



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday 15 May 2024**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 15 May 2024**

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

**The Speaker** read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## *Bills*

### **PROPERTY NSW AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **HEALTH PRACTITIONER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

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

#### **Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of messages from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.

*[Notices of motions given]*

### **NATIONAL PARKS AND HERITAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Jihad Dib, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (10:18):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I acknowledge the presence of the shadow Minister and a number of my colleagues who have been reserving places in the Chamber to hear the second reading speech of the National Parks and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The National Parks and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 makes amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974—the NPW Act—to revoke around 144 hectares of land from seven national parks and reserves in the national park system. The revocations will enable delivery of government infrastructure projects together with some smaller-scale, sensible proposals to improve boundaries with park neighbours and local councils. The bill includes one re-categorisation of a nature reserve to an Aboriginal area under the NPW Act in recognition of the reserve's Aboriginal cultural values.

The bill also includes miscellaneous legislative amendments to the NPW Act to support National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] staff safety, operation of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust and amendments to clarify requirements for the preparation of park plans of management. Minor technical amendments are also proposed to the NPW Act to confirm provisions relating to the holding and transfer of lands that have been revoked from the national park estate. Additional minor amendments to the NPW Act will remove obsolete definitions of terms involving wildlife regulation, which is now addressed under other legislation. The bill also clarifies uses of the Heritage Conservation Fund established under the Heritage Act 1977.

I turn to the national park revocation proposals. National parks are precious environmental assets. They protect places of exceptional natural and cultural value. They offer valuable visitor experiences that support physical and mental health as well as the New South Wales economy. The New South Wales Government is committed to growing the national parks system to protect biodiversity and cultural heritage and to provide opportunities for sustainable public uses that promote access to parks and support local economies and businesses. The Government's commitments in this regard are clear and unambiguous. They include creating the Great Koala National Park, establishing the Georges River Koala National Park and completing the National Parks Establishment Plan to identify priority areas for addition to the national park estate, including under-reserved habitats and species and areas critical for connectivity.

In addition, the Government continues to make significant investments in delivering new visitor infrastructure that supports access to and appreciation of the New South Wales environment and underpins the economic benefit national parks contribute to New South Wales. That includes six more NSW Great Walks

currently in development, to complement the seven already in operation, together with major upgrades and improvements in priority locations across the State. Supported by those commitments and investment, New South Wales national parks are more popular than ever before. They now welcome between 50 million and 60 million visits every year. In 2018 national parks in New South Wales contributed \$18 billion in economic activity and supported 74,000 jobs.

Revoking land from our national parks system is therefore a decision the Government does not take lightly. Revocations are considered only as a last resort and when no other practical options are available. The requirement for Parliament to approve any revocation proposals is an important measure to safeguard the State's conservation assets. However, from time to time it is necessary and justified to revoke land from national parks and reserves to address boundary errors or inadvertent encroachments; to ensure the most appropriate management authority owns and manages community assets such as utilities and roads; and to enable new priority public infrastructure projects to proceed. Sensible revocation proposals are routinely identified in consultation with local councils, government agencies, community members and other stakeholders.

The current revocation proposals set out in the bill will improve land management efficiencies, support delivery of priority State infrastructure, and ensure appropriate management of local infrastructure. I assure the House that the revocation proposals contained in the bill are in the public interest, are necessary because there is no other feasible option and will not result in any net loss of conservation values from the New South Wales national park system. The last revocations bill was in 2022, when around 54.3 hectares were revoked from six parks, and before that in 2020, when around 92 hectares were revoked from 10 parks. Prior to that, in 2016, 351 hectares were revoked from 12 parks.

To ensure a balance between supporting essential improvements to government infrastructure and conservation objectives, the bill will ensure that appropriate compensation is provided for the revocation of land from the national parks system where appropriate. That is a longstanding practice that has been followed for similar bills over many years. Where relevant, discussions regarding compensation will also consider the need for appropriate land management arrangements, such as fencing or other boundary markers, to be in place to ensure that further encroachments into parks and wildlife reserves do not occur as a result of future use of the revoked lands.

The bill proposes the revocation of around 144 hectares from seven national parks and reserves, noting minor adjustments may be made during the final survey and land transfer process. Firstly, part of Lake Macquarie State Conservation Area [SCA] contains an existing formed road, Silky Oak Drive. That road is not needed for park management and is primarily used as the existing access road to NSW Health's Morisset Hospital, a specialist psychiatric hospital. The bill will revoke Silky Oak Drive, which is around 2.1 hectares, from the SCA. The land will be held as part 11 land under the NPW Act until such time the appropriate management authority has been determined for transfer. Compensation will not be required for the revocation of Silky Oak Drive from Lake Macquarie SCA because the road is existing, has no conservation value and is not required for park management purposes.

The bill will also revoke around 13.16 hectares from a separate part of Lake Macquarie SCA and transfer that land, which contains the existing sport and recreation centre at Point Wolstoncroft on Lake Macquarie, to the State Sporting Venues Authority. The sport and recreation centre existed before the lands were reserved as part of Lake Macquarie SCA. It is a popular location for families and children and will continue to be operated as a sport and recreation centre after revocation occurs. The revocation will ensure that management and tenure arrangements for the existing sport and recreation centre are clear. Compensation will not be required for this revocation because the existing sport and recreation centre at Point Wolstoncroft predates the creation of the Lake Macquarie SCA. The transfer will ensure that the centre is owned by the appropriate New South Wales Government authority.

I also assure the House that suitable administrative arrangements will continue to be in place to provide public access through the site to the northern portion of Point Wolstoncroft, which will remain reserved as part of Lake Macquarie SCA. The bill will also revoke around 119.47 hectares from Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to enable the transfer of land to the Australian Defence Force. The land has and continues to be used for existing firing range purposes. It also contains unexploded ordnance associated with those activities. It is not suitable for public access. Compensation will not be required for this revocation because the existing firing range land was inadvertently included in the SCA gazettal in 2022.

The bill will revoke around 2.8 hectares from Royal National Park to enable the transfer of land containing existing railway sidings and stormwater infrastructure to the relevant transport authority. Transport for NSW is working with the NPWS to identify appropriate compensation for the revocation. Compensation will only be required for the new stormwater infrastructure component because the revocation will otherwise satisfactorily resolve the longstanding presence of previously constructed railway assets on the edge of the park.

The bill will also revoke around 0.1 hectares from Marramarra National Park to remove land containing historical and inadvertent encroachments associated with a neighbouring property. That includes part of a driveway, a groundwater bore and a water tank that were constructed across public and private land boundaries in error and were in place for many years before being reported by the property owner and park neighbour themselves. Appropriate compensation has been identified in discussions with the park neighbour and will be confirmed after the bill proceeds and before the revoked land is transferred.

The bill will revoke around 0.05 hectares from Jervis Bay National Park to enable transfer of land containing existing sewer pumping infrastructure to the local council. The three small parcels that make up the revocation are isolated from other parts of the park. Compensation will not be required for the revocation because it is correcting a historic gazettal error. The revocation will ensure that the essential local infrastructure is managed by the appropriate authority. The bill will also revoke around 0.11 hectares from Sea Acres National Park to enable Port Macquarie Hastings Council to improve safety for road users and pedestrians. Compensation will be required for the revocation and is being discussed with Port Macquarie Hastings Council.

The bill revokes three small portions of land, totalling around 6.21 hectares, from Lake Innes Nature Reserve to resolve park boundary interface issues with local council infrastructure and facilitate planned road upgrades under Port Macquarie Hastings Council. The areas to be revoked are: first, 1.26 hectares to facilitate the widening of Lake Road by the council, addressing longstanding traffic management issues along this key road corridor and existing road infrastructure placement; secondly, 0.36 hectares at Lake Cathie sporting fields to remove a historical unauthorised encroachment; and, thirdly, 4.59 hectares adjoining Ocean Drive to resolve boundary errors and roadworks and fill placement areas.

Of the three revocations in Lake Innes Nature Reserve, two contain small areas, totalling 2.2 hectares, of declared assets of intergenerational significance [AIS] for koala habitat values. These immediately adjoin and overlap with the edge of Lake Road and Ocean Drive. A number of steps have been taken to mitigate any impacts and ensure that there will be no net loss of conservation values as a result of revoking these areas. An independent ecological review was undertaken, which confirmed that the affected AIS areas are subject to various existing levels of disturbance as they adjoin constructed roads—including regular mowing of the road verge—and in some locations include existing utility infrastructure such as a sewage pumping station.

NPWS and Port Macquarie Hastings Council have worked closely to ensure that the footprint of the most critical revocation proposal at Lake Road is minimised. From the original proposal, the area to be revoked has been reduced by almost half, to 1.26 hectares, which is the minimum needed to meet relevant road upgrade standards. The Lake Road revocation is essential to assist in the management of growing traffic congestion issues in this area. Revocation is needed to enable council to progress the relevant design, consultation and planning approval processes for the road upgrade. Designing the road upgrade and any associated infrastructure to minimise any risks to koalas at Lake Road will be addressed during the planning approval stage. Protective measures such as fencing and safe road crossing infrastructure will be considered at that time.

The total AIS area that will be revoked from Lake Innes Nature Reserve at Lake Road and Ocean Drive is around 2.2 hectares. Let me be clear: The New South Wales Government supports the identification and protection of AIS. These areas have important natural or cultural values that warrant special protection. The Government also has a very clear track record of commitment to the conservation and long-term recovery of koalas. It recognises the importance of koala habitat in and around Port Macquarie Hastings local government area [LGA] and other parts of the Mid North Coast and the challenges that koalas face.

While the revocations from Lake Innes Nature Reserve affect only a very small part of the AIS—being only 0.05 per cent of the total AIS site in this area, which covers over 4,000 hectares—this is not a decision the Government takes lightly. For that reason, I am pleased to advise that Port Macquarie Hastings Council is working with NPWS to identify a suitable compensation package for revocations within the LGA, noting that compensation will not be required for the boundary error components. In discussions with council, candidate compensatory lands have been identified that are larger than the total area to be revoked from Lake Innes Nature Reserve and Sea Acres National Park. Assessments are ongoing to confirm that the proposed compensatory lands contain suitable habitat, but initial indications are that they are of comparable or better quality and conservation value than the lands to be revoked, and are also larger than the area to be revoked.

Finalisation of the compensation proposals for the Port Macquarie Hastings LGA will also consider appropriate measures to limit the risk of future encroachments. The bill will also require that the revoked land not be transferred to council unless the Minister for the Environment is satisfied that compensation for the land has been provided. The reduction in the area required for revocation at Lake Road, together with a commitment from council for compensation, will ensure that no net conservation values are lost from the national parks system. This practical outcome enables an important road upgrade and does not come at a cost to conservation.

A final aspect of the bill concerning revocations involves minor technical amendments to the operation of section 149 of the NPW Act to confirm provisions related to the holding and transfer of lands that have been revoked from the national park estate. These amendments clarify that once land has been revoked by an Act of Parliament, it may subsequently be disposed of or otherwise dealt with by the relevant Minister. This will avoid any doubt that revoked lands can be transferred to another entity for the purposes for which they were revoked in the first place, such as to enable a road upgrade. For the avoidance of doubt, the bill also includes appropriate savings and transitional provisions to confirm that revocations made under previous legislation are also taken to have been dealt with in accordance with section 149 of the NPW Act.

I now turn to the re-categorisation proposal. The National Parks and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 will re-categorise Serpentine Nature Reserve, an area of 723 hectares, to an Aboriginal area under the NPW Act. The reserve is located south-west of Dorrigo in the Armidale Dumaresq LGA. This proposed change recognises that the principal reason for the reserve's gazettal in 1979 was its highly significant Aboriginal cultural values and sites, including a complex stone arrangement, bora ring, grinding stones and shield, and ceremonial trees. These lands are of high cultural significance to local Aboriginal communities. They are part of a broader network of Aboriginal ceremonial sites across the surrounding landscapes. The proposal to re-categorise it as an Aboriginal area reflects this significance and will ensure that cultural values are managed in accordance with the principles for Aboriginal areas under the NPW Act.

The proposal is supported by the Serpentine Nature Reserve Aboriginal advisory committee and is consistent with its strong support for incorporating Aboriginal customs and protocols into the management of the reserve. I recognise the interest of the advisory committee and thank its members for their long-term advocacy in this matter. The intention to re-categorise the reserve is also identified in the published *Statement of Management Intent: Serpentine Nature Reserve*. The existing nature reserve already has limited visitor facilities and access, and this re-categorisation will not affect existing public use arrangements.

I now turn to proposals in the bill aimed at improving the safety of NPWS staff while they are going about their important work. NPWS staff are afforded protections under section 169 of the NPW Act that make it an offence to impersonate, assault or threaten any NPWS officer who is exercising their duties. Currently, this offence only applies when staff are operating under the NPW Act, the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 or the Wilderness Act 1987. NPWS staff carry out functions and duties under a much wider range of legislation, including laws related to bushfire management, feral animal control and wild horse management. Clearly, these protections should be extended to ensure that staff are protected when doing their job, irrespective of the specific legislation they may be working under at the time. The bill therefore amends section 169 of the NPW Act by extending these protections to apply in all circumstances when NPWS staff are carrying out their functions under the NPW Act, or the regulations, or any other Act or law.

The National Parks and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 will also clarify and simplify some aspects of the preparation of national park plans of management. The NPW Act requires that every park has a plan of management in place. These plans of management are important documents for park managers and the public as they set out the future management directions for national parks and other NPWS managed reserves. The preparation of plans of management for our national parks and reserves includes a significant and important component of consultation with the public, local communities and key stakeholder groups, as well as regional advisory committees and the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council. This makes it really important that the process for developing plans is clear and consistent.

The bill therefore amends the NPW Act to, firstly, clarify that section 72AA of the NPW Act sets out the matters to be considered in preparing a plan of management and, secondly, separate out the required content of the plan of management in new section 72AB. These amendments will ensure that the NPW Act provides clearer guidance on the matters to be considered in preparing a plan of management, compared to the content required for such plans of management. These amendments also update and simplify other provisions relevant to park plans of management—for example, by deleting obsolete sections dealing with private land conservation, given that those matters are now addressed by the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

In addition, the bill amends sections 74 and 80 of the NPW Act to address machinery-of-government changes and ensure that consultation within government on park plans of management is targeted to the most relevant entities and for relevant reasons. These include removing references to the former Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development, while maintaining existing requirements to consult with relevant water authorities on plans of management. They also include clarifying that plans of management affecting fishing activities—including access for fishing, threatened biodiversity within the meaning of the Fisheries Management Act 1994, and plans applying to or adjoining marine parks and aquatic reserves—are to be referred to relevant Ministers for consultation.

The bill includes legislative amendments necessary to support the activities and efficient operation of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust. The trust is a non-profit entity established under part 7 of the NPW Act to help mobilise philanthropic contributions in support of the national park estate. The proposed amendments will clarify that the trust, consistent with other charitable entities, can accept and use grants and other contributions to both support operations of the trust itself, including administrative expenses, and actions in support of the objects of the trust set out in section 96 (1) of the NPW Act.

A new operating fund will be created under the NPW Act for those purposes and will remain entirely separate to the existing public fund under the NPW Act, which was established to receive tax deductible donations. Section 156 of the NPW Act also will be amended to extend existing personal liability protections to include the board of the trust and any employees of the board. This is consistent with similar provisions in other existing legislation, such as the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, which excludes personal liability for members of the Biodiversity Conservation Trust Board. The bill includes minor amendments to delete definitions dealing with wildlife regulation from the NPW Act, such as the definition of marine mammal. These matters will now be dealt with under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and hence are no longer required to remain in the NPW Act.

I turn now to proposals in the National Parks and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 aimed at supporting communities to conserve and manage our heritage by improving operation of the Heritage Conservation Fund. The Heritage Conservation Fund is established under the Heritage Act 1977 but provisions for its use are outdated. Under the current provisions for use of this fund, the potential uses of money in the fund are narrow. That means that funds accumulate when they should be spent on heritage outcomes that benefit the whole community. The proposed amendments align the fund with the objects of the Heritage Act. They introduce a legislated purpose for the fund and expand and broaden the types of payments authorised to be made into and out of the fund. This will provide certainty and clarity, ensure the fund is fit for purpose and provide greater flexibility. The changes will enable the Government to fund grants, projects and programs that promote the objects of the Heritage Act. The cumulative impact of these changes will ensure the Government is more clearly able to allocate money from the fund towards initiatives that celebrate, commemorate and conserve heritage, leading to better heritage outcomes across the State.

This bill is about a sensible and targeted package of essential revocation proposals matched with appropriate compensation to protect the overall integrity of the national parks system. It also re-categorises Serpentine Nature Reserve as an Aboriginal area to ensure its significant cultural values are managed in accordance with the principles for Aboriginal areas under the NPW Act. The bill supports staff safety, operation of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust, and amendments to clarify the requirements for the preparation of park plans of management. Minor technical amendments are also proposed to the NPW Act to confirm provisions related to the holding and transfer of lands that have been revoked from the national park estate and to delete obsolete definitions. The bill also clarifies uses of the Heritage Conservation Fund established under the Heritage Act. I acknowledge the work of Minister Sharpe and all her team for their efforts in preparing a very detailed speech. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Visitors*

## VISITORS

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I welcome to the Speaker's gallery guests of the member for Bankstown and the member for Canterbury, Councillor Bhadra Waiba and community leader Mr Ganesh Tamang.

*Bills*

## EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY AMENDMENT BILL 2024

### Second Reading Speech

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (10:44):** On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024 to the House of government. I note the bill was introduced by the Treasurer into the Legislative Council and has been received from that other place. The object of this bill is to amend the Emergency Services Levy Act 2017 to permit the Treasurer to require an insurer to provide information for the purposes of evaluating and implementing reforms to the way in which emergency services are funded. Our emergency services help people in their greatest need. They provide critical services to protect and preserve the lives and property of members of our community. With the total cost of flood and bushfire to our economy projected by Treasury to increase from \$7 billion in 2020-21

to up to \$24 billion by 2070-71, the need to ensure our emergency services are funded in a fair, efficient, simple and sustainable way has never been greater.

Currently, our key emergency services agencies—Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Rural Fire Service and the New South Wales State Emergency Service—are funded primarily through the emergency services levy on insurance companies. The emergency services levy represents about 73.7 per cent of emergency services agencies' annual funding needs, which in 2023-24 is budgeted to cost insurers approximately \$1.4 billion. The balance of emergency services funding is provided by the New South Wales Government, which contributes 14.6 per cent, and local councils, which contribute to the tune of 11.7 per cent. Since insurance companies generally recover their contributions by imposing a surcharge on policyholder premiums, it increases the cost for households and businesses to insure their properties. This in turn sees some households and businesses underinsure and others not insure at all. In fact, 35 per cent of households in New South Wales do not have contents insurance and 5 per cent of home owners do not have building insurance—the highest rates of any State in Australia.

Insurers also tend to place the emergency services levy on top of their base premium. This then cascades through further taxes. The premium is subject to a further 10 per cent GST and the GST-inclusive price is then subject to a 9 per cent insurance duty. Removing the emergency services levy on insurance premiums would then be expected to reduce the cost of premiums and encourage greater uptake of insurance. To ensure the reform's goal of achieving a fairer, more efficient, simpler and sustainable funding system for emergency services, critical distributional analysis will be required to be performed in order to model and understand the impacts of a new replacement levy on our community.

The former Government's ultimately unsuccessful fire and emergency services levy reforms were criticised because they did not sufficiently consider the impact on particular parts of our community. This happened in large part due to a lack of detailed information to inform the reform process. Early access to insurance data will therefore allow distributional analysis to be performed. This will in turn enable the reform to be designed in such a way that the new replacement levy does not unfairly impact any one group of property owners.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. The Government's emergency services funding reform does not currently fall within the scope of the Treasurer's current power to obtain information under section 47 (1) of the Emergency Services Levy Act 2017. Given the critical importance of the data for tax modelling and distributional impact analysis, the proposed amendments seek to grant the Treasurer the authority to require information from insurers, including unit record data of insurance policyholders, for the purposes of evaluating and implementing reforms to emergency services funding. To help ensure that insurers comply with the Treasurer's request, it is proposed that insurers that fail to provide the requested data will be guilty of an offence and liable to a penalty. Given the extent of the powers and nature of the data, the authority will last for a short time only. The power will commence on assent and will not extend past 31 December 2026.

The Government also understands and respects that there will be privacy concerns regarding the personal information being held. To address those concerns, the bill includes several privacy protections. This includes the requirement that no personal information is disclosed outside of the Treasury and that any personal information collected through the process would not be retained by the Treasury beyond 30 June 2028. Treasury has also consulted the Information and Privacy Commission in the development of the bill. The Legislation Review Committee has examined the bill and reported its findings in *Legislation Review Digest No. 11/58*, dated 19 March, and noted that the bill may impact privacy rights, reporting as follows:

The Bill proposes amendments to section 47 of the *Emergency Services Levy Act 2017* to allow the Treasury Secretary or a person employed in Treasury to collect personal information from insurers. Such information can be collected for the purposes of 'evaluating and implementing reforms to the way in which emergency services are funded'.

The Bill may therefore impact individual's privacy rights by requiring that insurers provide personal information for collection and use, as an individual's personal information is otherwise protected from disclosure and use under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*. The Committee is particularly concerned that these provisions would empower the Executive to require disclosure of personal information by insurers without any requirement to notify a person that their information will be disclosed or given an opportunity to object.

Having made that observation, the committee concluded as follows:

However, the Committee acknowledges that the proposed amendments would allow the Treasurer to obtain necessary data to inform emergency services funding reform. The Committee further acknowledges that the Bill includes privacy protections, including restricting disclosure of information obtained to Treasury employees only, requiring the disposal of the information by 30 June 2028, and sunseting the provisions that empower personal information collection by December 2026. In the circumstances, the Committee makes no further comment.

In relation to the committee's findings, the Government believes it has robust privacy protections in place for the reasons that I have already outlined. I also note that the digest, in explaining how it makes and defines its conclusions, made the following statement:

Where the Committee concludes to **make no further comment** on an identified issue in the report, the Committee considers that the issue may technically engage with the criteria under section 8A or 9 of the Act but, given counterbalancing considerations (e.g. legislated safeguards), it is unlikely in practice to raise the issues under the relevant section. The Committee invites but does not otherwise require the Member with carriage (for Bill reports) or the responsible Minister (for regulation reports) to comment on these identified issues.

I hope these comments have addressed the committee's concerns further. This bill will enable the Treasurer to require insurers to provide important insurance data to inform the development of policy for the emergency services funding reform. Modelling and distributional analysis is critical to ensuring that the reform achieves the right outcomes for our community and to ensure that New South Wales's emergency services are funded by a fairer, more efficient, simpler and sustainable system. This bill is a small part of the necessary mechanics to enable the reform process. In relation to those reforms, the Government welcomes and encourages public consultation to inform the design, scope, features and transition arrangements for reforming the emergency services funding system. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Before I call the next speaker, I say a special hello to our beautiful friends from Survivor's R Us in the gallery. They do a wonderful job for the community. I also acknowledge everybody else in the gallery, who will be formally welcomed by the Speaker before question time.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (10:53):** I too take the opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful work of the team at Survivor's R Us and thank them on behalf of a very grateful community. The Opposition supports the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024. The bill will amend the Emergency Services Levy Act 2017 to permit the Treasurer to require insurers to provide information for the purposes of evaluating and implementing reforms to the way in which emergency services are funded. The bill replicates the provisions already in the Act that similarly permitted the Treasurer to require insurers to provide information for the purposes of the evaluation and implementation of the 2017 emergency services levy reform. The Government released a consultation paper on 10 April 2024, with comments due by 22 May 2024.

The consultation paper canvasses four options for a new funding system for emergency services to replace the emergency services levy on insurance policies with a new property tax. All four models will involve a forever property tax on all properties, including the family home. The consultation paper suggests making the property tax high enough to also cover the current contributions by local councils and the State Government, which provides for 26.3 per cent of the funding for emergency services. It says that "transitioning these contributions into the replacement levy could make the system much simpler". The bill will assist the Treasurer with relevant data as he calculates just how high his forever tax on the family home will be. The insurance data may also be relevant to planning transition arrangements as the emergency services levy is replaced with the new property tax. The Opposition's support for the bill does not necessarily indicate its position on the specific proposal the Government finally adopts to replace the emergency services levy, which the Opposition will assess on its merits when details are made public.

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (10:55):** I make a contribution to debate on the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024. Twenty-five years ago, I was working for a large Australian insurance company. We were talking about the emergency services levy and how distortionary and problematic it was then. It is pleasing that 25 years later the Minns Labor Government is undertaking reform in a considered and measured way. There are three fundamental principles that underpin the reform, of which the bill is the first step. The first fundamental principle is that emergency services play an enormous role for residents of New South Wales. We saw the role that emergency services played during the Black Summer bushfires in 2019-20 and the floods that impacted so many communities in New South Wales through 2021. Emergency services funding needs to be equitable and sustainable so that emergency services can be stable and have the highest capability to respond to need in the future.

The second fundamental principle is the critical role that insurance plays in society. Without insurance, individuals, businesses and communities have no way of managing their risk. Imagine starting a business or buying a home, car or major asset and having no way to insure against the catastrophic loss of that asset. Without insurance, economic activity in our community and society would essentially grind to a halt. The third fundamental principle is the increasing severity and frequency of extreme climate-related weather events. Over the past couple of decades, the frequency and severity of extreme storms and floods has increased, which increases the need for both our emergency services and affordable insurance. Those are the three fundamental principles that underpin this reform.

There are three reasons for this reform. The first is that the emergency services levy is fundamentally unfair because it is levied only on those who take out property insurance. Those who choose not to take out property insurance do not have to pay the levy, yet they enjoy the benefits of our emergency services. In other words, they



are able to free-ride on the insurance premiums paid and the emergency service levy contributions paid by those who do take out insurance. The second reason why this area needs reform is that the emergency services levy drives up the cost of insurance and it drives underinsurance. The emergency services levy adds about 18 per cent to premiums for residential property insurance and about 34 per cent to commercial property insurance. Already this year, insurance premiums have risen about 25 per cent due to rising reinsurance costs and, as I said, the increasing frequency and severity of extreme climate-driven weather events. The soaring cost of premiums drives underinsurance in New South Wales.

