was a union organiser who rose through the ranks to become the New South Wales assistant secretary of the Building Workers' Industrial Union in the 1980s, improving worker safety, wages and conditions. Tony looked after both the Mount Druitt hospital and the Parklea prison building sites. I recall how he gained a significant win for workers by securing a flea allowance at a worksite after insects infested the Mount Druitt hospital construction site. After leaving the union, he worked for several years with Bill McNamara as an industrial relations manager. They formed a formidable team and a lifelong partnership. Tony went on to start his own civil and building construction industry labour hire agency and become a major provider of jobs across the nation. Now it is a family owned and operated business.

Tony was associated with West Tradies club since its beginnings in 1983. He became a director in 2007 and a long-serving treasurer. He helped turn the club from one with financial difficulties into a strongly performing club supporting the local community. Tony's massive service to the community culminated in him earning the Order of Australia Medal. Tony sponsored numerous community and charitable organisations. He loved his football and sponsored the Mt Druitt Town Rangers FC and the Western Sydney Wanderers FC. Tony also played a significant role in bringing back the Rabbits by supporting George Piggins and co. Tony supported many individuals suffering hardships and tragedies, or he gave them a boost in their sporting endeavours. Tony served as a councillor on Blacktown City Council from 1996 to 1999 and then continuously from 2004. He first served as deputy mayor in 2011-12 and then again from 2016 to 2019, and served as mayor since 2019.

Tony provided significant support to me in times of crisis. We had to deal with the 2015 *Struggle Street* documentary that aired on SBS. When everyone was telling me to just write an angry letter expressing our collective displeasure at the so-called documentary, Tony said, "Screw 'em. Let's protest." So began the infamous garbage truck blockade of SBS. In 2016 a certain political opportunist proposed changing the name of Blacktown. Tony again provided strong advocacy and wisdom as we successfully campaigned to keep the Blacktown name. Tony was a friend of comedy legend Jerry Lewis. Jerry suffered an anxiety attack prior to one performance, and Tony provided calming support for Jerry before he went on stage. But that was the way he was—always helpful. I recall fondly how he always took a special interest in offering help to my mum as she went through her cancer treatment.

Tony's life could easily produce several volumes of colourful stories. I have not even touched on his friendships and encounters with Pelé, Nelson Mandela, numerous Premiers and Prime Ministers, and other colourful identities. Tony can be summed up as a person who loved his football and helped people. He was a passionate supporter of Blacktown. But, most importantly, he loved his family immensely. You will be sadly missed, my friend. Thank you, Nina and your extended family, for sharing him with our community over many decades. Blacktown will shine less brightly without him. My condolences to Nina and the whole family. Vale, Mayor Tony Bleasdale, OAM.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (20:49):** I, too, put my condolences on record. I pass on my deepest condolences to Nina Bleasdale and her amazing family—her kids and grandkids. Tony was larger than life. He was an amazing person. He mentored a lot of people coming through the Labor Party. I acknowledge what has been said by the member for Blacktown. He was a truly wonderful person who loved Blacktown, and he was always showing off the wonderful things and initiatives that he was doing with his team in Blacktown. He will be sorely missed. We are deeply devastated by his loss. We want his family to know that he was held in very high regard in the New South Wales Parliament.

### BACK TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:50):** Throughout my time in the Parliament of New South Wales, I have proudly supported some major reforms and supported measures for families across our State. From the affordable preschool cost-saving measures to the Active and Creative Kids vouchers, which provided valuable funding for families throughout New South Wales, the former Liberal Government always stood up for families. In fact, we were so committed to taking pressure off the household budget that the former Liberal-Nationals Government introduced the Service NSW Savings Finder. That initiative provided practical support to thousands of families by helping them to find relevant rebates, vouchers and schemes—cementing our legacy as a Government who was committed to providing support for families.

Figures published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies show that the weekly costs of raising a child range between \$140 and \$250 per child per week. As many in the Chamber would know, raising kids comes with many challenges and it is certainly not cheap in any sense of the word. From school lunches to clothes, to household rent or mortgage, participation in a local sports club, extracurricular activities, child care and school supplies, it all just seems to go on and on. That is why it is astounding that, during a cost-of-living crisis, this Government has cut the much-loved, much-used and much-needed Back to School Vouchers. Despite being called a cash splash by those opposite—which many families might find offensive, I might add—the vouchers were introduced by the former Government for one important reason: We know that schooling costs can be a significant drain on the family budget and we want to ease the pressure of that enormous cost. Completely ripping \$150 per child away from our local families in the Oatley electorate and right across New South Wales is beyond cruel.

Before the scheme was slashed, 3.4 million Back to School Vouchers were redeemed by families across the State. Whilst we would think that this figure would demonstrate the need for the program, unfortunately that was not the case. Millions of families are now missing out on \$150 per child to go towards shoes, stationery, backpacks, water bottles, lunch boxes, laptops and books—all of which are essential supplies that are very expensive when combined. My youngest son, Sammy, is about to go to school next year at the Mortdale Primary School and my eldest, James, is about to start high school the year after next.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Terrible teenagers!

**Mr MARK COURE:** I know. I know the costs associated with this, and it is a very real concern for many parents in my electorate. As one could predict, the anger from my community has been loud and clear. I have received countless emails, phone calls and visits to my office, mostly by mums, dads and grandparents who are furious with these cuts. In response, I launched a petition, which now has over 650 signatures. It is clear that this is an important issue and one I will continue to fight for in this place. Our local kids deserve so much better and our families right across the State do not deserve to suffer under this Government's slashes to the voucher scheme in the New South Wales budget.

Already we have seen families miss out on vital cost-of-living support measures, from the Active and Creative Kids vouchers to the First Lap vouchers. This cut is simply another strike against Labor's already tarnished reputation. Families are now missing out on crucial financial lifelines they once had access to under the former Government. Times are tough for everyone right now. However, the answer to solving the cost-of-living crisis is not to make further cuts. Now, more than ever, when grocery prices, rent and mortgages are at an all-time high, we need to be supporting families and not putting further strain on their budgets. Whilst I am disappointed—and I am sure I am not the only one in this Chamber—I will continue to strongly advocate on behalf of my community to challenge these unfair cuts. I am supporting the Liberal Party and National Party calls for the vouchers to be reinstated immediately. When times are tough, the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals will always stand by those who are struggling.

### DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:54):** In desperation I once again raise the issue of the ongoing crisis of domestic and family violence across Shellharbour, the Illawarra, regional New South Wales and our entire nation. I say to my fellow members of the Legislative Assembly, visitors in the gallery and everyone watching via other channels, that enough is really enough. Domestic and family violence is a stain on our communities, and it is up to my Government to clean it up. We are absolutely up to the fight. Whilst everyone has heard me bang on about this issue until I am blue in the face, today I want to read into *Hansard* a statement from Helena Fox, who was commissioned by the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. Helena Fox is an author from the Illawarra. She is also a courageous victim-survivor of family and domestic violence. The following is Helena's statement:

In case it wasn't already obvious, recent events have made the truth abundantly clear: We are in an enormous epidemic of gendered violence against women. From the individual stories of women dying at the hands of men, to the overwhelming evidence that women continue to be targets of male violence and entitlement, the details and statistics are horrifying.

Again, as always, those in power are saying shocked things. More must be done, say the spokespeople. People are calling for yet another review, but what is going to change? Half our population is female. When do women get to have their voices heard—not placated, dismissed, or forgotten, but truly listened to, and real action taken in response?

Gendered violence against women is seeded into our society. We are taught we are vulnerable and need to be vigilant, right from childhood. Women are being killed, assaulted, abused, coerced, threatened, disrespected, gaslit, belittled, undermined, disbelieved, and diminished, every day. Millions and millions of us.

When women talk to each other, there are endless stories of "Me Too"—or my sister, my friend, my mother, my client, my patient, my daughter too. I, too, carry a Me Too story.

It is exhausting. Traumatizing. Terrifying. Overwhelming.

Most importantly, it's enraging.

We have a right to feel angry about this, and not have that anger weaponised against us. For years, traumatised women have been shamed and punished for their rage, labelled as hysterical, crazy, unstable, unreliable, and even abusive when they demand safety and body autonomy, and speak out about harm being done to them.

But women shouldn't have to stay quiet and pleasant in order to have our bodies and boundaries respected. We shouldn't have to monitor our emotions, or apologise for being angry, or think of ourselves as helpless or out of control when we feel rage.

Our anger isn't the problem; the violence against us is.

Our anger is informed. It comes from a place of knowing. Our rage is a reasonable response to the violence being perpetrated against us.

Women, from all communities and backgrounds, deserve to express their rage loudly, quietly, calmly, strongly, in every corner of their lives—and be safe doing so. We deserve to step into our rage, embrace it, and hold it up as an empowering light to see by.

Our rage is bone (and centuries) deep. Collectively, let us all use the clean, clear tight of it to demand the safety and freedom we all deserve.

They are amazing words from Helena Fox, and I thank her for her unwavering advocacy. Before I conclude, I want everyone to think about this for a minute: These men—apparently not happy with their partners for leaving them for being violent cowards—prove their ex-partners are right when they go out and show everyone just how violent and cowardly they are. They deserve to be treated with disdain. They deserve jail time, as outlined in my private member's bill of 2021. We all know that there is more work to be done to stop men from murdering women, and I will continue to fight for all survivors of family and domestic violence.

### **BROADWATER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:59):** I acknowledge and support the words of the member for Shellharbour in her private member's statement. As a bloke, I thank her for bringing those words to the Chamber tonight. I update the House on flood recovery in my electorate of Clarence. I acknowledge the great work that is being done in the Northern Rivers region by government departments and members of Parliament from across the political spectrum. I speak of the member for Lismore, the member for Ballina, the member for Tweed Heads and the work that I am doing in this space. It has been almost 2½ years since the 2022 floods and, to be frank, everything is not okay. People are still not in their homes. People are living in pod villages, in tents and in caravans. Students are not back in their schools.

One of those schools is Broadwater Public School. Yesterday I presented a petition of more than 500 signatures, organised by the local community and P&C, calling on the State Government to rebuild Broadwater Public School as a matter of urgency. It is not the biggest school in New South Wales—it has about 52 students—but it is a very important community asset for the kids, mums, dads, pops, nans and teachers of Broadwater. The kids want to be back in their school. They are temporarily located at Evans Head, but it is a trek for the students every day.

The Department of Education has submitted a development application to Richmond Valley Council for the demolition of the existing school and its redevelopment. In my view, that development application is not required. Local governments do not approve State significant infrastructure such as schools; that is the responsibility of the education Minister, in consultation with the planning Minister. Presenting a development application to the local council is not the quickest way to get development consent to rebuild Broadwater Public School.

The students have had it tough. Not only have they lived through COVID, but they have also lived through a shocking flood event which has deeply impacted and scarred the community. The students are leaving for school earlier and getting home later because they have to travel to Evans Head for their education. I have spoken to the school captain, Leah. She is a school captain without a school. She wants to provide her fellow students with a great place to be educated. So I am again calling on the New South Wales Government to do everything possible to get development consent for Broadwater Public School. I acknowledge the member for Lismore, who is in the Chamber. She is doing a top job, and I mean that sincerely.



**Ms Janelle Saffin:** Thank you. I back you on this.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** Thank you for your support, Janelle. I have said to the department that, in my opinion, the development application with Richmond Valley Council should be withdrawn, and the redevelopment of the school should be approved under the normal review of environmental factors assessment process. If that were to be done now, the students would be back in their school next year. If we continue on the way that we are going, three years will have elapsed and the kids will still be without a school. I congratulate the community of Broadwater. I congratulate the P&C for the stance that they are taking, and I encourage them to continue to be a part of the solution—and they are. They accept that it will take time, but they are also telling me that their patience has run out. So I will represent their views here and I will work with anyone in this place to get the Broadwater Public School development consent approved and our 52 students back in their school as a matter of urgency. I thank the House.

#### CUMBERLAND CITY COUNCILLOR STEVE CHRISTOU

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (21:04):** I am proud that my inner west community is home to the largest concentration of LGBTIQA+ people in the country. Like so many other communities across Sydney and New South Wales, we see strength in our diversity and take pride in the inclusive practices and respect that stitches us together. No matter where LGBTIQA+ people and families with same-sex parents live in New South Wales, they are deserving of respect, support and inclusion. The attempt earlier this month by certain councillors of Cumberland City Council to "rid" its libraries of same-sex parent books and materials is offensive to families with same-sex parents and diverse families across New South Wales and raises important questions about what other books or material this council, or other councils, may seek to ban.

Councillor Christou, who moved the amendment, does not understand the role that public libraries play in our community or the damage that hurtful comments such as his can do to vulnerable communities. I suggest he does not speak for his community. I thank the councillors, including Labor councillors, who opposed the amendment. I commend the advocates from Western Sydney who have taken a stand against Councillor Christou and the council's position, and who are now calling on the council to rescind the resolution. In a petition being circulated by Equality Australia, local resident Caroline wrote:

My name is Caroline and my husband and I moved to Lidcombe in Sydney in 1985 to raise our young family. As my family grew we became actively involved in a wide range of community and sporting groups. I have been proud to raise my children in a diverse multicultural community that seeks to welcome people of all backgrounds and beliefs. But last week my local council, Cumberland Council, passed a motion that made me fear for the safety of the rainbow families in our community and the future cohesion of our community. They passed an amendment to the *Library Strategy 2024-2027* that bans books featuring same-sex parents from our public libraries. This crosses a dangerous line. Our area welcomes people of all backgrounds and beliefs, we're not about banning books just because someone does not like who is in them. There is time to reverse this decision at the next council meeting, and I'll be there to help make that happen.

I urge members of the community who share Caroline's view to sign the petition. Councillor Christou has said that books depicting same-sex parents risk "sexualising" children. A quick search of Cumberland City Council's online library catalogue reveals one such title that might be subject to Christou's ban—*You'll Be a Wonderful Parent: Advice and Encouragement for Rainbow Families of All Kinds*. The blurb of the book reads:

Becoming a parent is already a challenging time, even more so if you don't see yourself reflected in mainstream parenting resources, culture or even language ... This little book holds the reader's hand through the journeys of both birth and non-birth parents, with advice on everything from dealing with other's definitions of your family, to finding the right medical care and communities, and of course making sure that you take a lot of naps before the baby is born.

This is not radical stuff. The book that was brandished by Councillor Christou in the meeting, *Same-Sex Parents* by Holly Duhig, promises to help readers "Meet Daisy's two dads and learn how Ella gained a step-parent." This book is one of a series of what are described as "charming scrapbook-style titles" which "take topics affecting children's lives today and lets the kids themselves do the talking". Again, it is hardly revolutionary. In fact, the most that young children may learn from reading these books is that families, no matter how they are made, face many of the same pressures and experiences as traditional families. Of course, Councillor Christou would not know that because he has not actually read any of these books. This morning on ABC Radio, Councillor Christou acknowledged that he had not read the book he was trying to ban. He said:

We're not marginalising anyone here. We're saying no book of any sexual orientation, no matter its background, should be on library shelves.

I guess that means he will be banning *Romeo and Juliet* and we can say goodbye to any book written by Jane Austen. Is he serious? However, the resolution begs the question: What else will he seek to ban? This is a politician who is committed to division. What other communities will see an axe taken to resources and literature? What will be next in his culture war?

Finally, I acknowledge the people who work each and every day to make sure that our communities are inclusive. Rainbow Families is an excellent organisation based in my electorate. It holds events throughout the year to support and connect families. It hosts training seminars to assist prospective parents and carers to understand their options and the services they can connect with. I say to Rainbow Families and to all same-sex parented and diverse families across the inner west, Western Sydney and New South Wales that they are seen, they are valued and they are loved.

### COERCIVE CONTROL

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (21:10):** I speak about abusive behaviour, specifically the physical, mental and coercive abuse of women by men. A constituent recently told me an alarming story about a local woman who was effectively driven from her own home because she had been married to a man who abused her by controlling their finances. When she departed their home after years of having her money controlled and being told she was "useless", the woman left behind many of her possessions, returning to find that her husband had changed the locks and remained living in the house rent free. She, meanwhile, was forced to effectively couch surf until she could find a home, paying rent without being able to access her belongings, including her clothes. Her husband's abuse left her life in turmoil. That is just one example of how some men use coercive control to abuse women.

It is shocking that 97 per cent of domestic violence homicide victims killed by intimate partners had been subject to coercive control before their deaths. In other words, coercive control is a red flag for serious physical violence or death for women in these relationships. It is horrifying to think that so far this year 28 women in Australia have died at the hands of a violent man through no fault of their own. That is shameful. It is indeed a national crisis. We must stop the murders of women by their partners, and tackling coercive control is one measure we can act on now. We have the legislation in New South Wales. We have an implementation taskforce, and we have an education campaign. We now need to make sure that we all recognise and are aware of the dangers of coercive control. That is why I am working to support the awareness campaign in my electorate and beyond. That is why I stood with the Government and other Independents last week at the launch of the public awareness campaign. It is why we must act to eliminate coercive control.

Another area we can act on is to change the behaviour of violent men. We need a far-reaching expansion and enhancement of men's behaviour change programs across New South Wales, with a focus on rural and regional areas. We must properly fund and deliver programs aimed at men who have committed violence in the past or may yet do so. In Wagga Wagga the last Men's Behaviour Change Program was delivered some five years ago. We have not had the skilled staff we need to deliver that program. That service must be resumed. We need appropriate funding for training programs and the skilled staff for these very hard-to-fill roles. Fortunately, some local training has begun. That is great. I understand that four annual programs can be delivered in the Wagga Wagga area for about \$400,000 per year. It is not that much of an investment in the scheme of things, but it might have incalculable benefits because, of course, we cannot put a price upon a life. We should also be funding online men's behaviour change programs to improve access across the State and provide backup for areas that may not have on-the-ground services.

Finally, we need meaningful action to restrict young people's access to pornography, particularly that which depicts violence against women. Violent pornography poisons young minds, encouraging boys to grow into men to whom women are sexual objects to be treated with cruelty and abuse. This kind of material should not be available to anyone, anywhere. But if we can do one thing, we can make this appalling content harder to source and, at the same time, educate young men that violent sexual content is not only abhorrent but can also damage minds, ruin relationships and lead to appalling violence. The onus is now on us to tackle pornography to change the behaviour of impressionable boys so they do not grow up to be violent men. I welcome steps taken in that direction by the Federal Government. I urge the New South Wales Government to work with the Federal Government on that issue.

Changing the behaviour of one man will not immediately deliver safety to all women. But by changing one man, we will change the lives of the women and children around him. And if we can change one violent man, we can change many. There are many steps to be taken on this crucial journey. I am encouraged that the community is demanding action, and I am encouraged by the voices in this Parliament that have also been demanding action. Together we can bring an end to this crisis and work towards a time when women no longer need live in fear, not because they have changed but because men have.

### PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE SURF LIFESAVING VOLUNTEERS

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (21:15):** The weekend before last marked the end of the surf lifesaving season, and I take this opportunity to thank my local surf lifesaving clubs and their volunteers for all they do. Port Stephens

is blessed with beautiful beaches, but they do not come without dangers. Tragically, this year too many people lost their lives on our local beaches, despite the incredible efforts of local surf lifesavers. Our incredible surf lifesaving volunteers from Birubi Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Fingal Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Surf Life Saving Club are always on deck on our beaches, looking out for others. They are all part of the mighty Hunter branch of Surf Life Saving NSW, headed up by longstanding president, Henry Scruton.

The local clubs in Port Stephens and their dedicated members never cease to amaze me. The time they give to their clubs and our communities is incredible. Last weekend I was delighted to join Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Surf Life Saving Club at their end-of-season presentation assembly, and I was blown away. As I entered their simple, stunning new clubhouse, it was packed with almost 100 people, young and old, with laughter filling the air. Community partners sat amongst committee members, and a raft of teenagers tried to keep their end of the table to themselves, with little success. The mood was a mixture of pride in a successful season and relief that the long, hard season was over.

That small club looks out for people who visit one of the most stunning beaches in the State—Bennetts Beach. This season was busy, with almost 20,000 people visiting the beach during patrols. There were 9,869 preventative actions performed by club members and 100 rescues. Ten missing people were found and, thanks to all their good work, there were zero drownings on that beach—all that whilst managing 355 rips during the season and dangerous conditions that led to 11 beach closures due to sharks, storms and dangerous surf. As testament to the active training and education team at the club, more than 100 surf lifesaving awards were handed out at the presentation.

Under the leadership of the irrepressible chief training officer, Debbie Booth, an extraordinary amount of quality training and assessment was conducted by a 10-strong training team to lift skills across club members in radio operation, first aid, CPR, inflatable rescue boat driving and crewing, rescue watercraft and so much more. I suspect that the hours club members volunteered are not nearly all captured by measuring patrol hours. Nonetheless, there were still more than 40 club members on patrol this season for more than 60 hours—what is known as 100 per cent patrol. Many of them have done much more than that, like young Max Fortunaso, who volunteered more than 142 hours just this season to keep people safe.

This season the club had a massive contingent of nippers, with 140 young people learning to swim safely in the sea and gain skills for a lifetime. From the littlest to the wisest, the club's members are kicking goals. Last month Jan and Tony Logue and Sharon Taylor won gold, bronze and gold, respectively, at the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships. We wish them all well in the upcoming world titles at the Gold Coast. I congratulate and thank the club's committee members: Rebecca Curtis, Amanda Osmond, Kerrie Moore, Sarah Puddington, Wayne Bower, Ryan Russell, Lisa Avery, Debbie Booth, Cheryl Newton, Sharon Taylor, Craig Shelton, Kris Macklin, Natalie Skelly, Vic Pierce and Linda Stubbs.

I congratulate the award recipients. Patrol Rookie of the Year went to Luke Rochester. Patrol Person of the Year went to Peta Sheldon. The Outstanding Service award went to Sharon Taylor. The Junior Lifesaver of the Year was Abby Keighran. The Lifesaver of the Year was Andrew Eden. The Rose Dunlop Award went to David Lau. The Club Person of the Year was Ryan Russell. The Junior President's Award went to Bella Taylor. And the President's Awards went to Craig Sheldon and Dan Rodgers. Multiple awards for long service were given. I mention Debbie Booth for her 25 years, including 10 years as a trainer, and Phillip Everett for his 30 years. National medals were presented to Phillip Everett, Tony Logue, Phillip Daniel, Stuart Daniel, Carolyn Jeffries and Sharon Taylor.

This small club has a heart of gold. It has travelled a challenging road to become a strong club full of committed members dedicated to saving lives on beaches and looking after one another and the community along the way. And this is only this season's story of one of my Surf Life Saving Clubs. I will soon be attending the end-of-season presentation for Fingal Beach Surf Life Saving Club, and I know I will be equally amazed by its achievements and dedicated members. I do not doubt that, if I could get to Birubi Point Surf Life Saving Club's presentation, I would be similarly impressed, especially given the difficult season it has had. Tonight this Parliament recognises all of Port Stephens' dedicated, caring surf lifesaving volunteers. We thank them for their countless hours of service in saving lives, keeping our community strong and building leaders of the future.

#### **ALBURY ELECTORATE EATING DISORDER SERVICES**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (21:20):** Over 12 months ago I first brought the House's attention to the fact that Albury is the only community in all of New South Wales that does not have the benefit of a dedicated eating disorder coordinator. Albury Wodonga Health has been overlooked for one of these important coordinator roles that are provided to all local area health districts, as we are cross-border funded by Victoria. It is vital we engage and have constructive conversations to see that anomaly rectified. Eating disorders are serious mental

illnesses that take many different forms and are characterised by disturbances of thoughts, behaviours, and attitudes to food and eating. For some it leads to preoccupation about body weight and shape, and exercise. The debilitating issue impacts 1.1 million Australians, and that number is increasing.

Some of my constituents, including parents desperately struggling to find support for their children battling disordered eating, anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating disorders have shared their journey with me. Stemming from this, I sought out the Butterfly Foundation, the coordinator for the National Eating Disorders Collaboration, and invited it to visit Albury to meet with local parents, educators and clinicians to share expert advice about eating disorders and body image concerns. At a roundtable gathering we sat down with representatives from Albury Wodonga Health, Gateway Health, the Department of Education and Albury City Council to talk about our current situation and to form strategies for the path ahead. The information shared by Butterfly Foundation CEO Jim Hungerford and Head of Communications and Engagement Melissa Wilton at this briefing was startling.

It is estimated that right now in Albury 4,500 people are battling eating disorders. That heartbreaking number also takes a massive economic toll on my community of a staggering \$270 million each year. Albury Wodonga Health reports that during the pandemic there was a 25 per cent uplift in patients diagnosed with or with concerns of an eating disorder or disordered eating presenting to hospital. That number has not eased post-pandemic, as officials had hoped it would. The Butterfly Foundation's research shows that more than 90 per cent of young people aged 12 to 19 report some level of concern about their body image. That can lead to children not putting their hands up in the classroom to avoid turning attention onto themselves, as well as battling rising rates of depression and anxiety. It can also, tragically, pose an increased suicide risk. Prevention and education programs are key, because the earlier we can help someone before an eating disorder develops, the better the outcome.