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

#### *Visitors*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** We have many guests joining us today. I extend a very warm welcome to guests of the member for Blacktown, a delegation led by the Hon. Darlington Dzikamai Chigumbu, MP, the member for Budiriro South in Zimbabwe. I also acknowledge and welcome His Excellency Mr Joe Mhishi, Ambassador of Zimbabwe. It was wonderful to meet His Excellency and some of the delegates this morning. I know the member for Blacktown has spent a lot of time with them.

I welcome Taylah Cowley, a guest of the member for Blue Mountains. Taylah is a year 11 work experience student from St Columba's Catholic College. I acknowledge guests of the member for Camden: Iain Richard-Evan, Con Diomis and Timothy Logue from the Camden RSL sub-branch. It was very nice to meet them earlier today. I also welcome members of the Eugowra Promotion and Progress Association Inc, Sean Haynes, David Herbert and Liz Mitchell, who are guests of the member for Orange. Also joining us are guests of the member for Pittwater from the RSL LifeCare ANZAC Village Narrabeen, including the events and activities manager, Suzie Spencer. Welcome.

I welcome Scott Hinks, guest of the member for Hawkesbury. I acknowledge guests of the member for Riverstone, students from Riverstone High School who are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the Parliamentary Education team. I also welcome to the Parliament student leaders from high schools across New South Wales who are attending the Secondary Schools Student Leadership Program. It was lovely to be able to say a few words of welcome to them this morning. I can assure them, as did other members, that we really appreciate them stepping up into those leadership positions. I look forward to the new generation of young leaders coming through in New South Wales. I hope they have a wonderful day.

Finally, I acknowledge guests of the member for Lake Macquarie: members and volunteers from Survivor's R Us, and students from Toronto High School who are participating in the Secondary Schools Student Leadership Program conducted by the Parliamentary Education team. I particularly welcome my friend Mark McConville, the principal of Toronto High School, who met with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning yesterday. It is wonderful to have teachers of such calibre in New South Wales. I also welcome Falak Othman and Warda Othman, guests of the member for Coffs Harbour. It was lovely to meet them this morning and to talk about all things Coffs Harbour, my birthplace. To all visitors, you are very welcome here in the Legislative Assembly of Australia's first Parliament.

#### *Announcements*

### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS**

**The SPEAKER:** I inform the House that permission has been given for photography to take place in the Chamber during question time today.

#### *Members*

### **REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I inform the House that the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport.

#### *Question Time*

### **EDUCATION FUNDING**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:08):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Last year the Minister announced \$1.4 billion of cuts to education funding. Now that New South

Wales will receive \$1.9 billion less than forecast in GST payments for this year alone, will the Minister rule out further cuts to education funding?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:08):** This is a government that was elected to fix the mess in our schools that was left by those opposite. So I can assure—

**Mr Matt Kean:** That doesn't sound like a rule out.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am answering the question. I can assure the people of New South Wales that this Government will continue to invest record funding into education, because the last—

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We have put more funding into schools than the Opposition ever did. We will continue to do that, regardless of what black magic the Commonwealth Grants Commission recommends to the Federal Government. Regardless of what happens, we will continue to invest record funding in our schools because that is what this Government believes in. Members opposite have absolutely no credibility in asking questions, after what they did to public education. We inherited the worst teacher shortage crisis this State has ever seen.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** In just 12 months we have invested so much in our workforce that the teachers in our public schools are now the highest paid in the country. We have made almost 17,000—

**Mrs Wendy Tuckerman:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. Will the Minister answer the question about whether she will rule out making cuts to the Education budget? She has already taken out \$150 million.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. I could not hear the Minister due to the number of interjections—mainly from Opposition members with a bit of help from Government members. The Minister has the call.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** If that is all that Opposition members have, it says a lot about them. The Government can talk about what it is doing in public schools each and every day of the week. We were elected to fix the mess the Opposition left us. Members opposite are just wrong. We are investing record amounts in public schools. We will continue to do that. We will invest in our teachers whom members opposite drove to the brink. We will continue to build schools where needed and where members opposite refused to build them for 12 years, while growing populations exploded.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Our Government is committed to public education.

#### COMMUNITY SAFETY AND NSW POLICE FORCE

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (11:11):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on what action the Government is taking to increase community safety across New South Wales?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:12):** I thank the member for Fairfield for his question. He is a former Australian Federal Police officer and now a member of Parliament. I also acknowledge that the member for Fairfield and the member for Leppington played an important role in Wakeley a couple of weeks ago. It has not been heralded in the media, but they calmed down a combustible situation within that community, and I am sure community leaders across New South Wales genuinely appreciate it.

When it comes to recruitment and retention, the NSW Police Force needed a change. The four years prior to March 2023 saw record numbers of police officers leave the profession and some of the lowest recruitment numbers at the Goulburn academy in decades. To put it into perspective, in the past decade New South Wales increased its police officer numbers by 2,100 while, over the same period, in a smaller police force in a smaller State, Victoria increased raw numbers by 3,800, which is almost twice that. Between 2019 and 2023, almost 2,500 constables left the Police Force, along with 700 sergeants, which is very damaging and difficult. Those sergeants are experienced police officers, often with decades worth of work practice under their belts, who play a crucial role in mentoring and bringing through the ranks young constables joining the profession. If we lose that depth of experience, it is not just a headcount issue; we lose the expertise we require in a large State like New South Wales.

As a result of those confronting statistics, six months ago the Government decided on two crucial reforms, pushed by the police Minister and the police commissioner. The first was the removal of the wages cap in

New South Wales. That necessary decision was based on the fundamental concept that we cannot have world-class public services without people doing the jobs. We want to attract the best and brightest to public service in this State. The second reform was the establishment of a study subsidy for those undertaking the often gruelling job of training to become a New South Wales police officer in Goulburn. If we want to increasingly attract mid-career candidates who have decided to change professions and become a police officer, we must recognise that they often have responsibilities at home. They may have children, mortgages or rent to pay for. [*Extension of time*]

As a result, they need a study subsidy to undertake the training at the Goulburn academy. The Police Association of New South Wales requested that subsidy for a long time. It was routinely rejected by the former Minister for Police, who is the former leader of the National Party and perhaps its future leader. We do not know. They tell me there is one vote in it. It is pretty close. The request was rejected by the previous Government. I must say that the results of the change are encouraging. In fact, class 364 is at capacity, with 350 recruits. The Goulburn academy is full to the gills. That provides enormous momentum and energy in the NSW Police Force, because serving police officers know that new recruits are ready to join the ranks of a profession worth joining. As a result of the change, we have seen a 26 per cent increase in applications from people deciding to join the best police force in the world. That is good news for New South Wales.

The message for all members of Parliament is that we cannot expect a turnaround in New South Wales services until we change pay and conditions. The dark old days of a wages cap in New South Wales is no solution when it comes to policing, health, hospitals or education. I have monitored Opposition members closely over the past six months, and they routinely issue media releases condemning one pay outcome or award negotiation or another. Absent from their criticism is whether they will bring back a wages cap in New South Wales. The truth of the matter is that they know only one way, and under the Coalition a wages cap will be back in this State.

#### SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (11:17):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will school administrators be sacking support staff to accommodate the Minister's budget cuts?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will come to order. The Deputy Premier has the call.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:17):** No. That answers the question. I will be clear about what we have done in schools before I go into the lunacy of the Opposition asking questions about school staff. It is hilarious that the Liberals and The Nationals ask questions of this Government about staff in schools after what they did to them. We are encouraging principals to put extra executives into classrooms so that they are teaching children. That is not support staff; that is not school learning support officers. For the benefit of the Opposition, they are different staff members. We have made very clear to principals, time and again, that it is not to happen. That is the answer to the question of the member for Hawkesbury.

It gives me an opportunity to say what we have done for support staff. Together with teachers, we have made 17,000 of them permanent. The Opposition provided a regime that kept them temporary—for decades, in some cases—and now we have made them permanent. Now we are going through a process of ensuring that those teachers and support staff who have gone from temporary to permanent actually fill the vacancies left to us by the Coalition.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** And most are women.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Canterbury is right; the vast majority are women. Let me be clear: We have inherited a system where the shortage of teachers and school learning support officers means that there are 10,000 merged and cancelled classes, and this Government is not one to do nothing about that. This Government will put teaching and learning at the heart of what we do in education, which means we will cover those classes and support the workforce.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are putting record investment into public schools. We are paying the workers in our schools, including support staff, record amounts. Maybe next time members opposite are at one of their schools, they can tell them that they do not support their pay rise, that they actually want the wages cap back for the support workers and teachers in our schools. Why not tell them that next time they are at school? The Leader of the Opposition was at Sutherland this morning. Why did he not tell the teachers and support staff there that he did not want them to get the pay rise this Government has given them? That pay rise is ensuring we can get on top of the shortage that has impacted our kids.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (11:20):** My question is addressed to the exceptional Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is strengthening law and order across New South Wales?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:21):** I thank the exceptional Parliamentary Secretary. This Government is absolutely committed to making sure that our community is safer. Unlike members opposite and their fearless leader, who admitted they had unfinished business with domestic violence, we on this side are getting on with the job. Unfinished business—really? One might have thought that, having had 12 years in government, they might have finished some business. But we have repeatedly seen horrific incidents across New South Wales this year, and people, especially women, rightly expect their government to act.

That is exactly what we are doing. We are acting swiftly and comprehensively. We are implementing critical reforms on domestic and family violence, passing laws to tackle knife crime and launching major recruitment reforms to fill the many hundreds of police vacancies left by the "unfinished business" group on the other side of the Chamber. Yesterday we announced a comprehensive legislative package to tackle domestic and family violence, supported by the excellent work the police are doing through the domestic violence reform project, including initiatives like Operation Amaro, the domestic violence registry and the excellent domestic violence officers who are working in police commands to support victims in our communities.

Just this morning we announced our knife crime legislative package. These new powers will give New South Wales police officers the opportunity to use wands on people to get dangerous knives off our streets, which is just what the community is calling for. Through operations like Foil, they are seizing thousands of knives. Just last year almost 4,000 knives were removed from our streets to keep them safer. Police are doing a great job in our community. By giving police the tools to wand on our streets, we will see even more dangerous knives removed. We know that it works, because it is working in Queensland. We will not be stopping there. We will be getting on and getting the job done. Just this morning we announced our recruitment scheme for experienced officers, the professional mobility program. Previously, serving police officers in other jurisdictions had to start from scratch if they wanted to join the NSW Police Force. [*Extension of time*]

This will allow experienced police from other jurisdictions to come here and be police officers in New South Wales, at rank. We have also announced the "You should be a cop in your hometown" program. This will encourage people who live in regional areas to stay in their communities and be police officers with all of the support they have around them, including their families and the connections with their communities. This is a game changer both for recruiting police in our regions and boosting police numbers in those communities.

All this is in addition to our historic announcement to pay police recruits, which the Premier just took us through. We have seen a 26 per cent uptick in applications of people wanting to join the NSW Police Force, the best in the world. As the Premier told us, class 364 is oversubscribed. How long has it been since we heard of such a thing? The whole time I have been in this Parliament, I have never heard it. That is for sure. All we had to do was to have a bit of imagination, the help of the Police Association, the great work of the police commissioner and a government that supports the cops here in New South Wales. We will be seeing them on our streets by Christmas. We are getting the job done. I said from the get-go that recruitment and retention will be a serious focus for us. One, remove the wages cap—yes, we have done that. Two, pay recruits—we have done that. Three, more cops in regional areas and making it attractive for them to be there. Four, recruit experienced police. I say to the House to watch this space because we are unlike those opposite, who left us nothing but hundreds of vacancies and a big pile of unfinished business.

## HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (11:26):** My question is directed to the Premier. With all of the focus of the Government on boosting housing supply, it is crucial that any new homes be not only genuinely affordable and sustainable but also accessible to the nearly 20 per cent of people living with disability in New South Wales. Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory have all committed to implementing the silver accessibility standards laid out in the 2022 National Construction Code. Will the Premier and his Government finally commit to implementing the silver standard in New South Wales to ensure that all new homes we build are accessible?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:27):** I thank the member for Newtown for her question. We are weighing it up. The Minister for Disability Inclusion is looking at that issue, alongside the Commonwealth's Disability Royal Commission, for a coordinated government response across all departments, including Housing. I note that other States and Territories—Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern

Territory and the Australian Capital Territory—have signed up to the silver standard, but my understanding is all of those jurisdictions have delayed implementation, notwithstanding they have agreed to the guidelines. The reason for the delay in implementation is cost, and that will have to be taken into consideration. That is not a no. Disability inclusion is fundamentally important, as important as access to housing as a human right in our community.

I can report to the House, however, that the Government, in coordination with Landcom, is ensuring that at least a portion of all of its homes is up to the silver standard. As part of the pattern book program being led by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, we are looking at including the silver standard and, potentially, a gold standard when it comes to disability inclusion so that a standardised, off-the-shelf housing project, consistent with those national guidelines, can be built. I can also say that the change has been made for new social housing builds that the New South Wales Government is responsible for. But, obviously, there is more to do.

### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (11:28):** My question is addressed to the exceptional Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on the State's housing needs?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:29):** I thank the member for Cabramatta for the question. I remind him that when my mum gives advice on how to frame a question, he does not always have to take it. In updating the House on the State's housing needs, it is important to reflect on how Sydney ended up as one of the least affordable cities on the planet. We should take a look at how we ended up with rapidly growing prices in regional New South Wales, with rents at record highs and consistently low vacancy rates. That is largely the result of a planning system that was not working to support our housing and job needs and aspirations. When we came to—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

It does not take Opposition members long, does it? They do not want to hear about their record on police. They do not want to hear about their record on teachers. They do not want to hear about their record on transport. They most certainly do not want to hear about their record on housing, because it is a dismal one. They stopped housing at every opportunity. It is fascinating that medium-density housing was not allowed to be built even on 80 per cent of the land that was zoned for medium-density housing. The former Government had five Ministers, multiple agencies and a confused and confusing planning system. That is why the Government ended up with nearly 100,000 homes to catch up on.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The situation was that 30- to 40-year-olds were packing up and giving up on Sydney—they were leaving—and there was a record social housing waiting list. The Government has implemented a plan to address and confront the housing crisis in New South Wales. We know that housing needs enabling infrastructure to support it, so we introduced infrastructure contribution reforms to make sure there is a funding source that aligns housing with infrastructure delivery. Opposition members opposed that, despite it being part and parcel of their own re-election platform. They opposed it!

The Government set about reforming planning controls to allow more homes to be delivered around 37 train stations from the Hunter through to the Illawarra that had the existing water, wastewater and transport infrastructure capacity to support more housing. What did members opposite do? They opposed it. The Government introduced master planning for more homes around eight larger transport precincts for accelerated housing delivery, and members opposite opposed it. We introduced reforms that would support the delivery of both market and affordable housing so more places are delivered more quickly. Members opposite opposed it. The Government is introducing more housing types back into the New South Wales planning system through low- and mid-rise reforms that will allow for greater diversity. That includes dual occupancy, terraces, townhouses, small residential apartment buildings—*[Extension of time]*

Those were part and parcel of our housing past; we want them to be options for our housing future. Members opposite oppose it. The Government has been working with councils. Twelve of the 13 councils came on board with the Government's Transport Oriented Development sites across the Hunter to the Illawarra, and I thank them for it. They understand that they need be part and parcel of the solution—part of the national housing agreement. On the face of it, the Leader of the Opposition understands that as well. On the ABC's *Stateline* he said:

The Premier should be giving local councils the chance to develop their own plans with strict time limits and sanctions but at the end of the day you can't let councils stand in the way of appropriate increases in housing supply in their neighbourhoods.

That is exactly what the Government has done through its planning reforms. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his endorsement of the Government's approach. I really appreciate it. But he still will not pull his backbench members into line. He will not pull the member for Wahroonga into line. He is happy to let Opposition members spread misinformation and run scare campaigns because, ultimately, the Opposition is opposed to more housing for young people, families and essential workers like the hundreds of police the Government is recruiting and the thousands of teachers it is making permanent. The Government will stand up for those workers.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** We will make sure that they have a safe and secure home. The Government's planning reforms will deliver more well-located, well-designed and well-built homes across New South Wales. Those homes will work for families of all types, for all levels of income and for all stages in people's lives. Those are the sorts of homes that are already in our suburbs. We need and want more of the sorts of homes that people already live in. There is a "coalition of the unwilling" on the other side of the Chamber. Opposition for opposition's sake is in their DNA. When presented with a problem, their default is "no" instead of looking at "yes" as an option. New South Wales residents now and in the future need members opposite to support measures to confront the housing crisis, rather than just pretending to do so.

### KNIFE CRIME

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (11:34):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. In her previous answer, the Minister said that she wanted to tackle knife crime. Apart from on public transport, why does the proposed Jack's law fail to give police extra powers to act until there is an incident?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will cease debating across the Chamber. The Premier will come to order. The member for Wahroonga will come to order.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:35):** It is a very serious matter, Mr Speaker. People have lost their lives.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Keira will come to order. I am sure that the Minister can answer the question.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** It is a very serious matter. I begin by acknowledging the victims of recent incidents. We in the Chamber must remember that lives were lost. We never want to politicise these matters. There have been incidents at Doonside, Bondi, Wakeley, Coffs Harbour, Lake Macquarie and, most recently, just last week in Alexandria. I acknowledge and thank the Beasleys, Brett and Belinda, whom I first met at the Police Ministers Council in June last year and again in April this year. I reiterate what I have said before. Everybody deserves to feel safe in public, and that is why the Government has announced a suite of measures in relation to knife crime. The NSW Police Force also conducts regular operations, which I have also spoken about in this place many times. Operation Foil and Operation Pivot have been very successful. Removing dangerous knives from our streets is an absolute priority for the NSW Police Force.

**Mr Paul Toole:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear the point of order. The Minister will resume her seat.

[Interruption]

The member for Bathurst will step back from the table. The Minister will resume her seat while I hear the point of order.

**Mr Paul Toole:** My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about an incident occurring. Why do we have to wait for a violent knife crime to occur before action is taken?

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. There is no need for the member to make a speech. The Minister will address the question more directly. The member for Bathurst will resume his seat. The Premier will stop inciting the member for Bathurst. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** It would not be so disappointing except for the seriousness of the matter that we are discussing. The Government has developed legislation modelled on Queensland's Jack's law. As I have said, it will give police powers to wand or scan people for knives without a warrant in designated areas, including transport hubs, shopping centres and other crowded places. We said from the get-go that we would model these—

**Mr Paul Toole:** I request an extension of time for the Minister.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I am not going to give him that respect.

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I cannot believe those opposite are doing this about such a serious matter. You should pull them into line, Mr Speaker. It is outrageous.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Those tactics were a bit off script.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hornsby will not interject when the Speaker is on his feet attempting to bring order to the House. The member should apologise. Members' recent behaviour has been appalling. The Minister answered the question. She is not obliged to respond further or to use words prescribed by the Opposition. The Minister has fulfilled her obligation. Members will come to order. Order will be maintained throughout the rest of question time. Members who behave in a disorderly manner will be removed from the Chamber.

### EXPLICIT TEACHING

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:39):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister of Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the New South Wales Government's commitment to evidence-based teaching is helping improve student outcomes in the classroom?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:39):** As we heard in the Dorothy Dixers I was given by the Opposition in question time earlier, this Government inherited a system with student outcomes in decline. It is no wonder that is the case, because when the Opposition was in Government it suppressed teachers' wages. It oversaw record vacancies to the point that 10,000 classes were merged and cancelled every day and it burdened schools with overwhelming levels of administration. This Government is determined to turn that situation around. That means using this novel idea to members opposite of listening to educators and experts on where their evidence-based practice is up to, and where we need to act to support our educational leaders and teachers in delivering evidence-based teaching practice.

Educators will know that what we call explicit teaching is at the heart of this. Study after study has shown that it works. The teachers of New South Wales now have a government that is committed to supporting them to roll teaching out in the classroom. It is a key part of the Government's plan for public education and we want to see it used in every classroom. There are many examples of where it has worked well in New South Wales schools. In particular, I call out Principal Manisha Gazula, who has recently been in the media speaking about her commitment to the evidence-based approach of explicit teaching and how much it has lifted results, particularly in reading, at her primary school of Marsden Road Public School in the member for Liverpool's electorate. When she first became the principal she was rightly concerned that students were going to high school without a sufficient reading ability, so much so that year 7 children were at year 5 levels.

Explicit teaching turned that around and, as a government, we are committed to rolling that out across classrooms in New South Wales. Explicit teaching is about clearly explaining to students why they are learning something, how it connects to the sequence of what they have learned already, checking for understanding, and what success looks like when they have learnt it. The evidence is here on explicit teaching. [*Extension of time*]

We know it works. Unlike members opposite when they were in Government, this Government is listening to educators, like the member for Camden, who know what they are doing and have expert practice in rolling out something that works in classrooms. The fact that we got to the point that explicit teaching is seen as a revolutionary idea is a little bit worrying, but we are making sure it is rolled out. We inherited a decade or so of choose your own adventure. The Government is clearly putting its money where its mouth is. It made sure that on the pupil-free day at the beginning of term 2 it provided well-resourced and evidence-based professional learning for every teacher in New South Wales on how to use explicit teaching in their classrooms.

That is the stuff that is going to lift student outcomes in New South Wales, together with getting on top of the teacher shortage. We are making sure that our teachers are resourced and supported in the evidence-based practices that work to ensure that our kids can read, write, and add up so they have the skills to go forward with their lives. We are giving them the life-changing gift of education. The Government will make sure that the rollout of the new curriculum is content-rich, because content is what the teachers in explicit teaching need to equip our young children with the skills they need for a life of success. With our commitment to explicit teaching we will have more confident learners and better-resourced teachers. I am proud of what this Government is doing. We have listened to educators because they know what works in their classrooms.

### UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ANTISEMITISM PROTESTS

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:44):** My question is directed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. What steps has the Minister taken to combat antisemitism on university campuses in New South Wales?

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:45):** I thank the shadow Minister for his question. There is obviously a very big difference between a university campus in New South Wales and a school in New South Wales in that university campuses are managed by the universities, which are independent of our State. But they are subject to the laws that we have in New South Wales, and they are subject to the strong positions that this Government has taken to ensure that we make the best possible efforts to eliminate hate speech and the sorts of things which might incite violence in our community.

As the police Minister has mentioned on many occasions, the NSW Police Force has worked very hard to ensure that it is enforcing those laws in our communities, and that extends to our university campuses. I have spoken to a number of the vice-chancellors about the work they are doing on their campuses in terms of balancing the right to protest with the importance of not allowing people to incite hatred and violence. I am confident they are doing that to the best of their abilities and, when they need support, they are able to call on the New South Wales police for assistance.

### CHILD SURGERY

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (11:46):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on what the New South Wales Government is doing to reduce the number of children whose planned surgery is overdue?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:47):** I thank the member for Coogee. The House owes her a great deal of thanks for her leadership over some very difficult weeks that our State has just been through. Having been up close, I know that the work she did to support her community during that time was most appreciated by her community and the people of New South Wales. Many members would be aware that when we came to Government in March last year about 14,000 people, in total, had waited longer than was clinically recommended to have surgery. But there was a figure within that which was extremely concerning to me, as a legislator and as a parent. That number was 1,086 children who were waiting longer than clinically recommended to receive surgery.

I do not think there is a more stressful or anxious time in a parent's or grandparent's life than when they are waiting for a sick child to have surgery. I set a task to bring those figures of 14,000 and 1,086 down. The Premier and I established the Surgical Care Taskforce, which was designed to look at best practice across our 15 local health districts and four specialty networks to find ways to increase the number of people being seen, and to bring those two figures down. Today I am delighted to inform the House that we have reduced that by 92 per cent. From a high of just under 1,100, we are now down to 86 children waiting for surgery. That is a remarkable achievement for a government and workforce that are focused on delivering outcomes for the sickest children in New South Wales.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** This change comes on the back of an incredible amount of work by clinicians, surgeons, allied health workers, nurses, midwifery staff and hospital management. They have had a laser-like focus to work with the Government to bring the waitlist numbers down. [*Extension of time*]

We looked at and, in a sense, micromanaged the scheduling and operating. We worked closely with surgeons. We reached out and engaged with our private hospital networks. We ensured locum doctors are coming in to work on some of those specialty cases. We made sure that we are operating on weekends and public holidays to drive down that list. What does that mean in real terms? This morning the member for Coogee and I met with Freya, a nurse unit manager at the Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick. She talked about the difference the change has made in the lives of the children and families she cares for. She talked about the delight in ringing up a family, parent or carer to say, "That surgery is now ready to go. We have a date. That surgeon is ready to operate on your child." It makes a difference for patients like Amy, a child who has already experienced three lower limb operations. She has spent a large part of her teenage years in hospital.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. This is an important topic. We are all pleased that the elective surgery waitlist is reduced. But the Minister has failed to acknowledge—

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Order! I call the member for Hornsby to order for the first time. I call the member for Hornsby to order for the second time.



**Mr RYAN PARK:** We drove the number of people on the waitlist down from 14,000 to 2,000. There were more than 1,000 sick kids waiting for surgery. That number is down to 86.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Dubbo to order for the second time. I call the member for Hornsby to order for the third time.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** We will continue to focus on wait times because we have to. There will always be waitlists, but this Government is determined to deliver the very best paediatric health care, which our sickest kids need and deserve.

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (11:53):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister allow any cuts or delays to the rollout of public transport infrastructure as a result of the slashing of GST revenue from the Albanese Labor Government?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:53):** I thank the member for Holsworthy for her question. In last night's Federal budget there was \$2.5 billion of new funding for roads and transport infrastructure commitments. While there are budgetary challenges, the State and Federal governments are working together to deliver the trains, buses and roads that we need, particularly in Western Sydney. I know it is a foreign idea to members opposite, but this Government was left with a massive mess. A brand-new airport is emerging from the paddocks. It will be spectacular. A new metro line will be available when planes land.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The member for Holsworthy asked a very specific question about ruling out cuts or delays. The Minister is not answering the question—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease debating across the Chamber. What is the point of order?

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister is not being directly relevant. The question was about delays or cuts.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be directly relevant to the question.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I started my answer with the cold hard fact—which those opposite might not like—that there is investment and new money to deliver transport and road infrastructure. As a result, the State and Federal governments will continue to work together to fix the mess that was left by those opposite. That means more investment, not less.

**The SPEAKER:** Has the Minister completed her answer?

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** No, I am happy to continue.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** The Minister is misleading the House.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Order! Members will come to order. I asked the Minister to be directly relevant. It is not for the Speaker to direct the Minister how to answer the question. I upheld the previous point of order from the member for Dubbo. The Minister will complete her answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** As I said, there is more investment, not less. In fact, as I stated in the House only last week, there is more investment in the critical roads that the former Government failed to build. We are building roads for people to access jobs at the new Western Sydney airport. This Government will ensure the fastest growing part of Western Sydney can access the new Western Sydney airport. There is \$500 million for Mamre Road. There is \$400 million for Elizabeth Drive. There is \$260 million for Richmond Road. There is \$220 million for Garfield Road East. There is \$123 million for Memorial Avenue.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** I wish to put something on the record.

**The SPEAKER:** No. The member for Holsworthy should not take coaching tips from the member for Hornsby.

**COST OF LIVING**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (11:58):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government. Will the Minister please update the House on how the Government is helping communities access cost-of-living supports?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (11:58):** I thank the member for Penrith for her question and recognise the absolutely phenomenal amount of effort she puts in for her local communities. Like all members, she represents a community that is struggling with the cost of living. One of the cost-of-living pressures is tolls. There is a lot of talk from those opposite, but this Government is taking action.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I am putting aside the background noise coming from those opposite and will give members a bit of a history lesson on how the Government is addressing the cost-of-living pressures and supporting families who are doing it tough. It starts with an acknowledgement that families are doing it tough right across the State and right across the country.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** You would not be the person who gets up to say that things are hunky-dory. They are not. People are doing it tough. What we are doing as a government to support those families, to support those communities and to support individuals—

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Again, we have background noise from people who had 12 years. We listened to them; they can now listen to what we are doing. Maybe they can learn something and actually realise.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The Minister will be heard silence.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** We have talked about commitments to supporting people through a range of things but I will start with one. Under the previous Government—the current Opposition, and rightfully so—Sydney became the most tolled city on earth. There is not one part of Sydney that can be reached without going onto a toll road. Those opposite may want to deny it but it is an undeniable fact that Sydney became, under their watch, the most tolled city on earth. We took to the election—

**The SPEAKER:** I place the member for Riverstone on two calls to order. I place the member for North Shore on two calls to order. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** The problem is when we actually talk about things that are directly relevant those opposite do not want to listen; they want to interrupt. The fact is this city became the most tolled the city on earth under those opposite. This Government made a commitment—and we have rolled it out—to the \$60 toll cap. There are people, particularly in the western suburbs of Sydney, who cannot get to their places of employment simply because they need to pay a toll anywhere they go.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Every single time the former Government put its hand in people's pockets and took money out just so people could get from one place to the other.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

The previous Government wants to divert to other things. I will give you some statistics about the \$60 toll cap. In one month alone, the commitment this Government made—

**Ms Karen McKeown:** I seek additional information.

**The SPEAKER:** If the Minister is up to it, an extra two minutes is granted.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Give me five, Mr Speaker! There is a commitment of \$561 million over two years. That is a commitment this Government made to support people with toll relief—to give relief to people across Western Sydney and other areas where people have no choice but to take a toll road when trying to support their families. The thing is, those opposite talk about surface roads but there were no choices. I am pleased to say that, in the first quarterly period, \$46.8 million for 350,000 toll account users is there to be claimed. In one month alone—this shows how good a policy it is and how much people need it—\$13.5 million has been claimed through the toll cap rebate. Those opposite can talk, complain and whinge but the fact is that the people have spoken. In one month \$13.5 million was claimed as a result of the toll cap.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** The Government is also supporting people through the Seniors Energy Rebate in partnership with the Commonwealth Government. It supports seniors who are having to make choices between turning the heater on or going cold.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** What about the small business electricity bills? This Government took \$650 off small business electricity bills. Those opposite left all of the small businesses in New South Wales out in the cold and offered no support whatsoever. In addition to that, this Government has provided \$2,000 to support fertility treatment for those people who are having trouble starting a family. Nobody would be complaining about that because it is a really important support mechanism. I could talk for hours; instead, I remind members that Service NSW is at Parliament House from 1.00 p.m. today to help members with questions about rebates so that they can pass it on to their constituents and continue to offer that support. It is a good thing to get that information to constituents.

### STAYING HOME LEAVING VIOLENCE PROGRAM

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (12:03):** My question is directed to the Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. The Staying Home Leaving Violence package is a vitally important element to keeping domestic violence victims safe in their own homes; however, getting the security upgrades installed and completed is time-critical. Will the new package outline an urgent time frame within which these upgrades to properties must be completed?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:04):** I thank the member for Orange for his question. I know that he is deeply embedded in his community and that his community is experiencing quite a bit of pain at the moment. My thoughts are with that community. Last August I attended a domestic and family violence round table in Orange convened by Councillor Melanie McDonell. At that time I heard from victim-survivors their concerns about the devastating impact of domestic and family violence on families and the many challenges that women and children experience in the bush, and in regional centres more broadly. Staying Home Leaving Violence is a significant component of the package announced by the Premier last week.

The Government is investing \$48 million to expand specialist domestic and family violence case management services right across the State, including expanding Staying Home Leaving Violence to the remaining 37 local government areas. About 70 per cent of those 37 local council areas that do not currently have access to Staying Home Leaving Violence are in regional and rural New South Wales. Orange already has access to Staying Home Leaving Violence, which is why the member for Orange has knowledge of it. The program allows women to leave an abusive relationship and to live safely while remaining in their home.

The most critical and immediate step in the Staying Home Leaving Violence program is effective safety planning. That safety planning looks different depending upon the individual circumstances of the victim-survivors. It includes assistance with access to financial planning to help to navigate legal processes and provide security upgrades to properties to support increased protection. The key is keeping women safe. We know there are challenges in regional and areas. Staying Home Leaving Violence services leverage their relationships with providers to be able to install security upgrades urgently, meanwhile keeping women safe in refuges or other temporary accommodation until those upgrades can happen.

As a response for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, obviously safety is the primary objective of the Staying Home Leaving Violence program. The program was evaluated in 2022 as being successful in achieving housing stability and enhanced wellbeing for women and children affected by domestic and family violence. It is a long-running program. [*Extension of time*]

It began as a pilot in 2006 and the 2022 evaluation found the program to "effectively contribute to the long-term safety and housing stability of women and families who have left a violent and abusive relationship". In relation to the expansion announced last week, the Department of Communities and Justice is working through the expansion process as the program will and should vary for different communities and in different regions. Indeed, one of the things that I have come to better understand since coming into government is how flexible the program really is. The offerings and the models of service delivery vary from community to community. In ensuring that Staying Home Leaving Violence is available statewide, the Government has obviously made a commitment that the program is central to its response to domestic and family violence in New South Wales.

It is central to our response and central to prevention, because housing stability contributes to longer term wellbeing outcomes for women and children as they recover and heal. The Government will do everything it can

to ensure that the program can support women as intended and wherever they live, including in our regional and rural communities. Again, I thank the member for Orange for raising the issue, as I know people in his electorate have experienced an incredibly difficult 12 months. I am happy to work with the member for Orange to continue to address local issues. I also invite any other member in this place who has questions about the \$230 million emergency package or any of the Government's other responses to domestic violence to raise them with me directly. My door is always open as we address the issues of domestic and family violence together in this place.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:09):** It is a tough day for you today, Mr Speaker, with outrageous behaviour from the member for Hornsby.

**The SPEAKER:** I appreciate the kindness, but let us keep it ticking along.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is making transport more accessible?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (12:10):** It is always great to hear a question from the member for Cessnock. He is such a passionate advocate in his community for public transport issues and for disability inclusion, and that is what it is all about today. Since we have come to government, we have really leaned into public transport for regional communities. Members opposite just think, "Give them a bit of cash and don't worry about it; we won't provide the public transport, the right upgrades or all of the things that we need in the regions for people to have inclusive transport."

One of the very first things that I did as Minister was with the Minister for Disability Inclusion. We rolled out the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard on the regional trains network. I thank the member for Gosford, and Parliamentary Secretary. The member for Port Stephens, the member for Ballina, the Minister, the Parliamentary Secretary and I were in Ballina to roll it out on the bus network just a few weeks ago—and why were we in Ballina? We were there to talk to the community about wheelchair-accessible taxis—something, again, left to flounder under members opposite, who put an axe through the taxi industry and left so many people in our regional communities without proper access to wheelchair-accessible taxis.

Excitingly, there will soon be another one in the electorate of the member for Orange. As we heard in the last question, he is such a passionate advocate for his community. Government members love him so much that the Premier is taking us all out there for a Cabinet meeting on Friday. That is what we do: We get out there. We are the party of the bush; we are the party of the country. I am so proud of our record on that. Members opposite are literally bleeding. The President in the other place is out of the party room so he can have his job there. The aspirational member for Calare in the other place stood down from the shadow Cabinet so he could throw his hat in the ring.

The member for Bathurst is still a bit tight-lipped on whether he will do Calare or whether he might have another option. He might come back to fill the leadership role. As the Premier said, a lot of talking is going on. Of course, we lost one of our favourite members in this place, the member for Northern Tablelands. I was so sad to see him leave. I loved his speech. Did you love his speech, Mr Speaker? He said he loved you, he said he loved me and he thanked the Premier. Did he talk about anyone on the Opposition side? No—and why would he? This is really important; we want to hear more about this. [*Extension of time*]

It was really sad; we were all waiting for the member for Northern Tablelands to thank the "Dear Leader" over there—the member for Fukushima or the member for Chernobyl, whatever he is trying to do with his nuclear power plants. But it is so disgraceful. We had a former Minister—

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

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. As a former disability Minister, I think that accessibility of transport is a very serious issue, and I do not think the Minister is giving it the seriousness that it deserves.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has met the threshold for direct relevance. There has been a slight diversion—a detour—on the road she is heading down. I am sure that the Minister will return to the leave of the question.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I will come back to it, Mr Speaker. A former Minister for two extremely difficult portfolios, agriculture and tourism—I had them in opposition as well—was sitting on the backbench with no committees. No wonder he left, really. It is very sad and I put that on the record. I know he will be enjoying

this answer very much at home. He might have written some of it; I am not sure. Anyway, the Government is really serious about accessible transport. It has invested \$1.6 million in the rollout of an improvement program for 149 new regional bus stops, and \$88,000 of that went to the electorate of the member for Cessnock for 11 bus stops and two bus shelters.

Seatbelts on school buses were retrofitted in the electorate of Port Stephens. That was about making our bus network safer and more accessible. The Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme has improved lighting and tactile ground service indicators. It has provided an improved kerbside and more accessible timetable boards. They are all great improvements, as is the Safe Accessible Transport Program. I am so proud of what our Government is doing to bring accessible transport into the communities. It is a shame that we have had to come from such a low base after a decade or more of neglect by those opposite.

### **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** By leave: Pursuant to Standing Order 131 (7), I table a written response from the Premier to a question asked of him by the member for Kiama during question time on 9 May 2024.

#### *Petitions*

### **PETITIONS RECEIVED**

**The SPEAKER:** I announce that the following paper petition signed by more than 10,000 persons has been lodged for presentation:

#### **Manning Rural Referral Hospital**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to allocate funds within this term of Parliament for the completion of the Manning Rural Referral Hospital redevelopment plan in its entirety, lodged by **Mrs Tanya Thompson**.

**The SPEAKER:** I set down debate on the petition as an order of the day for a future day.

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

#### **Ulmarra Ferry**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to save Ulmarra Ferry, lodged by **Mr Richie Williamson**.

#### *Business of the House*

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: PETITIONS**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) The consideration of the petition to "Reject Special Rate Variation Application by Goulburn Mulwaree Council", presented by the member for Goulburn, to be set down for debate on Thursday 16 May 2024.
- (2) The consideration of the petition on "Transitional Accommodation for the Homeless", presented by the member for Port Macquarie, to be set down for debate on Thursday 6 June 2024.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: COMMITTEES**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the moving of a motion of which notice has not been given to amend the resolution of the House establishing the Committee on Law and Safety.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Committees*

### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY**

#### **Membership**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That the resolution of the House of 22 June 2023 establishing the Committee on Law and Safety be amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraph (11) and inserting instead:

- (11) The committee consist of seven members, comprising:
- (a) four Government members (one of whom shall be the chair);
  - (b) one Opposition member; and
  - (c) two crossbench members.

(2) In paragraph (12) inserting "Ms Maryanne Stuart" and "Adjunct Professor Tamara Smith".

**Motion agreed to.**

*Business of the House*

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:23):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) That the Government's Bail and Other Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2024 be recognised as urgent by this House.
- (2) That all business of the House be suspended at 2.30 p.m. today to enable the introduction of the Government's Bail and Other Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2024 by the Attorney General, the second reading of the Bail and Other Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2024 and, following the mover's second reading speech, the House to proceed with all remaining stages of the bill until their conclusion at this sitting.
- (3) Consideration of all remaining stages of the bill to take precedence over all other items of business, with the exception of (4) below.
- (4) If required, proceedings on the bill to be interrupted at 5.00 p.m. for the public interest debate and to then resume at the conclusion of the public interest debate.
- (5) That the Legislative Council be requested to sit and conclude debate on this bill this week.

I seek the support of the House to suspend standing orders, especially the usual procedure under Standing Order 188, to allow for the introduction and completion of debate on the Government's bail bill today, through all stages, after the lunch adjournment. It was the advice of the Clerk that this motion could not be moved until notice was given of the introduction of the bill, which only occurred immediately prior to question time.

We were surprised and disappointed that the program circulated this morning by the office of the Leader of the House did not include any second reading speech prior to lunch with regard to the bail amendment bill announced on Tuesday by the Premier, Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. There was also no notice of a second reading speech for the Government's version of Jack's law, involving new police powers to wand members of the public for illegal weapons. It may be that those bills will be read a second time before lunch, but the Opposition does not want to take any chances with regard to the bail bill. We want the bail bill to proceed through all stages today. We do not want urgent issues of public safety to be treated as anything other than urgent by this House. The Opposition supports both of these Government bills—the knife crime wand powers and the Bail Act amendments.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Although this motion is confined to the bail law reforms to protect women from domestic violence by persons who may be granted bail, the Opposition would also support urgency for the knife crime laws—known as Jack's law—in a similar manner if, after the passing of its bail bill, the Government wanted to suspend standing orders with regard to the knife crime amendments as well. We want the Government's bail reform bill to pass this House with the support of the Opposition today so the bill can pass this Parliament tomorrow with the support of the Government and the Opposition in the upper House. That is exactly what we tried to do last Tuesday with regard to our bill. The circumstances of urgency should rightly be above politics.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Yesterday in question time the Premier said:

It is the responsibility of everyone in this House, of all legislators, to ensure that we do everything possible to reduce the amount of domestic and family violence in the community and literally save lives—save women's lives—in this State.

We agree with those words by the Premier and we ask that he and his Government work in a bipartisan fashion with the Opposition to pass the Government's bail reforms today in this House and tomorrow in the upper House so that they become law this week. The Government and the Opposition can do that if they work together. Many women are being subjected to domestic violence in our State every day. Something must be done urgently about the bail laws in our State.

Just a little more than three weeks ago our State was shocked when Molly Ticehurst had her life tragically brought to an end allegedly by murder. Last Tuesday, I sought to have the Opposition's bail bill read a second time and debate brought on immediately. We hope the Government will at least support that expedition with regard to its own bill. The Opposition supports what the Government said in its press release will be in its bill. So there is no reason to wait any longer as the Government and the Opposition together comprise the overwhelming majority of members of both Houses of this Parliament. This matter is urgent. As the Premier said yesterday, 36,000 domestic violence incidents reported last year require us to act urgently and not put this off until the June sittings of Parliament.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Miranda will come to order. The member for Shellharbour will come to order. I call the Leader of the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:29):** When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall. How far has the Liberal Party fallen in a year? Those opposite are pulling a political stunt of such seriousness, it is probably one of the most deplorable things that I have seen in this House. It is not that the Coalition is led by a person without integrity—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The Leader of the House is making a significant contribution to debate on the suspension of standing orders. He will be heard in silence, as the Manager of Opposition Business was.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** It is not that the Leader of the Opposition is a man without integrity or deep-seated knowledge in this area. He is a reputable silk. The shadow Attorney General is, in theory, also a reputable silk. But that has not translated to the functions of this House. This is a difficult, complex bill that Opposition members have not seen. I approved the bill out of session as chairman of the Legislation Committee of Cabinet at 10 o'clock last night. Those opposite have not heard a second reading speech. Both the Leader of the Opposition and the Manager of Opposition Business know that is an essential part of the interpretation of a bill. They know that there are 30,000 offenders and 100,000 charges in a year. They also know that a bill like this impacts upon major changes to prosecution guidelines and police operations.

The Opposition does not know what is in the bill. It could be the abolition of the Liberal Party. It could mean that the material in relation to the Hills Shire Council about the member for Hawkesbury is disclosed publicly. It could contain anything. The Attorney General and the Minister for Women have committed to domestic and family violence stakeholders and the crossbench that they would not rush this law through and that they would give members time to consider it and consult on it. As I have indicated, the provisions cannot commence immediately because they involve significant changes to bail, and judicial officers need time to be educated and the police have requested a few weeks to educate officers and prosecutors in the field and do important system changes. The Aboriginal Legal Service, Legal Aid and the Director of Public Prosecutions also need time.

Phillip Ripper from No to Violence said, "The introduction of the legislation should follow due process and be considered properly." One of the country's leading sexual, domestic and family violence response and recovery services has also supported proper consideration of the bill in conversations with the Government. Major domestic violence stakeholders do not want the bill to be rushed. It cannot be rushed, as I pointed out last week. The Leader of the Opposition should control the Opposition. He knows that there is unfinished business. He knows that members opposite were in government for 12 years. He knows that failures of the former Government may well have caused catastrophes in this State. The Government has not used that as an excuse to invent a political attack.

The Opposition leader convinced the Opposition to work with us, but at the same time Mr Magoo is trying to rush through a bill that he has not read. He has not heard a second reading speech. I would have thought many members on the other side of the House could add value to the bill while it is before the House. As I said, the bill has been worked on virtually nonstop and was not approved by me until 10 o'clock last night. I cannot guarantee that it is a perfect bill. I want input from not just the sectors but also members opposite who might genuinely want to involve themselves. Their behaviour and their tin ear is nothing short of deplorable.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:34):** By leave: I make it clear that The Greens do not support the suspension of standing orders, recognising that the domestic violence sector, the legal sector and the experts that have been calling for a range of reforms have asked that reforms are made in a measured and considered way. There is nothing measured or considered about moving through all stages of a bill that no-one, apart from those in a late-night meeting last night, has seen yet. There is nothing measured or considered about rushing through a process without consulting domestic violence experts, legal experts, human rights and civil experts and First Nations experts, given the significant reforms. There is nothing responsible about rushing through a bill that will,

in effect, provide additional criminal responses and additional responses with electronic monitoring on people who have not yet been convicted of a crime, before we engage in discussion.

The member for Wahroonga stands in this place and attempts to care about gendered violence. I remind him that ahead of the State election in 2023, the NSW Women's Alliance had seven demands, which implies that they had not been delivered in the 12 years prior by the then Liberal-Nationals Government. I note that the Leader of the Opposition was, at that time, the Attorney General, and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence. I also note that during the period from May to December 2021, the member for Wahroonga was the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services. I wonder what he did as the Minister from May to December 2021. I remember hearing cries from women's refuges saying, "How many more refuges are going to be funded?" When talking about the kind of prevention that is needed, we must remember that funding women's refuges is the first line of defence for homicide prevention in this State.

The NSW Women's Alliance's demands included taking a coordinated and whole-of-government approach to sexual, domestic and family violence; committing to intersectional primary prevention to end gendered violence and promote gender equality; providing immediate and long-term support for people experiencing and recovering from sexual, domestic and family violence; providing safe and appropriate housing for everybody experiencing and recovering from sexual, domestic and family violence; reforming legal systems and policing for people experiencing sexual, domestic and family violence; enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead the charge towards ending sexual, domestic and family violence in their communities; and developing and implementing a workforce development plan for the specialist sexual, domestic and family violence sector.

There is nothing in those demands that says, "Please allow the member for Wahroonga to come into the Chamber and be the saviour of all women." There is nothing that says, "After 12 years of not fully addressing gendered violence in this State, we want to see the grandstanding of the member for Wahroonga in this Chamber." It is irresponsible for us to rush through all stages of the bill. The Greens will likely seek to make amendments to the bill, based on the details that have been reported. We hope to work constructively with the Attorney General. The Government is willing to work collaboratively to address concerns. All we are seeing is that the member for Wahroonga has relevance deprivation disorder.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:38):** By leave: I thank members for granting me leave to speak in debate on the suspension of standing and sessional orders. I know I look quite young, but I have been in this Parliament for well over a decade, through five Premiers, five Leaders of the Opposition and four different Parliaments. In that time, I have never seen a proposal from an opposition that is such a dereliction of duty, and which shows such disrespect to stakeholders in this space. Essentially, the Opposition is saying it is not going to hold the Government to account, it is not going to consider the legislation and it is not going to seek improvements to the bill. It is saying to stakeholders, "We don't care what you have to say. We don't care about any improvements you may recommend." But let me say this to the stakeholders and those concerned: If the Opposition is going to abrogate its responsibility in this space, the crossbench will pick it up. We will consult with the stakeholders. We will consider the legislation. We will work with the Attorney General on any improvements.

There is an important fact that I hope the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Attorney General know: When a bill passes, it does not immediately come into effect. A number of steps have to be taken to make sure that legislation as complicated as bail reform is implemented appropriately. That is one of the core requests of Domestic Violence NSW. We do not want to create the impression that, just by rushing this bill through, women will somehow be safe. We know that is not the case. We cannot give women escaping domestic violence a false sense of security. I hope this is the last attempt by the Manager of Opposition Business to push this bill. I want to see a strong Opposition that will work with the crossbench to hold the Government to account to improve legislation. But today the Opposition is saying it has checked out of this process. The Opposition wants to rubber stamp something it has not seen. As I said, in my 12 years in this House, this is the greatest dereliction of duty by any opposition.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:42):** In reply: I thank the Leader of the House, the member for Newtown and the member for Sydney for their contributions. We are observing, probably for the first time in the history of this Parliament, the bizarre spectacle of a government blocking its own legislation. We are saying—

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** We are listening.

**Mr Ryan Park:** It is a government that respects stakeholders.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!



**Mr Ryan Park:** You're taking a Panzer tank to stakeholders.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** We are listening to those you let down.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Settle down, settle down. And the second—can you stop the clock, please, Mr Speaker?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will come to order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I say to the member for Sydney and to the member for Newtown that this debate is not being held in a vacuum. We announced our policy two weeks ago. It is substantially picked up by this bill, and I gave the second reading speech on our bill last week. It is not as though we are bringing a completely blank mind to the issue.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Most of the Government's bill adopts our bill. It is not a new idea from the Government. So it is an easy thing and it is certainly not an abrogation of any responsibility to the community to be saying, "Please, bring it on so that we can get it through this House". The member for Sydney made a very good point. After the bill—

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** We have to talk to the women's groups.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** It's a dereliction of duty.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Settle down, settle down. After the bill has passed, it cannot commence to operate immediately. But it will not start to operate until we pass it through this Parliament. So the quicker we pass it through Parliament, the quicker that the measures can be put in place so it starts. This is an area where delay matters. This is an area where people's lives are at risk and we can do something tangible about community safety. Unfortunately, the member for Newtown does not realise that bail reform does not involve funding of domestic violence refuges. But I remind her that when we were in government, when I was the Minister, we announced \$430 million for domestic violence refuge funding. It was the largest single sum in this State's history. So I ask the member for Newtown not to lecture us about matters that are irrelevant to the bill.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I would have thought that when the community is crying out for us to work in a collaborative, bipartisan fashion, when we can see that the Government has essentially supported our proposal and our laws, that we would all say, "Let's get on with it. Let's crack on with it. Let's get on with it in the community's interest." Because it is not about us; it is about them. We are trying to focus on where there is no disagreement—

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** —that we actually put this in the law books of this State. If we pass the bill through this House today, it can pass through the upper House tomorrow. It can start being implemented more quickly, and that is what we want. It is disappointing to hear the rabble across the Chamber. The Government does not like the fact that the Opposition is being constructive and trying to be collaborative. We got ahead of this issue. Members opposite are worried that we are on top of the issue and suggesting constructive things for the community.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** It was incredibly disappointing that the Leader of the House mentioned the 30,000 domestic violence offenders but said nothing about the victims. He did not say a word about the victims. This bill is about protecting victims, and that is why we want to bring it on. That is why we want to pass it through Parliament. That is why we want to work collaboratively with the Government. We are focused on the victims, not on the offenders. I know that the Leader of the House defended a lot of offenders during his previous career, but we are worried about community safety. We are worried about the victims, and if the Government wants to bring on the knife crime bill, we will support that too.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Parramatta will come to order. All members will come to order. We will deal with this through the normal process.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order: A number of comments were made by the Manager of Opposition Business in his debacle of a speech that were offensive. He suggested that the Government does not care about victims of

domestic violence. I am not going to sit in this place and allow that guy to treat members on this side of the House like that. You were out of line, and the kid in the corner should stop shaking his head.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will resume his seat. It was a robust debate and I am sure there are plenty of views about what was correct and incorrect. However, the best way to deal with this issue is to put the question on the motion and see which view prevails. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....37  
Noes .....47  
Majority.....10

#### AYES

Amon, R  
Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Butler, R  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H  
Davies, T  
Di Pasqua, S  
Donato, P  
Griffin, J

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

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

#### NOES

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

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

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

#### PAIRS

Cross, M  
Roberts, A  
Williams, L

Warren, G  
Kamper, S  
Minns, C

**Motion negatived.**

#### *Bills*

### **BAIL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) BILL 2024**

#### **First Reading**

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

## Second Reading Speech

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:54):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Our Government is taking urgent action to address the unacceptable and persistently high rates of domestic violence in this State. Recent horrific events, including the tragic death of Molly Ticehurst in Forbes, have understandably shocked our New South Wales community and highlighted just how critical it is that we have the right measures in place to respond to high-risk domestic violence offending. I spoke with some of Molly's distraught family members this week and received representations from many of her relatives and friends in the Forbes community. The Premier and the Minister for police also attended Molly's funeral and met some of the people mourning her passing. It is clear to all of us that Molly Ticehurst was a much-loved member of her community and will be sadly missed. A small boy is without his mother and Molly's partner is without his love. I know that all members in this place join me in sending their sympathies and condolences to the Ticehurst and Dumbrell families and other relatives, especially to Molly's six-year-old son. Those people are understandably devastated.