When asked about what an eating disorder coordinator would mean to our region, Albury Wodonga Health said that it would make a world of difference, although it revealed that, if everyone in my region who needed immediate support reached out for help, it would literally crash the system. What we see right now are teenagers and young adults from Albury and surrounds travelling as far afield as the Sunshine Coast to seek dedicated and intensive inpatient eating disorder treatment programs, but on their arrival home they struggle with available step-down services, as they lack the necessary detailed knowledge about the demons they are battling.

The Butterfly Foundation's visit to Albury also included an address to 60 guests at a gathering coordinated by Business Women Albury Wodonga, which focused on the challenges of body image and the importance of promoting healthy lives. Chair Felicity Cahill told me, "We are grateful for the opportunity of this collaboration, as it highlights to our members the importance of the discussion around body image. We jumped on board to help educate our community about the importance of promoting healthy lives for the young people surrounding us. We know they are influenced by our decisions. Creating a platform to continue the discussion around body image is a conversation we want to be a part of." Locally we have strong interest for eating disorder support from the private sector of psychologists and psychiatrists. They are passionate and knowledgeable, working together to forge an informal network to try to provide coordinated care.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank health Minister Ryan Park and his office, the office of the Minister for Youth and the Minister for Mental Health, Professor Leah Brennan from La Trobe University, Business Women Albury Wodonga, and all those with lived experience who have reached out. It is vital we have these important conversations. We must equip our community with the practical strategies, skills and resources necessary to face the difficult and often desperate body image concerns affecting the people we love.

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (21:25):** International Women's Day is a day to recognise how far we have come towards gender equality. While we acknowledge and celebrate that society has come a long way, there is still work to be done, because for so long as one woman faces discrimination, harassment, inequality or oppression, we all do. On 8 March we come together to celebrate all women in all their diversity. We embrace their faith, race, ethnicity, gender, age, abilities and how they identify. We celebrate those who came before us, those who stand beside us now and those who will come after. It is a time to celebrate the achievements of women: social, political, economic and cultural.

In my community of East Hills, I attended the Revesby Workers' Club's International Women's Day event, which this year celebrated inclusion. When we inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion, we forge a better world. When women themselves are inspired to be included, there is a sense of belonging, relevance and empowerment. The event provided an opportunity to network and be inspired by guest speakers from varying backgrounds and industries. We were also treated to a welcome to country by Dr Shannon Foster. On 7 March I attended the NSW Women of the Year Awards at the International Convention Centre, where I was proud to name Dr Shannon Foster as East Hills Local Woman of the Year. I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Foster

on her achievement. The awards have played a key role in recognising the women and girls whose determination, bravery, skill and passion have inspired their communities and others to achieve great things.

Dr Foster is a well-deserving recipient of the East Hills Local Woman of the Year award. Dr Foster is a Sydney Dharawal saltwater knowledge keeper, educator and artist and has been teaching her family's stories to a range of audiences for over 20 years. She lives in Panania and recently completed her PhD in the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges at the University of Technology, Sydney, where she researched and documented her family's Narinya stories. She has now been conferred the title of Dr Shannon Foster, an accomplishment she should be incredibly proud of. Her research addresses site-specific, Sydney-based Aboriginal knowledge and documents the stories and knowledge of her family, the Dharawal people of the Sydney region. She was appointed to the Government Architect NSW's Aboriginal expert advisory panel, consulting on the Designing with Country document, and is a core member of the Connecting with Country cultural advisory panel for the Connecting with Country framework.

Dr Foster is a wonderful, caring woman who supports our community by providing insight into the culture, stories and history of the local Indigenous people. Her welcome to country ceremonies are especially captivating, as she explains Aboriginal cultural practices in a beautiful way. She cares deeply for her community, as demonstrated when she volunteered to perform a special healing ceremony for the opening of our local women's shelter, Biyani House. Dr Foster is passionate about education and sharing her knowledge of Indigenous history and perspectives with non-Indigenous teachers. During NAIDOC Week she presented knowledge-sharing workshops to teachers and educators. She says that non-Indigenous teachers have become important game changers and change makers in Indigenous education, particularly now that teaching Indigenous perspectives across all subject areas is compulsory in the curriculum. Dr Foster is teaching Indigenous allies to help end the silence and bridge the gap in education. Her focus is on imparting to non-Indigenous teachers an understanding of what makes a good ally and how important and impactful they can be when educating younger generations. I thank Dr Foster for her contributions and congratulate her on being named East Hills Local Woman of the Year.

#### **TAMWORTH ELECTORATE DETOXIFICATION FACILITY**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (21:29):** In the Tamworth electorate there is a desperate need for drug and alcohol detoxification and rehabilitation services. We do not have dedicated residential facilities to deliver those services for people suffering from addiction to drugs and alcohol. They must travel long distances in their search for help. I have had meetings with community and health professionals who have identified that two separate facilities are needed: one for detoxification and another for rehabilitation. I believe we have the solution to providing, in clinical terms, an alcohol and other drug withdrawal management unit in a residential setting, more commonly known as a detoxification unit, in Tamworth. A rehabilitation unit is a separate matter.

I think we have the solution. The current Tamworth Mental Health Unit—Banksia—is an inpatient mental health short-term acute unit with 25 beds. Both voluntary and involuntary patients are accepted under the Mental Health Act. It is safe and secure. The unit is located on the Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital site precinct and will become vacant late 2025 or early 2026 due to a new \$58 million mental health unit being constructed in the same vicinity. It makes good sense that, when the old mental health unit becomes available, it should be repurposed to a much-needed medically supervised alcohol and other drug withdrawal management unit in a residential setting.

That is the solution: a local, purpose-built residential medical facility in a health precinct that would be able to provide a safe and comfortable location in a supported environment for those managing withdrawal symptoms. It would allow those in Tamworth and the north-west to remain close to loved ones, with reduced disruption and reduced anxiety, which would promote a better health outcome. It is a ready-made detoxification unit. We have made numerous representations to both the previous Coalition and the current Labor governments. We need to be ready when the building becomes vacant. There are many positives with the plan and we need to start preparing now. The Government must adopt the recommendations of my community. That opportunity should not be missed. Let's start working together on a pathway forward to repurposing the existing building so that we are ready to meet the needs of those who desperately seek help in my electorate.

#### **TRIBUTE TO MAX BAKER**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (21:32):** On a rainy April afternoon I had the pleasure of joining Councillor Todd Carney, Mayor of Penrith City Council, as we gathered in Jamisontown for the renaming of the Max Baker Reserve. It is a fantastic new play space for all ages located in a pocket park close to where Max's wife of 62 years, Paula, now resides at the Royce. It is a calming space where Paula, her children and their families have a place to reflect and enjoy together. It was lovely to see Max's great-grandchildren, undeterred by the weather, enjoying the great new space. I am particularly proud that it was funded through the New South Wales Government.

Max Baker was born in Penrith on 10 June 1930 and lived his whole 91 years there. He joined Penrith Municipal Council as a junior clerk in 1949 when he was 19 years old. Within 10 years he worked his way up to chief accountant and was city treasurer when he retired in 1989. I am told that Max brought strenuous professionalism and integrity to the council. Under his stewardship everything ran smoothly, and he not only left the organisation in a strong financial position but also helped shape our continued financial sustainability. Over his 40-year career at the council, Max saw our city's population grow from 15,000 to over 160,000 people at the time he retired. It is now in excess of 220,000.

In that time, he helped the council build an impressive portfolio of assets and enabled financial programs to fund the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, the current civic centre and many other projects across our area. That is an outstanding legacy. The depth of Max's corporate knowledge meant that he was consulted on not just decisions relating to finances but also anything from engineering to town planning. His impact was far reaching. There is no doubt that Max was known for his professional integrity and dedication to his role, but he was also very social, loved a joke and had a knack for breaking down departmental or hierarchical barriers. He was a true gentleman, who was just as talented with figures as he was with people. Outside his contribution to the council, Max was a keen sportsman. In his early years, he played rugby league for the best team on earth, Penrith, and captained A-grade. At the Penrith bowling club he was an award-winning bowler and was much loved and respected by all who knew him.

I believe it is important that place names reflect the character and history of the local area and community. It is fitting that we honour our local heroes in this way. Max's name and legacy should live on in the Penrith community, to which he gave so much energy, love and expertise. It was such an honour to celebrate Max's achievements, including his exceptional service and his contribution to the people of Penrith, with his extended family. The esteem in which he was held was evident from the attendance on the day of so many staff from the council, including former employees and former councillors and mayors. Indeed, a former member for Penrith, the Hon. Peter Anderson, AM, was also in attendance. I asked Peter what his recollections of Max were and he said:

Max was a very genuine person with a warm personality and a very sharp mind. Immediately following my election as an alderman to Penrith Council in September 1977, I went to see Max to seek his assistance in gaining a proper understanding of how Council's finances worked. Not only did he do so, he also provided me with very useful overview of how the Council functioned in general.

His willingness to be of assistance was further evidenced during my six years on Council when, during many debates at Council meetings I would notice a slight facial expression appear on Max's face. A question shortly thereafter through the Mayor to the City Treasurer would see Max provide some very sage advice on the matter under discussion.

It did not matter where you encountered Max whether at a formal or informal occasion you would always be greeted with his trademark smile and his genuine concern as to your wellbeing.

The people of the City of Penrith will never fully appreciate the debt of gratitude they owe to Max Baker. I certainly do and always will.

The Max Baker Reserve and play space will serve as an enduring reminder for all those who knew and loved him and give those in the community who did not know him the opportunity to learn about his legacy and his enormous contribution to shaping our great city.

## REGIONAL HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (21:37):** Housing or shelter is a very basic human need. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the most basic of needs are physiological, such as food, clothing and shelter and looking after basic physical comforts, a big part of which is having a place to call home. Having a home also helps fulfil many other needs in that hierarchy like feeling safe and having a sense of belonging and self-esteem. In fact, all the other needs are dependent on having a safe, comfortable and reliable place to come home to every day. Similarly, when a community has a shortage of housing, it causes a wide range of negative social and economic effects across many aspects of that community. When people do not have a safe, comfortable and affordable place to eat, relax, sleep and shelter from the elements, it can badly impact on physical and mental health, lowering morale, sapping motivation and causing a rise in social complications. When a town does not have enough houses for its workforce, particularly essential or seasonal workers, it can cause a disruption to businesses and services, hamper the economy and can bring about population decline.

Those problems are acute in regional areas such as Barwon. The housing shortage has badly skewed the market for home buyers and renters, putting buying a home out of reach for many people and consuming a large chunk of the wages of renters. A lack of housing also has an impact on women trying to leave abusive relationships. Studies have shown that many women will not leave an abusive spouse because they have no other place to go. Many others are forced to sleep rough. The current shortage of crisis housing, shelter accommodation and affordable housing is putting pressure on services that help women escape domestic violence. A recent newspaper article stated that in some regional areas support services have had to temporarily house women

escaping violence in tents and in another area—believe it or not—a service has set up a secure car park for women sleeping in their cars.

There is a major housing and accommodation crisis confronting several mining and energy projects across the State. For example, the thousands of people needed to build the renewable energy zones in regional New South Wales will put pressure on local housing markets. In the past the solution was to build workers' camps or dongas—temporary accommodation. But it would be much better to find a solution that leaves a legacy of ongoing benefits for communities. The shortage of key worker housing in some towns is also making it impossible to attract enough professionals or highly skilled people. The results are that some hospitals can open only for limited hours or with fewer beds, aged-care homes must turn people away or close altogether, police can find it hard to keep a full roster of staff and schools are unable to find teachers. We want to encourage people to uproot themselves and move to a regional, rural or remote area, but the lack of housing is a huge barrier.

There are solutions. On a recent study trip to Malaysia, among other places, I spoke to Dr Suraya Ismail, the director of research at the Khazanah Research Institute in Kuala Lumpur. Dr Ismail is an expert on housing policy and conducts research for the Malaysian Government through the institute. Malaysia and Australia are both moving towards pre-approved or pattern-planning modular and panelised homes built from interlocking panels. Modular homes are normally built offsite, and the whole unit is dropped onsite. Panelised homes are built in the form of panels. They are then flat packed and shipped to site. The wiring and plumbing are already there. The person assembling the home does not need to be as skilled as a normal builder.

I have met with representatives from different companies in Australia that specialise in panel-built homes. They can set up a factory near the town or community where the homes need to be built. They then train and employ local labour to do some of the work. That overcomes the problem of the scarcity of construction workers and tradesmen, especially in the bush, and finding and paying—which is probably the bigger issue—workers who are willing to go to regional areas. In communities with high youth unemployment or a lack of engagement, young people can be trained in the basic techniques of modular or panel home construction. They take pride in what they are doing and have a sense of ownership over what they are building for their community. When local people build these homes there is a much smaller chance of the homes being vandalised or damaged because a real sense of pride has been built in the community.

The pop-up factories can be set up wherever housing is needed. There does not seem to be a downside to it. Homes get built faster with all kinds of benefits to the local community. If homes are built to a pre-approved pattern, it can speed up the process of development approvals for housing. After talking with Dr Ismail, I am convinced that this is a strategy that will help us. In the short term it will increase supply, which we know needs to be the priority when it comes to housing. Making it easier to create that supply, while bringing other benefits to the local community, requires us to look at some more creative solutions. I have met with the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Paul Scully, about the pattern-planning issue. He is aware of and progressing the issue. But we need to move quickly to capitalise on the opportunities we have to grow populations in regional New South Wales.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:42):** I thank the member for Barwon for his due diligence. I recognise the housing shortage in communities across regional New South Wales. I recognise it in my own community and cannot imagine what it is like in the remote community of Barwon. The housing crisis is real. It is affecting our essential workers, along with many other aspects of our communities. I appreciate the solution-based approach of the member for Barwon and his willingness to work with the Government to create solutions for his community.

## DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (21:43):** Maitland consistently has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in New South Wales. Over the past nine years as a member of this place, I have been a strong advocate on the issue. I am incredibly pleased that the Government has responded to the crisis statistics, which are increasing so quickly. Previously, a woman in Australia died from domestic violence every 10 days. That has changed to one woman every four days. That is unacceptable. A single death caused by domestic violence is one too many. The current level of violence across regional New South Wales and all electorates is unacceptable.

The New South Wales Government has provided an emergency package of \$230 million over four years as part of its response to the crisis. I am incredibly proud to be part of a government that is working to deliver change. The rate of violence in our homes is impacting not only women and men but also children. We need to stop the violence now, before it becomes an intergenerational problem. The Government has announced the implementation of the first primary prevention strategy. That is so important. The core values need to be respect, kindness and compassion. We need to see women and men as equal. People cannot assume they can behave in a

certain way to assert their power over someone else, whether it is through coercive control or other more violent means.

The Government will undertake further long-term reforms to prevent domestic, sexual and family violence. Future reforms will be informed by the lived experience of victim-survivors and experts. The other day in the Cabinet meeting we received a briefing from the Women's Safety Commissioner, Hannah Tonkin, along with Rosie Batty, Marcia Neave and Christine Robinson. We got an overview from the sector of the issues at play and some of the crisis response we need to undertake. They also talked about the long-term preventative space. It is about improving the community for everyone who lives here.

The \$48 million to roll out the Staying Home Leaving Violence program statewide is so vital. There are women in New South Wales who cannot leave their homes to escape violence. It is not safe for them to leave and it is not safe for them to stay. It is so important to roll out that program, particularly in regional areas. As the member for Barwon pointed out, the lack of housing in many regional areas isolates women and their children. The Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services Program will provide important case management. Women who have lived through this situation know it is about not only escaping the violence but also rebuilding their lives. The Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service Program will assist people to navigate the services of government agencies and non-government organisations. The program will help them coordinate contacts across police, the courts, health care, child protection, housing providers and refuges. The service will work with survivors who have already left relationships and those who remain. We know that leaving is the most dangerous time in a relationship.

There will also be a focus on improving the justice system for victims, with \$45 million set aside to improve bail laws. We do not want a knee-jerk response that could lead to more women being killed. We do not want poor responses; we need trauma-informed responses. There is \$24 million for specialist domestic violence workers within the justice system and \$2 million over four years to support the Domestic Violence Death Review Team. Those reviews give such important insight into what happens in relationships where things go so horribly wrong that someone ends up dying. There is \$2.1 million over two years to improve and continue the Corrective Services EQUIPS Domestic and Family Violence program. The program is delivered to offenders in custody and under supervision in the community to prevent reoffending.

Funding for early intervention includes \$48 million to secure and increase funding for workers who support children accompanying their mothers to refuges and \$700,000 for the Domestic Violence Line. There is \$38 million for the implementation of the first dedicated primary prevention strategy, which is really important work. I give a shout-out to all the services in my electorate that do such amazing work to keep women and children safe in our communities.

### **BADGERYS CREEK ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (21:48):** Like most residents living and working in Western Sydney, I was shocked when the Federal Labor Government announced cuts to vital infrastructure projects across our growing region. But I was not surprised that Labor continues to take western and south-western Sydney for granted. I was not surprised that Labor cut funding for infrastructure. Labor cannot be trusted to be the builder and investor for our communities. I was also not surprised when it performed an embarrassing backflip this week when it announced funding for projects that it had cancelled only last year. Through the relentless advocacy of many people, including my efforts in this place and the strong advocacy of my Coalition colleagues, we embarrassed the Federal Labor Government into backflipping on its funding cuts. This week it announced its backflip and is now returning funding to key infrastructure projects that were commenced under the Coalition's vision for our region.

For Labor members to claim that the announcement of funding is somehow part of a new vision or plan of theirs is laughable. In fact, one of the most comical examples is the Government returning funds to its own Federal Labor Government road project, the M12-M7 interchange. That interchange is critical to ensuring motorway connectivity to the new Western Sydney airport in my electorate from the existing motorway infrastructure across Sydney. How the funding for that critical piece of infrastructure was cut in the first place beggars belief. It should not have got to a stage where the Federal Labor Government was forced into that embarrassing backflip on funding commonsense and urgent infrastructure projects.

We must take full advantage of the opportunities arising from the Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport, the aerotropolis and the Bradfield City vision. For us to do so, the right infrastructure must be in place. With Western Sydney soon to be connected to the world via our own international airport, we must secure and retain investor confidence. Cancelling and then backflipping to cancel the cancellation of essential road infrastructure projects surrounding and leading to the airport should never have happened. What message is it sending to those who seek to invest in our region and who substantially base their decision-making



on Government vision and decisions when something as simple as critical infrastructure can be cancelled and then reinstated? Amazon has already walked away from Western Sydney, and we cannot afford to lose any more opportunities.

The state of the roads and the connectivity of the road network is far from sufficient for a region that is about to have an international airport operating. In fact, since State Labor's return to power in March 2023, our roads have been deteriorating and lacking the maintenance and upgrades that they need to meet current demand, let alone future demand. Mamre Road stage one has had funding committed to it and yet, after 13 months under this Government, construction is still yet to commence. Now funding has been announced for stage two of the Mamre Road upgrade, but I just want the Government to build stage one. Let us get stage one underway and then maybe we can celebrate the funding announcement for stage two.

Heaven knows the residents of St Clair and Twin Creeks, and the employees in the Mamre Road precinct, have waited long enough. I now call on the New South Wales Government to get things moving and ensure that critical road infrastructure projects are completed. Time is of the essence, and the opening of the airport is fast approaching. Too much time has been wasted cancelling projects and then backflipping and reinstating the funding. Labor members must now put politics aside and just get the job done. Perhaps, as they do so, they can also add some of their own vision for how they see the State growing.

When the previous New South Wales Labor Government was voted out of power, the former Coalition Government inherited a State that was last against every other State and Territory in Australia across all economic indicators. The former Coalition Government took New South Wales to number one on all economic indicators. It compounded the concern I had for New South Wales when current Government members failed to stand up to their Federal Labor colleagues following the infrastructure cuts they announced, as I feared that New South Wales was returning to the bad old days of pre-2011. Thankfully, the Coalition and the community were vocal enough to ensure the reversal of those cuts, although the fact that they occurred in the first place beggars belief. I continue to strongly advocate for my community regardless of the party that is in power, at either State or Federal level, as I always have done. My community welcomes the return of the funding to upgrade our road network, and now we wait to see those projects commence.

#### CUMBERLAND CITY COUNCILLOR STEVE CHRISTOU

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (21:53):** Today I am swamped with calls and letters from the fine people of the Auburn electorate, all up in arms about the brazen antics of a certain councillor at Cumberland City Council attempting to dictate what people can and cannot read. Let me lay it on the line: The people of Auburn are a peace loving and hospitable lot. They are the kind who open their doors wide and welcome everyone. Auburn is a place where churches, mosques and temples stand as beacons of camaraderie and solace. Our streets are alive with the vibrant hustle of one of the most kaleidoscopic communities on the face of the earth.

We draw a great deal of strength from that diversity, so members can imagine the profound disappointment—no, the sheer dismay—when we witness our local council being brazenly commandeered, once again, by none other than Councillor Steve Christou. Councillor Christou claims to ride a high horse of widespread support, which is puzzling unless he is counting the paltry 3½ per cent of the vote he managed to garner in the last Federal election—a curious form of popularity. But he is rather notorious, having stirred up more than 11,000 residents to sign a petition against him, aghast at his celebration upon rejecting a mosque. He called it a "fantastic win". Not many councillors have the dubious honour of rallying 11,000 signatures against their antics.

But Mr Christou does not stop at mosques, and it is not just the absence of bacon in his bacon-and-egg roll at a Bankstown athletics carnival—a deficiency he broadcast as some dark, sinister plot on major radio stations. That was until it was pointed out to him that they had simply run out and were restocking. Let us not start on his bizarre quibbles with Bonds advertisements. For the life of me, I cannot fathom what his grievance is there. Who could overlook his audacious criticism of the former New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government for allowing the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque to serve as a vaccination centre during the pandemic peak, or his disdain for the "Racism Not Welcome" signs, the welcome to country acknowledgements and the council's support for Diwali and Lunar New Year celebrations. He argues that the council should prop up western cultural events exclusively, with Easter and Christmas festivities.

Furthermore, let us not overlook Councillor Christou's political promenade through parties as though it were a grand ball, from the Labor Party to Our Local Community—and now, it seems, he is busy holding the megaphone at campaign rallies for One Nation. The man has not found a party he would not crash or a cause he would not champion—provided, of course, it offers him a stage. His proclivity for prohibition knows no bounds. I wager that once he discovers that re-runs of *Modern Family* are still airing, he will be scrambling to add television to his ever-expanding list of cultural contraband, purportedly to save our children from the pernicious grip of

"woke" entertainment. With a track record so variegated, his only consistent allegiance appears to be to the next headline-grabbing opportunity.

One of the most significant days for many in our community is when they stand in our local council chambers, hearts swelling with pride, to take the pledge of citizenship. It is a solemn yet joyous moment as they pledge their loyalty to Australia and its people, embracing our democratic beliefs, respecting our rights and liberties, and committing to uphold our laws. On those days they are reminded that our society is built on the bedrock of equality, irrespective of gender, faith, sexual orientation, age, ability, race or origin. Australia is celebrated as the land of the fair go, where respect and compassion fortify our care for one another and where we stretch out our hands to those around us in their times of need.

What unfolds before us through the actions of Councillor Christou is a glaring neglect for the rich tapestry that makes up our community—a disturbing tendency to fragment rather than to fuse. His approach stands in stark contrast to the ethos of our electorate, an ethos that is woven from threads of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The moment has come to send a clear message to Councillor Christou: The true might of our community is rooted in our collective embrace, not in the segregationist alleys he seems so keen to tread.

### TOCAL FIELD DAYS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (21:58):** I bring excellent news from the electorate of Upper Hunter. Last weekend we had a huge event: the Tocal Field Days. It was huge. Would you believe they celebrated 40 years of the event, bringing great people from all over the Hunter Valley down to the Paterson Valley, eating some food, enjoying all the stalls and seeing what good agricultural education is all about at Tocal College. I suggest that everyone puts it in their diary for next year. I also acknowledge all the participants who slipped on their gumboots to face the damp conditions underfoot and celebrate the ruby anniversary. Tocal and its interaction with the community is an important and now enduring part of New South Wales history. Briefly recapping that significance, the legacy of Charles Boyd "CB" Alexander is enshrined in New South Wales legislation under the C.B. Alexander Foundation Incorporation Act. The legislation, circa 1969, covers:

... the operation, maintenance and management of the C.B. Alexander Agricultural College; and for purposes connected therewith.

The Presbyterian Church opened the college at Tocal in 1965 but passed control to the New South Wales Department of Agriculture in 1975. A new chapter of the college's story opened over three days in 1984 when Tocal Field Days was launched. Today, Tocal Field Days is a non-profit incorporated association with three part-time staff members supported by an enthusiastic band of volunteers. Working hard throughout the year, the organising team is always looking for the unusual, the new and the unique to add to the event and make it engaging and fun. And what a following it has generated!

On the first weekend in May every year Tocal is the destination for thousands of visitors. They include people on the land looking for the latest innovations, hobby farmers and enthusiasts, as well as people looking for a great day out. Testament to the field days' success are the 370-plus exhibitors who set up displays across the college grounds—farm machinery to water tanks, livestock to the latest country clothing. The Central Coast Axemen Association became one of the newest members of the field days family, this year staging the first Tocal Wood Chop. Association members have already been told to mark their calendar for a return to Paterson in May 2025. Another group of woodchoppers marked their tenth anniversary at the event—the Paterson-Bolwarra Scouts, who introduced the Billy Boiling Competition at Tocal in 2014.