Many of the representations I received from Forbes and from all over New South Wales requested that the Government change the law to provide better protections for people who have been subjected to serious domestic violence. Today, as we introduce this bill, we remember Molly Ticehurst. Our Government has heard the community's concerns about domestic violence. We have heard them say that we need to do more, and we know that we need to do more. Nearly one in four women and one in eight men in Australia—extraordinary statistics—have experienced violence by an intimate partner or family member since the age of 15. I take a moment to recognise and express my deep sympathy to the families of all victims who have lost their lives as a result of domestic violence. I cannot imagine their pain. To those in our community who have experienced, or are experiencing, domestic and family violence, that never should have happened to them or people like them. There is no excuse for domestic abuse, and our Government is taking urgent action to improve outcomes for those people and to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions towards them.

We have heard and we accept that there is no silver bullet for the problem. We know that addressing domestic and family violence is challenging and requires a multifaceted response. On 6 May this year, our Government announced that we will provide \$230 million—new money—over four years as part of an emergency package to enhance support for domestic, family and sexual violence victim-survivors, and to expand programs that reduce the rate of violence against women and children. The package includes funding for crisis response, improving the justice system for victims, early intervention, primary prevention, strengthening the domestic and family violence service sector, and research.

The bill is an important part of our Government's response and demonstrates our commitment—and will soon demonstrate this Parliament's commitment—to take urgent and serious action to combat domestic and family violence. The bill includes measures that target high-risk domestic violence offenders and will ensure that "red flags" in domestic violence matters are considered by courts in bail applications—something the sector strongly asked for in meetings with us. They are measures that we hope will keep victim-survivors safer. I am proud, as Attorney General in the Minns Government, to bring the bill before the House today.

This bill will expand the offences to which the "show cause" requirement under section 16B of the Bail Act applies to include "serious domestic violence offences" and the new coercive control offence. It will require a bail authority, when applying the unacceptable risk test in part 3, division 2 of the Bail Act 2013, to consider two additional matters. First, the bill will introduce a new provision that explicitly requires the bail authority to consider behaviour engaged in by the accused that may constitute domestic abuse, including but not limited to strangulation, sexual assault, animal abuse and stalking—factors that the sector asked us to include in these provisions. Secondly, in the case of domestic violence offences against a current or former intimate partner, the bail authority must also consider any views put by the victim or their family members concerning their safety and the safety of others—similarly, something that victim-survivor groups and the domestic and family violence sector asked for. We have put it in.

In the case of serious domestic violence offences, if bail is granted despite the strengthened show cause and unacceptable risk provisions, the bill also provides that an electronic monitoring condition be imposed. This means that the likely outcome of a bail application for a person charged with a serious domestic violence offence will be that the person is either remanded in custody or subject to electronic monitoring. Further, the bill will provide that the decision of a bail authority to grant bail is stayed pending the making of a detention application to the Supreme Court by the prosecution for a "serious domestic violence offence", the coercive control offence and sexual assault offences under part 3, division 10, subdivision 2 of the Crimes Act 1900. The bill also

streamlines the procedures for prosecutions of offences relating to the use of tracking devices under the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 in a domestic violence context.

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

### *Committees*

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

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

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:01):** As Chair: It is with great pleasure that I address the House today as chair of the Legislation Review Committee. The committee tabled *Legislation Review Digest No. 13/58* yesterday. In the digest, the committee examined nine bills that were introduced during the last sitting week. It also reviewed 10 regulations and statutory instruments, commenting on four. 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 will draw members' attention to some of the key issues raised in the digest.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024 will amend the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to allow for the secretary to issue vibrancy guidelines that must be considered by consent authorities determining an application for extended hours of operation. The committee generally prefers substantive matters to be set out in legislation, published in the gazette or tabled in Parliament. The committee acknowledged that the intention of publishing the vibrancy guidelines on the New South Wales Government website may be to increase transparency. However, the committee noted that the bill does not include any provisions that prescribe or clarify where the guidelines are to be published or how interested persons may access them. The committee therefore referred this provision to Parliament for further consideration.

Turning to private members' bills, the committee also reported on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Animals in Residential Premises) Bill 2024. The bill seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to prevent landlords unreasonably refusing permission for tenants to keep animals on residential premises. The bill would allow a landlord to refuse a tenant's request to keep an animal on a premises only if the landlord applied to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the tribunal ordered that it was reasonable to refuse consent. The committee acknowledged that the bill's intention is to address pet owners' concerns about having limited access to or greater difficulty in securing residential tenancies. However, the committee noted that the bill may infringe on property rights of landlords, including the freedom of contract to set the terms of a lease agreement and to determine who or, in this case, what animals are excluded from the premises.

The committee further noted that the bill contains a savings and transitional provision, meaning that the changes would apply to lease agreements entered into before the amendments would commence. The committee generally comments on provisions with retrospective effect due to the impact on the rule of law principle that a person is entitled to have knowledge of the law that applies to them at any given time. For these reasons, the committee referred the matter to Parliament for further consideration. Finally, the committee commented on the practice note Supreme Court Common Law Division No. 11, Bail. The practice note outlines the practice and procedure to be adopted for preparing and filing a bail application in the common law division of the Supreme Court of New South Wales under the Bail Act 2013.

The committee noted that clause 32 allows a bail hearing to be vacated at the discretion of the registrar where there is slippage of the standard timetable for the filing and service of submissions and materials. The committee recognised that this practice note may be intended to build administrative flexibility into the Supreme Court's case management processes. However, the committee considered that allowing a registrar to have the broad discretionary power to vacate hearing dates due to an undefined amount of time lapsing, causing a slippage, may make it difficult for parties to a bail application to understand what circumstances may result in the vacation of a date or the circumstances for fixing a new hearing date. For these reasons, the committee referred this matter to Parliament for its consideration.

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

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:05):** I contribute to debate on the ongoing work of the Legislation Review Committee as we have tabled the thirteenth digest of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament. First, as always, I thank the chair for her leadership of our committee and her work, and the secretariat, who continues to do amazing work in producing detailed reports in a short time frame. There were nine bills for consideration. Six bills with some issues set out in section 8A of the Legislation Review Act were identified. The Bail Amendment (Serious Personal Violence and Electronic Monitoring) Bill 2024 was found to have issues with the right to the presumption of innocence, judicial discretion, and the right to liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention.

Whilst the committee acknowledges that the proposed amendments are intended to protect people, particularly women, from retributive personal violence from current or former partners released on bail for offences related to alleged violence against them, the committee notes that under the existing bail system an accused person charged with a serious personal violence offence must show why their detention is not justified and satisfy the bail authority that they would not present an unacceptable risk before being granted bail. These two existing safeguards are also intended to protect the community by placing the onus on the accused to establish that they would not pose a danger to others if on bail.

Secondly, the Better Regulation, Fair Trading and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 has issues around retrospectivity of the enactment of the legislation, the publication of information by appropriate electronic means and the process of giving notice, the penalty notice offences and wide powers of delegation, and the regulation-making power to incorporate intrinsic materials. On these the committee had no further comment. The Emergency Services Levy Amendment (Land Classification) Bill 2024 was found to have an issue regarding the incorporation of extrinsic guidelines, on which the committee had no further comment.

The Emergency Services Levy Insurance Monitor Bill 2024 was found to have the following issues: wide official powers of the monitor and appointed inspectors; wide incidental powers of the monitor; wide general regulation-making power; wide power of delegation; matters deferred to the regulations; and incorporation of extrinsic guidelines issued by the monitor. All were referred to the Parliament for further comment. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024 was identified as having the issue of incorporation of extrinsic guidelines into legislation. That has been referred to the Parliament for further comment.

Finally, the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Animals in Residential Premises) Bill 2024 was found to have an issue regarding property rights and retrospectivity, which was referred to the Parliament for further comment. That concludes committee members' comments on the thirteenth digest. I recommend that all members take a moment to read that excellent report.

**Report noted.**

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

*Bills*

**BAIL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) BILL 2024**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (14:31):** Before I turn to the detail of the Bail and Other Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2024, I reiterate that the bill is just one part of an ongoing package of reforms that seek to prevent domestic, sexual and family violence in New South Wales. Across government, work will continue on this important issue. In my portfolio, as I have said to our valued and crucial domestic and family violence sector stakeholders, there is more to come, and I look forward to continuing to consult with them on how to bring further reforms to this place to improve our justice system for victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence. I now turn to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 introduces several new requirements into the Bail Act 2013 to strengthen the legislative framework governing bail for domestic violence offenders. Schedule 1 [1] inserts three new definitions into section 4 of the Bail Act 2013, all relating to family and domestic violence.

"Domestic violence offence" has the same meaning as provided for in section 11 of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. The bill also introduces two definitions tailored to this legislation. The first definition is for an "intimate partner". An intimate partner of a person is someone who is or has been married to them, is or has been their de facto partner within the meaning of section 21C of the Interpretation Act 1987, or has or has had an intimate personal relationship with them, whether or not that relationship involves or has involved a relationship of a sexual nature. This limb is intended to capture other romantic relationships, including

relationships where two people may be waiting until marriage to commence a sexual relationship. The definition of "intimate partner" incorporates current and former intimate partners and mirrors the definition in section 54C of the Crimes Act 1900, which is part of the coercive control reforms that will commence on 1 July this year. The definition is also aligned to the existing provisions in section 5 (1) (a), (b) and (c) of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, which defines "domestic relationship". The scope of this definition should be interpreted in the context of those provisions and the general understanding of the term "intimate partner".

The second new definition is for "serious domestic violence offence", which means an offence under part 3 of the Crimes Act 1900 which carries a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment or more when committed against an intimate partner, or a corresponding offence committed in another jurisdiction. Examples of offences that would fall within the scope of that definition when committed against an intimate partner include causing grievous bodily harm with intent; sexual intercourse without consent; kidnapping; and choking or strangulation to render a person unconscious, insensible or incapable of resistance with the intention of enabling the commission of an indictable offence. Schedule 1 [2] to the bill expands the show cause requirement in division 1A of part 3 of the Bail Act 2013 to include two new categories of offences. In New South Wales, a bail decision must be made following a two-step process. First, where applicable, a bail authority must refuse bail for a show cause offence unless the accused can show why their detention is not justified. This is a high threshold, and the onus rests on the accused. The show cause test does not apply to people under the age of 18.

The bill adds two new categories of offences to the list of show cause offences in section 16B (1) of the Bail Act 2013. Proposed new section 16B (1) (c1) will add offences that fall within the new definition of "serious domestic violence offence" to show cause. Proposed new section 16B (1) (c2) will add the new coercive control offence in section 54D of the Crimes Act 1900 as an offence to which the show cause requirement applies. The new coercive control offence is yet to commence and comes into force on 1 July 2024. The offence will make it a crime for an adult to engage in a course of conduct consisting of abusive behaviour against a current or former intimate partner. The coercive control offence will apply if the adult intends the course of conduct to coerce or control the other person.

This offence will directly criminalise patterns of abusive behaviour which have the cumulative effect of denying victim-survivors their autonomy and independence. This abuse can include physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse. Coercive control has often been said to go to the heart of domestic abuse. It is for this reason that such an offence should be treated with the kind of seriousness that comes from being a show cause offence. Expanding the show cause requirement to include coercive control and serious domestic violence offences will keep victims and survivors safer. It will mean that people charged with these serious offences will not be granted bail unless they can meet the high threshold of showing that their detention is not justified. The second step for all bail decisions, including show cause offences where the show cause threshold has been met, is the application of the "unacceptable risk" test in division 2 of part 3 of the Bail Act 2013.

The unacceptable risk test requires a bail authority to determine if there is an unacceptable risk that an accused person will fail to appear at any proceedings for the offence; commit a serious offence; endanger the safety of victims, individuals or the community; or interfere with witnesses or evidence. If the bail authority determines there is an unacceptable risk, on an assessment of bail concerns, bail must be refused. Section 18 of the Bail Act 2013 sets out an exhaustive list of matters that the court must consider as part of the assessment of bail concerns. Schedule 1 [3] to the bill amends section 18 (1) of the Bail Act 2013 to require explicit consideration of key factors related to domestic violence offending. This will apply in all domestic violence matters, not just those involving intimate partners. Proposed new section 18 (1) (d1) will require a bail authority to consider any behaviour of the accused that may constitute "domestic abuse" under section 6A (2) of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007.

A range of behaviours may constitute "domestic abuse" under this new subsection, including both physical and non-physical abuse. In particular, behaviours that may constitute domestic abuse include behaviours that are physically or sexually abusive; behaviours that are economically or financially abusive; behaviours that include stalking or that cause an animal injury or death; and behaviours that keep someone away from their family. This reflects that the behaviours which make up domestic abuse can vary depending on the circumstances and are not just limited to conventional notions of physical violence. Proposed section 18 (1) (d1) also contains a non-exhaustive list of examples of conduct that may constitute domestic abuse, including strangulation, sexual assault, animal abuse and stalking. Proposed section 18 (1) (d1) will ensure that "red-flag" behaviour, as identified by the domestic and family violence service sector, is considered as part of the mandatory assessment of bail concerns.

Existing section 18 (1) (o) presently requires a bail authority to take into account, for serious offences only, any available views of the victim or family members relevant to a concern that the accused person could endanger the safety of victims, individuals or the community. Schedule 1 [4] to the bill extends this provision to all domestic

violence offences against an intimate partner, meaning that in all of these matters, the views of the victim and victim's family can be taken into account, even where they do not fall into the definition of "serious offence". This will ensure that any available victim views about their safety will be a mandatory matter the court must consider when assessing bail concerns. Schedule 1 [5] will insert new section 28B, requiring a court to impose an electronic monitoring condition on any accused person charged with a serious domestic violence offence, to whom the new show cause requirement will apply if they show cause and are ultimately granted bail.

The electronic monitoring condition must be imposed unless the bail authority considers that there are sufficient reasons, in the interests of justice, to justify not imposing this condition. I note that this requirement will only come into effect if the accused has met both the show cause threshold and the unacceptable risk test, as a further and final safeguard aimed at improving victim-survivor safety and reducing the risk of further offending. New subsection 28B (3) (a) clarifies that while electronic monitoring must be imposed in matters to which new section 28B applies, the provision does not interfere with or alter the existing powers of bail authorities in other cases to which the provision does not apply to make orders for electronic monitoring to address bail concerns as may occur during the imposition of conditions in accordance with section 20A. New section 28B (3) (b) makes clear that the new electronic monitoring provision that will be provided for in new section 28B (2) will not be a reason why an accused person is either able to show cause or is able to satisfy a court that there is no unacceptable risk.

The purpose of the electronic monitoring provision is to capture those people who are granted bail after satisfying the show cause and unacceptable risk tests without regard to electronic monitoring. It does not provide for a further way that those tests may be satisfied. I note that the requirements in section 20A for bail conditions to be imposed only if the bail authority is satisfied that they are reasonably necessary, proportionate, appropriate, practicable, likely to be complied with and reasonably practicable will not apply to the new provision. New section 28B is not subject to this limitation. It requires rather than empowers the bail authority to impose the electronic monitoring condition and sits outside the unacceptable risk test. Schedule 1 [6] will provide that the electronic monitoring provision can be imposed as a pre-release condition, so that an accused can be held in custody until it is met. Because implementing programs for electronic monitoring is complex and requires the necessary infrastructure and processes to be established, the bill provides that the new electronic monitoring requirement will commence on proclamation once necessary arrangements have been made.

New section 28B (4) and schedule 1 [7] new section 29 (5A) insert regulation making powers to provide for the making of regulations to matters relating to the supervision, monitoring and enforcement of electronic monitoring imposed under these amendments to support the implementation of the electronic monitoring provisions. I turn now to the amendments relating to the stay of bail decisions where the prosecution seeks to make a detention application to the Supreme Court, following a decision to grant or dispense with bail. Section 40 of the Bail Act 2013 currently allows a decision to grant or dispense with bail to be stayed for certain serious offences, pending a detention application being determined by the Supreme Court. A "serious offence" is currently defined under section 40 (5) of the Bail Act 2013 as an offence of murder; any other offence punishable by life imprisonment; or an offence, or attempted offence, involving sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 16. Where a stay operates, the accused remains in custody for up to three business days to allow the detention application by the prosecution to be heard.

Schedule 1 [8] amends the definition of "serious offence" at section 40 (5) of the Bail Act 2013 to include serious domestic violence offences, the new coercive control offence pursuant to section 54D of the Crimes Act 1900, and offences under part 3 division 10 subdivision 2 of the Crimes Act 1900. Subdivision 2 includes very serious adult sexual assault offences, including the offences of sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault. This amendment will ensure that where the prosecution in a serious domestic violence matter, coercive control matter, or sexual assault matter disagrees with a bail decision made in the local court and wishes to make a further detention application to the Supreme Court, an accused charged with these offences will remain in custody while awaiting the further Supreme Court detention application. Expanding the category of offences that stays apply to aims to help to mitigate immediate risks posed to the community and victims by providing an avenue for a detention application to be heard by the Supreme Court while the accused person remains in custody.

Finally, I note the transitional provisions in schedule 1 [9], which provide that the new bail provisions will apply to bail determinations from the date they commence and will apply to accused persons already charged with offences now captured by the provisions if they come before the court again for a bail determination. I now turn to schedule 2 to the bill, which amends the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (Surveillance Devices Act). This is a small but important change in relation to the use of tracking devices. It has been recognised in this place and in the broader community that one way in which perpetrators of domestic abuse maintain their domination and control over their victims is through tracking them and knowing where they are. This might be, in some cases, by physically stalking their victims, but we also know that technology often is a critical component of this.

The use of a tracking device without a person's consent is already a criminal offence. Section 9 of the Surveillance Devices Act makes it an offence to knowingly install, use or maintain a tracking device to determine the geographical location of a person without their consent or an object without the consent of the person in lawful possession or control of the object. This offence carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and/or a fine of 100 penalty units or \$11,000. However, under section 56 of the Surveillance Devices Act, the Attorney General's written consent is required to institute proceedings for any of the offences under the Act.

This power has been delegated to the Director of Public Prosecutions, by order published in the *Government Gazette No 86* on 31 August 2012, pursuant to section 11 (2) of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1986. In practice, the Director of Public Prosecutions provides the relevant consent, but this must be done personally as the power cannot be delegated further. This process is restrictive and may present a barrier to greater use of the offence in circumstances of domestic violence. The actual amendments themselves are simple. Schedule 2 [2] provides an exception to the consent requirement for prosecution of offences under section 9 of the Act, where such an offence is charged as a domestic violence offence.

The definition of domestic violence offence in the bill takes its meaning from section 11 of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007, which ensures consistency across the statute book. Importantly, as per section 11 (1) (c), any offence can be considered a domestic violence offence where the conduct which constitutes the offence is domestic abuse as defined under section 6A of that Act. Removing the requirement for the Attorney General's consent for prosecutions where the tracking device offence is charged as a domestic violence offence will facilitate its greater use as one way the criminal justice system can respond to that kind of domestic abuse.

I advise that the bill will commence on proclamation. As I said earlier in relation to the electronic monitoring provisions, the implementation of electronic monitoring programs is not straightforward and the Government will need to take some time to establish the necessary infrastructure and processes for that to occur. Those provisions will commence once that has taken place. In relation to the remainder of the measures in the bill, the NSW Police Force has requested time to ensure that all of its systems and officers are ready to implement the changes across the State, which is a significant task. Other agencies including the courts will also need to undertake necessary implementation work. To facilitate that, the remainder of the bill also commences on proclamation. The Government is working towards a commencement date of 1 July 2024 to coincide with the commencement of the coercive control offence in New South Wales.

As I said earlier, the bill is the first part of the Government's legislative reform in this space. The Government thinks it is a strong start with critical improvements to our bail framework in particular. I thank the people who work in the domestic and family violence sector for their constructive discussions with and advice to many Ministers, including me, particularly over recent weeks. I thank them for their engagement, their recommendations and their expertise. All Ministers involved in work related to domestic and family violence look forward to continuing to work with them on further important reforms in this space.

To ensure that the bill is meeting its intended objectives, I will ask the Department of Communities and Justice to conduct an administrative review of the provisions 12 months after their commencement. I understand that the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research will be monitoring and publicly reporting on the operation of bail when a person is charged with coercive control. The monitoring will be overseen by the Coercive Control Implementation and Evaluation Taskforce. I will also request that the chairperson of the Coercive Control Implementation and Evaluation Taskforce include consideration of the provisions in the bill relevant to the coercive control offence in its first annual report, which will be delivered 12 months after the commencement of the relevant provisions later this year.

The bill is a starting point; it is not the end. In the days, weeks and months ahead, there will be much more work done by the Government to continue to improve its responses to domestic, family and sexual violence. I look forward to working with all members constructively as we continue to move further towards addressing the scourge of domestic abuse in our State and nation. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT (POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (KNIFE CRIME) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

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

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (14:54):** I move:



That this bill be now read a second time.

The New South Wales Government is pleased to introduce the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) and Other Legislation Amendment (Knife Crime) Bill 2024. The bill contains the package of reforms that the New South Wales Government announced on 7 May to target the possession of knives, particularly among young people, reduce knife crime and boost community safety. Knife possession is the necessary precursor to violent knife crime. While fortunately the number of prosecutions for violent knife crime is decreasing, knife possession remains steadily high and reoffending is common.

The amendments to the Crimes Act 1900 that the Government brought to Parliament in June 2023 that increased the penalty for knife possession and knife use recognised that concern and the amendments in the bill build on those reforms. We have recently borne witness to the devastating outcomes of knife violence and, on behalf of the New South Wales Government, I extend my deepest condolences to those affected. Recent events have shown us how serious violent knife crime is and how it can have a lasting and devastating impact on our community. We know that our community expects us to do more to tackle knife crime and the measures in the bill are designed to do just that.

The first reform in the bill is the introduction of a legislative scheme into the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 [LEPRA] that will permit police, with the proper authority, to stop and scan persons using a handheld metal scanner in designated areas without a warrant. The legislative scheme is based on Jack's law in Queensland with some differences to better suit New South Wales. Jack's law was introduced in 2022 and is named after 17-year-old Jack Beasley, who was stabbed to death in Surfers Paradise in 2019. I acknowledge Jack's parents, Brett and Belinda Beasley—great people—who have been raising awareness of knife crime and advocating for change to make the community safer since the tragic loss of their son. The police Minister, the Premier and I have met Brett and Belinda Beasley. They took the time last week to speak to the Labor caucus to explain in detail the motivations behind Jack's law and how it worked in practice with the Queensland police. We found it to be a valuable and uplifting engagement. I thank them for their national advocacy.

Under the New South Wales scheme, a senior police officer of or above the rank of assistant commissioner will be able to declare public transport stations, shopping precincts, major sporting venues and other public places prescribed by the regulations as a designated area, provided certain legislative criteria are met. It includes a requirement for a relevant offence to have occurred at the place in the last 12 months. After declaration a designated area will be in force for 12 hours. While in force, a police officer will be able to stop any person in the designated area and scan them with a handheld metal scanner. If the scanner indicates metal is, or is likely to be, present, the police officer will be able to require the person to produce the item that is causing the scanner to indicate that metal is present and to submit to another scan. It is important to note that the legislative scheme will not authorise police to search a person without a warrant. However, if during the exercise of the metal scanner powers, a police officer suspects on reasonable grounds a person is in possession of a dangerous article, such as a knife or other weapon, the police officer may be able to search the person in accordance with the ordinary search powers under part 4 of LEPRA.

Reporting requirements and safeguards are built into the bill to protect people and to minimise any imposition for the person being scanned. Additionally, the Young Offenders Act 1997 will continue to apply to children who are found to be in possession of a knife in a public place without a reasonable excuse. That means police will have discretion to confiscate a knife in the possession of a child and deal with the child through the Young Offenders Act if appropriate—for example, by issuing a caution. Dealing with young offenders in this way is completely subject to the discretion of police. If police consider that it is appropriate that the young person instead face court then they will. The scheme will sunset after three years, with a statutory review preceding the scheduled sunset to report to Parliament on the policy and impact of the scheme.

The second aspect of the bill expands the prohibition on the sale of knives to children and increases penalties. Currently, section 11F of the Summary Offences Act 1988 makes it an offence for a person to sell a knife to a child under the age of 16. It is a defence to a prosecution for an offence under this section that the person selling the knife believed, on reasonable grounds, that the child was of or above the age of 16 years. The onus of proof for that defence lies on the accused. In the case of an employee selling a knife, the employer may be liable. The maximum penalty for this offence is currently 50 penalty units, or \$5,500. The bill will amend section 11F to increase the maximum penalty for the offence of selling a knife to a child under the age of 16 from 50 penalty units to 100 penalty units, which is \$11,000, or imprisonment for 12 months, or both.