Last weekend was also a special celebration for the Paterson Public School P&C Association. It celebrated 40 years at Tocal with cooking, sandwiches and cakes. It was the only food stall back in 1984, and now it is a huge success. Forty years later, the annual food stall has raised over \$100,000 to purchase infrastructure, equipment and support services, and support the school canteen and uniform shop. Members work bloody hard and have a lot of fun. It was great to see all the P&C committee there.

I am sure that CB Alexander would be proud to know that the field days have now connected generations of young people—city kids and farm kids—with real farm animals and shown them that farming or an involvement in agriculture can be a career in the twenty-first century. I take this opportunity to note from college principal Darren Bayley's 2024 graduation day report that the Paterson campus had 97 graduates from the full-time and trainee programs last year. The education delivery program had 139 graduates. The skills training last year saw 3,572 people trained through 505 courses, and the sale and distribution of educational material during 2023 totalled 16,309 hard-copy publications and 739 ebooks. That is a huge effort in education.

The Tocal Field Days fortieth anniversary will now be the launching pad for a new event when the organisers present Heartbeat of the Hunter. The brand-new music festival will happen on 28 September in Paterson. I wish Tocal Field Days all the best with the new venture. But hold your horses! There are some great

events coming up in the Upper Hunter this autumn, and the Scone Horse Festival takes the spotlight later this week. Everyone should get up there and support the horses.

### EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (22:03):** Mr Temporary Speaker Kemp, I congratulate you on your first session in the chair. You are looking very comfortable. Long may you reign.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Hear, hear!

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** There was a time when Australia had a federally funded employment service that found jobs for people across the country. It was established in 1946 and helped successive governments deliver full employment for three decades post World War II. It was eventually privatised in 1998 by the Howard Government, which introduced the Job Network. Under that new scheme, independent providers from private and community sectors competed to find jobs for the unemployed. That change also intensified the use of mutual obligations, which forced unemployed Australians to complete often pointless activities in return for receiving unemployment assistance.

While unemployment in Leppington is below the regional and State averages, the south-west Sydney region has some of the highest unemployment rates in New South Wales. It is therefore critical that we have an effective and functional employment service whose purpose is to find meaningful, long-term employment for jobseekers, not punish them. The Federal House Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services recently conducted a parliamentary inquiry into rebuilding employment services. The committee's report—handed down late last year—contains 75 recommendations, backed by extensive analysis, outlining crucial changes required to improve the system.

It found that Australia currently lacks an effective national employment services system, instead operating an outsourced, fragmented social security compliance management system. The report calls for a comprehensive overhaul of the system, including reducing privatisation, establishing a stronger government role and implementing more tailored approaches to address individual needs. Some of the key recommendations include transitioning to a more flexible service model, enhancing employer engagement, re-professionalising the workforce and establishing a rebuilt public sector core called Employment Services Australia to steer the system. The report strongly criticised Australia's current employment services system, highlighting inefficiencies and negative impacts on jobseekers and employers due to rigid mutual obligation requirements and excessive compliance measures.

The proposed new service model acknowledges clients' diverse paths to employment, social integration and economic involvement. The report also highlights the importance of introducing digital literacy training and multi-language online services to improve accessibility. Those reforms emphasise a shift towards meaningful and sustainable employment and addressing unique challenges faced by migrant and refugee communities, such as those in my part of the world. It would also introduce specialised services such as the youth employment service, tailored support for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse populations, as well as an overhauled service tailored to assist ex-offenders.

The goal of the proposed changes is to create a more supportive and effective employment services system that provides better outcomes for all Australians, irrespective of their background or location. The changes are most welcome in Leppington and the wider south-west Sydney region, which is an area characterised by significantly higher levels of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. There is also a higher concentration of youth unemployment, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. The region is also characterised by Indigenous unemployment that is disproportionately higher than the New South Wales and national unemployment average rates.

I support the development of tailored youth services and programs to design effective pathways for education, training and employment that meet local needs. It is crucial to create opportunities for migrants and refugees to acquire the necessary skills and language proficiency for available job openings. Since the release of the report, the Federal Government has expressed a commitment to reform our employment service system. The approach taken by the Albanese Government is to view employment services as an investment, not a burden. Bolstering the workforce is what is needed, not making it harder for disadvantaged people to get employed.

The Federal Government has also introduced an employment white paper that highlights eight principles to guide its response to the inquiry recommendations. I look forward to seeing the changes in employment services and I commend the Federal Labor Government for viewing employment services as it ought to—as an opportunity. Combined with this Government's focus on revitalising the New South Wales workforce, addressing skills shortages and rebuilding local manufacturing, we may finally see the end of John Howard's legacy, which has seen many hardworking Australians fall through the cracks.

## WATER BUYBACKS

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (22:08):** Today I talk about coercion. As we all know, coercion is when someone says they will do something bad to you if you do not do what they want you to do. It is nasty. Sometimes it can feel like blackmail. Yet that is what the Commonwealth Government has been doing to the Victorian and New South Wales governments when it comes to water. Let me explain. The Federal Government has a political problem. You see, a lot of people in the city who used to vote Labor are now voting for The Greens. Federal Labor is terrified of losing votes to The Greens, and no-one is more terrified than Federal water Minister Tanya Plibersek. Her red Federal seat of Sydney is turning green, so Tanya is doing everything she can to turn herself green. These days, she could give Kermit the Frog a run for his money. The problem is that some of the things that she is doing to look green are actually destroying the environment. Clearly, it is not easy being green. That is the problem with city-based greenies: They love nature in theory, but in practice they often know nothing about the environment because they spend most of their time in cities.

That brings me to the Federal Government's plan to buy back 450 gigalitres of water from struggling farmers in order to send it down the river into South Australia's fake Lower Lakes and out to sea. The Feds are pretending that doing this is good for the environment, but it is not. Those kinds of so-called environmental flows will flood huge areas of land adjacent to rivers and destroy kilometres of riverbanks in the process. The water needs to stay in New South Wales communities where it can be used to produce the food we eat, the clothes we wear and our animals' grain and fodder. But the Federal Government, Tanya Plibersek in particular, is so hell bent on pretending to be green that it will do anything, even if it means damaging the environment.

Shortly after the Federal Government announced its destructive buyback plan, the Victorian Government said no. The Victorian water Minister, Harriet Shing, said that her Government would not allow the transfer of water to the Feds if that transfer was part of the 450 gigalitre buybacks. It was a brave stance, and it was the right thing to do. That is when the coercion started. The Feds initially said to Victoria that if Victoria opposed the buyback plan, the Feds would withhold hundreds of millions of dollars that they were going to give to Victorian farmers to spend on water-saving infrastructure projects. It was coercion; some might call it blackmail. What did the Victorian Government do? It did what anyone should do when dealing with a bully and did not back down. It called the bully's bluff, and it worked.

Last month the Federal water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, backed down. She lost. She said, "Victoria, you can have the money for your water-saving infrastructure projects after all." The bully had been beaten. Meanwhile, here in New South Wales, Premier Minns had already given in to the bully. Premier Minns had failed to give New South Wales communities the same protection that the Victorian Government gave Victorian communities by simply saying no to Federal water buybacks. One of the reasons the Premier used to justify his weak stance was that he did not want the Feds to withhold money for water-saving infrastructure projects in New South Wales. The Feds were bluffing all along, and Premier Minns and Rose Jackson both fell for it.

Now that we know that the Feds are bluffing, there is no excuse for inaction on this matter by the New South Wales Government. Our Premier must do whatever he can to protect New South Wales communities, and that means he must say no to any Federal Government buybacks. My challenge to the Premier is simple: Step up and take on the Feds. Tell them to get their hands off our water. That water needs to stay in New South Wales. The Premier of New South Wales has one job: to make the lives of the people of New South Wales as good as he can. To borrow a phrase from Labor, it's time. Just say no.

## TRIBUTE TO NEIL "HARPO" MARKS, OAM

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (22:13):** Tonight I pay tribute to a local sporting legend, Neil "Harpo" Marks, OAM, who passed away in January this year at the age of 85. Neil was the son of the late Alec Marks and older brother of Lynn Marks, both of whom played first-class cricket for New South Wales. He was a legendary cricketer with the Northern District Cricket Club who went on to become a much-loved club patron. After a prolific season with Northern District first grade, Neil was promoted to the New South Wales side in 1958 at the age of 20. In his first game for New South Wales, he scored 180 runs and shared a monster sixth-wicket partnership of 332 with Graham Thomas—a partnership record that still stands today.

In his debut first-class season, Neil topped the Australian averages with 71.7, scoring 502 runs in that season. Neil's promising first-class career was unfortunately cut short by a very serious illness that required him to have three heart surgeries, including life-saving surgery in the United States. Undaunted by his health challenges, Neil went on to play 18 seasons in first and second grade for Northern District, captaining, coaching and mentoring a whole generation of players. He was also instrumental in bringing the great Neil Harvey to Northern District and unselfishly stood aside from the captaincy to allow Harvey to take over. In the 1966-67 season, that resulted in a first-grade premiership for Northern District. Neil was the captain of the second grade premiership-winning team in 1972-73, and again when the club won its second club championship in 1975-76.

As a captain, he was always positive. No matter what the situation of the game, he always devised a clear plan, which he had the incredible ability to articulate. Each team member knew exactly what they had to do for the team to win and, more often than not, they did. In the 1960s and 1970s, Neil Marks was known around the Sydney Grade Cricket circuit as "Mr Northern District", such was his contribution to the club. Every year, the club presents the Neil Marks Award for the best club player of the season. Neil's contribution to cricket was not limited to the field or to his club; he was a highly respected New South Wales selector for 12 years and managed many New South Wales teams on their interstate travels.

Neil was a lover of all sports. His love of sport was conveyed through his many books published on cricket and other sports. As well as being a fantastic cricketer and author, Neil was a great husband to Kay and a wonderful father to their three daughters. Neil Marks had a lively sense of humour. Known by many simply as "Harpo", his witty stories regaled many and he was a highly sought after guest speaker. His books recount many of those stories for posterity. Beneath the wit, however, was an incisive sense of fair play and good judgement. Marks was instrumental in forming a culture at Northern District of developing not only good cricketers but also good men. That culture was picked up by people such as long-time club president Austin Hughes and was continued in recent years by immediate past president Mike Langford, through to today with current president Jerry Hook. The club culture at Northern District Cricket Club is the envy of all other Sydney Grade Cricket clubs.

In 1954, as a 16-year-old, Neil Marks captained the first XI at Barker College, a position he held for an incredible three summers. As a Barker old boy, Neil coached numerous sports teams over the years. To recognise the contribution of Neil Marks to the life and culture of Barker College, and the support he provided to the school, in 2001 the newly completed pavilion adjacent to his beloved War Memorial Oval wicket was named the Marks Pavilion in his honour. That building hosted his wake, which was a celebration of his life. Neil Marks was awarded Northern District life membership in 1980 and Cricket New South Wales life membership in 2000.

In the 2019 Australia Day Honours, Neil Marks was awarded an Order of Australia medal for his services to cricket. He is remembered as one of the greats of New South Wales cricket and the Hornsby community. He is missed dearly. Tonight I recognise him for his incredible services and many achievements to cricket, the broader community and the State of New South Wales. Neil Marks is survived by his wife of 63 years, Kay, and their daughters, Sue, Sandra and Vicki. I acknowledge the enormous contribution that Neil made to cricket, to our community and to our country. May he rest in peace. Vale, Neil Marks.

### **DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (22:17):** I congratulate the member for Oxley, who is in the chair, on his position as Temporary Speaker. It is well deserved. Tonight I add my voice and the voice of my electorate to the stand against domestic violence. Last Friday residents in my electorate joined together for an early morning march against domestic violence. I note that the member for Gosford also participated in a march against domestic violence. The march was the inaugural Hills Community March for Change. As many in this Chamber know, prior to being elected I served the community as a prosecutor and spent many years as a lawyer. I had the opportunity to speak to many victims of domestic violence. I can say without any doubt that, in many instances, the impacts of domestic violence trauma have a long-lasting effect.

Apart from the financial impact, it can change a victim's views on society, create barriers to future relationships and, traumatically, lead to self-blame, shame, isolation, lack of confidence and lack of hope. The stories from survivors of domestic violence are heartbreaking. I say to anyone who has suffered domestic violence that they are not alone. They are part of our society. Each member of this House feels their suffering and pain. It is those who offend who must, and will, be held to account for their behaviour.

We all know that there is an increase in domestic violence offences. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research provides the greater metropolitan and regional statistics. For the greater metropolitan area for the 12 months ending December 2023, there were 19,089 domestic violence assaults. That represents an increase of 5.96 per cent when compared with the previous year. For regional areas it is greater, with a 7.56 per cent increase in domestic violence assaults when compared with the previous year. However, I am pleased to say that for The Hills Shire Council local government area there was a reduction of 23 assaults, which equates to a reduction of 0.4 per cent. I have mentioned domestic violence assaults, and I note that those statistics do not include apprehended domestic violence orders [ADVOs] where there was no actual criminal offence. For ADVOs taken out by police, there was an increase of 12.64 per cent for the year to December 2023.

When the residents of the Castle Hill electorate and the wider Hills shire walked against domestic violence recently, they stood in solidarity to make sure there would be no domestic violence in our society. They wanted to make it known that domestic violence was not acceptable and would never be accepted in our society. About 500 members of the community marched, including schoolchildren, members of Parliament and councillors. I acknowledge that the Federal member for Mitchell, Alex Hawke, and my parliamentary colleague the member

for Winston Hills also joined the march. When we reached Castle Hill Bowling Club, we heard stories from wonderful people such as Dr Michelle Byrne, the former mayor of the council; Naomi Moore, the police local area commander superintendent; Denise Maloney, deputy principal of Kellyville High School; and Fabio Caprarelli, head teacher from Kellyville High School.

Denise and Fabio spoke about the Love Bites program, which was introduced at Kellyville High School. Students at the school produced a short film that engages with students to reinforce the importance of respect. I have watched the film on two or three occasions now. Denise informed me that, through the Love Bites program, students have the confidence to call out disrespectful behaviour. Students have the confidence to change the culture, which is great. I also note that the Castle Hill RSL Group joined with the community to enable the Love Bites program to be rolled out to five local schools in 2023. I thank the RSL club for the stance it has taken against domestic violence.

What is the Government doing? I note the Government's recent announcement to provide \$230 million over four years as part of an emergency package to support domestic violence survivors and to expand programs to reduce violence against women and children. I thank the Minister for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the Government for it. I note that \$46.1 million will be allocated to primary prevention as part of the initiative. Love Bites is a program aimed at prevention, and I hope the Government introduces programs such as that. Let us hope that the funding announced recently will have an impact to change behaviours, to reduce domestic violence and to make women and children safe.

### TERRIGAL ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (22:22):** Mr Temporary Speaker, congratulations on your ascent to the chair. I know the people of Oxley will be incredibly proud of your recent appointment. I am proud to say that the Anzac spirit is alive and thriving in my community on the Central Coast. In the electorate of Terrigal, Anzac Day was marked by a series of poignant events held across the region. From MacMasters Beach to Forresters Beach, from Copacabana to Matcham, our community united in solemn remembrance to honour the Anzacs and all those who have served our nation in times of conflict and in peacekeeping missions. It was my privilege to attend four of those services, each one a reminder of the courage and sacrifice of those who have gone before us and of how their courage and resilience have shaped the world we live in today. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the president, Scott Warr, and the secretary, Michael Tabone, of the Terrigal Wamberal RSL Sub-Branch for organising yet another memorable dawn service at Terrigal Beach, the largest on the Central Coast on Anzac Day.

Like Anzac Day, the holding of the dawn service comes from the First World War. In the military, it is believed that dawn is the best time to conduct an attack. Although visibility is not good, there is enough light to move so that when the soldiers attack, they are already close to their objective, and so the tradition of stand-to came about. This meant that the defending troops, before dawn, would rise to the parapets, prepared for an attack if it came, a tactic that continues to this day. The sight of thousands of locals gathered at the foreshore at 5.00 a.m., standing in silent tribute to our fallen heroes and united in remembrance, was a moving experience. Moments like those remind us of what a profound honour and privilege it is to represent our community on Anzac Day. As I stood among the crowd, I could not help but feel a swell of pride at the sight of local surf lifesaving clubs re-enacting the Gallipoli landing on Terrigal Beach. Our young students, representing every public school in the electorate in the combined Central Coast Primary Schools Choir, stood tall and proud, singing heartfelt renditions of *Lest We Forget* and *The Last Anzac*. Their involvement is a testament to the enduring legacy of the Anzac spirit, passed down through the generations.

At Pine Needles Village in Erina, I once again witnessed the unwavering dedication of our elderly residents who, despite failing health, turn out en masse. They never fail to honour the service of our veterans and never was there a more powerful rendition of the Australian anthem than at Pine Needles Village. It was a humbling experience to deliver the prayer of commemoration to the fallen, a small token of gratitude for their enduring commitment. I thank Hazel Grosman, the convenor for the Pine Needles residents' association committee. I also had the privilege of attending the Empire Bay Progress Association Anzac Day ceremony. I thank the president, Ken Shaw, for the opportunity to speak at the event. For me, Anzac Day holds a deeply personal significance, as I reflect on the legacy of my own family's service. I am the proud great-grandson of a light horseman and the grandson of two World War II RAAF officers, and the spirit of this day resonates deeply within my family.

In my speech I acknowledged the courage and sacrifice of the countless individuals who have served our nation with unwavering dedication and reaffirmed our commitment to uphold the values they fought so valiantly to defend. The evening sunset service at MacMasters Beach is always a poignant event and a moving way to conclude such an important day of commemoration. I thank the president of MacMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Alison McNeill, and life member Vince Roberts for organising that spectacular service. Standing on the edge of the beach was a sobering reminder of the bravery and sacrifice of those initial Anzac landings at Gallipoli.

I thank the organisers of the following services and the constituents who kindly represented me on the day, laying wreaths on my behalf: David Ferry at the Copacabana Dawn Service, with a wreath laid by Michael Griffiths; Peter Grothen, the honourable secretary of the Davistown RSL, with a wreath laid by Jared Wright; Steve Fortey of the Avoca Beach Community Association for the Avoca Beach Dawn Service, with a wreath laid by Angela Burford from the Erina Rural Fire Service; Eric Daniel, the honourable secretary of the Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers and Peacemakers' Association of Australia at the Ettalong Memorial service, with a wreath laid by Bernadette Enright; Scott Warr and Michael Tabone of the Terrigal Wamberal Sub-Branch at the Breakers Memorial Service, with a wreath laid by Jan and Quentin Anthony; Doug Roser of the Forresters Beach Retirement Village, with a wreath laid by Donna Golightly; Treveen Brown of the Hardy's Bay Club, with a wreath laid by Elizabeth Reynolds; the Matcham Public Hall Committee, with a wreath laid by Jim Gorman; and John Gilbert of Broadlands Green Point, with a wreath laid by Jim and Sonia Stevenson.

As we reflect on the significance of Anzac Day, let us remember the thousands of locals who enlisted for the Australian Imperial Forces a century ago, bravely answering the call of duty, and reaffirm our commitment to upholding the values that they fought so valiantly to defend. The Central Coast was alive and well with the Anzac spirit on Anzac Day. As the local member for Terrigal, it has been an absolute privilege to represent our community. As we strive to foster peace, unity and understanding within our communities and beyond, we ensure that the sacrifices of our service men and women are never forgotten. Lest we forget.

### GUNDARY SOLAR FARM

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (22:27):** Mr Temporary Speaker Kemp, I congratulate you on your appointment. You follow others of great importance. I advocate again for my electorate of Goulburn and the many lives that will be impacted by the Gundry Solar Farm project. The project is proposed to be built on the Gundry Plains—prime agricultural land zoned RU1 which is currently growing quality cattle, merino sheep and lambs. Adjoining farmers run fat lambs, cattle, goats, stud sheep and merino sheep. It is land that grows our food crops such as oats, canola and lucerne. To refresh the memories of members, the proposed Gundry Solar Farm site is located a mere 9.6 kilometres south-west of the Goulburn town centre. The proposal is to build a 700-hectare, 400-megawatt solar project and a 400- to 800-megawatt battery energy storage system with approximately 750,000 five-metre-high solar panels adjacent to another proposal, just two kilometres away, which is proposing a 760-hectare, 450-megawatt solar project and 300-megawatt battery energy storage system with an estimated 830,000 solar panels.

The vast majority of the Gundry Plains from the east to the west—a land mass of 3,600 acres—will be covered in approximately 1.5 million solar panels, two substations and associated infrastructure. For perspective, 3,600 acres is the size of Lord Howe Island. A solar farm the size of Lord Howe Island is proposed to be located just 9.6 kilometres from the city of Goulburn on prime agricultural land within Sydney's water catchment. It is not an amazing feat in renewable infrastructure; it is reckless, negligent planning and profiteering by big business. The land was purchased by a prominent investment banker and will be leased to Lightsource bp. By its own admission on its website, Lightsource bp ostentatiously advises that it has been named "the world's largest solar developer".

Organised investors and large corporations are entering the farming sector to take advantage of and profit from landowners who are now tasked with defending their rights as neighbours in the rush for renewables. We are also witnessing corporate investors completely disregarding the policies and guidelines of State and local planning legislation, or SEPPs, used to control the use of agricultural land. I am talking about prime agricultural land, an invaluable natural resource that provides the capacity for Australia to meet increasing global demand for food and fibre—land that has been nurtured by farmers for generations. We need a firm planning policy that recognises the important role that agriculture plays in the economies of regional towns, not only for food sustainability but also for the environment in which solar factories are being built at a rapid rate. They are not farms. According to the dictionary, "A farm is an area of land that is devoted primarily to agricultural processes with the primary objective of producing food and other crops. It is the basic facility in food production."

Lightsource bp has attempted to greenwash this project and others by referring to them in its advertising and project information as a farm. The Gundry Solar project is no farm; it is a solar factory designed and sold by big business to make big profits. The New South Wales Government has a responsibility to the people it represents. Policymakers must protect productive agricultural land and ensure our energy transition development occurs with local communities front of mind. That includes consideration of future health contamination, damage to the surrounding environment and ecosystems, and the displacement of communities.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (22:31):** Mr Temporary Speaker Kemp, I congratulate you on your elevation to the Speaker's panel. Your constituents in the Oxley electorate should be very proud of you, as should your family be. We look forward to great times ahead.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 22:31 until  
Thursday 9 May 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

**SOPHIE LIMBERT**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to pass my congratulations to school counsellor Sophie Limbert on being awarded the School Counselling and Psychology Association for NSW's Early Career Practitioner of the Year honour for 2023. Ms Limbert, who has worked in the Forbes and Eugowra public school district for just over three years, proved herself invaluable to her community as it battled to recover from the devastating floods of 2022. When the floods hit, Ms Limbert had been in her role as Forbes Public School counsellor for less than two years but set about supporting her students and others from Forbes High and Eugowra, during school closures and then relocations, while juggling the day-to-day requirement of her role. Ms Limbert was also awarded the NSW Premier's Anika Foundation Youth Depression Awareness Scholarship in 2023, enabling her to study global natural disaster intervention. The floods of 2022 left an indelible impression on the Forbes district which it is still coming to terms with. The input of young professionals like Ms Limbert is not only aiding recovery but building the resilience needed to combat future events. I congratulate Ms Limbert on a well-deserved honour and thank her for her work so far.

**MARCUS WYTHES AND JACK SMYTH**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the Sydney Royal Easter show achievement of two young men from Canowindra, good mates Marcus Wythes and Jack Smyth. The pair joined forces to top the Beef Cattle Paraders (13-19 years) with Marcus the winner and Jack placing second. From rural families based in Canowindra, Marcus and Jack, both 16, are honing their skills through Scots All Saints in Bathurst and Red Bend in Forbes, working with their respective campus's cattle teams. It is paying off for the lads, who also show for studs outside their scholastic duties. Their handling and parading skills are being carefully craft, keeping in mind judging is not limited to the animals under their charge but also the boys' own presentation. To earn the top two positions, Marcus and Jack led a steer or junior heifer from the general beef cattle classes at the Royal Easter Show, which is effectively a state championship in this type of parading. As the winner, Marcus advanced to the grand champion parador state final. I congratulate Marcus and Jack on their success and look forward to following their careers in the cattle industry.

**EMILY RICHES, MADDISON HORNER AND LACHLAN VALLEY UNITED PHYSICAL  
CULTURE CLUB**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate two young ladies from Forbes and their outstanding effort representing the Lachlan Valley United Physical Culture Club at national level. Emily Riches (11 years competition) and Maddison Hornery (12 years) were two of 15 dancers from Lachlan Valley United Physical Culture Club to qualify for the national competition of the Bjelke-Petersen School of Physical Culture, staged in Sydney with the pair going on to qualify in the semi-finals. Maddison and Emily were part of a record cohort of dancers who advanced to Sydney from zone qualifying, illustrating the Lachlan Valley United club is doing some outstanding work training its participants. Mr Speaker, physical culture is an amazing sport in that children as young as two are catered for and dancers can continue their training well into their advanced years. I congratulate the Lachlan Valley United Physical Culture Club on its outstanding effort at national level and salute Emily and Maddison for spearheading that effort.