The bill will also introduce a new offence into section 11F of the Summary Offences Act that will prohibit a person from selling a knife to a child aged 16 or 17 without a reasonable excuse. It will be a reasonable excuse for a person to sell a knife to a child aged 16 or 17 if the person is satisfied the child reasonably requires the knife for the lawful pursuit of the child's occupation, education or training. This recognises that some people aged 16 or

17 may need to purchase a knife for legitimate purposes, such as hospitality students and apprentices in some trades.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Hear, hear!

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I thank the TAFE Minister for his encouragement. The maximum penalty for this new offence is 100 penalty units, which is \$11,000, or imprisonment for 12 months, or both. These reforms reflect community concern about access to knives and strongly denounce and penalise any retailer that may seek to profit from youth knife ownership. The reforms in the bill are evidence of the Government's ongoing efforts to tackle knife crime. In addition to the measures in the bill, I also note that the NSW Sentencing Council is currently undertaking a review of sentencing for firearms, knives and other weapons offences. The Government will consider any recommendations arising from that review.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill amends LEPPR to introduce proposed new part 4A, which contains the legislative provisions that will authorise police officers to use handheld scanners in designated areas without a warrant. Division 1 of proposed new part 4A contains the relevant definitions that set the parameters of the scheme. Division 2 of proposed new part 4A provides for the declaration of designated areas, including the circumstances in which a place may be declared a designated area, publication requirements and time limits.

Proposed new section 45F provides that a senior police officer may, by written instrument, declare public transport stations, shopping precincts, sporting venues or other public places prescribed by the regulations—such as places at which special events are held or night-life areas—to be designated areas. The places that can be declared designated areas are places where there may be an increased risk of higher knife possession rates, and the ability to declare those areas aims to increase community safety for people travelling via public transport, attending major sporting events or attending shopping precincts. The bill also enables New South Wales police to seek ministerial approval to extend those areas to a particular place-based event, such as the Royal Easter Show, by regulation. This ensures that there is flexibility for police but also provides for ministerial and parliamentary oversight, noting that all regulations are subject to a disallowance period.

For the purposes of the New South Wales scheme, a "senior police officer" is an officer of assistant commissioner level or above. This ranking is higher than that required in Queensland, in recognition of the fact that New South Wales does not have designated safe night precincts. Instead, the New South Wales provisions provide for more places that may be declared designated areas and also permit further areas to be prescribed by regulation.

Proposed new section 45G provides the criteria that must be met in order for a senior police officer to declare a place referred to in proposed new section 45F to be a designated area. This framework closely follows Jack's law. An area can only be declared if any of the following happened at the place in the previous 12 months: First, at least one offence was committed by a person armed with a knife or other weapon; or, secondly, at least one serious indictable offence involving violence against a person was committed; or, thirdly, more than one offence of possessing a knife or prohibited weapon in a public place or school was committed.

Additionally, the senior officer must be of the view that the use of handheld scanners is likely to be effective to detect or deter the commission of an offence involving a knife or other weapon, must consider the effect the use of handheld scanners may have on lawful activity in the area, and must consider whether any knives or other weapons were found if a previous declaration has been made in relation to the place. These requirements balance the need for the use of the scanning power with the impact on the lawful activities of the community.

Proposed new sections 45H and 45I provide that the instrument declaring a place to be a designated area must be published on the NSW Police Force website as soon as practicable after the declaration is made and that a declaration remains in force for 12 hours. Proposed new section 45J provides that more than one declaration of a designated area may be made in relation to the same place. There will be no restrictions on making a new declaration when a declaration expires, provided the criteria in proposed new section 45G continue to be met. Division 3 of proposed new part 4A provides for the powers that may be exercised once a declaration has been made for a designated area and on board relevant public transport vehicles. It also outlines safeguards and provides for record keeping requirements. Proposed new section 45K provides that a police officer may, without a warrant, require a person in a designated area to stop and submit to the use of a handheld scanner.

Proposed new section 45L provides for the authorised use of a handheld scanner without warrant on board public transport vehicles in the following circumstances: when the public transport vehicle is travelling within two scheduled stops in any direction of a public transport station that is a designated area, or outside the two-stop radius if the police officer started to exercise the power within the two-stop radius; or if a person leaves the public transport vehicle within two scheduled stops of a public transport station that is a designated area in a public place

at the public transport station at the scheduled stop. This ensures that persons who may be travelling to a public transport station that is a designated area can be scanned before they arrive and also ensures that people who are carrying a knife or other weapon cannot circumvent the use of scanners by quickly travelling away from a public transport station that is a designated area.

Proposed new section 45M provides for the requirements if a handheld scanner indicates metal is present or is likely to be present. A police officer will be able to require the person being scanned to produce the thing that is, or is likely to be, causing the scanner to indicate metal and be re-scanned. This provides for the crux of the scheme, and the availability of police to do this is both a deterrent to the carrying of knives in public places and a critical tool for removing knives from the community. New section 45N will make it an offence to fail to comply with a requirement made by a police officer under division 3 without a reasonable excuse. The maximum penalty is 50 penalty units, or \$5,500. This is consistent with the approach in Queensland and an existing comparable offence in section 87MA of LEPR, which relates to failing to comply with a direction issued by a police officer under public order powers.

New section 45O provides the safeguards that apply if a police officer exercises a power under new part 4A. Pursuant to this section, a police officer must exercise the power in the least invasive way practicable in the circumstances; the police officer must be of the same sex as the person being scanned, if reasonably practicable; and the police officer may detain the person for as long as reasonably necessary to exercise this power. Additionally, new section 45O ensures that part 15 of LEPR applies to the use of a power under new part 4A. Part 15 of LEPR contains the safeguards that apply to the exercise of police powers generally, and includes a requirement for a police officer to provide information, such as evidence that the officer is a police officer, their name and place of duty, the reasons for exercising the power and a warning that failing to comply with a direction is an offence.

New section 45P provides a requirement for the Commissioner of Police to keep records about the use of powers under division 3, including the information prescribed by the regulations. This information is required to be included in the NSW Police Force's annual report. It is expected that this may include the number of people who were scanned under the scheme and the number of weapons found, along with data about locations and any other outcome. New section 45Q provides that a statutory review of new part 4A is required as soon as possible after two years from the date it commences. The statutory review will consider the reported police data, knife offences data from the Bureau of Crimes Statistics and Research and any other relevant material to report on whether the policy objects of the scheme remain valid and whether the terms of new part 4A remain appropriate for securing those objectives. A report of the outcome is then to be tabled by the Minister within three years after the date part 4A commences.

New section 45R is a sunset clause that provides that part 4A expires three years after the date it commences. Any renewal of the sunset clause will need to come back to Parliament to be debated, and this will be informed by the outcome of the statutory review. Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Summary Offences Act to deter and appropriately penalise the sale of knives to children. Item [1] in schedule 2 amends section 11F (1) of the Summary Offences Act to increase the maximum penalty for the offence of selling a knife to a child under the age of 16 from 50 penalty units, or \$5,500, to 100 penalty units, or \$11,000, imprisonment for 12 months, or both. Item [2] in schedule 2 introduces a new offence in new section 11F (1A) of the Summary Offences Act that prohibits a person from selling a knife to a child who is 16 or 17 years of age without a reasonable excuse. The maximum penalty will be 100 penalty units, imprisonment for 12 months, or both.

Item [4] in schedule 2 provides that it is a reasonable excuse for a person to sell a knife to a child who is 16 or 17 years of age if the person is satisfied the child reasonably requires the knife for the lawful pursuit of the child's occupation, education or training. Items [3] and [5] in schedule 2 make consequential amendments to section 11F of the Summary Offences Act. Finally, clause 2 of the bill provides that the amendments to LEPR and the Summary Offences Act will commence by proclamation. This is necessary to enable all resourcing and training arrangements to be finalised to facilitate the use of handheld metal scanners, and to provide sufficient time for retail associations and other stakeholders to ensure that retailers are aware of the new offence relating to the sale of knives to children aged 16 and 17.

Recent incidents of knife violence have shaken our community in New South Wales, and I can only imagine how difficult it has been for the victims and their loved ones. But what recent events have also shown us is the strength and resilience of our New South Wales community. Our community has shown us their incredible ability to come together and support each other, and they deserve nothing less than a government that is dedicated to listening to, and supporting, them. The danger posed by the possession or use of knives is unacceptable. The community expects us to do more, and so we must do more to deter knife possession and reflect the seriousness and gravity of the harm caused. We are doing that today with this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:15):** I support the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024. The bill amends the Emergency Services Levy Act 2017, which is known as the ESL Act. The bill provides the Treasurer with the authority to require specified information from insurers for the purposes of evaluating and implementing reforms to the way in which emergency services are funded. The New South Wales Government has committed to reform the funding of the State's emergency services. The three New South Wales emergency service agencies that are funded by the emergency services levy—the ESL—help New South Wales residents and businesses when natural disasters and other emergencies occur. Fire and Rescue NSW is responsible for the provision of fire, rescue and hazmat services in cities and towns across New South Wales. The NSW Rural Fire Service is responsible for combating bushfires in New South Wales and leads coordinated bush firefighting operations across 95 per cent of the State's landmass. The NSW State Emergency Service is responsible for responding to flood and storm emergencies in New South Wales, with most rescue efforts occurring in rural parts of the State.

The funding needed for our emergency services mostly comes from the levy on insurance. Specifically, 73.7 per cent of the funding comes from insurance companies, 11.7 per cent comes from local councils and 14.6 per cent comes from the State Government. The emergency services levy currently increases insurance premiums in New South Wales by around 18 per cent for residential properties and around 34 per cent for commercial properties. The ESL has a direct impact on the cost of living for households and leads in some instances to households being underinsured or not insured at all. This becomes a major risk in the event of an incident. The latest available household expenditure survey from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that 35 per cent of New South Wales households did not have contents insurance and 5 per cent of home owners did not have building insurance.

Finding a sustainable, broad and fair funding system is vital to ensuring the best emergency services to protect everyone. Placing the ESL on insurance is an unfair, inefficient and unsustainable way to fund our emergency services. Removing the ESL imposed on insurance and instead distributing the levy across a broad base of property owners could create a fairer system that is cheaper for the majority of people. To adequately inform the design of the reform, critical tax modelling and distributional impact analysis will be required. This cannot be done without unit record data from insurance companies. The insurance industry has been cooperative in this reform to date. Section 47 (1) of the Emergency Services Levy Act 2017 currently grants the Treasurer the authority to require specific information from insurers for the purpose of the evaluation and implementation of emergency services levy reform.

The Act currently has a limited definition of emergency services levy reform. It relates to the previous fire and emergency services levy reform attempt and does not cover the current emergency services funding reform. Therefore, the bill seeks to amend the Act to enable the Treasurer to obtain information that is critical to evaluating and implementing the reforms needed for emergency services funding. The Government understands that there will be privacy concerns regarding the personal information being provided. The bill contains a number of provisions to ensure adequate privacy protections are in place regarding sensitive data. Treasury has consulted with the New South Wales Information and Privacy Commission in developing the bill. In regard to privacy protections, the bill will not allow the Treasurer to require information from insurers after 31 December 2026. The bill will require that no personal information is disclosed outside of Treasury and that any personal information that is collected because of that process will not be retained by Treasury beyond 30 June 2028.

The emergency services levy needs to be reformed because the burden of paying for emergency services in insurance premiums falls on households, especially those with mortgages. Generally, people who take on a mortgage must pay for property insurance under the conditions of their loan. A 2018 New South Wales parliamentary inquiry into the fire and emergency services levy provided findings and recommendations. However, it was found that the former Government did not have an adequate understanding of the complexities or impacts of the proposed reform. It resulted in the decision by the former Government to indefinitely defer the fire and emergency service levy reform, causing significant and avoidable costs to councils and the insurance industry.

The inquiry recommended that when developing a new levy, a government should ensure that there is appropriate consultation with key stakeholders, conduct full and transparent modelling of such a levy, reintroduce an insurance monitor and consider a range of issues before deciding to implement a new levy. The Minns Government is committed to making the emergency services levy a fairer system and reducing the unnecessary

increases on insurance premiums, which directly impacts the cost of living. The bill will allow the Government to proceed with the reform required to address this critical issue. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:22):** I make a contribution to debate on the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024. As the member for Mount Druitt indicated, the object of the bill is to permit the Treasurer to require insurers to provide information for the purpose of evaluating and implementing reforms to the way in which emergency services are funded. We have heard in this House that it is a complex issue. I feel obligated to speak on it because I represent an area that was hit by the significant floods in 2022. Since becoming the member for Tweed I have gone through seven major flood events. Every one of them is different. There is a lot of angst. I have been working hand in hand with the Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, the member for Ballina and Resilience NSW on this.

Insurance is a difficult thing. I support the bill in terms of allowing the Treasurer to get information. Unfortunately, it raises a number of issues in that a lot of people in my area cannot get insurance for their houses. If they can, premiums are \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year. Insurance companies are fairly resilient in providing information. There are arguments after every natural disaster. Hydrologist reports indicate three or four different terms of storm damage, inundation, flood damage and so on. In basic terms, if a person's house has insurance for storm damage and it rains and damages their roof, that is fine. That is storm damage. But if it runs down their backyard and into their neighbour's property, that is inundation. A lot of policies do not include inundation.

There is also concern about the interpretation by hydrologists. Time and time again I have seen flood-affected residents engage their own hydrologists, and they end up in court in a legal battle. The average person in my area cannot afford to go to court. It is unfair that the emergency services levy is paid in insurance because a lot of people either cannot afford that insurance or choose not to pay it. Many residents in my local area cannot get insurance, so they forgo it. I am sure the member for Lismore has had similar experiences in her area. We rely on emergency services, which is fair and equitable. The former Government looked at valuing land, which was going extraordinarily well until people realised that the value of land dictated the amount of money they would pay on the levy. A person from the eastern suburbs, with a nice harbour view, was going to pay up to \$40,000 extra per year. The chance of flooding in Double Bay is very little compared to Lismore, Murwillumbah or the Tweed.

I have my doubts about the reform. It is a complex issue for government to deal with. There are a lot of balls in the air. But it is necessary that there is a start on it. I admit that I was a bit frustrated with our former Government. It kicked this down the road a fair way. All members agree that emergency services should be funded, and it should be done in a fair, equitable and transparent manner for the good people of New South Wales. As I said, I support this first move, but it is difficult to determine insurance costs. As all members of this House know, cost of living is a major problem. I just got my car insurance bill and I was amazed at how much it has gone up. I think anyone in this place would shake their head and say, "Really? I haven't had an accident in 20 years, but my goodness."

With flood insurance in the Tweed, there is an option to approach council and pay a fee to get a separate hydrologist's report. I live on a hill, so if my house flooded, water would be about 200 feet over the rest of the Tweed. I do not think we would have to worry about much else—although my property may go up in value because I would then have a waterfront. I commend the Government, but I think this issue is going to be long and drawn out. I have gone through six or seven natural disasters and one thing I can say for certain is that insurance companies are extraordinarily difficult to deal with at the best of times. I wish the Government all the best. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (15:27):** I make a contribution to debate on the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024. As the member for Tweed indicated, many communities across New South Wales, including mine, are experiencing the impacts of more frequent natural disasters, be they floods, bushfires or significant storm events. Reform is much needed in this space. The New South Wales Government has committed to reforming the funding of emergency services to resource the fight against the increasing instances of natural disasters and other emergencies and to reduce insurance costs by more fairly spreading the costs across property owners.

On 16 November 2023 the New South Wales Government announced its commitment to reforming the State's emergency services funding. Since then, the Treasurer has led a consultation process, including the formation of a reference group that is made up of leaders from the insurance and property industries, business and council representatives and emergency services experts. A public consultation paper has been published, allowing people to contribute to this important reform. People can provide feedback via the "Have your say" website by 22 May. Public consultation is welcomed and encouraged to inform the design, scope, features and transition arrangements for reform of the emergency services funding system. This bill is another important step in the reform process.

The three New South Wales emergency services agencies funded by the emergency services levy help New South Wales residents and businesses when natural disasters and other emergencies occur. Fire and Rescue NSW is responsible for the provision of fire, rescue and hazmat services in cities and towns across New South Wales. I imagine that many members of this place visited their local station this past weekend for Fire and Rescue NSW Open Day 2024. The NSW Rural Fire Service is responsible for combating bushfires in New South Wales and leads coordinated bush firefighting operations across 95 per cent of the State's land mass. The NSW State Emergency Service is responsible for responding to flood and storm emergencies in New South Wales, with a majority of rescue efforts in rural parts of the State.

The funding needed for our emergency services mostly comes from the levy on insurance. Almost 75 per cent of the funding comes from insurance companies. Local councils contribute approximately 12 per cent and the State Government contributes just under 15 per cent. The existing emergency services levy increases insurance premiums in New South Wales by around 18 per cent for residential property and around 34 per cent for commercial property. As the previous speaker mentioned, unaffordable insurance increases the cost of living for households with some form of insurance and leads to underinsurance or an increasing number of households left at risk. The latest available Household Expenditure Survey from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that 35 per cent of New South Wales households do not have contents insurance and 5 per cent of home owners do not have building insurance, which is concerning.

New South Wales businesses have ranked insurance costs as their number one issue in almost every business conditions survey conducted since 2019, including the first quarter of 2024. States that have removed emergency service funding from insurance premiums have seen the proportion of uninsured buildings decrease relative to States that did not reform insurance levies over the same period. With natural disasters becoming more frequent, intense and unpredictable, the need for emergency prevention and response is growing. Over the past five years multiple flooding events and a significant bushfire event have caused billions of dollars of damage to properties and infrastructure in Liverpool. It is unsustainable to continue business as usual in these circumstances and untenable to expect our community to put up with business as usual. Therefore, the Government is acting to reform the emergency services funding system to be fair, efficient and sustainable.

Placing the emergency services levy on insurance is an unfair, inefficient and unsustainable way to fund our emergency services. Removing the levy from insurance and instead distributing it across a broad base of property owners could create a fairer system that is cheaper for the majority of people and addresses some of the key structural issues. The largest share of funding of New South Wales' emergency services is provided by people who insure their properties, contents or other goods. Generally, people who take on a mortgage must pay for property insurance under the conditions of their loan. People who do not insure their properties or other goods do not pay the emergency services levy and make no direct contribution to funding emergency services. However, those people may still use emergency services.

The emergency services levy is generally passed on to policyholders by insurers. It increases the price of insurance by adding to the base premium and, consequently, also by increasing the price on which GST and stamp duty are levied. According to a 2023 report by the Actuaries Institute, home insurance premiums in New South Wales are estimated to be the third highest in Australia, below only cyclone-prone Queensland and the Northern Territory. NSW Treasury estimates that the current emergency services levy also makes insurance premiums in New South Wales around 34 per cent higher on average for commercial property than would otherwise be the case. Insurance costs across Australia have been increasing rapidly over recent years, rising by 16.2 per cent through the year to the 2023 December quarter—the strongest annual rise in more than two decades.

This is occurring in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, when pressure is increasingly being placed on households and families across our State. It leads to a system where many households are underinsured or uninsured. The latest available Household Expenditure Survey from the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that 35 per cent of New South Wales households did not have contents insurance and 5 per cent of home owners did not have building insurance. This trend will only be exacerbated by the increasing impost on families from a range of other expenses. In other States, emergency service funding has been removed from insurance premiums. In Victoria, the number of property owners choosing not to insure their building declined significantly between 2009-10 and 2015-16. This coincided with the abolition of the State's insurance-based emergency services levy in the 2013-14 financial year.

To adequately inform the design of the reform, critical tax modelling and distributional impact analysis will be required. This cannot be done without unit record data from insurance companies. The insurance industry has been cooperative in this reform to date. The Act currently has a limited definition of "emergency services levy reform". It relates to the previous fire emergency services levy reform attempt and does not cover the current emergency services funding reform. The bill therefore seeks to amend the Act to enable the Treasurer to obtain information that will be critical to evaluating and implementing the reforms needed for emergency services

funding. The Government also understands that there will be privacy concerns regarding the personal information being provided. Considering these concerns, the bill contains a number of provisions to ensure adequate privacy protections are in place regarding the sensitive data that is being sought.

NSW Treasury has consulted the Information and Privacy Commission NSW in developing the bill. In regard to privacy protections, the bill will not allow the Treasurer to require information from insurers after 31 December 2026. The bill will require that no personal information is disclosed outside of Treasury, and any personal information that is collected as a result of this process will not be retained by Treasury beyond 30 June 2028. Given the increasing number of privacy and data breaches occurring in our communities, these protections are sensible and warranted. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (15:37):** As we have heard, the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024 seeks to amend the Emergency Services Levy Act 2017. Essentially, the bill provides the Treasurer with the authority to require specified information from insurers for the purposes of evaluating and implementing reforms to the way in which emergency services are funded. While this might seem an inconsequential bill, it points to the kind of Government we are: We introduce reforms based on data and evidence. The bill will reform the way we collect the emergency services levy. Unlike the previous Government, we will not back away from these evidence-based reforms. I note that this is something the previous Government tried to do. I cannot remember whether the member for Goulburn was the relevant Minister at the time.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** No.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** No. But she was the local government Minister at one point, and this has been a bugbear for those in the local government sector. Councils have a role in raising this levy and they argue, validly, that the current collection method is unfair and inequitable. That is why the Government has committed to reforming the way we fund emergency services in this State. On 16 November 2023 the Government announced its commitment to reform emergency services funding. Since then the Treasurer has led a consultation process. Part of that process was the formation of a reference group, which is made up of leaders from the insurance and property industries, business, council representatives and emergency services experts.

I call attention to two members of that reference group. The first is Darriea Turley, the president of Local Government NSW. She is a fabulous advocate for the local government sector, and it was my pleasure to serve on the board of Local Government NSW as the treasurer when she was president. My term as treasurer ended in October or November last year, but Darriea was re-elected by somewhere in the realm of 70 per cent or 80 per cent of the membership. Some might say that that was a reflection of her competition, but I think that is unfair. It is a reflection of how good a president Darriea Turley is. She is doing fabulous work, and I am sure she will advocate strongly for the local government sector as part of the reference group.

The other member is Leighton Drury from the Fire Brigade Employees Union. I bumped into Leighton last night in the Parliament building, which he frequents quite a bit. He is another fabulous advocate for his organisation, and its members are also fabulous advocates—each and every one of them. They were on my pre-poll booth in March last year, and they did fabulous work. I think their message was to put the then Government last and that was a very effective campaign. Good on them for that. In addition to the reference group, a public consultation paper has been published. It is important that people have a say on that. As the previous speaker the member for Liverpool said, it closes on 22 May. If people have not already done so, I strongly suggest they pop open the laptop and start hammering away to get that feedback in.

Three emergency services agencies are funded by the levy in New South Wales. They are Fire and Rescue NSW, the Rural Fire Service and the SES. In my electorate of Leppington, where urban sprawl continues apace, all three agencies require funding to look after that part of the world. The RFS does a fantastic job in places like Austral, Catherine Field and Rossmore, while the great folks at station 007 in Horningsea Park do Fire and Rescue NSW very proud.

Under the current split of funding, insurance companies contribute about 73.7 per cent, local councils contribute 11.7 per cent and the State Government contributes 14.6 per cent. The bill seeks to get information around insurance companies, and the reason is, essentially, a fundamental unfairness in the way the levy is collected. If someone does not have insurance on their house, they do not pay that levy. That is fundamentally unfair and something we seek to reform. Other States have already gone down that path, and it has had a positive impact. In Victoria the number of property owners choosing not to insure their building declined significantly between 2009-10 and 2015-16. That coincided with the abolition of its insurance-based levy in 2013-14.

Likewise, South Australia and Western Australia abolished their insurance-based levies in 1999 and 2003, respectively. Putting the States side by side, based on 2015-16 figures, about 35 per cent of New South Wales households do not have home and contents insurance, which is a much higher figure than in any other State. In

Victoria, which I just mentioned, the figure sat just above 26 per cent. In Western Australia and South Australia it was a bit lower, at about 25 per cent. That shows that through reforms that get rid of an insurance-based emergency services levy, we start to see some equity in people's home and contents insurance.

The issue will become more pressing as time goes by because we are starting to see more frequent and intense climate-related incidents. A few weeks ago we had quite a bit of rain. As usual in my neck of the woods, in Austral, good old Gurner Avenue flooded again and people were trapped. Despite the warnings of the SES, people drove through the floodwaters and their cars were washed away. Thankfully, no-one was injured. But those things will happen more and more. What used to be one in 20, 50 or 100 year events seemingly occur every one or two years. Thankfully, in places like Milky Way Street in Leppington we have good drainage.

**Mr Steve Whan:** The Force is with them.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** The Force is certainly with them in Leppington, and they do not suffer nearly as much as places like Austral. Even in Catherine Field, along Anthony Road there is a causeway that floods quite a bit. I am happy to report that I am working with Camden Council on getting automated gates that close it. I am doing my bit, but we all have to do our bit to mitigate the risks of intense climate events, and that is what the bill seeks to do. It is a very important bill. I commend it to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:46):** On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: In reply: I acknowledge the speakers who contributed to debate on the Emergency Services Levy Amendment Bill 2024—the members representing the electorates of Hornsby, Strathfield, Mount Druitt, Tweed, Liverpool and Leppington. I thank them for their contributions. I also acknowledge the staff of Treasury, the emergency services Minister's office and the Treasurer's office, who worked on the bill and helped us bring it to the House. The Government announced its intention to proceed with the reforms on 16 November last year, when the Premier gave a commitment to remove the emergency services levy from insurance products and replace it with a broad-based levy on property owners across the State. The bill is one of several that the Government will introduce to expedite that reform. As I said in my second reading speech, this bill is key to getting the modelling right and getting the data to support that modelling so we have a fair system in this State.