**PINK SARI**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Pink Sari Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation run by a small team of women who have been working since 2016 to improve the health and well-being of South Asian families to build awareness to lessen the impact of Cancer. They recently launched the Caninfo & Care Project funded by the Cancer Institute NSW, an exciting new venture which will expand their capacity and make a profound difference to our community. The project will facilitate equitable access to culturally appropriate services to newly diagnosed patients and those undergoing treatment. The importance of raising cancer awareness cannot be overstated and improving that awareness within CALD communities, particularly among members of the community who may not speak English is an invaluable service to the community. Getting more people to proactively test for cancers and educating on the importance of prevention is saving lives and Pink Sari should be very proud of that. I look forward to seeing Pink Sari continue to flourish and the profound difference you make in Parramatta expand. As an all volunteer your selfless devotion to improving and preserving the lives of those around you is inspiration. Thank you to you all.



### **CAMDEN CHINESE MARKET GARDENERS BOOK LAUNCH**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—On the 6th of April, I had the privilege of attending the Camden Museum for the launch of the book 'A History of Camden Chinese Market Gardeners 1899-1993' edited by Ian Willis and Julie Wrigley. The book is a brief history of the Chinese market gardeners who first arrived in the Camden District during the late 19th century, providing insight into the story of the Camden Chinese Market Gardeners, which is not widely known but deserves to be remembered for their contribution to the local Camden area. Sophie Loy-Wilson a senior lecturer of Australian History at the University of Sydney attended the event and officially launched the book. Thank you to Ian, Julie, and the Camden Historical Society for inviting me to the Camden Museum and hosting the book launch, it was a wonderful afternoon.

### **CAMDEN RSL ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICE**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—On Anzac Day, I joined thousands of locals at the Camden RSL Dawn Service and commemoration to honour our brave servicemen and women involved in fighting for our country. Maintaining the tradition of Anzac Day ceremonies is so important to our community. It was fantastic to see such many people waking up early for the dawn service in recognition to those who have gone before us and fought for our country, especially to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Thank you to our veterans and active servicemen, as well as our community members who turned out in huge numbers to pay respects on this historic day. Thank you to all the organisers at Camden RSL sub-branch and all those who took part in the event for making this yearly commemoration possible. Lest we forget.

### **CAMDEN SHOW VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATION NIGHT**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—I was very thankful to attend the Camden show volunteers appreciation night on Friday the 5th of April. I commend all the volunteers for helping put on this year's very successful edition of the Camden Show. I really enjoyed chatting with our volunteers about their work for the show and how they enjoy getting involved in the community through the show, from helping set up events, directing people around the show, and overall running of the Camden Show. The Camden Show cannot happen without the incredible work of our volunteers, and I cannot thank them enough. I would also like to thank President of the Camden Show Society David Dunbier for inviting me to the event.

### **HELEN LAKATOS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Helen Lakatos on the publication of her book 'Izzy the Jerusalem Donkey' and recognise her contribution to the Greek Orthodox Parish of Saint Stylianos, Saints Peter and Paul and Saint Gregory Palamas at GyMEA. Helen Lakatos is a first generation Australian-born Cypriot. She is the proud mother of two boys, a grandmother to three children, and a parishioner at St Stylianos, which has over 7,000 members. Now Helen is also an author and has written and published her very own children's book. Helen sought to communicate the stories of the New Testament in a way in which young readers could understand and engage with more readily. The story is told through the eyes of 'Izzy', a young donkey in the time of Jesus. Izzy experiences the events of Palm Sunday, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, among others. It is a story of trust, sacrifice, hope, and victory. The book is in the process of being translated to Greek.

### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate everyone who took part in the Sutherland Shire Relay for Life last weekend. 69mm of rain fell on Cronulla during the Relay, but as many were heard to say "cancer doesn't stop for rain": people turned out in force to raise money for cancer research, celebrate with those who've survived cancer and remember loved ones lost to the disease. More than 1200 'relayers' and 106 teams were part of the event over the 24 hours. Many, including school students, braved the elements to camp onsite overnight and keep the Relay going through the early hours of the morning. This year's fundraising tally is at just over \$320,000 and climbing, which exceeds last year's total. This is an amazing achievement in such miserable weather and highlights the dedication to the cause of everyone who braved the conditions. I acknowledge the hard work of the volunteer organising committee of around 50 people, co-chaired by Rod Coy and Glenn Nicholas, who were kept very busy adjusting plans because of the rain. Rod Coy said he was blown away by how many turned up and that it was great to see "the goodness of mankind for 24 hours".

### **WOOLLOOWARE GOLF CLUB CHARITY GOLF DAY**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I was delighted as club patron to join the Woollooware Golf Club's 62nd annual charity golf day on 23 March in support of Sydney Legacy. The annual fundraiser has been an extraordinary success over the years, with more than \$1 million raised for Sydney Legacy to help support families of those who've given their life or health for their country. This year's event saw 143 golfers in action and a cheque for \$50,000 presented to Sydney Legacy, which is the largest ever donation from the golf day. I congratulate the

organisers and everyone who participated and contributed to the charity golf day, particularly the event committee of chair John Stoffels, club president Sid Guinane, club general manager John McMahon, John Clark, Ian Roach, Grant Turner, Chris Callanan and golf director Brad Ulph, along with volunteers on the day Pat Stoffels, Vicky Armstrong, Sue Wyse, Meg Russell, Carol Sorenson, Carol Page, Dianne Smith, Jill Roach, Mitch Rugless, David Lohman, Phil Duke and Leanne Nowak. The event's success over so many years is testament to the ongoing generous spirit of Woollooware Golf Club's members to give back to the community.

### **COUNCIL OF INDIANS AUSTRALIANS, HOLI**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—It was a pleasure to attend Holi at the Castle Hill Showground on 24 March 2024. The event was attended the Consul of India Mr Bal Krishan Anand and Neeru Anand, the Mayor of the Hills, Members of Parliament, and local councillors. Holi is one of the most attended cultural highlights of each year. The Showground was awash with colours, and it was clear community enjoyed the cultural delights, dancing, and music. Holi is celebrated annually in the month of March and is considered the second biggest festival of our nation after Diwali. Holi is believed to be the celebration of the triumph of good over evil. The festival also marks the celebration of fertility, colour and love. Even though Holi is a festival in India, it is now becoming a global festival. People from multiple countries are celebrating it. By celebrating Holi, people mark the arrival of the spring season, and they thank the almighty for the good harvest. I recognise and thank Shail Wadwa, President of the Council of Indians Australian for presenting another wonderful and vibrant festival to our community.

### **HORNSBY MUSICAL SOCIETY, JEKYLL AND HYDE**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I congratulate the Hornsby Musical Society [HMS] on the production of Jekyll & Hyde. HMS was founded in 1958 and is one of Sydney's premier amateur societies. Operating on a not-for-profit basis, the society has staged over 100 productions over the years at numerous venues. On 3 May 2024 I had attended the opening night of Jekyll & Hyde at the Pioneer Theatre. From the first moment the cast appeared on stage the audience was enthralled with wonderful acting, vocal performances, costumes, and sets. The lead cast members, Nathan Lomas, who played Jekyll, Max Waterson, who played Hyde, Emilia Henley, who played Emma, and Sarah Paull, who played Lucy each captivated the audiences with wonderful artistic and vocal performances. I thank the production team, Director Tim Selby Choreographer Lauren Oxenham, Music Director Aiden Smith, and Production Designer, John Goggin for bringing Jekyll & Hyde to the Pioneer Theatre. The next production HMS will bring to the Pioneer Theatre will be Urinetown, The Musical to be performed during November. Thank you to the Hornsby Musical Society and the entire cast of Jekyll & Hyde for your performance. The community look forward to the next production.

### **GLENORIE DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB, ANNUAL AWARDS PRESENTATION**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On 27 April 2024 I attended the Glenorie District Cricket Club Annual Awards Presentation. The occasion also marked a significant milestone in the history of the club being a celebration of the clubs 130th anniversary. The Glenorie Progress Association also marks its 130th anniversary this year. The Mayor of Hornsby Shire Council, Phillip Ruddock OAM and the Deputy Mayor of The Hills Shire Council, Councillor Mitchell Blue also attended the Awards Presentation. The club had a wonderful season this year finishing second in the Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Club Championship for Seniors and third for the Juniors. It was an honour to present the Spirit Award. The Spirit Award was presented to the club member which displayed the important values of sportsmanship, positivity, integrity, respect, inclusivity, and tenacity. There were many nominees including Noah Nicholson, Jacob Reeves, Liam Dockery, Alanna Giles, Elijah Smith, and Luke McDowell. The winner of the award Spirit Award was Joey Gilbert. Joey displayed maturity as the captaincy duties and as a person throughout the season displaying patience and leadership and gaining the respect of his coach, team-mates, and the parent group. Congratulations to Joey and to all award recipients.

### **BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - JAMES DUMAS**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing James Dumas a happy 67th birthday! James, a valued member of our Ryde community, celebrated his special day on March 28. It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday in a community like Ryde, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making his day a little extra special. As he reflects on his birthday, I hope his memories are filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that will accompany him on his journey in the future. Wishing James continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday, James!

### **BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - YAGIZ AKSOY**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Yagiz Aksoy a joyous 35th Birthday! Yagiz's partner, Lara asked me to share the following message in the NSW Parliament: "Today, we honour Dr Yagiz Aksoy, a distinguished clinician and researcher, as he celebrates his 35th birthday. As the founder and

president of the Macquarie University Table Tennis Club, the largest of its kind in Ryde, Dr Aksoy significantly contributed to our community for a decade. This year marks a dual celebration: Dr. Aksoy's 35th birthday and the 10th anniversary of the club's establishment. His dedication to both his professional work and the development of table tennis in Ryde is truly commendable. Happy Birthday Dr. Aksoy!". It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Yagiz's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Yagiz!

#### **BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - LIPING YAN**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Liping Yan a joyous 40th birthday! Their spouse, Ming asked me to deliver the following message in the NSW Parliament: "Happy Birthday Liping! Wishing you a day filled with love, laughter, and all the happiness you deserve. May this year bring you countless blessings and unforgettable moments. Here's to celebrating you and the wonderful person you are. Cheers to another amazing year ahead!". It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Liping's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Liping!

#### **GREAT LAKES UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise the Great Lakes United Football Club for their continued success in organising the Viking Challenge, an annual men's & women's small-sided football tournament. This year marked a significant milestone as 192 teams, comprising 2000 players from across the state, gathered at Tuncurry Sports Complex, making it the largest turnout yet. The downpour on Saturday put a halt to the day's games forcing officials to squeeze 96 games into the program before kick-off on Sunday. The Forster-Tuncurry football team, 'Benders with the Boys' took out the Viking Challenge title for the fourth consecutive year! The Viking Challenge brings so much more than football, it brought 4,000 visitors into the Myall Lakes region over the weekend, providing a substantial boost to our local economy. Congratulations to the committee members - Peter Flower, Richard Allen, Ray Brady, John Fletcher, Lesley Cambell, Neil Wassell & Kurt Tonks – for all their hard work in putting together this fantastic tournament.

#### **NARELLE COLLINS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to congratulate Narelle Collins, who was the recipient of a NSW Seniors Local Achievement Award. Narelle's story is one of resilience, compassion, and dedication to her community. Despite facing medical challenges, she has served the Manning Valley Seniors Citizens Association since 2011, now as President. She's led the association through tough times, increasing membership and providing important social connections during the pandemic. Beyond her work with seniors, Narelle has been a dedicated member and President of the Taree LungNet Group for 14 years, supporting those with lung issues and donating to healthcare facilities. She also serves on the Manning Local Health Committee at Taree Base Hospital, furthering her commitment to community health. Narelle Collins exemplifies selflessness and leadership. Thank you for your contributions, Narelle and congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **TED BICKFORD OAM**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to congratulate Ted Bickford OAM, who was the recipient of a NSW Seniors Local Achievement Award. For nearly three decades, Ted has selflessly volunteered as the Graffiti Buster, tirelessly working alongside young volunteers to combat graffiti in the Myall Lakes region. Ted runs a graffiti hotline for reporting incidents and goes beyond just removal by educating local youth through school programs, effectively preventing future graffiti. Thanks to Ted's dedication, our community, including our skate parks, remains graffiti-free. Ted is involved in the Forster Tuncurry Westpac Helicopter Group, he was the president for 10 years and recently was awarded with 25 years of service! He is a passionate advocate and over the years has worked hard fundraising money for the organisation through balls, truck shows, Bunnings BBQ's, King of the Krater Skate Competitions and bowls days. Ted's commitment to our community and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service is truly commendable. Thank you for your hard work Ted and congratulations on this well deserved recognition.

#### **BAILEY CAMPBELL**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Bailey Campbell, from Warilla High School, for securing a position in the esteemed Future Leaders Academy. Bailey successfully applied for a place at the Future Leaders Academy Pacific Student Leadership Program to be held in Vanuatu later this year. This is a prestigious international leadership camp linked to the Duke of Edinburgh's Hillary Award. There are only

40 places available for Australian and New Zealand applicants, and to have three of our students selected speaks volumes to their leadership and advocacy skills. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Bailey on this wonderful achievement and wish her well in all her future endeavours.

#### **SHEREE RANKMORE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Sheree Rankmore, from Flinders, who has been awarded The Aunty Mary IWD Scholarship for Indigenous Women by the International Women's Day Illawarra Committee valued at \$2,000.00. Sheree is a proud Ngadju woman who has lived and worked on Dharawal country for over 30 years. She has worked for decades with multiple bodies, including the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Shellharbour City Council and TAFE and is on the board of the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service. Under the mentorship of elders such as Aunty Mary Davis and Aunty June Lowe, the single mum has established herself as a professional resource and contact within the local Aboriginal community. She has given thousands of volunteer hours to community projects which help families with funerals, developing reconciliation action plans, writing funding applications and tenders, organising NAIDOC events and the legendary Elders Ball at Wollongong Entertainment Centre. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Sheree on this wonderful achievement and wish her well in her future endeavours.

#### **ANGEL AND ISAAC – LAKELANDS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Lakelands Public School captains, Angel and Isaac, who applied to be on the NSW Education Minister's Student Council (known as the DOVES Council). This is a small group of students from across NSW who provide advice to the education minister on issues that affect students. Both students put together a video application and were successful in making it to the interview stage – an outstanding achievement when there was only one position available in our region and most of the council members are high school students. They were both confident and courageous in their interviews. Angel was selected to be on the DOVES Council and began her duties in March when she travelled up to NSW Parliament House and participated in a three-day conference with her fellow council members. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Angel and Isaac on this amazing achievement, you are both wonderful role models for your school.

#### **PILU CELEBRATES 20 YEARS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—One of Sydney's most popular fine dining restaurants, Pilu at Freshwater in my electorate of Manly, is about to celebrate its 20th anniversary. Its rich Sardinian heritage is delivered by passionate Proprietor Giovanni Pilu, who along with wife Marilyn, delivers a menu that draws diners from across Sydney, especially for its Sardinian suckling pig. Within the first year of opening, Pilu won two, Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide Awards and the accolades have continued from a steady stream of diners. Pilu's official 20th anniversary celebrations will be held in August but as a generous response to community support, Pilu will also stage several no-charge events. On 22nd August, a fundraiser for Manly's Adolescent and Young Adult Hospice will be held at the restaurant with a generous contribution from the Pilu team. Special mention should also be made of TAFE NSW, which Giovanni claims was a turning point in his career, and is why he dedicates much time and effort into supporting the institution. Congratulations Giovanni and Marilyn on delivering 20 years of fine dining through Pilu's at Freshwater. May there be many more years to come.

#### **TIBETAN FOOTBALL TEAM**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the Tibetan Community in my electorate of Manly. Many of them live in Dee Why, which is largely within in my electorate. The Tibetan Community is active, holding a variety of events, and last year helped formed the Tibetan Community of Australia Football Team. I was pleased to attend the team's launch its subsequent participation in the 2023 Gyalyum Chenmo Memorial Gold Cup was hailed a great success. The young people are eager to participate in the tournament again this year, which is being held in Southern India. Seven of the players live in Dee Why and have been busy organising raffles and other fund-raising events to cover costs, including for travel, accommodation, insurances and jerseys, and continue seeking a major sponsor. I thank the Tibetan Community for their ongoing contribution to our broader community and wish their football team every success in kicking goals for funding and on the field for football glory.

#### **MANLY COMPUTER PALS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to draw attention to the excellent work undertaken by Manly Computer Pals, a member of the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association. The organisation seeks to assist those over 55 to navigate their way through today's modern computer technology and adapt to the maize of programs, which become available at their fingertips. For a small cost, topics including the internet, emails, smart phones, smart cars, laptops, tablets and iPads are covered, opening the door to games, genealogy,

music, photos, news, weather, transport, social media, apps and more. As the Manly Computer Pals website states, 'The possibilities of what can be achieved using digital devices are almost endless. There are few tasks, regardless of how complex, that can't be done today by anyone who is prepared to spend a little time learning the basics.' My electorate is indeed fortunate to host Manly Computer Pals as it helps ensure the older members of our community don't become socially isolated, or miss the wonderful range of helpful services that become available through even basic computer knowledge.

#### **ST PATRICKS CRICKET CLUB - JAMES KREUTZBERGER**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate James Kreutzberger for being awarded a life membership with Albury's St Patrick's Cricket Club, during the end-of-season presentation night on March 29. James - thank you for being a role model in sportsmanship, camaraderie, and leadership. Your remarkable support to your fellow St Patrick's Cricket Club members has not gone unnoticed. The honour of a lifelong membership is a testament to your hard work, valuable presence, and significant contributions to Albury's cricketing community. I am grateful for your continued commitment with the club, a well-deserved recognition, for an extraordinary individual.

#### **BURRUMBUTTOCK ENDURANCE RIDE**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Angelina Patterson and Tony Marshall, for organising the annual long-distance horse-riding event the "Burrumbuttock Endurance Ride", held at the Burrumbuttock Recreation Reserve, during the Easter Long Weekend. What started as a project focused on horse development and successful genetics, has blossomed into a premier Australian sporting event, recognised by both the NSW Endurance Riders Association [NSWERA] and the Victorian Endurance Riders Association [VERA]. The ride attracted 122 participants, including interstate riders aged from 10 to 70, with some looking to qualify for the World Championships later this year in France. The competition ranged across the distances of 20km, 40km, 80km and the penultimate 100km. Congratulations to the winners: Sarah Parker, Hannah Cossor, Harry Berg, Tracy Lee Cossor and Chloe Hayden. Well done Angelina & Tony for your many years of involvement and success in the sport of endurance horse riding. As well as a special thankyou to the many Burrumbuttock volunteers that led to the event's success including the local farming families who generously opened their properties to the riders and spectators.

#### **BILLABONG HIGH SCHOOLS WORLD'S GREATEST EVENT DETAILS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Billabong High School for their outstanding Fundraising event: the World's Greatest Shave, which raised an impressive total of \$6,127.55. This achievement is a testament to the incredible generosity and support from the staff, students and local community. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the following individuals who played a key role in making this event a success: Melissa Ross and Edward Bates who organised the event and participated. Jo Kirby, Megan Sturges, Brian Duke and Debbie Eady, staff fundraisers and great contributors towards the fundraising goal. Roslyn Barber, a generous community member and hairdresser who volunteered her time to support the cause. Additionally, I would like to recognise the 22 students who bravely shaved or dyed their hair for this cause and the SRC students who worked to collect donations and manage the canteen on the day. This remarkable figure reflects the dedication and enthusiasm of everyone involved. Your generosity, teamwork and kindness make a world of difference—well done Billabong High School!

#### **WOW (WOMEN OF WELLINGTON)**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate Jess Redfern on the establishment of "The WOW" Women of Wellington. Women of Wellington is an Instagram page with the aim of shining a spotlight on the remarkable women of the town and their contributions to community. Each woman featured is given the opportunity to share her story, highlighting the positive impact she is making in her own unique way. The Instagram page has now evolved into monthly face to face events, providing a platform for women to connect and learn from one another in person. The events will feature a volunteer guest speaker and will focus on topics such as mindset, goal setting, information for new mums and finance tips. The talks are free to attend. This approach ensures that every woman in the community, regardless of their personal situation, has the opportunity to participate and benefit from the valuable information and discussions, empowering them to thrive personally and professionally. Jess's dedication to building up the community and creating opportunities for women to thrive is truly commendable, and her efforts are making a meaningful difference to the lives of many.

#### **STELLA HARDING**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to acknowledge nine-year-old Stella Harding from Narromine as a Motorcross Champion! Following in her Dad Luke's footsteps Stella has found a passion for riding fast and having fun! Her talent for the sport has also become evident from a very young age!

Stella started on the bike with training wheels at just two years old and incredibly commenced competitive racing at the age of just four! In her most recent competition, on her trusty KTM motorcycle, supported by her parents and sponsor Dubbo City Motorcycles, she achieved first place in the 2023 Queensland Junior Motorcross Female State titles in Mackay. Stella also placed a strong ninth place in the Darwin Australian Junior Motorcross titles. With each competition, she reaffirms her position as a formidable force in a predominantly male dominated sport. Her consistent performances and achievements are a testament to her skill, determination and unwavering commitment beyond her years. Stella is now focusing her energy and attention on the upcoming NSW titles and the Australian Titles in Perth. Good luck Stella, I look forward to continuing to follow your motocross journey!

### CUDGEGONG CRUISERS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Cudgegong Cruisers on the success of their 2024 Can Cruise which raised the incredible amount of \$33,000 for Can Assist. Can Cruise brings together a convoy of vehicles of all sizes and utilities for a one-day car and motorbike rally. The event not only raises money for a great cause but also provides a thrilling experience for car and motorbike lovers of all ages. Each year, the Can Cruise continues to grow in popularity, drawing a larger crowd of spectators and participants. The event has become a highlight on the calendar for car enthusiasts and community members alike. Among the regular attendees is John Stuart, who has participated in the event for an impressive 10 years. Since the inception of Cudgegong Cruisers in 2009, this group of hard working and passionate volunteers have made donations totalling \$265,000. In addition to supporting Can Assist, they have also extended their support to other local charities and community organisations such as the Mudgee Hospital. I congratulate Club President, John Hodges, and his committee on their outstanding efforts and the significant contributions they make to the community.

### CAMERON TAYLOR

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise Cameron Taylor from Hastings Secondary College on his recent achievement - passing the N3 level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test [JLPT]. The JLPT has been offered in Australia by the Japan Foundation since 1984, as a reliable means of evaluating the Japanese proficiency of non-native speakers. A certificate from this exam attracts recognition as academic credit to preferential treatment at companies and for immigration to the country of Japan. This test is extensive. It is a rigorous four hour exam, where the participant must travel to Sydney for it to be undertaken at the University of New South Wales campus. Cameron demonstrated his ability by comprehending 650 kanji (Japanese characters) and 3750 Japanese words. This particular level suggests a capability to comprehend Japanese as used in everyday situations. I believe that the Japanese language is considered one of the most difficult languages to learn. It has three different writing systems, a hierarchy of politeness and an opposite sentence structure to English, making it decidedly complex. I commend Cameron's dedication and achievement in acquiring proficiency to this level in such a challenging language.

### DR CARMEN HANSEN

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise Radiation Oncologist Dr Carmen Hansen, formally from the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute [MNCCI] for her instrumental efforts spanning twelve years with the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. Described as a highly respected and caring person by her peers, Dr Hansen has treated many patients in her time as a Radiation Oncologist, specialising in breast, gynaecological and urological malignancies. Dr Hansen went above and beyond to support her patient's recovery. She did this in part by dedicating her time and resources into ensuring the most up-to-date protocols and training were maintained in accordance with leading research and development in the field of radiology. This included implementing improved technology in the treatment of breast cancer. As the Chair of EviQ Radiation, Dr Hansen contributes to the development of protocols and clinical content from her evidence and experience in cancer treatment. This information is then collected and displayed as a resource for hundreds of clinicians to use. Dr Hansen also played an integral part in the training of registrars and other staff in the radiation oncology program. Dr Hansen finished at the MNCCI on 19th April. We thank Dr Hansen for her outstanding contribution to our health system.

### KAYDEN DAY – JUVENILE ARTHRITIS AWARENESS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise Hastings Secondary College student Kayden Day. A diagnosis in 2020 of Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis [JIA], was the catalyst for Kayden becoming a steadfast advocate for the condition, spreading the word and educating people that there are various forms of this disease and that it does not only affect older people. Statistics show in Australia, there are approximately 6000 children affected by JIA, making it as prevalent as Type 1 Diabetes in children under 16. JIL can affect teenagers, children and even babies. Kayden refuses to be silenced by his condition. In March 2024, he organised a 'family hangout' event encouraging families from Port Macquarie and neighbouring areas to meet and connect with each other. Kayden has joined Juvenile Arthritis Foundation Australia Board roundtable discussions at

Parliament House, Canberra, speaking with Ministers and dignitaries about young people living with Juvenile Arthritis. Bravely sharing his journey, Kayden highlights how arthritis impacts not only the child, but their families as well. The Federal Government have announced the first-ever federally funded program to help drive early diagnosis of juvenile arthritis. I am inspired by Kayden's strength and determination to educate people that 'Kids get Arthritis Too.'

#### RECOGNITION OF JUSTIN OAKENFULL

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Justin Oakenfull for being awarded the winner of the prestigious Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association Ltd National Champion Young Auctioneer at the Sydney Royal Easter Show recently. The competition focuses on the young auctioneers and assesses them on clarity, diction, manner and livestock-value knowledge. I congratulate Justin for being selected as an individual who is leading the way through exemplary practice, collaboration and passion for the industry. Justin's success at the National Championships means he will now represent Australia, Elders and Inverell in the World Auctioneering Championships at the Calgary Stampede in Alberta, Canada in July. I commend Justin for his commitment to the agricultural industry and we wish him well in the World Championships. I thank Justin for his contribution and positive impact on agriculture and to his community.

#### ARMITAGE AND BUCKLEY STOCK AND STATION AGENTS

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Armitage and Buckley Stock and Station Agents for servicing the New England area since 1974. The Armidale business is currently owned and operated by Luke Heagney and Tom Piddington, who retain the respected reputation of their forebearers, Founders David Armitage & Norm Buckley and their predecessors Victor and Debbie Moar. I congratulate past and present owners on this wonderful milestone and for continuing to hold the record for the largest single weaner sale in Armidale's history. Under Luke and Tom's leadership, the agency continues to grow and evolve to meet the challenges of industry requirements and selling platforms, whilst maintaining its presence within the digital landscape. I also congratulate the other current team members supporting the success of the agency, including Stockman Darcy Booth; Real Estate Agent Michael Clark; Office Manager Margaret Jones; and Tracey Stace in Administration. I commend Armitage and Buckley for their years of excellence in customer service to the New England producers and for their valuable contribution to the Australian livestock and real estate industries over the past 50 years.

#### CHAISE TIPPETT AND JACK LOVE

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Armidale brothers Chaise Tippett and Jack Love for competing in the NSW Karting State Titles recently and excelling in the sport of Karting. I congratulate Chaise and Jack on their many achievements in their chosen field and their dedication to Karting. Recent successes have meant that Chaise has signed with the Tyler Greenbury Racing Team, which will allow him to attend more interstate events and his dream of competing in the Australian Karting Championships in 2024. Last month he had the fabulous opportunity to go to Italy to compete in the ROK Italia. Karting is a very competitive sport that has seen Jack closely challenge his brother for poll position in many events. The competition keeps them on their toes. I commend Chaise and Jack on their hard work, passion and commitment to the sport and I would like to thank their family, major sponsors and those involved in the support of this dynamic duo on their journey. Chaise and Jack are fine ambassadors for their sport and the Northern Tablelands Electorate will be right behind them in their future endeavours.

#### SHOW SEASON IN OXLEY

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The Oxley electorates were very amused in the past few weeks with a success stunt of our local Comboyne, Wauchope, Kempsey, Bellingen and Macksville Ag shows. Intense rides, mouthwatering food vendors, and live performances are among the traditional entertainments. However, its strong agricultural concentration is what really sets it apart. Each community show chased an impressive two days each, that unites the communities. The competition for baking, wood-chopping, and horsemanship, as well as the magnificent display of livestock that included beef cattle, goats, and even some little farm animals, were all eagerly observed. It has been a great way for some fun and experience within our local communities as well as showing off the skills and talent that our young constituents have within the agricultural sector. I applaud the individual show societies for giving up their time to ensure that each day is smoothly run; these local shows are a terrific way to have a fun-filled day. It is highly praiseworthy that they are dedicated to giving back to the community and to making the town's day enjoyable and representative. I look forward to the 2025 shows!

#### THE JOYFUL JOURNEY OF A YOUNG CHAMPION

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—At the HART Sport State Track and Field Championships in Sydney, eight-year-old Ciarra Taylor competed on behalf of Little Athletics New South Wales' Macleay Valley. Ciarra

advanced to compete in the 60-meter hurdles, discus, and high jump on Saturday, March 23, and Sunday, March 24, after qualifying from the Zone and Regional Championships. Ciarra was overjoyed with the opportunity to attempt to surpass her personal best on the big stage in Sydney after winning two silver medals in the discus and a gold medal in the high jump at previous competitions. Ciarra was anxious to compete against 23 other girls in the Under 9s age group, but her fear was unwarranted as she dominated two of her events and finished in the top 10 in the state. The eight-year-old placed seventh in the 60-meter hurdles and ninth in the high jump to place among the top ten in the state championships. I commend Ciarra for giving it her all and coming away with such an amazing result. She is an absolute superstar and should be beaming with pride with the results she has achieved. Well done.

#### **HELPING SICK LORIKEETS IN THE MACLEAY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I stand to acknowledge Kathrine Mackay, a college student from St. Paul's, for her tremendous attention shown to our feathered companions. Even the smallest heart can harbour the deepest affection for our species. Like many other areas, the Macleay Valley community is seeing an alarming number of rainbow lorikeets afflicted by lorikeet paralysis syndrome. However, the birds' condition could have worsened in the absence of Katherine Mackay's generous spirit. After doing some research and consulting with Australian wildlife needing aid volunteers, Kathrine realised that the wobbling lorikeet she had seen as she was getting off the bus to go to school was suffering from lorikeet paralysis syndrome. Katherine spent her afternoon putting together fact sheets that she would give to her school office and the community to raise awareness of the situation. Seeing someone so young, so smart, and so passionate about bettering the community astounds me. Katherine is a true inspiration, showing us that no matter how old we are, we can all still make a difference in the lives of others and animals. I commend the actions of young Katherine.

#### **ARLINGTON OVAL – FIRST COMMUNITY GIRLS SOCCER MATCH PLAYED**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Congratulations Hurlstone Park Wanderers and Leichhardt Saints U13 girls' soccer teams who recently played the first female soccer match at historic Arlington Oval in Dulwich Hill! Whilst this historic oval has been a hub for soccer since 1932, until now it has only been used for the men's game. On 7 April 2024 this quirk of history was fixed as the Hurlstone Park Wanderers and Leichhardt Saints U13 girls kicked off their 2024 season in front of an enthusiastic crowd. After the well fought 1-all match, both sides posed together for photos to recognise the important milestone for community sport. Congratulations to the presidents of both clubs, Rosalie Viney and Matt Bowen, as well as all the coaches, players and parents for organising and taking part in this historic match!

#### **CONGRATULATIONS JUNO SMITH ON NATIONAL MOUNTAIN BIKE RACING SUCCESS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I would like to congratulate Juno Smith, a local Marrickville High School student, on her recent success at the National Mountain Bike Championships. The highly competitive championships were held in March at Lake Macquarie and Juno achieved second place in the U15s Women's Cross Country Short Track Race. This race is an intense, short race, and is one of the most dramatic for racers and fans alike. Juno also placed fourth in the Cross Country Olympic National Championship, another incredible result. In addition to mountain biking Juno is an accomplished track and road cyclist, placing second in the Junior tour of Goulburn in April. Juno trains thirteen hours a week and is an active member of Sutherland Shire and Dulwich Hill Cycling Clubs, and Western Sydney MTB Club, where she has won several awards in 2022/2023, including Junior Cyclist, Junior Female Cyclist and Female Mountain Biker of the Year. Congratulations on these outstanding achievements and all the best for your next competition Juno!

#### **WEAR IT ORANGE 22 MAY**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Wear it Orange Day will take place on 22 May. This is a day to honour and thank the many SES volunteers who generously give their time to help communities during disasters such as floods and storms. Thank you to my local dedicated SES units, the Marrickville SES, led by unit commander Liam Hogan, and the Ashfield-Leichhardt unit led by Sharon Buckley. The volunteers at these units keep us updated on current severe weather warnings, advice and go out of their way to keep us safe. I would like to personally thank the dedicated volunteers throughout my electorate who give their time and energy year-round to safeguard us during our most vulnerable moments. In early April, Sydney experienced heavy rainfall causing flooding and damage in the Inner West. NSW SES came to the rescue, responding to over 6000 calls for assistance, with both Marrickville and Ashfield-Leichhardt Unit volunteers attending to over 40 calls each. I encourage you all to dress in a splash or burst of orange on Wednesday 22 May to show your support and appreciation for your local SES volunteers.



### ORAN PARK HOTEL

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate Versatile Construction and key project partners Momento Hospitality and Archbiosis Architects for celebrating the 'topping out' ceremony to mark the construction of the Oran Park Hotel reaching its highest point. The first stage of the Oran Park Hotel is scheduled to open later this year and I look forward to the opening day when the Oran Park community and visitors to the area can enjoy a high quality and family-friendly destination that will foster connections and increase local employment. This hotel will enhance the vibrancy of the region and will benefit the lifestyles of locals and visitors alike. Upon full completion, some of the features will include a dedicated meeting and events floor, bistro, lounge, pizzeria, sports bar and a children's area. I commend the team at Oran Park Hotel for their success thus far and wish them the very best as they continue with this important project.

### ORCHARD HILLS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate Dr Camille Brandt and her dedicated team at Orchard Hills Veterinary Hospital on winning the prestigious 2024 Australian Small Business Champion Award for the Veterinarian category. It is an extraordinary achievement to take out a national award in recognition of one's success in their respective field and this is a testament to Orchard Hills Veterinary Hospital's outstanding contribution in offering expert healthcare to cherished pets. I'm so delighted that our local community and visitors beyond can rely on the service of the team at Orchard Hills Veterinary Hospital in providing healthcare to their beloved pets and I thank them for their exceptional work that has led to them taking out this deserved award. On behalf of the Badgerys Creek community, I congratulate Dr Brandt and her team at Orchard Hills Veterinary Hospital and I wish them continued success into the future.

### NEPEAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate Nepean Christian School on its 40th anniversary. Nepean Christian School is a non-denominational, independent Christian school located in the Mulgoa Valley, which has been catering for students from Kindergarten to Year 12. It is a vibrant school with over 600 students. More recently, it has also started catering for pre-school students, having commenced an Early Childhood Centre called Puggles in 2023. The school enshrines the Christian faith and value of service to the community in its students. Each year the school engages with comprehensive service programs. All senior students participate in the pinnacle of Nepean's service program with a week-long trip to their sister school in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The school also requires the older students in the school to complete twenty hours of community service each year. On behalf of the community of Badgerys Creek, I congratulate all current and former students, staff and parents on this historic milestone and wish them many anniversaries ahead.

### SUBODH SHIRODKAR

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and commemorate the life of Mr Subodh Shirodkar who passed away on Friday the 26th of January 2024. Subodh is to be remembered for his selfless and unwavering dedication to his local community. Mr Shirodkar's generosity and kindness is no more evident than in his extensive history with the St George District Cricket Association. As a coach for more than 15 years, Subodh mentored countless young aspiring players at a local level all the way up to representative level. His quality and expertise as a coach is exemplified through the fact that two of his alumni were integral pieces in Australia's Under 19 World Cup win earlier this year. Subodh's contribution to cricket in our local area is truly immeasurable. His dedication to the game and the Kingsgrove Cricket Club was unsurpassed. Beyond cricket, Subodh was known as an expert in all things property. Over the years, he mentored many members of our community in their journey of owning their first home. On 26th January the Shirodkar family lost a husband and a father, but the St George community lost a member who always lent a helping hand to those in need.

### LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL 2024

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to commemorate the Lunar New Year Festival held by the Georges River Council celebrating the Year of the Dragon on Saturday, February 3, 2024. This marks the 21st year that the Lunar New Year has been celebrated in the Georges River area and the largest celebration yet, attracting an estimated 50,000 visitors. Crowds enjoyed the diverse food stalls and traditional dance performances that were showcased, with particular emphasis on the dragon dances, symbolising prosperity as we welcome in the Year of Dragon. This celebration holds special significance for Georges River Council, as the dragon serves as both the council's emblem and the beloved mascot, Georgie the Dragon and provides an opportunity for community engagement and cultural exchange within our electorate.

**KIM FENWICK**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—On behalf of the St George Community, I thank Multicultural Community Liaison Officer Ms Kim Fenwick for nine and half years of outstanding service to the St George Local Area Command. The Kogarah Electorate is very diverse and having officers like Ms Fenwick is invaluable to both the Command and the community. I visit countless community groups across the Kogarah Electorate and they have all told me how invaluable Ms Fenwick has been in providing a sense of safety and comfort to new migrants and people with diverse backgrounds. I wish Ms Fenwick all the best in her new role at the Liverpool Command and once again thank her for her outstanding service to the community of St George.

**TENTERFIELD HIGH SCHOOL'S HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE SUCCESS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Tenterfield High School has received a letter of congratulations from the Secretary of Education for outstanding improvement in the 2023 Higher School Certificate results. This is the second time in three years that such a departmental commendation has been made. Higher School Certificate graduates, their families, Tenterfield High Principal Stephanie Scott and her teaching staff can be extremely proud of this academic achievement. As Ms Scott told The Tenterfield Star, only a handful of schools across the state receive these letters, and the results speak volumes for what they offer at the school. As the Secretary noted, the results are a collective effort and a result of the culture of high expectations and quality relationships at the school, the individual support offered to students, and the professional development and expertise of teachers. Tenterfield High has also achieved excellent growth in reading and numeracy in the junior years for the past two years. Reading growth is significantly above the State average. The whole school reading program across Years 7 to 10 in every English lesson, as well as individual support for students who require it, has supported this growth. Take a bow Tenterfield High.

**DRUMMER BOY MAKES KYOGLE'S ANZAC DAY A SPECIAL ONE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—MY GRANDSON Gabriel and I had a 4am start in order to join the large crowd who turned out for Murwillumbah's ANZAC Day Dawn Service. It was a solemn and special occasion which we shared. I made arrangements to be represented at other ANZAC Day services across our Electorate of Lismore. The IndyNR.com reported that the beat of the drum was back at Kyogle's ANZAC Day march. Proud mum Mia Fowler said her son Fred was 'pumped' to join the march as its drummer boy. Fred Fowler, 13, is the grandson of Kyogle RSL Sub-Branch Secretary Jack McDonough. I take this opportunity to recognise the Sub-Branch's work on behalf of veterans. Kyogle has a long and proud history of military service. Mr McDonagh told The IndyNR.com that last year young Fred decided to lead the march alongside another 'old bloke' (Geoff McGuinness) on the drums. Fred had spent six months practicing the drums with Mr McGuinness. The different generations keeping traditions alive proved very popular with onlookers. Fred's a versatile 'young bloke'; march finished, he had to head into Lismore's Albert Park Stadium to play in the State Championships for baseball.

**ANOTHER AWARD FOR TWEED SECTION OF NORTHERN RIVERS RAIL TRAIL**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I CONGRATULATE Tweed Shire Council and its project partners on winning another award for the 24-kilometre Tweed section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail. This time, the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia awarded the project top honours for Engineering Excellence in Category 1C -- Design and Construction of a Public Works Project – Project greater than \$5 million. Former Rail Trail Project Director Iain Lonsdale (Tweed Shire Council's Coordinator Strategic Planning & Urban Design) says the rail trail is a successful example of government, industry and community collaboration. It is a real credit to Council's engineering team and its partners, including NSW Public Works and construction contractor Hazell Bros, together with additional support from heritage consultant Urbis, Zone Landscape Architecture, Bridge Knowledge and Burchills Engineering Solutions. The scope of the project covered diverse trail surfaces, historic bridge restorations, and two impressive tunnels, including designing innovative solutions for nocturnal works in the Burringbar Range Tunnel while ensuring protection of micro bats and glow worms. Tweed Shire Council's General Manager Troy Green and his staff, and Mayor Cr Chris Cherry and her fellow councillors can be justifiably proud of this eco-tourism asset.

**NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections)**—On 20-26 May, we will mark National Volunteer Week to pay tribute to the more than five million Australians who volunteer their time to make our communities better. The theme is 'Something for Everyone', recognising that there is no one way to volunteer – anyone can do it in any way. There are thousands of volunteers in the Macquarie Fields electorate who stand as pillars of the community, embodying kindness and generosity. They are parents helping in the school canteen or running P&C events. They are members

of the local Lions or Rotary clubs. They are Vinnies or Salvos volunteers. They are community sports coaches and managers. They are visitors having a cup of tea with people in aged-care homes. Many volunteers do not donate their time for public praise or accolade. But this does not mean that they are not deserving of our applause and gratitude. I thank each and every volunteer in my electorate and around NSW for the tireless work that they do and the positive change they make in our community and in the lives of the people they help.

#### **BATHURST REGIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—The Bathurst Regional Youth Council made a positive impact in the lives of local young people recently with their successful celebration of NSW Youth Week. The councillors organised 'Youth Week Sunday Sesh' as a free event suitable for young people aged 12-24 years that included market stalls, live music, competitions, food and a Q and A session with Youth Councillors. The event drew a large crowd and many local community organisations came together to celebrate young people. Through these events this group of passionate young people are empowering their generation to be a voice of youth in the Bathurst region and engage in their community. Congratulations to Youth Mayor Jasmyn Nankervis, Youth Deputy Mayor Kirilee Scott and Youth Councillors Aarnav Shah, Aston Hornery, Harry Tayler, Henry Burnett, Isabella Morris, Jessie Nunan, Kyle Destura, Lachlan Wright, Meagan Justin, Nicholas Bellamy, Sabina Short, Scarlett Hall and Soren Lee O'Shannessy.

#### **ICPA 30TH ANNUAL IFTAR**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Islamic Charitable Projects Association [ICPA] 30th Annual Ramadan Dinner was held at the Al Amanah College in Liverpool bringing dignitaries and faith leaders together to celebrate the most significant event in the Muslim calendar while also recognising the organisation's work in promoting policies and institutions that celebrate collaboration and the Australian way of life, including social support for women, youth and the broader community. This dinner was attended by the ICPA President Haj Mohammed Mehio in the presence of Darulfatwa Islamic High Council of Australia, Dr Shiekh Ibrahim El Shafie. The Islamic Community Projects Association promotes faith, quality education, charity and support to members of the faith community who are suffering from poverty, poor health or disadvantage. Acknowledgement of the many people within the faith community who have family and friends who may be suffering due to the conflict currently impacting the Middle East, assumed prominence. The sharing of food, conversation and messages of peace hold enormous importance in preserving social cohesion and humanity at a time of stress and overseas conflict. Ramadan Mubarak!

#### **CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA'S IFTAR**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The newly appointed Consul General of India; Sydney, Dr. Janakiraman Sarvesvaran, hosted the Sydney Consulate's inaugural Iftar Dinner on the 4th of April, 2024. This significant milestone acknowledged the diversity of faiths represented amongst our Indian diaspora in NSW. As the Indian diaspora continues to grow across New South Wales and the Parramatta electorate, it is important that every person can celebrate their cultural and faith-based festivals in our community. This year Ramadan has been a particularly challenging time for our local Muslim community and all Muslims around the world as they watch on with sadness and frustration at the events in Gaza. None of us who have attended local Iftars have been immune to the heavy toll the events in Gaza have placed on our Muslim community. With this front and centre of our minds, it was even more significant that Dr Sarvesvaran showed solidarity and offered members of the local Indian diaspora the opportunity to come together to break the fast with community and elected representatives. A final mention to Mr. Javed Khan, owner and manager of Delhi "O" Delhi, for providing the delicious 'faire' for all the attendees. Ramadan Mubarak.

#### **DAVID MILLS**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—He's a man known for his commitment to caring for others. Bathurst local David Mills sure has made a positive contribution to the community he is so engrained in. David's participation in community organisations is vast. It ranges from the Salvation Army and Rotary to the Rural Fire Service and Yetholme Progress Association. Not to mention his ongoing work in the field of community welfare and the many boards David has sat on. But one of his most passionate projects has been the Bathurst RSL Sub Branch which he has been serving for 19 years and as president for 10 years. After a decade in the President's chair, he has stepped down from the role to allow for the next generation to come through. David has led Anzac Day services in front of the Carillon War Memorial for many years always addressing the crowd with words of wisdom on the values of service men and women and the ongoing Anzac spirit. A veteran himself, he has always commemorated one of the most significant days on our national calendar with grace and respect. The Bathurst community thanks him for his ongoing passion for helping others.

### DOREEN PETERS

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—It's great to be able to acknowledge the unwavering dedication to the Rural Fire Service of long time Hartley resident Doreen Peters. She has spent half her life feeding our bravest heroes through the RFS canteen, but now has come for her to hang up her apron after almost four decades of service. It all started when the Hartley RFS purchased a mobile canteen truck from the Blue Mountains RFFS and commenced operations in 1979. The aim was to use the truck to help raise money to provide free meals for the firefighters during bushfire periods. Who would have known the venture would be the success story it turned out to be, but it couldn't have happened without Doreen's commitment to the job at hand. Not only did Doreen help out with free meals and refreshments at every local major bushfire, she also got called out by the police to search and rescues, drownings and road accidents. And not surprisingly, Doreen was acknowledged by being named Lithgow's Citizen of the Year in 1998 and received the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal in 2011. If ever there is a Lithgow Living Legend, it's Doreen Peters. Congratulations.

### CRIMSON LIFE CHURCH

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Speaker, I rise today to commend the proactive initiatives undertaken by the Crimson Life Church, which is co-located with PCYC Liverpool. Recently, I caught up with Mario, the pastor of Crimson Life, where we discussed the challenges faced by the local community and what local support services are available. Crimson Life Church embodies a spirited community ethos, dedicated to facilitating connections with God through faith. Their overarching mission centres on nurturing connections within the congregation, and empowering individuals for impactful service guided by principles of connection, growth, service, and love. Notably, their Community Care Pantry & Breakfast initiative exemplifies these values in action. Through this program, church members extend support to our local community by providing bi-monthly cooked breakfasts and essential items such as non-perishable food, hygiene products, and cleaning supplies. They do this because of their care and concern for their neighbours, and without any expectations. I look forward to further collaborations with Mario and his team, as they continue their compassionate endeavours to enhance wellbeing and alleviate the hardships faced by those experiencing financial difficulties in our community.

### CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Earlier this month I took part in Clean Up Australia day, which brought together members of the Liverpool community with an aim to improve our local environment. First conceived over 30 years ago by Ian Kiernan, who organised Clean Up Sydney Harbour in 1989 following the rubbish left behind after the BOC Yachting Challenge, Clean Up Australia Day has since captured the interest of the nation, with over 20 million Australian's having stepped up over the years to volunteer. I note the presence of Clean up Australia day events across Liverpool, with so many people giving up their Sunday mornings to give back to our environment. I extend my sincere thanks to Friends of India Australia, who helped organise clean-up events across my electorate, and I look forward to seeing many more people put into practice the mantra "Don't Pass it Up, Pick it Up".

### MICHAEL ADDICOAT

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Speaker, it is with great sadness that I inform the house that on Saturday the 4th of May, Michael Addicoat passed away. Michael served the local community in Bonnyrigg Heights as Principal of Freeman Catholic College for a decade between 2000 and 2010, part of an illustrious career in Catholic Education spanning 42 years and 11 different schools. Those who knew Michael remember him as an inspirational leader, who had a profound impact on the students and staff at Freeman, which can still be seen in the day-to-day life of the college today. It is a testament to the significance of his leadership that the Michael Addicoat Centre at the college bears his name. Freeman Catholic College is one of the highest achieving co-educational Catholic schools in New South Wales, a source of pride for many in my electorate. This is largely due to Michael's tenure as Principal, which laid the foundations for Freeman's academic excellence. My condolences to Michael's family and loved one, and those from the Freeman community who knew him. Vale Michael Addicoat.

### ROSS BARRATT - WOOLLAHRA

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Ross Barratt on being awarded life membership at Woollahra Sailing Club. Ross been involved as an active volunteer since 2012, taking on a number of board positions. Ross' most important role was as General Manager until 2023, having successfully steered the Club through COVID, the ramp/pontoon development and significant improvements in club administration. Woollahra Sailing Club had a very humble beginning. It was founded at a meeting on the 8th of May 1953 by some very enthusiastic Moth Class sailors resonating from the Woollahra Municipality. The current clubhouse was built in 1980s to reflect the continued success and growth of the Club. Now more than 60 years old, Woollahra

Sailing Club continues to thrive, with a sense of pride over its past and a clear vision for the future. Congratulations Ross on achieving life membership at a club on which you have had such a profound impact.

#### **VICTOR FRIEZER - WOOLLAHRA**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Victor Friezer on being awarded life membership at Woollahra Sailing Club. Woollahra Sailing Club had a very humble beginning. It was founded at a meeting on the 8th of May 1953 by some very enthusiastic Moth Class sailors resonating from the Woollahra Municipality, with Victor becoming President. In 1958 Victor was elected as their first Commodore. The current clubhouse was built in the 1980s to reflect the continued success and growth of the Club. Now more than 60 years old, Woollahra Sailing Club continues to thrive, with a sense of pride over its past and a clear vision for the future. Congratulations Victor on achieving life membership at a club on which you have had such a profound impact.

#### **MARTIN (STANLEY) BLAND - WOOLLAHRA**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Stan Bland on being awarded life membership at Woollahra Sailing Club. Stan has been consistently involved as a volunteer at WSC for more than 10 years. In addition to his current contributions as board member, adult learn-to-sail coordinator and maintenance man, Stan has held important roles over years on the Board. These have included Club Secretary, Vice and Rear-Commodore, volunteer sailing school manager, initiating and managing Pacer Pathway programs (adults learn-to-sail), as class representative and on the sailing committee. Woollahra Sailing Club had a very humble beginning. It was founded at a meeting on the 8th of May 1953 by some very enthusiastic Moth Class sailors resonating from the Woollahra Municipality. The current clubhouse was built in the 1980s to reflect the continued success and growth of the Club. Now more than 60 years old, Woollahra Sailing Club continues to thrive, with a sense of pride over its past and a clear vision for the future. Congratulations Stan on achieving life membership at a club on which you have had such a profound impact.