The Government welcomes public consultation to inform the reform of the emergency services funding system, and in that regard I refer members to the consultation paper. A couple of speakers referred to it, but it bears mentioning again. Consultation opened on 10 April, when the Treasurer and the emergency services Minister released the consultation paper entitled *Reforming the emergency services funding system*. People have until 22 May to make contributions. I note the comments of the member for Tweed about issues with obtaining insurance across the State. The consultation process is an opportunity for those people to have their say, which can be done online through the Government's "Have your say" website. The ultimate aim of the bill is to facilitate the move to a new system where we fund emergency services more fairly and, in the process, make insurance cheaper for people across the State. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS) BILL 2024

### Second Reading Debate

**Debate resumed from 8 May 2024.**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:50):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024. The Opposition will be supporting this bill. When New South Wales referred many of its powers to legislate on industrial relations to the Commonwealth in 2009, excluded from the referral were matters relating to local government sector employees. Those matters remain governed under New South Wales law through the provisions of the Local Government Act 1993. Section 340 of that Act currently excludes the employment of both general managers and senior staff members from being an industrial matter for the purposes of the Industrial Relations Act 1996. Rather than being employed under an award, general managers and other senior staff members are employed under a standard contract, approved by the Office of Local Government, which includes a provision for termination with four weeks' notice at any time during the contract period, with no reason required to be given for the termination.



Section 332 of the Act currently allows local councils, subject to certain requirements related to the responsibilities, skills and accountabilities of the position and the proposed remuneration package, to designate certain positions as "senior staff" positions. In 2021, in its report on Operation Dasha, the Independent Commission Against Corruption recommended a review of the "no reason" termination provision in the standard contract for general managers and other senior staff members. In response to this recommendation, the parties to the Local Government (State) Award, namely, Local Government NSW and the three local government unions—the United Services Union, the Local Government Engineers' Association, and the Development and Environmental Professionals' Association—requested the Government amend the Act to remove the ability for councils to determine positions in their organisation structure to be senior staff positions.

In September 2022, as Minister, I thought it important to seek the views of the broader local government sector, including individual councils, so the Office of Local Government released a discussion paper proposing to amend the Act to make senior staff subject to awards and to the Industrial Relations Commission jurisdiction, while leaving the general manager provisions untouched. The bill would remove all references to "senior staff", effectively incorporating them within the provisions of the Act dealing with employees in general and leaving only the provisions relating to the employment of a general manager still excluded from being an industrial matter for the purposes of the Industrial Relations Act 1996.

I note that the Independent Commission Against Corruption, while noting arguments for retaining "no reason" termination for general managers, given its pivotal role and the importance of a good working relationship between each council and its general manager, also recommended consideration be given to introducing some procedural restraints on how "no reason" termination of a general manager can be carried out. Those options included requiring either a unanimous vote, a two-thirds majority vote or an absolute majority vote; giving the Office of Local Government a veto power; a mandatory cooling-off period; and mandatory consideration of mediation. Further work on this issue remains to be undertaken by the Minister for Local Government. This bill completes a process undertaken by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government in responding to ICAC's Operation Dasha report and seeking the views of all local government stakeholders on this issue. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:54):** I support the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024 and thank our wonderful Minister for Industrial Relations for bringing this bill to the House. Minister Cotsis and the Minns Labor Government are loyal friends of workers. They always have been. This bill is one of many that will tip the balance back in favour of the workers who keep this State moving every day. This bill will provide all council employees, excluding general managers, the security of being covered by the Local Government (State) Award or other industrial instruments. It also gives those employees access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission in the regulation of their employment, which is a very important addition indeed.

All council employees, apart from general managers, will have the same minimum terms and conditions of employment. That is a very sensible move in my view, particularly in the local government sector. It will remove the insecurity in the employment of senior executives, which makes them susceptible to improper pressure from councillors and others, by providing them access to the unfair dismissal jurisdiction of the commission. That is important. We need our senior executives in local government to be dedicated to the communities they serve, not to partisan mayors or councillors. Senior executives should be free to speak their minds on important matters without the fear of not being protected by strong legislation such as that proposed by the bill.

Currently the default position is that all council employees, other than the general manager, are employed under the award unless the governing body of the council has determined their position to be a "senior staff" position under section 332 of the Local Government Act 1993. Under current legislation, the holders of positions determined by councils to be senior staff positions must be employed using standard contracts of between one and five years. Standard contracts are approved by the departmental chief executive of the Office of Local Government. I am of the firm belief that the ability of councils to determine positions as senior staff positions should be removed.

Removing the classification of "senior staff" positions will provide these council employees the security of being covered by the award and access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission in the regulation of their employment. As a former union official who worked in the local government sector, I know that the protections offered by the award will be of enormous benefit to those hardworking staff members. This is particularly an issue for executive-level employees who exercise planning and other regulatory functions, which are notorious for having pressured added from councillors and a wide variety of lobbyists and advocates that may not always have the best interests of the community at heart. Future dismissals of executive-level employees would need to be procedurally and substantively fair, and for a valid reason.

These critical changes are required, considering some of the horrendous stories that have been investigated by bodies such as ICAC and reported in the media over the years. One example is the recent ICAC investigation into the former Canterbury City Council, which highlighted the significant corruption risks that arise from the insecurity of employment under the senior staff contract. Under the current approved senior staff contract, employees' employment can be terminated for no reason, with the payment of the equivalent of 38 weeks remuneration, making them susceptible to improper pressure from councillors and others. This is particularly an issue for executive-level employees who exercise planning and other regulatory functions. Imagine a potential whistleblower raising a significant corruption issue with a general manager or mayor and finding themselves being sacked so that they can be silenced. Requiring all staff members other than the general manager to be employed under an award or another industrial instrument will confer protection against these corruption risks.

While the employment of senior council executives who are employed under the award or another industrial instrument can still be terminated, that will need to be procedurally and substantively fair and for a valid reason. It will be subject to rights of redress in the Industrial Relations Commission. Importantly, the amendments will still allow councils to offer terms and conditions of employment that are not available under the statutory contracts. Provided the award minimums are met, councils would be able to agree on the terms and conditions of employment that they consider appropriate for the position. That will allow councils to continue to hire the best and brightest whilst ensuring those staff have adequate protections. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:59):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024. I agree with the earlier comments of the shadow Minister for Local Government, the member for Goulburn. The bill would remove references to senior staff from the Local Government Act with the effect that all staff, other than the general manager, would be subject to the award and the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission. The Local Government Act 1993 currently excludes the employment of both general managers and senior staff from being an industrial matter for the purposes of the Industrial Relations Act 1996. Rather than being employed under the Act, they are employed under a standard contract approved by the Office of Local Government, which includes a provision for "no reason" termination.

In 2021, in its report on Operation Dasha, ICAC recommended a review of that provision in the standard contract for senior staff. In September 2022 the Office of Local Government released a discussion paper proposing an amendment to the Act to make senior staff subject to awards and to give the Industrial Relations Commission jurisdiction, while leaving the general manager provisions untouched. The bill gives effect to that proposal. It is responsive to ICAC recommendations and gives effect to work done by the Coalition Government in late 2022. ICAC identified "no reason" termination provisions as a potential risk for corruption. There is further work to be done to consider how "no reason" termination should apply to general managers. In the absence of stakeholder consultation, it would be premature to seek an amendment to this bill to cover that issue.

I have worked with a number of general managers, a number of senior staff and probably a larger number of councillors. I think the majority do their best, but there are often outside influences—particularly regarding planning decisions. I have seen undue pressure placed unfairly on senior staff. They are in the shadow of the hangman's noose at the moment so I think it is good to put these provisions in place. As always, ICAC leads by example, which is why I fully support the bill. I also worry about general managers, who are excluded from the bill. I have also seen undue influence placed on general managers if they do not make certain decisions or back certain councillors.

Like many other members in this Chamber, I deal with a lot of complaints about local councils. People bring those complaints to members on a regular basis. I have always held the view, rightly or wrongly, that if I worked as a council general manager I would feel that if I did not make any decisions I would not get into trouble. If a person defers a decision and passes it on to somebody else, they cannot get into trouble. Many residents and constituents are frustrated about planning decisions. Whether it is a garden shed or a shopping centre, a development can be stifled because of particular council views. In this country people have the right to hold a particular view, and when others try to exert unfair influence then ICAC will get involved. I support the bill.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (16:03):** I am thankful for this opportunity to speak in support of the Local Government (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024. The bill amends the Act to remove the ability of councils to determine positions in their organisation structure to be senior staff positions. Under the current provisions of the Act, the holders of positions determined by councils to be senior staff positions are employed using standard contracts of between one and five years' duration. Under the amendments put forward in this bill, contracts of employment will only apply to general managers so that senior staff in councils have access to secure, permanent employment.

I will speak on the benefits of the bill for councils and council employees and how the bill supports the attraction and retention of valuable staff. The New South Wales Government has consulted with all industrial parties to the award to help identify the potential benefits and challenges posed by the amendments. Stakeholders

have identified many advantages of the legislative amendments in the bill for senior-level employees in local government. Significantly, senior staff will not be subject to improper pressure with the fear of termination of their employment under the "no reason" termination clause. That has been a particular issue for executive-level employees who exercise planning and other regulatory functions. Future dismissals of executive-level employees other than the general manager would need to be procedurally and substantively fair, and for a valid reason.

The amendments will ensure that all council employees other than the general manager have the same minimum terms and conditions of employment. That will assist councils with attracting and retaining executive-level employees by giving them flexibility to offer terms and conditions of employment that are not available under the statutory contracts. Importantly, the bill amends the Local Government Act to address the current insecurity of employment for senior council executives and to provide access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission.

The current lack of security of employment for senior staff operates as a significant disincentive for talented employees, particularly in regional areas such as mine, to take on more senior roles in councils. Under the bill, extending award coverage to senior staff will promote the development of existing employees through the ranks, who will continue to enjoy the security of permanent employment when they reach the executive level. Employees will be more confident to take on leadership roles. Under the bill, senior staff who choose to remain on the standard contract until it expires have the comfort of knowing they will also have access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission, including unfair dismissal provisions.

It is important to councils that employment arrangements give them the flexibility to build senior management teams, offer competitive remuneration packages and keep senior staff accountable for performance. All of these objectives can be achieved under the award system as proposed in the bill. Employers in local government, like all employers, will be able to offer senior staff remuneration and other benefits that are above the Local Government (State) Award. The award sets the minimum terms and conditions of employment at the industry level. Remuneration is only one component of the total reward that councils provide to employees. Other components of the employment package may include allowances, statutory benefits like superannuation, above-award payments and benefits such as higher salary, performance bonuses and additional leave. Provided the award minimums and relevant statutory requirements are met, councils have flexibility to offer above-award payments and other benefits to reward high performance.

Under the bill, employers will continue to be able to manage the performance of senior staff, guided by a best employment practice model. The award allows councils to take disciplinary action when an employee's work performance or conduct is considered unsatisfactory, including summary dismissal in the case of serious misconduct. Councils can have performance agreements with award employees setting out agreed performance criteria. Such performance agreements may be implemented as contractual conditions when offering employment to new employees or may be implemented with existing employees in response to specific circumstances. For example, performance improvement plans may be implemented as a form of disciplinary action. Even if there is no performance agreement, at common law employees have a duty to obey their employer's lawful and reasonable directions and to exercise reasonable care and skill in performing their duties.

In detail, the bill will amend section 223 (1) (i) of the Local Government Act to remove the option for governing bodies of councils to determine senior staff positions within the organisational structure of a council. The bill amends section 338 of the Local Government Act to restrict the requirement for holders of senior staff positions to be employed under a fixed-term employment contract based on a standard contract approved by the Departmental Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government. Standard contracts will only apply to general managers of council and executive officers of joint organisations. The bill also amends section 340 of the Local Government Act to extend to all council staff other than general managers of councils and executive officers of joint organisations the ability to seek redress in the Industrial Relations Commission for an "industrial matter" as defined in section 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996.

The bill extends 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 amends section 354A of the Local Government Act to remove references to "senior staff" from provisions relating to ministerial approval of termination payments. The bill also inserts a schedule into the Local Government Act to provide for transitional arrangements that will preserve an employment contract for a senior staff member of a council until the contract expires. Staff in that situation will have access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission, including unfair dismissal and dispute provisions. No award or enterprise agreement made by the Industrial Relations Commission will simultaneously 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. Those amendments allow senior staff of a council who are currently employed under a statutory contract the option to transition to the award or enterprise agreement before

their current contract expires without the need to advertise the role, 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. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:12):** I support the changes proposed in the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024, which was introduced by the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety. Local government is the foundation of communities across New South Wales. It oversees our roads, footpaths, libraries, waste management and numerous essential services that contribute to our daily lives. With 128 local councils employing between 40,000 and 50,000 individuals, it stands not only as an essential service provider but also as a significant employer within our communities. Despite best intentions, there have been instances when local government has faltered and fallen short of the trust placed in it. It is our responsibility to confront those challenges and to chart a course towards local government that is more accountable and transparent.

The recent report by the Independent Commission Against Corruption has highlighted one such challenge, and that is the issue of employment practices within local councils. Specifically, the ICAC report identified potential corruption risks stemming from the insecurity of employment contracts, particularly for senior staff members. The existence of "no reason" termination clauses in standard contracts, as highlighted by the ICAC, poses a grave threat to the integrity of our local government institutions. It leaves those in senior positions vulnerable to undue influence and compromises their ability to serve the community without fear or favour. In response to those findings, we have before us a legislative proposal produced through extensive consultation and collaboration with stakeholders from all corners of the community. The bill seeks to address the identified shortcomings in our current system and assists to strengthen the foundations of trust upon which our local government is based.

At its centre, the bill is about ensuring that local government serves the needs of the people and builds trust across our communities. It seeks to achieve this through a series of targeted reforms aimed at improving transparency, accountability and fairness in employment practices within local councils. Central to the bill's provisions is the removal of the ability for councils to determine senior staff positions within their organisational structures. Rather, such determinations will be entrusted to the general manager, ensuring greater consistency and impartiality in decision-making. Furthermore, the bill aims to restrict the use of fixed-term employment contracts to only the most senior positions, such as general managers, therefore reducing the potential for undue influence through insecure employment arrangements.

Equally important is the bill's emphasis on providing recourse for council staff in the event of a dispute or grievance. Granting all council employees access to the Industrial Relations Commission for resolving industrial matters will empower them to seek redress in a fair and impartial manner. No longer will they be left vulnerable to subjective decisions or unjust treatment. Moreover, the bill extends employment protections to all council staff affected by amalgamations. Those employment protections ensure that no-one is left behind in times of organisational change. It provides senior staff who are currently employed under standard contracts with the option to transition to the award or enterprise agreement, thereby affording them greater security and stability in their employment.

Let us not underestimate the significance of the reforms proposed within the bill. They represent a crucial moment in our journey towards more accountable and transparent local government. They demonstrate the Government's commitment to ensuring the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in the service of our communities. This is an opportunity to reaffirm our dedication to the principles of good governance, transparency and fairness. We must come together across ideological divides in support of the bill and the values it represents. By supporting those changes, we not only honour the trust placed in us by the people of New South Wales but also contribute to a brighter, more prosperous future for all. I extend my appreciation to all of the government agencies involved for their collaborative efforts, and I extend my gratitude to the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Industrial Relations for their determined efforts in support of the much-needed changes in the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (16:18):** I speak in support of the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024. The Government is committed to ensuring that all employees in New South Wales receive fair reward for their contributions to the growth of our State. It is no different for local government employees who provide essential services at the community level. The bill amends the Local Government Act 1993 to ensure secure, ongoing employment for senior staff in local government. In June last year the New South Wales Government established an industrial relations taskforce to examine options for a modern New South Wales industrial relations framework that would deliver a new and more cooperative approach to bargaining.

One of the aims of the review was to ensure that the award and agreement-making processes in the Industrial Relations Act continue to apply to the local government sector. The Industrial Relations Taskforce recommended that senior staff below the level of general manager be given access to the rights and obligations under the Industrial Relations Act. Many employees within local government are currently excluded from the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC]. Most senior staff are employed on contracts and do not have the benefit of security of employment or access to an independent arbiter to assist with disputes in the workplace, such as the unfair termination of employment.

The Government is now in a position to ensure fair and reasonable conditions of employment for local government employees. The bill amends the Local Government Act 1993 to restore confidence in local government employment. It guarantees ongoing, secure employment for all senior staff other than the general manager through the Local Government (State) Award or an enterprise agreement instead of short-term contracts. Senior staff will transfer to the award while retaining their current roles and responsibilities. The award sets the minimum pay and conditions of employment available to senior staff. Of course, local governments are able to offer more advantageous terms of employment.

It is understandable that some employers and employees may not wish or may not be prepared to transfer to the award immediately. Therefore, the bill provides a three-month transitional period for senior staff currently employed under a standard contract to transfer to the award. Senior staff, other than the general manager, also have the option to remain on their contract until it expires. Regardless of their decision, all senior staff will have immediate access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission. Should a transferring employee require the assistance of the commission, the bill ensures they will be able to seek redress in the IRC for an industrial matter, as defined in section 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996. Those mechanisms were carefully considered by the Government to ensure a fair and reasonable transition of senior staff from employment contracts to the award or an agreement.

It should be noted that all parties to the award have collectively advocated for these changes to the Local Government Act 1993. The employer and employee representatives share the view that the amendments proposed in the bill provide the appropriate remedy for unfair employment practices and are in the best interest of fair and transparent employment in local government. I commend the bill to the House and congratulate the Ministers and their staff on their hard work to provide secure working arrangements for all local government workers.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:22):** I support the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024. Today I focus on the key provisions of the bill that enable all council staff, other than general managers of councils and executive officers of joint organisations, to seek redress in the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC] in relation to an industrial matter, as defined in section 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996, and to lodge an unfair dismissal claim. This Government is committed to making workplaces in New South Wales fairer by improving access to workplace justice, which is important for all council employees, including senior staff.

Currently, council senior staff are employed under fixed-employment contracts based on a standard contract approved by the departmental chief executive of the Office of Local Government. Senior staff do not have access to the IRC to assist with industrial matters and are unable to lodge an unfair dismissal claim. On 22 March 2021, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, better known as the ICAC, published its report on an investigation into the conduct of councillors of the former Canterbury City Council. The ICAC identified a potential corruption risk with "no reason" termination clauses in standard contracts under the Local Government Act 1993.

Following the release of the ICAC report, parties to the Local Government (State) Award advocated for amendments to the Act. In particular, they advocated for removing the ability of councils to determine positions in their organisation structure to be senior staff positions and for enabling senior staff to access the IRC, including giving them the ability to lodge an unfair dismissal claim. Under the bill, only general managers of councils and executive officers of joint organisations of councils would be employed under fixed-employment contracts. All other employees would be employed under the Local Government (State) Award or an enterprise agreement. Importantly, the bill ensures that senior staff have access to the jurisdiction of the IRC to resolve industrial matters and seek relief for unfair dismissal. The IRC provides a range of remedies for unfair dismissal that are currently unavailable to senior staff in the local government sector. They include reinstatement, re-employment and an order for the payment of backpay, entitlements or compensation.

Compensation is not to exceed six months of an applicant's remuneration immediately before being dismissed. The amount received will vary in each case and depend on various factors, including, for example, whether the applicant made a reasonable attempt to find alternative employment. When determining an unfair dismissal claim, the IRC may take into account whether a reason for dismissal was given, whether the reason had a basis in fact, whether the applicant was given an opportunity to give an explanation, whether a warning was

given and any other relevant matters. For flexibility, the bill provides senior staff, other than general managers of councils and executive officers of joint organisations, with the option to remain on their contracts until they expire. Even if senior staff choose to remain on their contracts, they will have immediate access to the jurisdiction of the IRC if the bill is passed.

Extending access to the IRC to senior council staff helps promote transparency and accountability in employment practices. It addresses issues raised by the ICAC in its 2021 report in a measured and practical manner. Importantly, the bill delivers access to workplace justice for senior staff, who are important decision-makers in the community, given the key role local government plays in communities across New South Wales. The bill places senior staff in a strong position to continue their vital work delivering services for New South Wales communities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (16:26):** I support the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024, which has been keenly anticipated in the industry—in some instances for the past 30 years. The measures proposed in this bill were the subject of extensive consultation with all stakeholders in the local government sector by the Office of Local Government. Members should not forget that an ICAC report recommended a review of the "no reason" termination provision of the standard contract of employment for senior staff. The Office of Local Government issued a consultation paper on the proposed changes in September 2022. Put simply, the changes in the bill will put New South Wales councils in the same position as most other employers in the country, which are required to have a valid and lawful reason to terminate the employment of their employees.

The bill puts all council employees, except general managers, on the same footing and affords them all the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. It is universally unfair to terminate the employment of senior staff under the "no reason" termination provision of the statutory contract for senior staff. Often that action is not preceded by any prior warning about poor performance, inappropriate workplace conduct or other problem behaviour. I acknowledge that the changes were not universally supported by everyone in the sector. However, it is apparent that the concerns identified by those opposed to the changes are informed by a misunderstanding of how the Local Government (State) Award applies to council senior executives. Many councils already successfully employ their senior executives under the award and have no issues with its operation.

In its consultation paper, the Office of Local Government addressed some common misconceptions about the employment of senior council executives under the award. The first misconception is that employment under the award diminishes the accountability of executive level employees for their performance and the delivery of outcomes. That is not the case. The award encourages councils to consider developing enterprise key performance indicators that are specific to local needs and to use those indicators to develop performance targets for teams or individual employees.

The second misconception is that councils cannot reward high performance under the award. Again, that is untrue. The award is a minimum rates award, which sets the minimum terms and conditions of employment at the industry level. In effect, it is the floor. Councils can and often do pay above the award minimum terms. The award does require councils to have a salary system. A council's salary system represents the minimum award rates at the workplace level. Salary system rates of pay are only one component of the total reward that councils provide to employees for their labour. Other components of the total reward include allowances, statutory benefits such as superannuation and above-award payments and benefits such as higher salaries, performance bonuses, additional leave et cetera. As I stated earlier, provided the award minimums and relevant statutory requirements are met, councils have the flexibility to offer above-award payments and other benefits to reward high performance.

The third misconception is that councils cannot restructure senior management teams under the award. Again, that is not correct. Councils are free to restructure their operations under the award subject to complying with minimum notification and consultation requirements. Subject to complying with the workplace change provisions of the award, if the restructuring of the council's operations results in staff becoming redundant, councils may terminate their employment with appropriate notice, or payment in lieu of notice, and a severance payment. The entitlement under the award for a redundant employee with 10 years or more service is 39 weeks, comprising of five weeks notice, or payment in lieu of notice, and 34 weeks severance. That is one week more than the maximum termination payment available under the current approved standard contract of employment for senior staff.

The fourth misconception is that the award diminishes a council's ability to take disciplinary action against executive-level employees. Again, that is not correct. The award allows councils to undertake disciplinary action if an employee's work performance or conduct is considered unsatisfactory, including summary dismissal in the case of serious misconduct. Penalties for unsatisfactory work performance or conduct include, but are not limited

to, a demotion to a lower paid position or a lower salary point or step, suspension without pay and termination of employment.

The fifth misconception is that if senior council executives are employed under the award, councils may be exposed to an increased risk of unfair dismissal proceedings. While it is correct that executive-level employees covered by the award can access the Industrial Relations Commission [IRC] for relief from alleged unfair dismissal, it should also be noted that only 5 per cent of unfair dismissal proceedings before the IRC actually result in reinstatement. The maximum monetary compensation that can be awarded by the IRC for unfair dismissal is 26 weeks, compared to the 38 weeks under the current approved standard contract of employment for senior staff. The IRC is a cost-effective and efficient mechanism for the resolution of disputes involving the termination of employment of executive-level employees compared to other available mechanisms.

In contrast to those misconceptions, the benefits of the changes proposed in the bill are self-evident. Although they do not apply to the general manager, they will provide all council employees procedural fairness, together with the security of being covered by the award and subject to the jurisdiction of the IRC; remove the insecurity in the employment of senior staff that makes them susceptible to improper pressure; ensure that all council employees have the same minimum terms and conditions of employment; assist with attracting and retaining executive-level employees, especially in rural and regional areas, by giving councils flexibility to offer terms and conditions of employment that are not available under the current statutory contract; and more readily promote the development of talented council staff to take on leadership roles. It has been fundamentally unfair that senior staff have had absolutely no cost-effective remedy when sacked without cause. I therefore have no hesitation in commending the bill to the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:34):** I make a contribution to the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024. The bill will address a longstanding corruption risk to councils and I am pleased to support it. Currently under the Local Government Act 1993 councils have the option of determining senior executive roles in council as senior staff positions. To determine an executive role as a senior staff position, the responsibility, skills and accountabilities of the position must be generally equivalent to those applicable to the executive band of the award and the total remuneration package must be equal to or greater than the minimum remuneration package payable with respect to senior executives whose positions are graded band one under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013. Currently that is \$201,350 per annum.

If a council determines an executive role as a senior staff position, the holder of the role is required to be employed under a fixed-term employment contract based on a standard contract approved by the departmental chief executive of the Office of Local Government between one and five years in duration. It should be noted that not all councils determine their senior executives to be senior staff and many council senior executives are employed under the Local Government (State) Award. The approved standard employment contract for senior staff allows their employment to be terminated for absolutely no reason with 38 weeks notice or the payment of 38 weeks remuneration. If the employment of the holder of a senior staff position is terminated in that way, under the Local Government Act they have no recourse to the Industrial Relations Commission, unlike other council employees. That creates an insecurity in the employment of senior staff that make them susceptible to improper pressure in the exercise of their functions. That poses a particular corruption risk for senior staff who have responsibility for the exercise of a council's regulatory functions, particularly in relation to planning and development.

That corruption risk was demonstrated in the ICAC's investigation of the former Canterbury City Council, known as Operation Dasha. ICAC's investigation exposed the lengths that a group of corrupt councillors—referred to within the council as "the junta"—went to to manipulate the recruitment process for a new planning director. That included exerting improper influence over the general manager and installing themselves on the recruitment panel to allow them to appoint a person as a planning director who they believed would be more sympathetic towards development, even though that person was not the most meritorious candidate. The appointment was made after the previous planning director was effectively forced out of his role by the exact same councillors. The previous planning director gave evidence that he had resigned because he felt his position was no longer tenable because the recommendations of the planning staff were constantly being questioned and challenged by the junta. Sadly that is not an isolated occurrence. There have been other instances in which general managers have been placed under pressure by councillors to dismiss planning directors because they are seen to be insufficiently sympathetic towards development.

I do not want my speech to come across as being against development. We know development is vital and, indeed, the Government is determined to ensure that the planning and development of more new houses throughout New South Wales is done in an expedient way with planning communities rather than just households and residents, as has happened in my area. The measures contained in the bill will put an end to that corruption risk. From assent, all senior executives appointed by councils will be required to be employed under the award

and given access to the unfair dismissal jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission. The protections will also apply immediately on assent to senior staff who continue to be employed under the approved standard contract. Those contracts will remain on foot until they expire, at which point the employees will transition to the award. Employees currently employed under senior staff contracts can also request to transition early if they wish, before their contracts expire.

In the future, councillors, or general managers under pressure from councillors, will no longer be able to exert improper influence over senior council executives who are responsible for the exercise of a council's regulatory or planning functions by threatening their employment. If dismissed in those circumstances, senior planning staff will have recourse to the Industrial Relations Commission, which will be able to apply independent scrutiny of the circumstances in which their employment was terminated. It would be remiss of me not to congratulate the Minister for her work in restoring the strength of the Industrial Relations Commission so that the bill can exist. I commend the bill and the Minister.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:40):** I make a contribution to debate on the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements Bill) 2024. The bill addresses a very longstanding and very problematic anomaly within the Local Government Act 1993 as it relates to the employment of senior staff below the level of general manager. The bill amends the Local Government Act to reform employment arrangements for senior council executives and provide for improved employment security through coverage under the Local Government (State) Award or an enterprise agreement. The amendments will also allow senior council executives, except general managers, to access the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission. The bill was drafted in response to findings in the Independent Commission Against Corruption report on Canterbury council about the potential corruption risk created by "no reason" termination clauses in standard contracts for senior staff in local government.

The bill amends section 223 of the Local Government Act to remove the option for governing bodies of councils to determine senior staff positions within the organisational structure of a council. It amends section 338 to restrict the requirement for holders of senior staff positions to be employed under fixed-term employment contracts based on a standard contract approved by the Departmental Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government. Standard contracts will only apply to general managers of council and executive officers of joint organisations. It amends section 340 to extend the ability to seek redress in the Industrial Relations Commission for an industrial matter to all council staff other than general managers. It will extend employment protections for staff affected by council amalgamations to all staff other than general managers and executive officers.

They are really important reforms. Having been a councillor for 17 years, I certainly saw many occasions that illustrated how essential it is that senior staff have proper employment protections. The term "corruption risk" perhaps clouds what actually happens on the ground. It creates a fear of being sacked. Even though being paid for 38 weeks is pretty good compensation, people should never be sacked for no good reason. Councils should not have that power, but I have seen it happen on a number of occasions.

I place one occasion on record from after the amalgamation of Parramatta council, when I ceased to be a councillor. Just prior to the election of the City of Parramatta Council, candidates who went on to become councillors went around boasting that, when the new council was elected, one of those senior executives would be gone—that she would be dismissed. She was responsible for development and was seen as being particularly obstructive to one particular developer—and others as well, but one particular developer was on the warpath.

Miraculously, they were elected and she was gone. They went around saying that she was a terrible, incompetent staff member and was not welcome anywhere in Sydney. But she went on to very quickly get a very senior role at another council, where she is performing well and thriving. That is the sort of thing that happens. Essentially, she did not want the sun to be blocked out from Parramatta mall, a place where everyone congregates to eat their lunch in the sunshine. A development is being constructed there at the moment and, once it is finished, people will not see the sun in winter.

That is just one example, and I have seen it happen many other times. I have also seen the reverse: Knowing that councillors are responsible for their career progression, senior council officers cultivate certain councillors and play favourites within the council chamber in the hope of receiving promotion—and it often works. It has happened many times, and it happens no matter which side of politics is in the majority, including Independents. But it should never happen. Officers cannot provide frank and fearless advice if they could be sacked for any reason. Often councillors do not face an adequate level of accountability because the general public do not necessarily know who they are. They do not necessarily have executive-level experience or experience employing and managing staff. They may think it is acceptable to yell at staff, bully staff or demand things of staff. The bill provides far greater protection for senior staff in that situation.



It does not extend to general managers, and I think that is fair and reasonable. Councillors should still be able to determine who the general manager is. The general manager should be more responsible for determining senior staffing in the council and should certainly be the person who decides whether to dismiss someone. That should only be for a good, employment-related reason, not due to the whims of the political majority and whoever the council is at the time. People have been calling for this reform for years, well before the Canterbury decision. I will be very pleased to see it, and I am sure it will be very well received in local government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (16:47):** I am pleased to support the Local Government Amendment (Employment Arrangements) Bill 2024. I begin by acknowledging the dedication and hard work by my colleague the Minister for Industrial Relations in bringing forward this important reform to the local government sector. I have been personally advocating against that law since about 1993. It might have taken me over 30 years, but I am really proud to support the bill today. In fact, I should make a telephone call to Garry Payne, who was then the head of the Department of Local Government. He contacted me last year to congratulate me on my elevation to Minister for Local Government. I should remind him that if you persevere, you eventually get your way, even though it might take three decades.

Councils employ more than 48,000 people across New South Wales. They are the level of government closest to the community and have a profound impact on the social and economic outcomes of the people that they serve. I have seen that firsthand as I have travelled around the State meeting with various councils and their staff. All council staff have a very important role and contribute in one way or another to improving their communities. It therefore makes logical sense that senior staff have the same level of protection and job security as other council workers do, but that is not the case. The bill will rectify that and provide protection by removing the option for councils to determine the executive-level positions as senior staff positions.

Currently, senior staff are employed under statutory contracts between one and five years, based upon a standard contract approved by the Office of Local Government. Under those employment terms, senior staff can have their employment terminated at any time for no reason on a payment of 38 weeks remuneration in lieu of notice. This means that senior staff do not have access to the rights under the New South Wales Industrial Relations Act. It also makes senior staff more susceptible to improper pressure. The insecurity and contract basis of senior staff positions creates an increased corruption risk. Councillors or others can use the threat of "no reason" termination or, alternatively, no reason renewal of contract, to assert influence over senior staff employed on those contracts. That was demonstrated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption's investigation of the former Canterbury City Council in Operation Dasha. It was particularly an issue for senior staff who exercise planning and other regulatory functions.

The measures in this bill represent a significant reform that will not only address this corruption risk but also will deliver tangible benefits for councils, their staff and, most importantly, their communities. It will provide all council employees, other than the general manager—and I send a warning that that position is next—with the security of being covered by the award or another industrial instrument. They will also be subject to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales in the regulation of their employment. The bill will remove insecurity in the employment of senior staff that makes them more vulnerable to improper pressure by providing them with access to the unfair dismissal jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission. Future dismissals of senior staff positions will need to be procedurally and substantively fair and for a valid reason. This bill will ensure that all council employees have the same minimum terms and conditions of employment, aside from the general manager. This will assist councils with attracting and retaining senior staff by giving them the flexibility to offer more secure employment—rural and regional councils have repeatedly raised this issue with me. Provided that award minimums are met, councils will be able to agree on terms and conditions of employment that they consider appropriate for the position.

Finally, it will more readily promote the development of talented council staff to take on leadership roles. The lack of job security of senior staff currently operates as a significant disincentive for talented employees, particularly in rural and regional areas, to take on more senior roles in councils. Local government needs a sustainable and skilled workforce to be able to deliver economic benefits to regional and rural communities. We need to keep quality staff working in skilled jobs within our councils. The bill provides important protections so that senior staff have the security and certainty they need to be able to stay with their council for the longer term. Many councils already employ their senior staff under the Local Government (State) Award or another industrial instrument, and already enjoy these benefits. However, for many councils the measures contained in this bill may represent a significant shift. A lot of thought has been put into the transitional arrangements in the bill. They have been made with the assistance and expert advice of the parties to the award to minimise disruption caused by councils transitioning senior staff.

Most of the measures contained in the bill will not take effect for three months following assent, giving councils and their senior executives ample opportunity to prepare for change. Critically, however, the amendments to section 340 of the Local Government Act 1993, which will operate to give senior staff access to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission including in relation to unfair dismissals, will take effect immediately on assent. This will ensure that senior staff currently employed across New South Wales councils cannot be adversely affected in employment as they negotiate their transition to the award. Staff who wish to maintain employment under their current contracts can continue to do so until they expire. Once their contract expires, they will automatically transition to the award. Senior staff who wish to transition to the award early can request this and their employer must not unreasonably refuse this request. Where a request is refused, the employee will be able to apply to the Industrial Relation Commission for a review.

The bill is the culmination of significant work by all concerned, including the parties to the Local Government (State) Award. I recognise Local Government NSW, the United Services Union, the Local Government Engineers' Association, and the Development and Environmental Professionals' Association. All those organisations have tirelessly advocated for the changes in this bill. The New South Wales Office of Local Government has consulted extensively with the local government sector on this bill and its policy work has informed much of the bill's contents. It is difficult to identify any reasonable objection anybody could possibly have to the measures contained in the bill. The bill recognises critical functions of senior staff across our councils and rightly provides the security and protection they deserve. Importantly, it mitigates potential corruption risks to which senior staff can be exposed when carrying out their role. Robust governance is essential to an effective local government sector. The bill is a sensible measure that will help to strengthen the integrity of councils across New South Wales. I therefore have no hesitation in commending this bill to the House.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (16:55):** In reply: I thank members for their fantastic contributions to debate. I thank the member for Goulburn for her support of the bill. I thank the member for Shellharbour, who is a strong advocate for local government and local communities, for her excellent speech. I thank the member for Tweed; the member for South Coast; the member for Mount Druitt; the member for Heathcote; the member for Coogee; the member for Penrith; the member for Riverstone; the member for Granville; and the member for Heffron, and Minister for Local Government, who is a very strong local government advocate. He was also one of Sydney's best mayors when he was a local councillor.

I will address some of the issues raised by members. The member for Goulburn, who is a former local councillor and mayor, spoke in favour of the bill but also raised issues around ICAC and recommendations that were made with respect to Operation Dasha. The member for Shellharbour spoke of the concerns for whistleblowers and the improper pressure that exists under the present framework and noted that the bill will protect against those corruption risks. The bill will still allow councils to offer terms and conditions to staff that are not otherwise available under industrial relations laws. The member for Tweed, who spoke in favour of the bill—and I thank The Nationals—referred to the ICAC recommendations and noted that there is further work to be done regarding general managers. He also noted that it would be premature to seek legislative amendment in that regard without consultation, which I accept.

The member for South Coast is one of our new members and she is an excellent member. She is also involved in local government. During her contribution she advocated that other council employees, other than general managers, should have the same minimum terms. The bill will promote job security for employees and employees will have access to the Industrial Relations Commission. The member for Mount Druitt is also a former local councillor. The member for Coogee also served on Local Government NSW and on the Waverley Council. The member for Penrith, who is an excellent advocate, was elected mayor of the Penrith City Council a number of times and is a very strong advocate, particularly for women in local government. I thank the member for Penrith for her contribution to local government in the more than 20 years in which she has been involved in local government.

I thank the member for Heathcote for her contribution, particularly in relation to her advocacy regarding access to the Industrial Relations Commission. I thank the member for Riverstone for his advocacy for fairness for senior staff. He spoke about the local experience of mistreatment of council employees and the fear that results from improper conduct. The member for Granville, who is a former mayor of Parramatta, spoke about the culture of fear for employees and said that no-one should be sacked without a reason. I know how passionate the member for Granville is. The member for Heffron was involved in local council work for over three decades. He talked about the contract basis and insecurity of senior staff positions creating a corruption risk and about the importance of job security. The member for Heffron, and Minister for Local Government, and I have been working collegially with the local government sector. I say to all senior staff in local government that if the bill gets through the upper House and staff want to transfer, they cannot be stopped. They have access to the Industrial Relation Commission. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Public Interest Debate

#### DAVID BERRY HOSPITAL

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:00):** I move:

That this House express total opposition to the closure and/or sale of the David Berry Hospital.

I start by thanking the people in the gallery that have travelled from the Kiama electorate to be in the State's Parliament to listen to the debate today. They all have a story and a connection to the David Berry Hospital and are concerned for its site and future. I thank them for taking the time to be here in the nation's first Parliament, the New South Wales Parliament. Many people are watching at home via the internet, and I thank them for their support. I also thank the many people who have signed the petition calling on the Government to rule out the sale of the site. David Berry's 1889 will expressly provided a bequest of £100,000 for the "erection and endowment of a hospital". That property was a gift to the people of our community. However, governance of the hospital is under the terms of the David Berry Hospital Act 1906, which overrides the will and includes a provision for the Government to sell the property should it wish.

The hospital provides nine beds in the Karinya palliative care unit and 17 beds in the rehab unit. The State Heritage buildings are situated on 11.6 hectares. It is a serene environmental site surrounded by trees and a section of the Illawarra subtropical rainforest. In 2022 the former Government and Minister Hazzard ruled out the sale of David Berry Hospital under questioning from me during question time. I take members through the steps that have brought me to this point today, where I am using the public interest debate to raise the issue. The first I heard of any concerns about the future of David Berry Hospital was on 22 January this year. I received an innocuous letter from the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. It said:

It is anticipated that services including Palliative Care and Rehabilitation will continue to be delivered from David Berry Hospital until at least the end of 2025, when the relocation to Shoalhaven Hospital will take place.

I was involved in securing the funding to upgrade Shoalhaven Hospital, and I am proud of that. That is my local hospital and it needs an upgrade. At no point in any of those discussions was there mention of that particular move. There was no consultation, no public advertisement—nothing. That was the first that I had heard as the local member. As a result of that letter, I asked a question of the Premier in this place on 6 February. I followed it up on 8 February with a question on notice to the Minister for Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, who I note is absent from the debate today. He responded on 15 March. Without providing his own answer, the Minister referred me back to the Premier's answer, which stated:

The services provided from David Berry Hospital will not be closed. Both Palliative Care and Rehabilitation services will be expanded once they are relocated to Shoalhaven Hospital, following completion of its \$438 million upgrade.

In the Premier's mind, we are not closing services at David Berry if we are relocating them to the Shoalhaven. He went on to say that David Berry Hospital was built in 1906 and cannot accommodate contemporary clinical requirements. I take the Premier up on that point. The building that members are standing in today was first opened as a hospital in 1811, and the Premier is talking about a building that was built and enacted under the David Berry Hospital Act in 1906. That simply does not make sense. The Premier's answer also states:

The David Berry Hospital is governed by legislation dating back to 1906. A legal position to guide any future use options for the site is being determined and consultation with the community and other stakeholders will occur about possible future options.

That is what the Premier had to say. He did not rule out a sale as he was asked to. It is the easiest thing in the world to do, but the Government chose not to. I have been a member of this place for a while, and I have seen the public interest debate used for the blue team and the red team to condemn or to congratulate. I am not doing that.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Apart from the self-congratulations.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I will ignore that inane interjection. I come into the Chamber today as a local member to stand up for my community and back them on an asset that means a lot to them. The people in the

gallery know that and have their own experiences. I quote some of those experiences. One of my constituents asked that I read out their statement. They said:

Anyone who has visited a patient at David Berry Hospital will appreciate the serenity experienced by those who are located there. As a palliative care unit the peaceful surroundings cannot be replaced in other areas. For those nearing the end of life there is nothing to compare at other health care units ... Don't just look at the Budget when making decisions that are life-changing for those in need of care. I know that Health is not a money-making department for the Government, but don't forget that all of us will need to use that service at some point in our lives.

Another constituent said:

The infrastructure is already there. The sense of peace and spirit is part of the location. Look after the gift generously granted by David Berry many, many years ago.

One such person who has benefited from that gift, Major Selena Clancy, is in the gallery today. She was a special forces soldier who served our country. She was injured as a result of her activities in the line of duty and learnt to walk again because of the services at David Berry Hospital. She is but one of the people in the gallery today asking the Government, pleading with the Government, to rule out the sale of David Berry Hospital. For all of those reasons, there should be total opposition to the closure of the hospital, but there is one more reason. It is located in critically endangered Shoalhaven subtropical rainforest, which many community members have raised in the context of recent unauthorised works that were undertaken onsite. The Federal department and the State heritage department are now investigating the potential unauthorised works that could be preparing the site for other uses. I simply say to Government members that this is not about the past; it is about the future. Please respect the views of my community and rule out the sale of David Berry Hospital.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I join the member for Kiama in welcoming his guests in the gallery.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:08):** I also welcome those in the gallery from the beautiful Shoalhaven and South Coast. I give a big shout-out to Graeme Day and his 2ST listeners across the region. I start by moving an amendment. I move:

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

- (1) Notes that in 2022 under the previous Coalition Government the relocation of all services from the David Berry Hospital to the new Shoalhaven Hospital was approved.
- (2) Notes the community will continue to receive safe and quality care from the David Berry Hospital until services are relocated to and expanded at the new Shoalhaven Hospital campus as part of the \$438 million major redevelopment.
- (3) Notes the progress being made by the New South Wales Government to deliver the new Shoalhaven and Shellharbour hospitals and to deliver better health services.
- (4) Notes the Government has committed to undertake extensive consultation with the community on future use options for David Berry Hospital for the public good. The only person who has spoken about selling David Berry Hospital or delaying works at other hospitals that serve the Kiama electorate is the member for Kiama. He asks a question in a media release or a Facebook post to stir up fear in his community, just to get attention. On the matter of David Berry Hospital and its closure, the member for Kiama is adamant that the previous Liberal Government gave an ironclad commitment to keep the hospital open. Luckily, our wonderful Hansard team records every word spoken in this Chamber. On 15 February 2022, the former Minister for Health and my good friend, Brad Hazzard, was asked by the member for Kiama to rule out the closure of any hospital in his electorate. Former Minister Hazzard replied:

Sometimes once the new hospital is built those things change a little, so we will see how we go once we get the new hospital well and truly underway and have a feeling from the staff and community.

The statement "we will see how we go" does not exactly scream a commitment to keep the hospital open, as claimed by the member for Kiama. The member cannot pretend that he did not know about this exchange, because he posted a video recording of Mr Hazzard's answer on his Facebook page that same day. The post only received four likes at the time. I like the post because it exposes the member for Kiama as a master of spin who will say anything to discredit this fantastic and fine Labor Government.

On the issue of hospitals that serve the people of the Kiama electorate, I note that the member for Kiama ventured out in the rain a few days ago to get a photo for another Facebook post. Again, the purpose of the post was to scare his community, this time into thinking that works on one of the new hospitals had stopped. The works have not stopped. The photo is of three very glum-looking people. Pictured from left to right is the Deputy Mayor of Shellharbour, Kellie Marsh; the de facto Mayor of Shellharbour, Gareth Ward; and the failed State candidate, Chris Homer. The photo relates to works at another hospital. The three of them are standing there—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 76, on relevance. This motion has nothing to do with Shellharbour; it has everything to do with the David Berry Hospital. Would you please bring the member back to the leave of the motion?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the motion.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** Importantly, and perhaps in a moment of sombre reflection, the member for Kiama stopped the theatrics and replied to a comment by Layla Elizabeth on one of his Facebook posts.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I call the member for Pittwater to order for the first time.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** Layla wrote:

It couldn't possibly be because the job is still being tendered and they're still working on the design itself. Hospitals aren't designed and built overnight. How good is politics.

Indeed, Layla, how good is politics! The member for Kiama replied:

That's true but planning for this hospital finished in 2023 after two years of consultation. I look forward to the Government providing an update.

At the end of the day, all the member for Kiama really wants is an update. I am happy to provide that, and I am sure the Minister for Health is happy to provide that as well. Let me give the member an update. I can assure the member for Kiama that the new hospital is on track for delivery in 2027. The early works are nearing completion, despite the horrible recent weather, and we are finalising planning approval and the details of the main works contract. The communities of the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and the South Coast are in safe hands under this hardworking and compassionate Labor Government.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:13):** I thank the member for Kiama for moving this motion. I commit to members of the gallery and the people of Berry that the Coalition stands with the member for Kiama in supporting the retention of David Berry Hospital. That was our position, confirmed by Minister Hazzard, in the previous Coalition Government. The Coalition Opposition stands behind that decision and will not sell David Berry Hospital. It will keep it in public hands for perpetuity. Has the gallery seen any member of Parliament perform more feebly or been more embarrassing in defence than the member for Shellharbour?

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order—

**Mr MATT KEAN:** She is a Parliamentary Secretary—

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

**Mr Rory Amon:** They're running a protection racket.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Protection racket indeed! Mr Temporary Speaker, I remind you that it is practice in this Chamber that there should be no interruptions from the public gallery.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** They're even running cover for themselves.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Hornsby to order.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Further, I ask that the member for Hornsby be instructed to direct his comments through the Chair.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I will respond to both points. I understand that visitors in the gallery are very engaged on this topic and feel passionate about it. I know the member for Hornsby is used to receiving a round of applause when he speaks, but I ask that decorum be upheld in the gallery, otherwise members will be asked to leave. On the second point, the member for Hornsby has been addressing his comments through the Chair even though he was not looking at me. The member for Hornsby will return to the leave of the motion.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** People in the gallery can see for themselves that the member for Auburn is running cover for the person who is running cover for the Minister. He is not even in the Chamber to defend his position, which is that he is not committing to the people of Berry—

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order—

**Mr MATT KEAN:** —to keep this fine hospital in operation.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** If the member for Hornsby wishes to cast aspersions on any member on this side of the Chamber, he should do so by way of substantive motion. Mr Temporary Speaker, I ask that you bring the member for Hornsby back to the terms of the motion, as you did with the member for Shellharbour.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Hornsby will return to the leave of the motion.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I will, Mr Speaker. It is very clear.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Point of order: Maths might not be my strongest suit, Mr Temporary Speaker, but I recall that the member for Hornsby was on three calls to order at the end of question time. He has been called to order again once or twice during this debate.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I have called the member for Hornsby to order. It is up to the Speaker to decide whether the member is removed from the Chamber. There is no point of order.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Given you were not in the chair, I was just reminding you.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Members will come to order. The member for Leppington will resume his seat. The member for Hornsby has the call.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The reality is that the member for Shellharbour had five minutes to answer a very simple question. She was asked, "Will you give confirmation to the community that you will not sell David Berry Hospital, that you will keep David Berry Hospital in community hands and that you will continue to provide services at David Berry Hospital?" She talked about everything but that question. She talked about Shoalhaven hospital, which was funded to the tune of the \$436 million by the Coalition Government. It was fought for by the member for Kiama and delivered by the Coalition. The Government is again taking glory for the Coalition's hard work. The Coalition will continue to stand by the people of Berry, Kiama and the rest of the Shoalhaven region, supporting them with quality health care when they need it. It is not the first time that this Labor Government has made brutal cuts to health care in New South Wales. David Berry Hospital plays a very important role in providing palliative care. It provides end-of-life care for those who need it.

This Government's reckless spending is about to result in the loss of the State's triple-A credit rating. Labor has trashed the State finances by recklessly spending on their union mates. And who is paying for it? The people of Berry and the people who need end-of-life care are paying for it. Labor has already slashed a quarter of a billion dollars from end-of-life care services. Is there anything more shameful than ripping money away from dying people? Labor did not tell the grieving families and people needing end-of-life care that they were going to do that if elected. Before the election they did not tell the people of Berry that they were going to close the community's hospital. If dying people cannot trust the Labor Party to protect their interests, what hope do the rest of us have?

The Minister for Health had an opportunity to protect the interests of some of our most vulnerable people—those needing end-of-life care. What did he do? He let the Treasurer rip one-quarter of a billion dollars away from palliative care. That is what we get under a Labor government—cutting palliative care from dying people and taking public hospitals away from local communities like Berry. That is what happens when the Government cannot manage the State's finances and cares about not the community interest but only the union interest. It is wrong; it is shameful. The Coalition will stand by the people of Berry now and always.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (17:19):** I thank the member for Kiama for introducing this debate. The member never disappoints me. He is always the showman, and I am sure that he practises his performances in this place like he is with the Bomaderry players. That performance did not let the truth get in the way of publicity—rile up the community over something that is not an issue, run a fear campaign and claim a win. The member for Kiama is a master at it. In fact, he even mentioned the rainforest. The member suggested that we were—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 76. The motion is not about personal attacks on me; it is about the people of Berry and a hospital. I ask that you direct the member for South Coast to return to the leave of the motion.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for South Coast will return to the leave to the motion.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER:** The suggestion that we were clearing rainforest at the site immediately comes to mind. What really happened was a fire trail was repaired so that the driveway could be repaired and access to the hospital could be maintained while the work was undertaken. It is time for a history lesson. David Berry, whom the town of Berry is named after, left the princely sum—as the member for Kiama said—of £100,000 in his will in 1889. It is of note that the main reason David Berry wanted the hospital to be built was so local Aboriginal women could give birth in a hospital as, at the time, they were not allowed to give birth in Shoalhaven hospital. I acknowledge Uncle Gerry and Uncle Tom Moore and the wider Jerrinja and First Nations community. I understand that that place holds great importance for all of them and that they have strong ties to David Berry Hospital and its surrounds.

I also acknowledge the people in the gallery. There are strong emotional ties to the hospital among the residents of Berry, Shoalhaven Heads and surrounding areas. Over the past 37 years nearly all of them have visited a family member or friend who has accessed either palliative care or rehabilitation services at the hospital. The people of Berry understand that the hospital was gifted, and in 1906 the David Berry Hospital Act was passed by the New South Wales Government. That Act determines what can and cannot be done with David Berry Hospital. Until that has been determined by legal experts, nothing will be decided. David Berry Hospital is now 115 years old and, while it has served the community well, it needs major repairs if it is to continue to operate. The previous Government decided to close the current services and move them to the refurbished Shoalhaven hospital, once completed. Thank you to the Voice of David Berry Hospital website for its clear and accurate information. In fact, residents of Berry tell me that at the time the move was announced descriptions such as "old" and "not fit for purpose" were used.