#### **OUR COMMUNITY CARES – PENRITH**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—What an amazing event last Saturday for the annual Our Community Cares Fundraiser held at the St Marys Band Club. The theme was a 'Breakfast at Tiffanys' black and bling high tea. Over 300 of our community came together to support this worthy charity. I know how generous the Penrith community are in supporting those in need. This event was no exception raising over \$21,000 to purchase a CO2 monitor for Nepean Childrens ward and an ECG for the A70 Cancer Ward at Nepean. Thank you to Chris Gauci and the fabulous army of volunteers that put this event together. It was an afternoon filled with fun and a lot of laughter. Well done to all involved. I'm looking forward to again supporting next years event which will be a 60's/70's theme.

#### **NICOLE CELEBAN AND NEPEAN THERAPY DOGS**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—I recently had the pleasure to attend an afternoon tea at the Royce in Penrith to recognise Nicole Celeban, the visionary founder of Nepean Therapy Dogs, whose compassionate leadership has enriched our Penrith community. Through Nicole's tireless efforts, Nepean Therapy Dogs has become a pillar of support for those facing adversity, offering solace, comfort and unconditional canine love. From Hospital-to-Hospital Nicole's initiative has bridged a gap in so many different communities, not just Penrith. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Nicole and Nepean Therapy Dogs for their invaluable collaboration with local hospitals, aged care facilities and community groups. I thank her for providing patients with more than just a friendly face, but support amongst the trials of illness and recovery. It was an honour to meet with Nicole and members of the team to learn about the amazing acts of kindness towards the residents in my electorate. As we honour Nicole, Nepean Therapy dogs and the team of excellent individuals who help facilitate this program for their selfless contributions, let us also celebrate the enduring legacy of love and healing they continue to cultivate within the community of Penrith.

#### **BARRY ROOTS OAM**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)**—I wish to congratulate Mr Barry Roots OAM on his 50 years service as a local Justice of the Peace (JP). It was a pleasure to award Barry his certificate of service this week coincidentally on the occasion of his 52nd wedding anniversary. Becoming a JP is a great community service. A JP is trained to act as independent and objective witness to documents used for official or legal purposes and can assist you by attesting the execution of a document, witnessing a statutory declaration, witnessing an affidavit for use in court. However, Barry is better known locally for his contribution to education for over 40 years. Before his retirement Barry was founding Principal of Penrith Anglican College for 17 years. Well done Barry who continually gives back to our community.

**ATHOL AND JEAN BUTCHER - 70 YEARS OF LOVE**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Athol and Jean Butcher as they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in March this year. The couple were both born and raised in Northern NSW and met at a social dance in Lawrence, where their love of the land and their farming backgrounds drew them together. The couple married in 1954 and later welcomed and raised three daughters. Mr and Mrs Butcher now also have three granddaughters. In the early 1990's Mr and Mrs Butcher purchased a vacant block of land, in Maclean and built their current residence, overlooking the Clarence River. I wish Athol and Jean good health and happiness on this special occasion and many happy celebrations to come.

**PINKERTONS HOURGLASS JEWELLERS - 90 YEAR CELEBRATIONS!**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Congratulations to Pinkertons Jewellers of Casino on reaching a remarkable milestone of 90 years in business. The journey of Pinkertons Jewellers is a testament to dedication, craftsmanship and a legacy of excellence that spans generations. The Pinkerton family's first shop in Walker Street, Casino, marking the beginning of a thriving family business. Over the years, Pinkertons Jewellers has been a symbol of quality and tradition, as Pinkertons Hourglass Jewellers Casino celebrates its 90th year in 2024, we honour the Pinkerton family's legacy, innovation, and commitment to the art of jewellery making. Congratulations go to Pinkertons Hourglass Jewellers, and may they continue to sparkle and shine for years to come, bringing joy and beauty to all who walk through its doors.

**SALVATION ARMY MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to acknowledge a significant milestone in the history of the Salvation Army in Grafton, going strong for over 140 years now. Marking the beginning of a remarkable journey of service and dedication to the Clarence districts, from humble beginnings the Salvation Army opened its doors in the Oddfellows Hall moving on to an establishment of their own in Pound Street and then further moving on to their current location, the Salvation Army Hall in Oliver Street, Grafton, they have been a beacon of light, love and friendship and touched the lives of many. Throughout the last 140 years, the Salvation Army has been a constant presence in our community, providing support, hope and compassion to those in need. Thank you and congratulations to the past, present and future members and to all that have supported the Salvation Army over the many years, and the years to come.

**ARMENIAN GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE 109TH**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Wednesday 24 April, I joined with the Armenian community of Willoughby and beyond to commemorate the 109th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. Beginning with a mass at the Armenian Apostolic Church in Chatswood, the Armenian community walked in a procession to Beauchamp Park where a moving commemorative service was held at the Park's memorial to remember the lives tragically lost. The Armenian community paused to pay their respects to their fallen compatriots. This genocide was a dark chapter of world history when from April 1915, Ottoman forces carried out the systematic, mass murder of up to 1.2 million Armenian people in their attempt to wipe out an entire culture and civilisation. Many of the Armenians in my community had family members and relatives who perished in the genocide, so the scars from this atrocity run deep. Each year, the Armenian community marks this anniversary to seek healing from the pains of the pasts and it was my honour to walk beside them in their healing journey.

**BARONESS GARDNER OF PARKES**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I am honoured to pay tribute to the life of Baroness Trixie Gardner of Parkes, Australia's first Peer in the British House of Lords who had a personal connection to my community of Willoughby. Born in Parkes in 1927, her family moved to Cammeray where she attended school at Monte St Angelo before studying dentistry at Sydney University where she met her husband, Kevin Gardner. Relocating to London, Trixie and Kevin opened a dental practice, raised their three daughters, and immersed themselves in community work and local politics. In recognition of her distinguished contribution to local politics and community work in London, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher appointed her in 1981 to a Peerage in the House of Lords where she served with distinction. As Australia's first Peer, Trixie dedicated herself to improving dental care, lifting education standards, and providing proper regulation for private landlords. Highly respected and well-liked, she attracted friends across the political divide and faithfully served her Peerage for life. Baroness Trixie Gardner was a remarkable Australian, and I am proud of her connection to my local community.

**SYDNEY MULTICULTURAL SERVICES – CHATSWOOD**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I would like to warmly congratulate the Sydney Multicultural Community Services [SMCS] on the opening of their new office in Chatswood. For more than forty-two years, the SMCS has been committed to helping disadvantaged and marginalised people in culturally and linguistic

diverse communities participate in Australian society. In particular, the SMCS has been active in helping people in immigrant communities requiring aged care, disability services, social connection, and immigrant support. It does this through the provision of dedicated care workers who speak a variety of different languages. It has helped these people access essential support services to improve their wellbeing and quality of life. The SMCS has also helped immigrants on lower incomes to access services such as housing and income support. Chatswood itself is a vibrant cultural hub, and it is so apt and timely for the SMCS to open their new office there. I have no doubt that with its new presence in Chatswood, the SMCS will make a wonderful contribution to this richly multicultural community I have the privilege to represent.

#### **UNIQUE FARMSTAY 20 YEAR DREAM TURNING INTO REALITY**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Wantabadgery sixth generation farming family, Nicholas and Amber Heffernan, have been working on their dream of transforming the old silos on their property that are no longer in use, into farm stay accommodation. Farm stays are part of the growing Agritourism industry, which is going from strength to strength. Nicholas and Amber are passionate about farming and the environment, and these unique two-person luxury retreats will be entirely off-grid. Each of the converted silos will include heating, cooling, and there will be an EV charging station on site. Located just 13km east of Junee, this fantastic initiative will allow people to enjoy locally sourced produce and explore the area with Junee part of the famous Canola Trail. The Trail has vivid canola crops spanning from Junee, Temora and Coolamon, making the farm stay a perfect spot to take in the breathtaking views in Spring. I wish Nicholas and Amber every success with their business which it is set to open later in the year.

#### **OLYMPIC SPIRIT SHINES IN JED RUSKIN**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Jed Ruskin of Temora High School has been recognised through The Australian Olympic Change-Maker program for his leadership and driving a positive change in his school and the local community. This program shines a light on secondary students from around the country who demonstrate the Olympic spirit includes friendship, sportsmanship, and striving for excellence on and off the field. From a young age, Jed has been a committed member of the Temora AFL and Netball Club, showcasing his passion for the game through his consistent volunteering. Jed plays on both the 15- and 17-year-old football teams and still finds time to coach and plan sessions for the under-14 Girls' team. Every week, Jed donates his time to ensure country football stays alive by serving as a boundary umpire or water runner and mentoring the younger generation. Well done, Jed. Your volunteering is benefitting the whole Temora community.

#### **BLAND COUNTRY HOPE RALLY TEAMS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Three teams from the Bland Shire, participated in this year's Riverina Outback Rally, raising money for Country Hope. Among the 180 participants were husband-and-wife team Cate and Nigel Armstrong from Armstrong Toyota, Christie Wilson and Ellen Hume driving as West Wyalong Wanderers, and the Ungarie based 'Turnin & Burnin' team Molly Bryant and Brad Gilbert. All three teams raised a combined amount of \$53,145 for Country Hope. This charity organisation provides emotional and financial support to country families who have a child diagnosed with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses. Christie and Ellen have raised \$25,130, placing them fifth on the money-raising ladder; Cate and Nigel, followed closely, raising \$25,125, and Molly and Brad raised \$4,400. This year's rally was a true test of endurance and determination, with participants covering over 2,200km in just five (5) days. The teams left Darlington Point and journeyed through the towns of Jerilderie, Gerogery, Harden, Albert, Mount Hope, Lake Cargelligo, and finally, Grong Grong where the competition ended. A grand total of \$602,203 was raised by the 180 participants. Congratulations are extended to all for their efforts in raising vital funds to support the most vulnerable members of our communities.

#### **STEVE AND JO WILLIS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises former Red Rooster owners Steve Willis and his wife Jo have sold more than half a million pieces of chicken over the last sixteen years. Last month the pair, along with their son Grady, who has worked at the store since he was 12, handed over the keys to the new owners with little fanfare. Mr Willis estimates he and his wife have employed around 200 local Kiama kids, including his now 20-year-old son. Now all three family members are putting their feet up for a well-earned break before they decide what their next business move will be. Steve, who is also the President of the Kiama Leagues Club, is certain they will stay in Kiama. Steve grew up in Cootamundra and has had five businesses with his wife by his side. He was an apprentice mechanic straight out of school, worked on the Cootamundra railways for eight years, and spent some time in the meatworks. He headed to Bowen to pick mangoes. Thank you Steve and Jo for everything you have done for our local Kiama community over the past sixteen years.

### SHOALHAVEN HEADS SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Shoalhaven Heads Surf Life Saving Club. On Saturday 4th May 2024, I was delighted to attend their end of season presentation night for 2023-2024 at the Shoalhaven Heads Surf Club. It was a terrific gathering of hard-working committee members and Surf Life Saving beach patrol members, nippers and club volunteers. I would like to acknowledge the President Kim Willett, the Club Secretary Nicky Pryde who did an outstanding job organising the logistics for this event, and Mr David Schofield who received his National Medal for his many years of dedication and service to Surf Life Saving NSW. I also acknowledge Kings Porker BBQ and Catering who did a terrific job on the buffet dinner and catering. I also thank the cadet group who planned the décor and music for the Club's end of season presentation night with a Club Colours theme. Thank you very much to the Committee for inviting me along and congratulations and well done to the Shoalhaven Heads Surf Life Saving Club on a terrific end of season presentation night.

### SAM SCOBIE

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises local resident Sam Scobie who is already making waves in the real estate industry as a dedicated agent at Ray White Kiama. With a family legacy spanning three generations in real estate, Sam has a passion for his work. This is evident in his commitment to providing exceptional client services. He began his journey in real estate less than three years ago, yet swiftly proved his dedication and in 2022 was awarded Youth Business Person of the Year. At 21, Sam already has extensive experience in various roles within the industry. These credentials have allowed him to develop his skills and understanding of the market dynamics. He places great value on client experience and his professional approach exemplifies this. Sam has finished his apprenticeship with Ray White and is now a licensed real estate agent. He finds his young age can occasionally be considered a disadvantage. However, his work speaks for itself. His genuine commitment to the job and his clients serves are highly regarded. He thrives in a dynamic, challenging and fast paced environment. Congratulations to rising star Sam Scobie from Ray White Kiama.

### VALE NEIL SLIGAR, FORMERLY OF ESCHOL PARK

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections)**—A courageous and generous man who was one of the public faces of Parkinson's disease. Neil was a major contributor to the Macarthur Parkinson's Support Group. Through the group, Neil advocated for improved local services and more community nurses to assist those living with Parkinson's disease. In 2016, I had the pleasure of presenting Neil with a NSW Community Service Award acknowledging Neil's tireless work advocating for improved access to care for people with Parkinson's disease. Neil used exercise to help manage the disease and improve his quality of life. In doing so, he paved the way for more research into management of the disease through physical therapy. Neil was spreading awareness and advocating on behalf of the 70,000 individuals affected by Parkinson's in NSW right to the end. Our community is forever grateful for Neil's contributions, which sought to make life better for people living with Parkinson's, their families and carers. Rest in peace, Neil.

### PETER FREEMAN

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I acknowledge the remarkable culinary talent of Padstow optometrist Peter Freeman and his participation at this year's Sydney Royal Easter Show baking competition. Peter demonstrated his exceptional baking skills by entering several non-perishable and regular cakes in this year's show. His commitment to excellence in baking has been honed through years of experience and time spent at the Australian Patisserie Academy at North Ryde TAFE. He was inspired by watching his grandmother and mother baking when he was a young boy. Peter's unwavering dedication to perfecting his craft mirrors his approach to patient care as an optometrist, where precision, passion, and attention to detail are paramount. Peter began entering cakes for the Royal Easter Show in 2005 and has received over 30 ribbons in the baking competition as well as the prestigious Heather Gibson Perpetual Trophy in 2015. Congratulations to Peter for his participation at this year's Easter Show. I wish him continued success in his baking endeavours and professional pursuits.

### RAMADAN

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I recognise the significance of Ramadan to the Muslim community in my electorate and acknowledge the opportunity to celebrate this occasion with them. Ramadan is the most sacred month in the Islamic calendar. It is a time of fasting, prayer, reflection, and acts of charity among the Muslim community and I was honoured to join with my community during the month of Ramadan, especially those of Muslim faith as they broke their fast after the sun went down. I was fortunate to attend the opening weekend of Ramadan Nights Lakemba with Mayor Bilal El-Hayek. The event is an opportunity for Muslims to



break their fast as Lakemba's Haldon Street transforms into a bustling bazaar showcasing cuisines from around the world. It is also an opportunity for people of non-Muslim backgrounds to learn about and appreciate the customs, traditions, and values of the Muslim community. I hope everyone in my community enjoyed a happy Ramadan.

#### **ANZAC DAY IN EAST HILLS**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I acknowledge the ANZAC Day ceremonies that were held in our community, commemorating the brave men and women who have served our nation. On Thursday, April 25th, the Panania RSL sub-branch hosted a Dawn Service at the Cenotaph, which I was fortunate enough to attend. The event was solemn and respectful, and attended by a great number of community members. It was followed by a service at the Padstow War Memorial organised by the Padstow RSL sub-branch. The ceremony provided poignant moments for reflection and remembrance, allowing us to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by our ANZACs. The Revesby Workers Club also hosted ANZAC Day services, including a march from Bankstown YMCA, followed by a service at the Cenotaph. I was honoured to attend these ceremonies alongside members of our community, where we stood in solidarity to honour the courage and sacrifice of our servicemen and women. I thank everyone who organised these events for their work. Let us continue to come together on ANZAC Day to pay our respects. Lest we forget.

#### **CENTRAL COAST ACADEMY OF SPORT**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—My congratulations to the Central Coast Academy of Sport on the recent recognition bestowed upon the NSW Regional Academies of Sport (RAS) as official Australian Olympic Training Centres. This prestigious designation underscores the invaluable role that RAS plays in nurturing the development of young Australian athletes, laying the foundation for their Olympic aspirations. The acknowledgment from the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) reaffirms the vital contribution of RAS in shaping the future champions of our nation. With tailored programs, coaching, camps, and competitions, RAS provides essential support in the early stages of athletes' Olympic journeys. As we look ahead to the Brisbane 2032 Olympics, this recognition serves as a source of inspiration for aspiring athletes within the Central Coast Academy of Sport. We commend the dedication and commitment of all involved in nurturing the talent of regional NSW, and we eagerly anticipate the future successes that will emerge from this partnership. Congratulations once again to the Central Coast Academy of Sport and all NSW Regional Academies of Sport on this remarkable achievement.

#### **PAWS FOR A CAUSE WALK**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Lions Club of Wyoming, East Gosford Centennial, for their outstanding efforts in organizing the Paws For A Cause Dog Walk which was held on the Central Coast recently. This event, aimed at raising funds and awareness of Meningococcal Disease, beautifully showcased the power of community coming together, accompanied by our beloved furry companions. A special acknowledgment goes out to Sarah Joyce, a true inspiration and advocate for Meningococcal awareness. Her courage and dedication as a survivor and ambassador for Meningococcal have undoubtedly made a significant impact in spreading awareness and saving lives. Alongside her adorable puppy Frankie, Sarah exemplified the spirit of resilience and determination during this fantastic event. Thank you also to Meningitis Centre Australia for providing valuable information and resources, ensuring that attendees such as myself, left with a better understanding of Meningococcal Disease. These community events are so valuable in raising awareness and promoting health education in our community. Let us continue to stand together in solidarity against Meningococcal Disease. Congratulations to all involved in this fantastic community event.

#### **ROSS HALLAWAYS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and congratulate one of my fantastic former school principals Ross Hallaways. In a testament to his outstanding contributions and dedication to school swimming, the New South Wales Primary Schools Sports Association (NSWPSSA) recently named the Boys All Age 5 x 50M Relay event after him, creating the Ross Hallaways Shield. Ross's tireless efforts as President, Vice President, Swimming Convenor, and Swimming Manager in Charge have significantly impacted the development and success of school swimming programs. His initiative in promoting the participation of students with disabilities, implementing technological advancements, and enhancing event opportunities for swimmers has left an indelible mark on the state swimming championship. As a life member and recipient of swimming service awards at both NSW and School Sport Australia levels, Ross's commitment to the sport is truly commendable. His unwavering support for school swimming and NSWPSSA has played a pivotal role in shaping the success of sporting programs across the region. Congratulations once again, Ross, on this well-deserved honour. Your dedication and passion for school swimming are an inspiration to us all.

### VALE FRANCES TUCKER

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Frances was born in the small country town Coolah. Spending most of her childhood in the central west with her four brothers, and soon becoming substitute mother to her siblings after the death of both her parents. At just 15 years old Frances was helping at Coolah District Hospital, and it wasn't long after when she became an assistant nurse, delivering babies or making important decisions independently. Frances officially began her training at Mater Hospital in North Sydney and the rest is history. After marrying local Frank Tucker, they eventually moved to Narrabri where Frances continued nursing at the local hospital, in between having her two children, Joe, and Clint. Frances spent more than 60 years of her life dedicated to helping people in her nursing career, including titles of midwife, deputy matron and deputy director of nursing. Frances had a significant impact on the community and will be greatly missed. I am sure her legacy will be forever remembered.

### VALE BRIAN WARREN

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Brian Warren was born and raised in Werris Creek in 1947, settling as a Wee Waa resident from 1990. Brian John Warren volunteered his time as position of Treasurer at Wee Waa and District Historical Society and Namoi Echo Museum for almost 13 years, whilst also taking on the role of licensee and treasurer of the Wee Waa gold Club. The former serviceman fought in the Vietnam war, he served as a Lance Corporal in the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment from May 8th 1969 - September 10th 1969. Devoting himself to both his country and community, Brian was held in high regard and was a well-respected member of the community. Brian had a significant impact on the community. May his legacy be forever remembered.

### GREEN SCHOOLS COLLECTIVE

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**— Speaker I am pleased to announce the commencement of the Green Schools Collective across North Sydney. Teaching our future generations about the virtue of sustainability has never been of greater importance than it is today, and the re-launch of the school environmental network marks the beginning of a brighter and greener future for our children. The initiative aims to foster a deeper understanding of and appreciation for sustainability and protecting the precious Australian environment we are so fortunate to call 'home'. It encourages students and educators to collaborate on engaging and educational sustainability projects, whilst also supporting schools to partake in environmentally friendly programs such as plastic-free canteens. The Green Schools Collective has a mix of 12 primary and secondary schools, including North Sydney Boys, Wenona, North Sydney Public School, Loreto Kirribilli, Cammeraygal High school, Cammeraygal Montessori School, Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, St Aloysius, Shore and Redlands. I am so proud of the participating schools in our local community and their admirable and ongoing commitment to creating a sustainable environment for our children.

### OPENING OF WIRRA BIRRA PARK NORTH SYDNEY

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to acknowledge the opening of Wirra Birra Park in North Sydney, which was opened to the public by the Sydney Harbour Trust over the Easter long weekend. The park connects locals to country, showcasing an array of native plants and stunning views overlooking Neutral Bay. 'Wirra Birra' is a First Nations name for Neutral Bay and means 'a forest of gum trees near running water'. The name of the park and the selection of native plants that populate it pay respect to and acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Land, the Cammeraygal people. The opening of the park follows the rejuvenation of the Torpedo Factory Precinct at Sub Base Platypus. The park is situated on a sandstone bench that was revealed during the Torpedo Factory Renewal Project. Now, Wirra Birra Park bridges centuries of local history, from the traditional land of the Cammeraygal people, to the World War 2 torpedo factory that once supplied the Allied Naval forces, and now, a beautiful space for our community to enjoy amidst the hustle and bustle of North Sydney.

### CONGRATULATIONS MARGARET KROBOTH

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker today I would like to congratulate an integral long-term member of the north shore community, Margaret Kroboth. She was recently granted Life Membership at Norths Cammeray, making her the first person to be awarded such a membership in 25 years. She is also the first woman to ever achieve Life Member status at the club. Margaret has always been an active member of our community, from her commendable charity work to her ongoing loyalty to Norths Cammeray, where she has nurtured the club's community for over 40 years. Margaret can be found at the club most days of the week. She dabbles in Bridge, Euchre, Bingo, Trivia and much more. As President of the Bridge Club in 2009, Margaret managed to double the membership in just a year. In 2010 she won the President's Shield for her efforts. I want to commend Margaret on her achievement, as well as thank her for her dedication to our wonderful community over

the years. Norths Cammeray has gained an upstanding Life Member who perfectly encapsulates the Club's welcoming atmosphere and vibrant sense of community.

#### **ANZAC DAY 2024**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On 25 April I joined our community to commemorate Anzac Day for the dawn service at Roseville, morning services at Turramurra and St Ives, and an afternoon service at North Turramurra. On Anzac Day we all came together to remember all Australians killed in military operations. I recognise those who helped contribute locally to Anzac Day 2024. At Roseville, thank you to John Whitworth, Michael Askey OAM, Prof. David Barker AM, Rev. Mal York of St Andrews, trumpeter Angus Phimsipasom from Killara High, Sing Australia Gordon Choir, Roseville Scouts, youth ambassadors Romina Cooke and Madeleine Raymons and the 2/17th Battalion. At Turramurra, thank you to Sydney North Region Scouts led by Honorary Commissioner Allen Hyde, Turramurra Scouts led by Julie Commins and Kevork Temisgian, and Turramurra Rotary Club led by Dallas Booth. At St Ives, thank you to St Ives Lions Club led by Geoffrey Gibbons, Veena Etccl and Paul Doman, and Turramurra High Leos Mayher Singh and Toby Cox. At North Turramurra, thank you to Turramurra Bowling Club led by James Sneddon, John Devlin, Bill Parry, Peter Lowe, Leigh Burford, Penny Howell and bugler Rory Martinic from Knox Grammar. We will remember them. Lest We Forget.

#### **NORTH SHORE DISTRICT SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION – 2024 SEASON OPENER**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Saturday 27th April 2024, I attended the 2024 season opener of North Shore District Softball Association (NSDSA) at the St Ives Village Green. The season opener showcased NSDSA's ongoing commitment to inclusiveness, team building and development. As a proud patron, I had the opportunity to develop my own softball skills by delivering the first pitch of the season to mascot Softball Sally. I understand the umpire, Cr Jeff Pettett, also called it a strike! I recognise and thank NSDSA President Dione Taylor, Secretary Fiona Gow, Competition Director Lynne Townsend, and Communications Director Julia Benson, as well as Softball NSW CEO Stuart Clark, President Paige Hyslop, and local softball Olympian Rachel Lack. Thank you to all the volunteers for their time, work and support for the local softball community. Softball is an amazing sport, and I hope it is back in the Olympics soon. I wish all at North Shore District Softball Association the best with season 2024!

#### **FORESTVILLE RSL SUB BRANCH - ANZAC SERVICES 2024**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Sunday 21 April 2024, I joined our community to attend the Sunday Anzac march and service at the Forestville RSL Sub Branch. We all came together to remember all Australians killed in military operations. I recognise Forestville RSL Sub Branch for all the work they do, including President Bob Lunnon, Vice President Sandy Howard, Secretary Vincent Williams, and committee members John Scifleet, John Balfour OAM, Stuart Hablethwaite, Peter Mcaskill, Ted Samojlowicz and Kevin Leary. Thank you for your ongoing education. I recognise two World War II veterans who are members of the Sub Branch, Don Kennedy OAM and Roy Taylor. Both have been presented with a commemorative medallions to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. Zali Steggall OAM MP presented Mr Kennedy with his medallion, and I was privileged to present Mr Taylor with his medallion, assisted by Mr Hablethwaite. In recent times, I have had the opportunity to meet and get to know Mr Taylor. He is a patriot. I too thank him for his dedication and public service. We will remember them. Lest we forget.

#### **CITY NORTH MEN'S SHED**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I commend the City North Men's Shed's projects and members' contributions. This new group has established a new organisation and shed, procured machinery and tools, and trained and prepared members to build things. Shed members built, decorated, and installed 20 street libraries for children in Darling Harbour for International Children's Literacy Day, with support from PlacemakingNSW. The libraries had over 350 children's books in 20 languages, with many donated by their respective embassy and local residents. The collection included Indigenous Australian story books from the Indigenous Literacy Foundation. I proudly opened the installation earlier this year. Shed members also made rowing scull storage rack supports for the North Shore Rowing Club and have been refurbishing toy electric cars donated by Therapies for Kids that will then be passed on to children with limited mobility. They even built the benches that are now used for new projects. Members learn new skills while also building something that is useful, contributing to both the local area and community harmony. I commend the City North Men's Shed for their engagement and positive contribution to the inner city.

#### **HARMAINY ABDUL KARIM - KEEPER OF THE CROSSING**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I commend the 17 years of service to the Glenmore Road Public School community given by School Crossing Supervisor Harmainy Abdul Karim – affectionately known as 'Mr Harmainy'. Mr Harmainy personally greeted every student, parent,

grandparent or carer as they crossed Gurner Street, a smiling face for a generation of Paddington children. He was there during their early preschool days at Peter Pan, through primary school and onto high school. He is also known for his prodigious memory, recognising and greeting students and their families personally. I understand Mr Harmainy worked for many years as a first and business class steward on Singapore Airlines, where he developed tricks of the trade to remember everyone's name. Since 2007, Mr Harmainy also acted as a volunteer football coach and was a regular helper at school fetes, fundraisers and working bees. I understand he always received loud cheers and applause at the recognition day assemblies. Many Paddington residents will long remember Mr Harmainy's friendly welcome and his care for young people, and will wish the 'keeper of the crossing' well in retirement.

#### **MAITLAND COMMUNITY MEN'S SHED**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I wish to congratulate the Maitland Community Men's Shed on their 14th birthday, which they celebrated earlier this week. A big thank you to all the members past and present who have made the shed what it is today. Maitland Men's Shed is situated in East Maitland and has grown since its inception in 2007, with the current facility officially opening on 7 May 2010. The Maitland Community Men's Shed strives to improve the quality of life for men by addressing men's health issues and the need for organised, but low level/achievable activities for mature people. The group stand "Shoulder to Shoulder" when it comes to looking after their mates. I still get emotional when I remember the story of Geoff from a few years ago. Geoff, one of the most senior members of the shed was doing it a bit tough and his fellow shedders rallied and got together to build him a ramp from inside his house into his garage so he could get outside a lot safer. That's what the shed is all about, helping those in need. Congratulations to the Maitland Community Men's Shed and keep up the great work!

#### **LOVEYS IGA GILLIESTON HEIGHTS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Loveys IGA Gillieston Heights for their success at the recent NSW & ACT IGA Awards of Excellence. Loveys IGA Gillieston Heights was named Medium Store of the Year at the awards, and also won Medium Fresh Produce Department of the Year and Medium Grocery and General Merchandise Department of the Year. I would like to congratulate store owner James Lovegrove, store manager Samantha Ryan and the team on the service they provide for the Gillieston Heights community. James reflects that the awards are an acknowledgement that the staff at the store are doing a good job for the stores customers. Local grocery stores provide a vital service to communities such as Gillieston Heights. We saw that all too well in recent years when this community was cut off with flooding. The store, which has been open for two years, prides itself on providing consistency, that customers can bank on them having what they need, and that the store is well presented and well stocked. They credit their customers and staff for their success. Congratulations to the team on their success.

#### **HOPE WHITE AND MATILDA PERCIVAL**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Maitland teenagers Matilda Percival and Hope White who recently competed in the National Netball Championships representing NSW. Hope White and the under 19 team were victorious, winning the Championship undefeated. Congratulations Hope. This comes after Hope received a silver medal last year, and a gold in 2022. Hope is a Giants Academy member and has also recently received a 2024 Commonwealth Games New South Wales Athlete Grant. Hope is a dynamic hybrid wing attack and was chosen following a strong campaign at the week-long National Netball Championships in Frankston. Hope was named Most Valuable Player in New South Wales' 19U national championship-winning game. For Matilda, who is in Year 11, this was her first National Championships and Matilda scored an impressive 154 goals representing the under 17's team. Matilda was last year selected in the Australian All Schools under 15 team, is in the South's Champion squad and competes for North Shore United in the NSW Premier League 23s. Congratulations Hope and Matilda!

#### **PREMIER'S HARMONY DINNER 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I had the privilege of attending this year's Premier's Harmony Dinner on 14 March 2024, alongside many of my parliamentary colleagues and community leaders. As part of NSW's Multicultural March, the Premier's Harmony Dinner is an annual occasion where we come together to celebrate our rich cultural diversity and honour outstanding multicultural champions through the Premier's Multicultural Community Medals and inductees to the Multicultural Honour Roll. I was struck by the many remarkable success stories of multicultural communities and individuals, whose incredible contributions have played a significant role in fostering the harmonious and cohesive society we enjoy today. I extended my wholehearted congratulations to all the Multicultural Community Medals winners and inductees to the Multicultural Honour Roll for 2024. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Minister for Multiculturalism, and everyone involved in organising

this memorable event. The harmonious ambience and the colourful cultural performances were a living tapestry of the beauty of our State's multiculturalism.

#### **TREASURER'S BONNYRIGG HIGH SCHOOL VISIT**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 26 March 2024, I had the privilege of meeting with Bonnyrigg High School Principal Ms. Kim Allford and the school's leadership team, alongside NSW Treasurer, The Hon Daniel Mookhey, and my Parliamentary colleague, Ms. Charisma Kaliyanda MP, Member for Liverpool, to discuss challenges facing the school. The primary focus of our discussion revolved around addressing the critical need for upgrades and new infrastructure, particularly in response to the increasing student enrolment. Bonnyrigg High School, with a permanent room capacity for 850 students, currently accommodates 1650 students. Space is supplemented by demountable classrooms. With the adjacent NewLeaf estate redevelopment project underway, enrolment is projected to exceed 2000 in the near future, highlighting an urgent need for upgrades and new buildings. I extend my gratitude to Principal Ms. Kim Allford and the leadership team for raising their concerns. Their dedication and tireless efforts to ensure our local students receive the learning environment they deserve are commendable. I also extend my appreciation to the Treasurer for taking the time to visit Bonnyrigg High School and engage in the discussion critical to advancing the school's projects. We are grateful for his ongoing support.

#### **TAMMY AND GAVIN GILBERT - DARLINGTON POINT**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise Tammy and Gavin Gilbert, who, on behalf of Country Hope, are the organizers of the Riverina Outback Rally. The rally takes driving participants along a mystery route in an amazing and fun-filled 5-day challenge using a 2-wheel drive vehicle only. Launched in 2017, this rally has been running for past 7 years and in this time has raised a staggering \$3.3 million dollars directly for Country Hope. This money has helped many Riverina families during times of great need, coping with the treatment, care and sometimes loss of a child with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses. Tammy and Gavin Gilbert live in Darlington Point and have run the rally from the start. They are a vibrant, resilient, and independent couple with an amazing knack of bringing people together for a common cause. I commend Tammy and Gavin for their ongoing dedication in raising much needed funds for Country Hope.

#### **JUDY BOND - BURONGA**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I would like to recognise Judy Bond, of Buronga for the outstanding wearable art she has been creating for decades. A highly skilled seamstress Judy uses natural fibres – from paddock to catwalk - in the innovative creation of clothing through knits and crochet. Judy is a long time supporter of the Henty Natural Fibre Fashion Awards. Her garments are almost seamless and her designs, many using super fine Merino wool have won her international awards and deserved recognition. Now 78, Judy gets pleasure from the models wearing her creations in charity parades, fund raising and delights in her contribution to the events. Judy's flair with designer creations is to be congratulated and I thank her for her contribution to many charities, while supporting and profiling the wool industry with style.

#### **DON E. KENNEDY, OAM**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—As Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of the United States, I was privileged to join the Ceremony of Honour for Don E. Kennedy OAM, at the Consulate General of the United States of America on February 2nd 2024. Don was awarded the Merchant Mariners of WWII Congressional Gold Medal for his service and sacrifice. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. Congress, which recognizes dedication, heroism and public service that created a lasting impact on American history. To grant this Medal, a legislation must be co-sponsored by two-thirds of both the US House and Senate before their respective Congressional Committees. Don was recognised with Merchant Mariners whose honourable deeds played a critical role in WWII. Don is one of only 15 Non-US Citizens to ever receive this Medal. During WWII, Don's valiant efforts as a Merchant Mariner to transport oil, troops, munitions, food and material sustained the Allied War effort. This shaped Australia and US into the bold democracies they are today. Thank you to US Consul General Christine Elder for recognising this important part of our shared history. Congratulations Don, and thank you for your commitment to peace and freedom.

#### **HOMENETMEN NAVASART - REGISTRATION DAY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was wonderful to attend the Homenetmen Navasart Registration Day on 4th February 2024 to present a \$45,000 Community Building Partnership Grant. This Grant will help Homenetmen Navasart fund a new shade cover for their basketball court. With over 100 chapters and 25,000 members worldwide, Homenetmen Navasart is a global organisation that supports Armenian youth. For over 50 years, our local club in Smithfield has provided a home and family to our Armenian-Australian community. Facilitating opportunities to participate in Scouts and sporting activities, Homenetmen Navasart helps children develop sportsmanship, team building and leadership skills. Established after the Armenian Genocide,

Homenetmen Navasart continues to provide a safe space for Armenian youth in the diaspora to connect. Given the ongoing crisis in Artsakh, the Club's support is vital to our community during this difficult time. During my tenure as the Member for Prospect, I have seen our Club grow, fostering a welcoming community for our Armenian youth to celebrate their culture. The Club's community impact is truly a testament to the hard-working Executive Committee, Members, Coaches, Scout Leaders, Volunteers, parents, and enthusiastic kids. Thank you to Chairman Yeghpayr Ara Boyajian and the Executive Committee for your dedicated efforts.

#### **FARRAR AND SONS BAKEHOUSE**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to Farrar & Sons Bakehouse in Mayfield on their recent win at the 2024 Australian Small Business Champion Awards for Best Bakery. It was an unexpected award as the bakery has only been in operation for just over a year. Farrar & Sons were recognised for their community spirit and customer engagement. They supply discounted bread to local charities and organisations so they can turn a higher profit on their fundraisers and frequently take pie ideas and requests to create new and exciting fillings. It's truly inspiring to see local businesses not only thrive but also innovate and engage with your community in such creative ways. Your dedication to quality and customer satisfaction shines through in every pie you bake. This success is a testament to the hard work and passion that Sally, Scott, and Tristan pour into their craft each day. Here's to many more years of delicious pies – keep up the fantastic work!

#### **CHAIN DAISY**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—In September last year, Newcastle tragically lost homegrown rocker, Paul Woseen, bassist and founding member for The Screaming Jets. His legacy lives on with the Paul Woseen Memorial Music Grant providing a platform and support for emerging artists to showcase their abilities and pursue their musical aspirations. Last week, Chain Daisy were announced as the winners of this grant after demonstrating their musical prowess, dedication to their art, and potential to make a significant impact in the music industry, both locally and beyond. This achievement is a testament to the vibrant music scene in Newcastle and the wealth of talent it fosters. Chain Daisy's success serves as inspiration for aspiring musicians, highlighting the opportunities available and the rewards of hard work and perseverance in pursuing one's passion for music. Congratulations to Chain Daisy on this well-deserved recognition that honours the memory of the beloved Paul Woseen, I wish you the best of luck on your musical journey.

#### **WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL'S EARTH FLIX - CINEMA 4 CHANGE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Wingecarribee Shire Council recently hosted the launch of Earth Flix: Cinema 4 Change, an initiative of their 'Sustainable Us' program. Marking a significant step towards environmental awareness and community engagement, this initiative offers the opportunity for environmental education and inspiration throughout the year. Wingecarribee Council is committed to taking urgent action on climate change, and these screenings offer a unique opportunity for people to connect with each other and to consider the implications of the messages for their immediate surroundings. It received funding from the Australian Government and the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. Followed by a Q&A session to explore the films, attendees can deepen their understanding of environmental issues while fostering community dialogue and collaboration. Earth Flix represents a collaborative effort to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship within the community and offers inspiration for positive change.

#### **WOLLONDILLY ANGLICAN COLLEGE SCHOOL ZONE CHANGE FOR IMPROVED SAFETY**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Following calls from the Wollondilly Anglican College community, the School Zone at Remembrance Driveway, Tahmoor, has been extended to include the arrival of school buses from 7.30am. School zones are there to protect students, alerting motorists of the increased traffic and risks. The extension of this zone will mean that the school drop off times will be in line with bus arrivals and will ensure that it is safer for the students. "We are so pleased that Roads NSW have agreed to the request and have implemented a non-standard School Zone outside Wollondilly Anglican College... The earlier start time for the school zone will dramatically improve safety outside the College" said Headmaster Trevor Norman. The new time zone demonstrates what can be achieved when a community of motivated individuals come together to enact a positive change. Thanks and recognition is also due to the many parents and community member who wrote letters in support of the change and shared their personal motivations for creating a safer environment for the children attending the school.

#### **ALAN MCINTOSH**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Last week the Tweed said a sad goodbye to a pillar of our local community, Alan McIntosh. Alan helped shape the Tweed through his generosity, dedication and connection to his community. A stalwart of the Tweed farming and business communities, Alan and his family generously supported many community organisations and helped the Tweed in more ways than we are most likely aware.

I recall attending a local surf club fundraiser for a new tractor. Alan was also in attendance and upon learning of the fundraising target, he donated the full amount needed. This is the kind of man Alan was – happily paying it forward to those around him without any fanfare. Alan also offered 12 hectares of land to the NSW Government to build the new Tweed Valley Hospital – at no cost. And he helped start the Santa fire truck lolly run through Kingscliff, Cudgen and Chinderah, which continues to delight kids every Christmas Eve. Alan's community spirit was second-to-none. My condolences to Alan's wife Suzanne, Alan's children and extended family. Alan will be greatly missed and his legacy shines brightly in his memory.

#### **TAHMOOR LIONS CLUB CUSTOM CANDLE SENSATIONS**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—It is a scent that is ubiquitous to the Australian cultural phenomenon of the fundraiser sausage sizzle. The smoky tangy goodness wafting on the breeze promising a juicy sausage snack is instantly recognisable, and thanks to the Tahmoor Lions Club you can now take that scent home with you in the form of a candle. A treat for your olfactory system, and not for your waistline, creative innovator Alex Hawkins has crafted three fundraiser candles for the Lion's Club Tahmoor - the standout of which, for me, is the aptly named "Let's Ketchup for a Saucy Sausage Sanga". In an ode to the Lions Christmas Cake, the 'Evergreen Christmas Fruit Cake' candle makes it smell like Christmas everyday, and a traditional floral option is offered in the 'Australian Bush Lions' candle. This fun and lighthearted fundraiser underscores the serious and important role that the Lions Club volunteers play in their efforts to support those in need in the community. The work of the Lions club touches the lives of many, and I am admirable of the tireless efforts of those who volunteer their time and skills to help others.

#### **WE CARE CONNECT**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—We Care connect celebrate their 8th birthday with their incredible volunteers supporting families in need across the Central Coast and Hunter. The local organisation provides clothing and nursery essentials to vulnerable families. Also, the organisation supports special occasions such as Back to School essentials, Mother's Day packs, May the Fourth Be With You and Christmas Day gifts providing the chance for children to not feel left out and the parents involved. It is an occasion to look back on their first year supporting 440 children to 6,901 children in 2023. The support of We Care Connect volunteers and people across the community are together making a difference by rehoming quality preloved children's essentials with families who need them most. Congratulations to We Care Connect on their 8th Birthday and doing an amazing job supporting families in our community.

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

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Wyang Christian Community School raised over \$12,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation World's Greatest Shave on school grounds. Year 11 students along with Mrs Johns and Mrs McKendry supported the foundation by cutting and shaving their hair, some were also able to donate their hair. The donations will go towards research and support for Australian's living with blood cancer. Every dollar raised will help provide families with practical and emotional support to get them through the many challenges that blood cancer can bring and powering Australia's brightest research minds. Well done to Wyong Christian Community School students and teachers taking part in making a life changing difference.

#### **BARBARA AND RICHARD HOWES**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Barbara and Richard Howes are true locals of the Wyong area, both sharing their time, energy, and talents in supporting the community through voluntary work. Together they organised Barbara and Richard Howes Charity B.B.Q. events to raise funds for over 20 years to a variety of charities across the Central Coast. From raising funds at their home turning into one of the Central Coast's biggest barbecues. The barbecues supported funds for Wyong Public Hospital Medical Equipment starting in 2007 with 120 people raising \$4,000 to purchase a \$5,516.40 ECG and Lung Capacity Monitor. The remaining funds were put in by the Howes. In 2008, the number of attendees increased to 240 and raised \$7,000 to purchase a LXI Spot Vital Sign Monitor for taking blood pressure and temperature. In 2009, the couple set up the event with the help of the Freemasonry Lodge Wyong Tuggerah Lakes and raised \$10,160. Masonic Care Centre agreed to match the funds and donated a total of \$20,160, to purchase five electric beds. The community support is outstanding along with Barbara and Richard who would spend months to organise these events.

### MELCO FABRICS

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I have such a sense of pride whenever I buy a product and it's marked "Made in Australia". For this very reason, I want to acknowledge the fabulous Melanie Coultas, the founder of Melco Fabrics for her commitment to produce fabulous made-in-Australia fabrics. With a mission to produce high-quality, ethical, and sustainable fabrics right here in Australia, Melanie has put her heart and soul into building Melco Fabrics, a leader in our textiles industry. Sewing is one of my hobbies, and I have collected fabrics from around the world. Therefore, I am confident to say that Melanie's fabrics are some of the best you can find in the market. You can easily feel her passion just by going through the gorgeous range of products that Melco Fabrics offers. Why is Australian-made matter? Because it represents job opportunities and economic prosperity to our local community. I encourage everyone to have a look at Melco Fabrics online or visit Melanie's beautiful factory at the scenic Charmhaven. I thank Melanie for her remarkable efforts, and I genuinely hope her story can inspire other entrepreneurs to create more Australian-made products

### THE ASPIRE PROGRAM

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I would like to send a big thank you to Soroptimist International Brisbane Water, for continuing to fund the Aspire Program and supporting secondary-school girls. The Aspire Program is a seven-week program designed for secondary school girls who may be disengaged from learning. These girls often come from disadvantaged families, have experienced hardship, or may have difficulties establishing positive relationships. The Aspire program helps female students have a better understanding of themselves. The aim of the program is to educate, empower and enable participants who engage with the program. It equips the young women with support, life skills and strategies to carry them into the future. It is vital that we support the young people within our communities. They are the next generation of leaders and innovators and it should be our priority to provide them with the self-efficacy and confidence to guide them through their lives. It is through fantastic programs such as Aspire that we can support our young women. Thank you once again to Soroptimist International for sponsoring the Aspire Program and giving opportunities to our youth.

### GOSFORD HOSPITAL'S STROKE UNIT

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I am ever so proud of Gosford Hospital's Stoke Unit for their most recent achievement in stroke care. Being one of only 16 hospitals that have received official stroke unit certification from the Australian Stroke Coalition (ASC), out of more than 1300 Australian hospitals, it's fair to say that this recognition marks an outstanding commitment from the team at Gosford Hospital to our stroke patients and their families. Stroke is one of the leading causes of death in Australia, and in 2021, it is estimated that an average of 23 Australians died of stroke each day. As a result, high quality stroke care is paramount to save Australians lives. While it is not mandatory, the ASC Stroke Unit Certification Program hopes to encourage local hospitals to reliably provide the best possible stroke care to patients. As a Coastie, I find myself very fortunate to be in an electorate where we have the wonderful Gosford Hospital. The staff always goes above and beyond to look after the community. I am forever grateful for Gosford Hospital's stroke unit and its amazing efforts to support stroke patients while enabling them to make conscious choices for their treatment plans.

### CARDIFF 251 RETAINED - BEAT THE BURN 2024

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—The crew from Cardiff took part again in the Beat the Burn fundraiser, March 11-15. This event sees firefighters paddle, cycle and hike 400km in four days to raise funds for the Burns Unit at the Westmead Children's Hospital. With their sights always set pretty high for the kids in need, the lads raised a substantial \$6,482. Over 19 continuous years, firefighters have raised over \$1,200,000 for the Burns Unit. Beat The Burn set up a basecamp at the NRMA Jindabyne Holiday Park, and Fire & Rescue NSW and ACT firefighters put their bodies to the test through the rugged landscapes of the Kosciuszko National Park, competing for David Weir Memorial trophies, knowing that the pain they felt was nothing compared to what these kids have endured. To the firefighters, the kids in the Burns Unit are the heroes. The funds raised go towards research and purchasing expensive equipment, ensuring that young burns survivors have access to the latest techniques in pain and scar management, and their families are given the support they require during difficult times. Congratulations on another successful campaign.

### HUNTER HURRICANES WATER POLO

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Forming twenty years ago to provide an avenue for talented local players at the highest level without having to travel or relocate to Sydney, and gathering players from a wide catchment, the Hunter Hurricanes Water Polo Club has produced some of the country's top elite juniors. Starting with one team, the Hunter Hurricanes now compete in the AWPL, one of ten clubs representing five states in a national competition running over a five-month period. Teams for both men and women – from Under 12s through to seniors – play their matches at local pools, particularly Lambton Pool and the indoor pool at the UoN. All teams



are entered in both State and National Championships each year. The Hunter Hurricanes is the only regional-based club with both men's and women's teams competing in the league and helps develop regional water polo through flipper ball and junior development programs. Initially called "aquatic football" and "water rugby", men's water polo was among the first team sports at the 1900 Olympics. It's great to see this fabulous game thriving in our region - the water polo community remains very close-knit.

#### JASON HOFFMAN

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—Newcastle Jets veteran, 35-year-old defender Jason Hoffman, in front of family and friends, made his 300th A-League appearance on Saturday 27 April, coming off the bench in the 62nd minute in an F3 derby with Central Coast Mariners at McDonald Jones Stadium. He was the 9th A-League player to reach this milestone and was greeted with a deserved standing ovation by 9,416 fans. Jason's career began as a Mayfield United local junior and onto Hamilton Olympic. He represented the Australian Under 20s eleven times (2007-2009) and Under 23s thirteen times (2008 – 2012). Jason played seventeen seasons as a pro footballer - 220 games for the Jets, always giving a lot, on and off the pitch - a good trainer, the first to arrive and last to leave. At 17, he made his debut for the Jets as a substitute on 2nd September 2007, the season they won the GF. Jason also played five seasons and eighty games in Melbourne (for Heart and City) between 2010 - 2015, returning to Newcastle in 2015 to play a further 191 matches. Good luck, and well done on a great career, Jason.

#### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - FIGTREE HIGH SCHOOL

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Jack Tully, Charlize Macedo, Samarah Gibson and Alexander Dawson who have been named as the 2024 Figtree High School leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to lead by example. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extracurricular activities. Each of them will spend 2024 acting as role models for their peers and I have confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate Jack, Charlize, Samarah and Alexander on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at school.

#### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - HOLY SPIRIT COLLEGE

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Tallulah Rogers, Jackson Smith, Eva Georgievski, Lucas Allen, Imogen King and Brayden Woodford who have been named as the 2024 Holy Spirit College leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to lead by example. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extracurricular activities. Each of them will spend 2024 acting as role models for their peers and I have confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate Tallulah, Jackson, Eva, Lucas, Imogen and Brayden on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at school.

#### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - KEIRA HIGH SCHOOL

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Miles McAndrew, Akira Nepia, Lawrence Tsui, Riley Grossman, Esmee Schrauwen and Xavier Jeremijenko who have been named as the 2024 Keira High School leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to lead by example. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extracurricular activities. Each of them will spend 2024 acting as role models for their peers and I have confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate Miles, Akira, Lawrence, Riley, Esmee and Xavier on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at school.

#### PROFESSOR SILVIA FRISIA

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Congratulations to Silvia Frisia, Conjoint Professor in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences at the University of Newcastle, on being awarded the prestigious Jean Baptiste Lamarck Medal. A resident of the Charlestown Electorate, Professor Frisia has been recognised for her contribution to the field of carbonate sedimentology, applied to palaeoclimate science—which is to say, the

study of ancient climates. For three decades, Professor Frisia has contributed to breakthroughs in the field, digging into the past to find out how the environment has changed in cold and warm periods throughout history. The award of this medal, named for the early nineteenth century French naturalist and awarded by the European Geoscience Union, further cements Professor Frisia's standing as a global leader in her field. Professor Frisia achieved a Doctor of Research from the University of Milan in Italy, and from 1994 to 2007 was a research associate at the natural science museum in Trento, northern Italy. She has been at the University of Newcastle since 2007, and over the course of her career has provided supervision, training, support and transfer of knowledge to more than 550 young researchers through summer schools and workshops.

#### **ANZAC DAY 2024**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—On Thursday 25 April, people all around Australia and New Zealand, and Australians and New Zealanders across the world, gathered to pay respects to the sacrifices of Australian servicemen and -women. This year, as we marked the 109th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, ANZAC Day remains an important day of remembrance and community. I would like to acknowledge the services held in the Charlestown electorate this year: the Dawn Services held at the Dudley War Memorial and at Cardiff RSL; the morning service at the First World War Memorial in Adamstown; and the service at Lions Park in Charlestown. I want to thank the organisers of each service, as well as those students from across the Charlestown electorate who laid tributes, spoke at services and overall ensured that the spirit of ANZAC will continue through generations to come. I would particularly like to acknowledge the veterans and returned servicemen and women who attended the events for their service to our country. Lest We Forget.

#### **PROFESSOR MATT DUN**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Acute myeloid leukaemia and diffuse midline gliomas, a type of aggressive brain tumours, are responsible for nearly a third of all childhood cancer deaths each year. Charlestown electorate resident and long-time childhood cancer treatment advocate and researcher Matt Dun, a professor at the University of Newcastle, led a team which discovered that both AML and DMG cancers produce huge amounts of "free radicals". These byproducts of cancer cell growth promote further damage to the body, and contribute to resistance to upfront therapies. If these therapies don't work, children diagnosed with these types of cancer face tragic outcomes. Now, Professor Dun and his team, consisting of researchers from UoN and the Hunter Medical Research Institute, have been awarded a \$591,890 Cancer Australia grant to examine if silencing these free radicals will increase response to therapies and improve patient outcomes. I wish Professor Dun and his team all the best in their research, and congratulate them on their receipt of this grant.

#### **ST JOSEPH'S JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the St Joseph's Junior Rugby League Football Club ("Joeys") for receiving a funding boost of \$4,162.67 from the 2023/24 Local Sport Grant Program. Established in 1964, the Joeys' coaches and trainers continue to keep our local kids active, fostering a lifelong love of rugby league with nearly 400 registered players competing in boys and girls competitions across all age divisions. This funding will enable Joeys to install a new PA system at the clubhouse at Kareela Oval, allowing more effective communication with members and enhancing the game day experience. Of course, none of this is possible without the dedication of the St Joseph's Junior Rugby League Football Club Executive Committee. I recognise President Michael Evans, Senior Vice President Peter Jamison, Secretary Paul Vanderwert, Treasurer Shaun Spangenberg and Registrar Anthony Howard for their efforts. I thank the members of the St Joseph's Junior Rugby League Football Club for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes in our community.

#### **TAREN POINT TITANS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the Taren Point Titans Junior Rugby League Football Club ("Titans") for receiving a funding boost of \$5,000 from the 2023/24 Local Sport Grant Program. Formed in 2004, the Titans are one of the newer teams in the Cronulla Sutherland District Junior Rugby League developing a reputation as an inclusive, family friendly club, catering to all players. Today the Titans have nearly 360 registered players including 100 female players and 25 teams competing in all levels of the competition. Through this funding, the Titans will be able to offer comprehensive training to coaches, trainers and players to improve their skills and organise inclusive sport events for the Club's wider membership. Of course, none of this is possible without the dedication of the Taren Point Titans Junior Rugby League Football Club Executive Committee. I recognise Jay Te Wao, Adam McPherson, Craig Magee, Leah McGregor, Julie Robinson Kim Chin Poy and Brett Robinson for their efforts. I thank the members of the Taren Point Titans Junior Rugby League

Football Club for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes in our community.

#### **SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the Southern Districts Rugby Club ("Southern Districts") for receiving a funding boost of \$8,635 from the 2023/24 Local Sport Grant Program. Formed in 1989, through the amalgamation of St George and Port Hacking rugby clubs, Southern Districts has developed a reputation for providing their players with the skills needed to represent at higher honours. Since that time Southern Districts has produced 14 Wallabies and countless representatives for Super Rugby, Australian Schools, Australian U20's and Australian 7s. This funding will enable Southern Districts Rugby Club to purchase gym equipment and tackling bags for use by the Club's women's team in their debut season in the Jack Scott Cup and beyond as the club looks to increase female participation in Rugby Union. Of course, none of this is possible without the dedication of the Southern Districts Rugby Club Executive Committee. I recognise Brad Devine, Warren Smith, Blake Middleton, David Cahill, John O'Brien, Col O'Connor, Andy Marinos and Marcus Carbone for their efforts. I thank the members of the Southern Districts Rugby Club for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes in our community.

#### **JENNIFER PARRY - DRESS FOR SUCCESS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to thank and congratulate a local constituent, Jennifer Parry for all her efforts over the years, as well as her recent achievements. Despite being born blind, Jennifer has been an absolute inspiration within our community. Recently, Jennifer was made an ambassador for 'Dress for Success' – an organisation which initially helped her land her dream job. Dress for Success offers styling services as well as empowerment workshops, providing a confidence boost to women wishing to enter the workforce. The organisation's latest campaign 'Empower Hour' will help a total of 750 women get back into the workforce, whilst also coinciding with International Women's Day. We know that there are many challenges associated with women entering the workforce, however organisations like Dress for Success are instrumental in removing barriers and combatting stigmas. I'd like to thank Jennifer for her advocacy work over the last few years. This work ensures that women receive the assistance they deserve and I could not be more proud of her efforts. I wish Jennifer every success in her future endeavours.

#### **MERYL BISHOP**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise an individual who has made enormous contributions to our local community through her service to Georges River Council. Georges River Council's Director of Environment and Planning, Meryl Bishop, has recently taken up a new position with Randwick Council. I know that she will be sorely missed amongst both the Council staff and Councillors. I've had the pleasure of meeting Meryl on several occasions, and I can truly say that she has always acted with the upmost professionalism and dedication to the role. She is a public servant who is committed in every sense of the word. From the most instrumental planning changes to our community, right down to the smallest issues, her achievements are numerous and commendable. Meryl has had over 25 years of experience in planning and local government, helping to develop masterplans for community hubs that promote functionality, liveability and of-course, aesthetics. I wish her all the very best in her new role at Randwick Council. I know that she will do an absolutely sensational job.

#### **OATLEY RSL ANZAC COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise the team from the Oatley RSL Sub-Branch, who recently hosted the 2024 Oatley RSL ANZAC Commemorative Service. I had the privilege of attending the service at the Oatley Memorial Gardens and was joined by the wider community, as we paid our respects to those who have served and sacrificed for our nation. I would like to thank President Damien Cole, Treasurer Doug Torode, and Secretary Kevin Grimes for their hard work and organisational efforts this year. The Oatley RSL Sub-Branch has been operating for over 80 years and this is thanks to the hard work of the executive committee. Through their efforts, the traditions and solemnity of ANZAC Day are upheld year after year. Of course, ANZAC Day is a chance to remind ourselves of how lucky we are to live in this beautiful nation. The privileges and freedoms we enjoy today are built on the sacrifices of Australia's brave servicemen and women. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to those who have served and continue to serve. May their sacrifices never be forgotten. Lest We Forget.

#### **HIS HOLINESS YOUNAN VISIT**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—I have spoken previously in this place about the recent visit of His Holiness Mar Gewargis III Younan to Australia and New Zealand. During His Holiness' stay, I had the pleasure of inviting him to my electorate office for afternoon tea with myself and the Member for Liverpool to

discuss the significance of the local church community at St Zaia's Cathedral in Middleton Grange. It was fantastic to hear of His Holiness' upbringing in Chicago as a first generation Assyrian-American, and the importance of religious institutions in fostering a sense of community, particularly in our rapidly growing suburbs. I know that His Holiness' visit has been of major interest to the large Assyrian-Australian community in my seat of Leppington. It has been an exciting time for many of them as he made his first visit as the patriarch of this ancient church. I wish His Holiness all the best as he returns to Baghdad, and eagerly look forward to his next visit down under.

### SHAOLIN GAMES

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On 2 December 2023 I was delighted to attend the Shaolin Culture Spectacular Show and Vegetarian Banquet, as part of the 2023 World Shaolin Games Intercontinental Final - Oceania Region Open. This event is a celebration of the rich heritage of Shaolin Kung Fu, a martial art that has been practiced for over 1,500 years in China. Shaolin Kung Fu is not only a physical discipline, but also a spiritual one, that teaches us the values of courage, compassion, wisdom, and harmony. Shaolin Kung Fu is a national intangible cultural heritage of China, and has gained worldwide recognition and admiration for its beauty and significance. I was proud to be a part of this cultural exchange, as well as witness the amazing performances and competition. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Shaolin Kung Fu Meditation Temple of Australia and the Organizing Committee of the International Shaolin Kung Fu Contest in Australia for hosting this wonderful event, and for inviting me to join you. I would also like to thank the Venerable Abbot Shi Yongxin and the delegation of Shaolin monks and warriors from China for their presence and participation.

### MANDAEAN LANGUAGE SCHOOL AWARD CEREMONY

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On the 16 December 2023 I was pleased to attend the annual Mandaean Language Class Award Ceremony. The first Mandaean language classes were held in The Sabian Mandaean community centre in Smithfield in 1996. Since that time, the Mandaean community has had the privilege of holding 40-minute classes once a week in local primary and high schools in the South-West Sydney district. They currently have 3 classes operating for children from 5 to 13+ years. The main objective of these classes is to provide the younger generation insight into their cultural heritage and history through the Mandaean language, a form of Aramaic. It is delightful to see the younger generation learning and achieving valuable knowledge regarding their cultural background. The hall was flooded with Mandai school students and their families and during the ceremony a group of students presented activities related to the Mandai language. It was my pleasure to have the opportunity to witness and celebrate the achievements of this wonderful community and its thriving youth.

### GIA NETWORK

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—Today, I want to acknowledge the incredible work of the GIA Network, which stands for the Giovani Italiani in Australia Network, a local Italian Association supporting young Italians. GIA Network is a beacon of hope and support for young people who have migrated to Australia from Italy, as well as for second and third generation Italians wanting to connect with the Italian culture. They have helped young people navigate the challenges of a new country, preserving their cultural heritage and traditions. Through cultural events, casual meetups, fundraising initiatives and mentorship programs, the GIA Network has empowered our youth to embrace their Italian identity while building a new life in Australia. They have created a sense of family and connection, bridging the gap between generations and fostering a sense of belonging. I wish to congratulate Domenico Stefanelli, President of the GIA Network for his work as well as the hardworking Board Directors, Committee Members, and volunteers that support this good work.

### PAOLO RAJO

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish to acknowledge a true champion of our Italian community, Mr Paolo Rajo, who is the beloved local host of Rete Italia, Italian Radio. For decades, Paolo has dedicated himself to sharing Italian stories, our music, and our Italian culture with Australia. Through his tireless efforts, he has brought our community together, providing a platform for Italian voices to be heard, for news to be reported in Italian and for traditions to be preserved. His passion, enthusiasm, and love for the Italian heritage has inspired countless individuals, young and old, to embrace their Italian roots. Paolo is more than just a radio host – he's a cultural ambassador, a community leader, and a true friend to many. His dedication, expertise, and warmth has made Rete Italia radio station a beacon of Italian culture in our community. Let us express our heartfelt gratitude to Paolo for his longstanding service, unwavering commitment and contribution. We celebrate his legacy and look forward to many more years of his work. Your service to our community is cherished and appreciated. Grazie mille, Paolo!

### REVEREND RAY MINNIECON AND THE COLOURED DIGGERS PROJECT

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I acknowledge Rev. Ray Minniecon, founder of the Coloured Diggers Project, for their commemoration of ANZAC Day with a service at Foley Park in Glebe on Thursday April 25. I had the honour of attending the service, and to lay a commemorative wreath as a gesture of our respect from our community for First Nations people who have served in overseas conflicts. I also want to acknowledge their Director Mr Ken Zulumovski and Mr Colin Watego OAM for their roles in organising the service, and Max Sollin who delivered the address. I acknowledge the community's appreciation for this years' service. The work of communities to remember those who have fallen in war reminds us of our responsibility to work for lasting peace and justice, and it is particularly important to show respect and share in the reflections of First Nations people.

### REVEREND DAVID GORE AND PYRMONT ANZAC DAY SERVICE

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I acknowledge Rev David Gore and the Uniting Church in Ultimo, who worked with the community to commemorate ANZAC Day with a service at Union Square in Pyrmont on Thursday April 25. I was honoured to receive an invitation to attend the service, and to lay a commemorative wreath on behalf of our local community. I thank Rev Gore, and all members of the Pyrmont and Ultimo community who organised and attended this service. The work of communities to remember those who have fallen in war reminds us of our responsibility to work for lasting peace and justice.

### RON GLEW, OAM

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I acknowledge Mr Ron Glew OAM, a resident of Rozelle, President of the Air Force Association NSW and President of the Balmain-Rozelle RSL sub-branch, for his efforts working with the community to commemorate ANZAC Day on Thursday April 25. I note that the ANZAC Day dawn service at Balmain is a long running and well supported community occasion held each year at Australia's oldest war memorial. I had the honour of attending the dawn service at Balmain's Loyalty Square, and to lay a commemorative wreath alongside Mr Glew, to show our respect for those who have fallen in armed conflict. I thank Mr Glew for this opportunity. and I acknowledge the community's appreciation for this years' service. It was wonderful to see the community come together and the contribution of local schools was especially impressive. The work of communities to remember those who have served in the armed forces, and fallen in war reminds us of our responsibility to work for lasting peace.

### NORTHERN BEACHES VETERAN WELLBEING CENTRE

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to visit the RSL Lifecare Northern Beaches Veteran Wellbeing Centre. Based in Dee Why the Centre offers a holistic approach to supporting local veterans. The team at the Centre can connect veterans with practical services for support with wellbeing, housing and employment. They are also able to provide expert advice and guidance through the Commonwealth Government's Department of Veterans' Affairs claims process, which can often be time consuming and stressful. From the initial set up to support with appeals, the Centre takes a personal approach on each case, advocating for veterans to receive recognition and respect, and are set up for life after service. While smaller than other RSL LifeCare Veteran Wellbeing Centres, the Northern Beaches Centre offers an innovative model that proves how much can be achieved with community support. Thank you to Dee Why RSL President, Graeme Liddell, for his and the RSL's support of the Centre. Thank you to Craig Horner, Centre Coordinator, and James Dallas, Head of Veteran Wellbeing Centres at RSL LifeCare for all your amazing efforts to support our veteran community.

### NARRABEEN RSL SUB-BRANCH - 2024 ANZAC SUNDAY MARCH

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to participate in the Narrabeen RSL Sub-Branch's annual ANZAC Sunday March, Commemoration Service and lunch, held on 21 April 2024. It is always an honour to march alongside local veterans and their families in the procession from Narrabeen Surf Life Saving Club to Narrabeen Cenotaph. Each year, the Narrabeen RSL ANZAC Sunday march serves as an important reminder to our local community to pause, reflect and pay tribute to the sacrifices of our servicemen and women. It was wonderful to see members of the local surf club, scout group and schools involved. Thank you to President - Garry Maurer, Secretary - John West PSM and the Sub-Branch for organising this important event. The Narrabeen RSL Sub-Branch do a wonderful job supporting local veterans and ensuring our community remembers and honours those who have served and protected our freedom and Australian values.

### TERREY HILLS TENNIS CLUB

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to visit the Terrey Hills Tennis Club. It was wonderful to visit the courts and meet with members of the Club's executive. Tucked away amongst the beautiful greenery of Terrey Hills, the Club does a first-rate job maintaining their courts and facilities. The Club

is a warm and vibrant community, hosting social events, relaxed friendly games, and competition tennis. Coaching is also offered onsite. Tennis is a sport for all ages, offering so many positives for people's health and wellbeing. The team at Terrey Hills Tennis Club are committed to growing and improving their Club, to share these benefits with as many people as possible. I am so pleased that soon the Club will have upgraded bathroom amenities thanks to a grant secured for the Club. Thank you to Club President, Ross Kempshall, and his executive for his efforts to make the Club a safe and inclusive place. I am pleased that acknowledgement of the Terrey Hills Tennis Club is now preserved for all time in the records of the oldest parliament in our nation.

### SAVE WALLUM

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the dedication and resilience of the Save Wallum non-violent direct-action community group and the wider community who support their efforts. The Wallum site in Brunswick Heads is currently scheduled for development and it is admirable to see Non-Violent Direct-Action utilised by gathered activists to defend this incredible landscape. Further, it is heartwarming to witness the outpouring of support from the community for these activists who not only join in sitting up trees, or laying in front of bull dozers, but also cook and deliver meals and continue to respond to call outs for aid. Save Wallum has brought together ecologists, scientists, lawyers, activists, and everyday community members in an effort to protect the remaining 1 percent of coastal heathland here in the Byron Shire; core biodiversity and habitat including the Wallum Sedge Frog, the Wallum Froglet and over 20 other endangered species. Members of our community should have standing to represent Nature, particularly in an extinction crisis. I congratulate all of the Save Wallum community members for standing up for Nature.

### LAUNCH OF SOUTH WEST MOUNTIES MAGIC 2024

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the 16th of March 2024, I was privileged to represent the Honourable Steve Kamper, Minister for Sport, at the official launch of the South West Mounties MAGIC. This event marked a significant milestone in the sporting landscape of our region, heralding the beginning of an exciting journey for the team and its supporters. It was an honour to be present at such an important occasion, celebrating the spirit of athleticism and camaraderie that defines our local sporting community. Joining me at the launch was my parliamentary colleague, Nathan Hagarty MP. Both from South Western Sydney, Nathan and I share the passion of supporting and promoting local sports. Sports play an important role in promoting health, unity, and community engagement. Also, it has the transformative power to inspire and uplift individuals and communities. I thank Mounties Club for the kind invitation and for their continued support in our local sporting teams and activities.

### SYDNEY MUSLIM WRITER'S FESTIVAL 2024 IN BANKSTOWN

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Bryan Brown Theatre opened its doors to the second official Sydney Muslim Writer's Festival (SMWF) over the weekend of 24 and 25 of February. The festival provides a unique opportunity for writers and thinkers from our community to unite and engage in compelling discussions, share their diverse experiences, and celebrate the flourishing literature within the Muslim community. I would like to recognise the incredible efforts of our local community in hosting creative writers and thinkers and bringing together families and students from different backgrounds. Events like this foster diversity while encouraging youth to participate in creative activities that are worthwhile and beneficial to their social and intellectual development. The festival also catered to emerging and aspiring authors, offering them the opportunity to learn from established writers and industry professionals. The SMWF creates unique opportunities for the community to explore the power of writing as a tool to amplify Muslim voices and reframe the narrative around Muslim-written literature. The SMWF is an inspiring event that will foster a thriving community of writers and readers for years to come, adding value to our community through diversity and inclusivity in literature.

### HAYDEN SAYERS

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Congratulations to Hayden Sayers, for being selected to play for the National Junior U/20s Men's Ice Hockey team! As a staff member for Brewhouse at Bankstown Sports Club, it's amazing to see another example of sporting talent among their staff. Hayden has always been known for his widespread sporting ability; however, he knew it was fated when he first stepped foot on the ice. His hardworking mentality and optimism have landed him the golden opportunity to make a career out of his beloved sport. In support of Hayden's remarkable achievements, Bankstown Sports Club has offered to support him in his international endeavours. Hayden has since received financial assistance to subsidise the cost of equipment and travel to Belgrade and Serbia, as he has been handpicked to participate in the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championships. This tremendous accomplishment from Hayden and the vast contribution from Bankstown Sports Club is a testament to the close relationship between our wonderful business

community and its people. It is enlightening to see one of our own achieve such greatness. Again, congratulations Hayden, we are wishing you all the best as you embark on this exciting journey.

#### WINNER OF 2024 YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—It is with immense pride, that I extend my warmest congratulations to Nour Al Hammouri, the deserving recipient of the 2024 Community Young Citizen of the Year award. In a community teeming with promise and potential, Nour has emerged as an exemplary inspiration, embodying the spirit of youthful vigour, dedication, and civic responsibility. At a time when the world looks to its young leaders for innovation and positive change, Nour has proven to be a remarkable leader. His commitment to community service, paired with an unwavering passion for creating meaningful impact, sets him apart as a role model for his peers and a source of inspiration for individuals of all ages. Nour's tireless efforts in community projects, activism, and outreach initiatives have not only contributed to the betterment of our community but have also sparked a sense of collective responsibility among the Bankstown community. His ability to mobilise and unite others for a common cause underscores a level of leadership beyond his years. Congratulations Nour on your win for the 2024 Community Young Citizen of the Year! Thank you for your hard work in Bankstown.

#### ROLLED GOLD

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Artists have tackled controversy since the dawn of time but only one has dared to take on the challenge of the Chiko Roll! For this task, Wagga Wagga turned to pop artist Chris Roe who celebrated the roll in his latest exhibition, writing another chapter in the contest of ideas that is the origin of the Chiko. Wagga has claimed to be the home of the roll since 1951 when a Bendigo boilermaker first sold this dubious delight at the Wagga Show. Bendigo and Bathurst have since claimed to own the roll, but Wagga is standing firm. Struck by the absurdity of this deep-fried claim to fame, Chris created a human-sized inflatable Chiko for his exhibition, *Rogue Thoughts*. "Is this oversized spring-roll really how we define ourselves in Wagga?" Chris asked himself, before answering: "Apparently it is!" His oversized roll became a centrepiece of *Rogue Thoughts* – a courageous re-telling of Australian stories that even dared to reimagine Ned Kelly in confronting new ways. Chris's art speaks for itself, and I encourage people to see it. But when it comes to the Chiko Roll, I stand with my city. So, back off, Bathurst and Bendigo – the Chiko is ours!

#### SHOW SUCCESS

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Breeding prize cattle runs in the genes for the Robson family of Adelong, as demonstrated by Jack and Sam Robson at this year's Royal Easter Show in Sydney. At the ages of 15 and 12, Jack and Sam have pulled off a feat that makes them the envy of many older breeders, winning the prestigious Urquhart Trophy for Supreme Beef Exhibit. Their Angus cow, DSK TEL Hot Stuff S116 – or "Hottie" for short – was recognised as the premier beef animal at the show, a remarkable success that can take a lifetime to achieve. Hottie also won the Hordern Trophy for Interbreed Champion Pair and Supreme Angus Exhibit, netting valuable promotion for the family stud, JSR Livestock. It was a win for three generations of the family with the boys' grandparents, Chris Knox and Helen Alexander, originally breeding the award-winning cow. The boys' mother Donna said they were "pretty excited" by the win and are developing a broad interest in agriculture amid other pursuits such as playing rugby league. As for Hottie, she has a bull calf at foot, ensuring her prize-winning genes are also handed down to new generations. Congratulations to Jack, Sam and their family.

#### JASMINE CECCHINI

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—A young Wagga woman who fell in love with the art of beauty therapy while watching her mum in action as a small child is making her home city proud on the world stage. Jasmine Cecchini, 21, has been chosen to represent Australia at the WorldSkills International Championships in France this year and on behalf of the community, I wish her every success when she puts her skills to the test. She will face off against competitors from more than 75 countries over four days of competition in Lyon in September – a tough challenge but one perfectly aligned with Jasmine's training and passion for her craft. Jasmine's mum Naomi Zadow operates Wagga day spa Circa 1929 and is also head teacher of beauty at TAFE in Wagga. Inspired by her mum to take up the profession, Jasmine is completing an apprenticeship at Circa 1929, and on top of that, studied her Certificate IV in Beauty under Naomi's tutelage. Jasmine's journey in the profession she loves is a great testament to both mother and daughter and a wonderful example of how passion and training are developing our workforce of the future. Congratulations, Jasmine, and best wishes for the championships.

#### ROSIE JOHNSON

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Rosie Johnson. Rosie was a well-known Goulburn personality, who held a warm place in many hearts throughout the community. Rosie was born in October 1947, and grew up in a girls' home in Bowral, whilst completing her primary schooling at

Goulburn Public School. From a young age, Rosie lived with schizophrenia, but this never stopped her from being an integral part of the local community. Rosie secured employment at Endeavour Industries for many years, and volunteered as a Pink Lady at the Goulburn Base Hospital, where she became very popular. Rosie married Christopher Johnson at the Uniting Church in October 1975, and even though Christopher passed away many years ago, Rosie would always pop into my office to remind me of her anniversary and ensure I had a card ready to post to her. Rosie would often be seen at community events, or in Auburn Street calling in to see and have a chat to the many who knew her. I was saddened to hear of Rosie's passing on the 10th of April, I take this time to reflect upon her colourful character and contributions to the community. Vale Rosie Johnson.

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