The previous Government released the Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment plan in December 2021. The plan outlined that the hospital staff and services would be moved to purpose-built facilities in the Shoalhaven hospital in late 2026 as part of the redevelopment. In 2021, in regard to the future of David Berry Hospital once services transitioned to Shoalhaven hospital, then Minister the Hon. Brad Hazzard gave the following guarantee to the member for Kiama:

I give you an undertaking, in fact I guarantee it, there will be maximum consultation with you and the local community.

Guess what? Nothing has changed. A number of options could be considered for David Berry Hospital, and I have discussed them with the member for Kiama. But until actions under the David Berry Hospital Act 1906 have been interpreted, nothing can or will be decided. The Minns Government will continue to invest in health services on the South Coast, and we will determine exactly what can be done with David Berry Hospital. I put on record that the Minister for Health has made a commitment to do exactly what the previous Government committed to: We will consult with the community before any decisions are made regarding the future use of David Berry Hospital.

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (17:24):** I acknowledge the member for Kiama for bringing the motion to the House, and I thank the people in the gallery who have made the trip from the South Coast. It is not a short distance to travel. For those who are not aware, I represent the electorate of Ryde, which is a bit closer to the Parliament of New South Wales. The motion resonated with me because it speaks to a lack of transparency before an election and a more sinister intent coming to the fore after the election. I will share a similar story with respect to a local health facility in my electorate but before I do that, I reflect upon some of the comments from members opposite. I listened to the contributions of two members, who sought to quote ad nauseam former Minister Brad Hazzard and his commitment given in this place. However, they were unable to match that commitment.

Now that those members are in government, I do not understand why it is so hard for them to say in this place, "We will do exactly what the former Minister did," and give an ironclad commitment that they will not sell off the hospital. That is what the people want. That is what the member for Kiama wants, and that is what people understood was the case before the election. But those opposite have breached that faith. There are still opportunities for members to speak to the motion. Government members can stand up and give the people who made the long trip to this place the confidence and assurance that their hospital will be safe. I mentioned earlier a similar experience in my electorate. There is a very large mental health hospital in North Ryde. It is on a significant parcel of land and has provided services for many years.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: Opposition members have consistently taken points of order about relevance. Government members have tried to speak about other issues related to the hospital but been told to come back to the leave of the motion. I ask that the same ruling apply to Opposition members.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Ryde will return to the leave of the motion. I understand that he is providing a case study or an example. However, it is not relevant to the specific topic of debate.

**Mr JORDAN LANE:** Indeed, I will because it goes to form, character and record. It is a record that members opposite are unable to deliver. Sites like the hospital offer an important public service in the growing

State of New South Wales, where we will need more health services, not fewer. The very last thing they should do is leave a skerrick of doubt about a facility that is well served, well used and beloved—and I understand that love. In my electorate we have similarly adored facilities. I acknowledge what the facility must mean to those who have made the trip here today, and I call upon the Government to recognise the commitment and effort from that community. There is something to be said for their contribution. People power can win. I will not harp on about my example, but we had a win in Ryde—and they can have a win in Kiama too.

The people of Kiama have a good advocate in their local MP. South Coast members on the Government side should provide stronger advocacy. They are sitting on the Government benches. They have the ear of the Minister for Health, the Treasurer and the Premier, yet they are not in the Chamber today because they do not care. Ultimately, it comes down to politics. I bet if it were a Labor electorate, we would not be having this debate. The Government would be making more of an effort to assure the community that it would look after the facility. Ultimately, it always comes down to politics.

*[Interruption from gallery]*

I acknowledge the applause from people in the gallery. They should not do that though as I believe it is a breach of the standing orders. If Kiama were a Government-held electorate, this debate would not be happening. Ultimately, it is all about integrity. This Government was elected on a self-described platform of integrity, but since my election to this place all I have seen is favouritism for those in red electorates and complete ignorance of people in blue, Greens, Nationals and Independent electorates. That is wrong. If Government members want to be better, it is on them to stand up for all people in New South Wales and not pick and choose which services and facilities they want to support.

*[Interruption]*

I am being told to sit down because they do not want to hear the truth and the reality, which is that they have been selective. They do not have the guts to stand up and do the right thing by the hardworking people who made the trip all the way into Sydney from Kiama. I thank them for what they have done. I resonate with their story. I have my own in Ryde. I am here to back them, as is the Coalition. I thank the member for Kiama for this outstanding motion. It is on the Government to back the facility.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I remind people in the public gallery to remain silent. This is an important debate and I do not want to have people removed from the public gallery.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:29):** It is hard to know where to start with the member for Kiama.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Just say sorry.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** I acknowledge the interjection. Yes, he should say sorry to the people who have travelled here all the way from Berry, because on not one occasion in this debate have members opposite pointed to a direct quote from former Minister for Health the Hon. Brad Hazzard stating that palliative care services would remain at David Berry Hospital. In fact, Brad Hazzard consistently said that his Government was looking at moving the palliative care services to the rebuilt Shoalhaven Hospital. He said it in 2022, and the member for Kiama was in the Chamber. This is exactly what he said:

... there were discussions between the local health district and the staff looking at whether the staff thought that it was appropriate as part of the development of the clinical services plan to go to the new hospital.

That is what the Liberal Minister for Health said on that day in 2022, in this Chamber. Not one person has got up and pointed to a quote on that day in 2022 that is any different. He said:

Sometimes once the new hospital is built those things change a little ...

He also said in local papers in the Illawarra:

... palliative care services will move to Shoalhaven Hospital under the redevelopment plan. Palliative care will expand from the current nine beds to 15 single bed rooms with ensuites.

That is exactly what they are doing. I understand this because palliative care in Auburn was delivered in St Joseph's Hospital, and under this Government it has been moved to Auburn Hospital, where new palliative care services have been built as part of ours. Opposition members say that somehow this is a selective government, but that is a myth. This Labor Government is looking to delivering the best possible health care to people. Liberal health Minister Brad Hazzard believed the same thing.

The other thing everybody should know is that the largest ever budget for palliative care in New South Wales was delivered by the Labor Government. It was a 6.5 per cent increase for palliative care. Not one Opposition member can point to a palliative care budget that has more money than the one we delivered in the



last State budget, which had a 6.5 per cent increase. That is why Auburn Hospital has a whole new floor for palliative care. That is why you are seeing palliative care—

**Mr Rory Amon:** Point of order: Just a moment ago the member for Auburn took a point of order when the member for Ryde was talking about a hospital in his electorate. For 1½ minutes the member for Auburn has done nothing but refer to a hospital and health service in Auburn. She should be brought back to the leave of the motion.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** To the point of order: Opposition members raised this issue during debate. I am responding to the points that they put forward. They claimed that theirs was the only one.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** To ensure the member for Auburn uses the rest of her time most effectively, she will return to the leave of the motion before the House.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** Returning to the leave of the motion before the House, it is unfortunate and disingenuous of the member for Kiama to mislead the people of Berry about the former Liberal Government's intentions and the best medical practice for palliative care. At the end of the day, we are delivering a service to the whole of New South Wales, and we want to make sure that people in palliative care, at the worst times of their lives, get the best possible facilities and health care. Remember that health professionals are delivering these services. Those professionals need the most modern facilities, the best equipment and the most capabilities to deal with people in their most distressful situations. That is what a modern health service does. That is what Brad Hazzard thought, and this Labor Government has continued on with a policy put forward by the Liberal Government.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:34):** I thank the member for Kiama for his contribution. I thank all of the guests in the gallery for making the trip from the South Coast today. As a regional member, I know exactly how important palliative care is to regional health services. I note the member for Kiama's contribution today. I know that in his reply he will provide answers to the statements made by those opposite. Sadly, the Government has moved to amend a sensible, straightforward motion, which is that the House expresses total opposition to the closure and/or sale of the David Berry Hospital, which provides vital rehabilitation and palliative care services to the community.

I am proud to have been part of a government that delivered record funding for palliative care after the voluntary assisted dying legislation: \$743 million over five years to boost palliative care not only on the Central Coast but across New South Wales, including the South Coast. I can speak firsthand of the incredible work our doctors and nurses do in palliative care every day because I have lived that experience, as I said in the Chamber last week. We have seen record investment into palliative care services across New South Wales and seen how vital they are. It is about not only the patients, as I said last week. It is about also the family members who benefit from the incredible support given by palliative care services, whether in a major hospital, minor hospital or rehabilitation service. I have lived this experience.

This is a bit like *deja vu* for us because, back in 2011, before we had a change in government, a similar campaign was being run by the Labor Party in government to close Woy Woy Rehabilitation Unit, with no consultation with the public whatsoever. We are seeing a repeat of that. There was a simple question asked during this debate. It is so important that the Government be transparent and open with people. The Labor Party lost the seat of Gosford in 2011 because it was not honest and truthful with the people of the Central Coast and was punished accordingly.

Sadly, the Government secretly cut \$250 million from palliative care in this budget, hoping that nobody would notice. That would impact services such as David Berry Hospital and services on the Central Coast, which include the service at the new Gosford palliative care unit, which I have spoken about at length in this space, and the future Wyong palliative care unit. We are talking about \$9 million cut from palliative care on the Central Coast over the next four years, and I believe the numbers are the same for the South Coast. If the member for Auburn wants to know, I can tell her now that it is \$9 million cut from recurrent funding for palliative care on both the South Coast and the Central Coast, which are the second highest cuts across the State. That is not something to be proud of. It has been taken away from people who need support at the end of their lives.

I was so proud to be part of a government that delivered record funding to provide those services across New South Wales. It did not matter who was representing the electorate or who was in power. Both of the hospitals on the Central Coast are in Labor electorates, and both of those hospitals received upgrades worth half a billion dollars under the former Government. We delivered a palliative care unit with 14 beds, receiving \$5 million in recurrent funding every year, which has now been cut. We also delivered another \$13.5 million for a brand-new palliative care unit at Wyong, but the sad part is that recurrent funding for that staff is now under threat because of the cuts in the terrible budget last year, which was snuck through without any consultation and without seeing

the light of day until it was called out and found out during estimates inquiries. This is an important motion and an important issue for the people of the South Coast.

As I have said, I have firsthand experience of the incredible job that palliative care doctors and nurses do. Not one bed from one facility should be reduced. There should be additional services delivered through the Shoalhaven hospital—an addition to the fantastic services at David Berry Hospital, not a reduction or an amalgamation. Additional services are required. I say to members opposite that one certainty in life is that it ends. What matters is managing that end respectfully and providing support to the family members of those who have made the choice to pass away in a facility. Some 75 per cent of people would prefer to pass away at home. Sadly, that is not always deliverable. That is why this service to the community is so vital. I thank the member for Kiama for fighting to keep that for his community.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:39):** In reply: I thank the member for Terrigal, the member for Ryde and the shadow Minister for Health. I also thank the members representing the electorates of Shellharbour, South Coast and Auburn for their contributions to the debate. I cannot take credit for the motion. In fact, this motion was first moved on 21 April 1994 by the then member for Kiama, Bob Harrison. Government members are planning to vote against a motion proposed by one of their own former members. Voting against the motion will put the Government totally out of sync with the local community. I will address some of the issues raised in the debate. The member for Auburn said that the *Hansard* is a beautiful thing. Indeed, the record is a beautiful thing. The member said that the former Minister for Health had not ruled out the sale of David Berry Hospital. I hate to correct the member for Auburn, but I direct her attention to the *Hansard* of this place on 15 February 2022. Minister Hazzard said:

As to the closures, there are no plans to close the David Berry Hospital ...

The member has lied. She suggested that there was no commitment from the former Minister, but there was. I asked the Government simply to rule out the sale of David Berry Hospital. The Government has responded with a list of amendments to try to worm out of a very simple commitment that people have come a long way to hear. The Government is just not listening.

This Government is behaving like it has been in power for 16 years, not one year. If this is any indication of how it will ignore regional New South Wales and some of our most vulnerable residents, the people of this State will have no hope with this Government. I want the Government to do one very simple thing. I would have thought the Minister for Health would be in the Chamber for this debate. The Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast is also the Minister for Health. He is obviously too busy to come to the Chamber and actually speak to people who have travelled a long way to Parliament House. He will not come down from level eight in this building to the floor of the Chamber to do his job and rule out the sale of this hospital. That is pathetic. I am incensed.

I am angry because that bloke is not only the Minister for Health but also the so-called Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast. What a disgrace! I did not see this plan on the flyers of the Labor candidate for Kiama at the last election. I saw the campaign director out the back; he has none from four. I hope he will be able to explain this at the next election. I say to Mr Gainsford, keep running those Labor campaigns. The Government needs to rule out this sale. I oppose the Government's amendment. I will always stand with my community and I will always oppose the sale of this hospital. We will keep it in public hands, just as David Berry intended.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Kiama has moved a motion, to which the member for Shellharbour has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....46  
Noes .....39  
Majority.....7

# AYES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, L  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S

Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kirby, W  
Leong, J

Piper, G  
Quinnell, S  
Saffin, J (teller)  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Smith, T  
Stuart, M  
Tesch, L

## AYES

Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Davis, D  
Dib, J  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Hagarty, N (teller)

Li, J  
McDermott, H  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R

Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

## NOES

Amon, R  
Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Butler, R  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H  
Davies, T  
Di Pasqua, S  
Donato, P  
Griffin, J

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

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

## PAIRS

Kamper, S  
Minns, C  
Warren, G

Roberts, A  
Williams, L  
Cross, M

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....46  
Noes .....39  
Majority.....7

## AYES

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

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

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

## NOES

Amon, R  
 Anderson, K  
 Ayyad, T  
 Butler, R  
 Clancy, J  
 Cooke, S  
 Coure, M  
 Crouch, A (teller)  
 Dalton, H  
 Davies, T  
 Di Pasqua, S  
 Donato, P  
 Griffin, J

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

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

## PAIRS

Kamper, S  
 Minns, C  
 Warren, G

Roberts, A  
 Williams, L  
 Cross, M

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I thank those in the public gallery who joined us for the public interest debate. I wish them a safe journey back to Berry, and I hope they enjoyed some of my electorate of Sydney while they were here.

*Bills***JURY AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Second Reading Speech**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:58):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Jury Amendment Bill 2024 makes a number of amendments that will improve the efficiency of jury empanelment, provide enhanced support for jurors to perform their role, and reduce the expenditure of resources on trials that are ultimately aborted or result in hung juries, where possible. The amendments in the bill were identified through a review of indictable processes in the District Court and Supreme Court, led by the former Chief Judge of the District Court, His Honour Justice Derek Price. The review identified ways to streamline jury processes and ensure that juries in New South Wales operate and are managed in the most efficient and effective way. It also sought to ensure that jurors are provided with the best possible support to make their significant contribution to the justice system.

This bill will implement recommendations made through this review. The Jury Amendment Bill was first introduced in the Legislative Council in October 2023. The bill, as first introduced, included an amendment to implement the sole recommendation of the statutory review of the amendments made to the Jury Act 1977 by the Jury Amendment (Verdicts) Act 2006. Those amendments introduced majority verdicts in criminal proceedings in New South Wales. The proposed amendment to section 55F of the Jury Act would have enabled a majority verdict to be returned by a jury in criminal proceedings where a unanimous verdict has not been reached after the jurors have deliberated for a period of not less than four hours. This amendment was proposed to replace the existing requirement for jurors to deliberate for not less than eight hours.

The bill was referred to the Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 5. The committee considered whether the amendments in the bill impacted on procedural fairness and an accused person's right to a fair trial. The committee received nine submissions and held one public hearing at Parliament House in Sydney. The committee primarily considered the proposed reduction to the minimum period of deliberation for majority verdicts, outlining a number of key issues, including: the principle of unanimous verdicts, judicial discretion, the duration of the deliberation period, cases involving complex evidence, efficiency savings, court time, juror wellbeing and verdict integrity.

The issues considered by the committee were addressed in detail by the Parliamentary Secretary in the Legislative Council during the debate, as required by sessional order 188A. During debate in the Legislative

Council, an amendment was moved and passed to retain the eight-hour minimum period of deliberation, instead of reducing this period to four hours, as originally proposed. The committee also considered the amendments to: remove the requirement for a court to make an order permitting the jury in criminal proceedings to separate at any time after the jury retires to consider its verdict, introduce email service for jury notices, and increase the investigative powers of the NSW Sheriff to allow investigations into improper conduct by a third party towards a juror.

The Government has carefully considered these issues. The Government has worked closely with experts to ensure that the proposed amendments in this bill achieve their intended aim. The Department of Communities and Justice consulted the heads of jurisdiction and other members of the judiciary, as well as key government and legal stakeholders, during the development of the amendments in the bill. Extensive consultation occurred with stakeholders responsible for overseeing and managing the selection and operation of juries, including the NSW Sheriff's Office, the District Court and the Supreme Court. The Local Court and Coroner's Court were also consulted.

Targeted consultation was also undertaken with legal stakeholders, including Legal Aid NSW, the Law Society of New South Wales, the New South Wales Bar Association, the Public Defenders, the Aboriginal Legal Service, the NSW Police Force, and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Judicial Commission, the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, and Treasury were also consulted. Key legal stakeholders were also involved in the indictable process review led by Justice Price, and further consultation was undertaken with stakeholders on drafting the final form of the bill.

I now turn to the substance of the bill. Schedule 1 [1] to the bill adds a note to section 14A (d) of the Jury Act to clarify what constitutes good cause for the purposes of seeking an exemption or excusal from jury service. The note is intended to clarify that good cause includes any circumstances that could affect a person's ability to perform the functions of a juror, and can extend to temporary disabilities or other physical or mental conditions. The amendment is intended to clarify and support the breadth of discretion that the sheriff and courts have when considering applications for exemption or excusal.

This will improve efficiency by ensuring that jurors who will not be able to properly perform the role of a juror are excused before they are empanelled to a jury. Removing these jurors early will reduce the risk of trials not being able to continue because a juror needs to be excused or discharged during the trial. The proposed amendment aims to avoid unfairness or inefficiencies caused by jurors needing to be discharged during a trial in circumstances where it would have been appropriate for them to be exempted or excused from service as a juror. Schedule 1 [2] expands the test for the selection of additional jurors in criminal proceedings in the Supreme Court or the District Court.

Currently, the test under section 19 (2) of the Jury Act allows the court to order that up to three additional jurors be selected for the jury only if the trial is estimated to take two weeks or longer. The current provisions fail to recognise that, while the length of the trial is a significant factor influencing the need for additional jurors, certain trials carry an increased risk of juror attrition that is not due to the trial's duration. New section 19 (2) and (3) will allow a judge to empanel up to three additional jurors if the court is satisfied that it is necessary due to the nature, likely duration or complexity of the proceedings, or any other factor that may result in a juror being discharged during the trial. This amendment retains the ability of the court to consider the length of the trial when determining whether or not to order the selection of additional jurors, but also introduces new factors that the court can consider.

The amendment includes an example of the type of trials that may require additional jurors in relation to these new factors, namely a trial that involves distressing or sensitive material. The court also will continue to have to be satisfied that the selection of additional jurors is an appropriate means of ensuring there will be sufficient jurors remaining on the jury when the jury is required to consider the jury's verdict, and that appropriate facilities are available to accommodate the additional jurors. This amendment will provide the courts with further scope and discretion to empanel more jurors where appropriate. It is intended to guard against the impacts of juror attrition, including wasted resources, delay and trauma for complainants and witnesses, and uncertainty for accused persons.

Empanelling additional jurors when appropriate also reduces the risk that juror numbers will fall below the number required for the trial to continue under section 22 of the Jury Act. Schedule 2 to the bill makes one consequential amendment to the Jury Regulation 2022 as a result of this amendment. The bill also contains amendments to improve the process by which jurors can request to be excused from service. Currently, section 38 (3) of the Jury Act only allows a request to be excused from jury service to be made in writing if the circumstances of the request relate to the person's health or may cause embarrassment or distress if made public. If the circumstances of a person's request to be excused do not fall within these categories, the person must make their request to the judge or coroner orally.

Schedule 1 [3] to the bill amends section 38 of the Act to enable all requests to be excused from jury service to be made to the court or coroner either verbally or in writing. This amendment responds to stakeholder feedback that a verbal request to be excused is not necessary and may disincentivise some potential jurors from making valid applications where the circumstances of their request are not health-related or embarrassing or distressing. In response to stakeholder feedback, the bill provides an option for requests to be made either verbally or in writing to make the process easier and less distressing for potential jurors who may not be comfortable seeking excusal verbally. This amendment also seeks to help to minimise juror attrition. If a written excusal request is made and further context is required, a judicial officer or the sheriff can discuss the written request with the person. Importantly, the amendment still allows for excusal requests to be made orally if that is the person's preference. Item [4] of schedule 1 corrects an incorrect cross-reference.

I now turn to amendments in the bill relating to replacement jurors. Item [6] of schedule 1 to the bill inserts a new section 53D into the Jury Act to enable a court or coroner to order the selection of a replacement juror if a juror dies or is discharged before the judge or coroner gives oral directions to the jury in a trial or coronial inquest. Currently under section 53C, if a juror dies or is discharged, the court or coroner has only two options: either discharge the jury or continue the trial with a reduced number of jurors if continuing would not give rise to the risk of a substantial miscarriage of justice. Those limited options do not sufficiently address circumstances in which a juror is discharged or dies very early in trial proceedings—namely, before the judge or coroner has given their opening oral directions to the jury. Those opening oral directions occur before any witnesses are called or evidence is given in trial proceedings.

Currently, when a juror is discharged or dies at that early stage the whole jury may need to be discharged. That is because continuing a trial with a reduced number of jurors from the outset carries a greater risk that the trial will become unviable if there are further reductions in juror numbers. New section 53D gives the court or coroner the ability to order the selection of a replacement juror if a juror is discharged or dies in the very early stages of the proceedings before the commencement of opening remarks. The amendment will reduce the likelihood of whole juries being discharged very early in the proceedings. Importantly, the coroner or court must still discharge the jury if, in their opinion, ordering the selection of a replacement juror would give rise to a substantial miscarriage of justice. Item [7] of schedule 1 to the bill removes the requirement for a court to make an order permitting the jury in criminal proceedings to separate at any time after the jury retires to consider its verdict.

Currently, under section 54 of the Jury Act, a jury in criminal proceedings can separate any time before it retires to consider the verdict. However, after it retires to consider the verdict, it can only separate if a court order is made allowing it. The rule stems from historical rules and practices that required juries to remain together and sequester themselves while they deliberate. The need to keep jurors physically separate from society no longer addresses the ways in which jurors may be influenced and therefore such orders are no longer considered necessary in most cases. The amendment removes that outdated technical requirement and aims to increase trial efficiency. It will also bring New South Wales in line with all other Australian jurisdictions, where there is no requirement for the court to make an order to allow jurors to separate. Proposed new section 54 will still give the court the ability to make an order that a jury does not separate at any time.

The bill also makes important amendments to increase protections for employees summoned for jury service. Item [8] of schedule 1 to the bill expands the definition of employee in sections 69 and 69A of the Jury Act to include part-time employees. The existing provisions are intended to prevent employers from dismissing or prejudicing employees, or making employees use their leave or undertake additional work because they are summoned to serve as a juror. However, those protections do not currently apply to part-time employees. The amendment will provide part-time employees with the same protections against adverse workplace treatment that full-time and casual employees currently have. Jurors are the judges of the facts in trials and the verdicts in those trials are ultimately their decision. People who are summonsed to serve as jurors should not face adverse consequences from their employers for engaging in that crucial part of our justice system.

Next I turn to amendments in the bill relating to the powers of the sheriff to investigate improper conduct. Item [9] of schedule 1 to the bill amends section 73A of the Jury Act to give the sheriff the ability, with the consent of or at the request of the Supreme or District courts, to conduct an investigation and report to the court on the outcome of the investigation if there is reason to suspect a criminal trial may be, or may have been, affected because of improper conduct by a member or members of the jury. Currently section 73A of the Jury Act only provides the sheriff with the power to conduct such an investigation if there is a reason to suspect that the improper conduct may have affected the verdict of a jury in a criminal trial. That precludes the sheriff's officers from investigating conduct if there is no verdict. Improper conduct may occur at any time during a trial and any improper conduct has the potential to impact the outcome of a trial and the integrity of the jury system, even if improper conduct does not affect a verdict. For that reason, the bill amends section 73A of the Act so that investigations are not only limited to matters for which it is suspected that the verdict has been affected.

Item [10] of schedule 1 to the bill also extends the circumstances in which the sheriff may investigate improper conduct by permitting investigations into conduct committed by another person in relation to a juror rather than just the conduct of a member or members of the jury. The purpose of the amendment is to broaden the scope of section 73A to allow the sheriff to investigate improper conduct towards or directed at a juror, as well as conduct by a juror, in the circumstances provided for by the provision. Currently the law does not permit the sheriff to investigate conduct of third parties—that is the responsibility of the NSW Police Force. In some circumstances the sheriff will be better placed to immediately investigate irregularities that occur during a trial. Enabling the sheriff to conduct such investigations will ensure that they can be done in a timely manner and with minimal interference to the trial proceedings. In cases where the improper conduct is sufficiently serious, the court may refer the matter to police for investigation.

Item [11] of schedule 1 to the bill will amend section 75 of the Act so that any summons, notice or other document required or authorised by or under the Jury Act to be sent, served or given to any person by the sheriff will be able to be sent, served or given to a person by email. Currently section 75 requires jurors to be summonsed via personal service or post. Typically people are served with a summons or other document via post. The requirement involves a significant number of letters being sent to potential jurors with the aim of getting sufficient numbers of persons to serve on a jury. Sending summonses, notices or documents to a person's email address will alleviate the administrative burden on the postal service. It will also assist potential jurors to receive and respond to a summons by permitting the use of direct hyperlinks to the juror portal. Email service will only be used where the potential juror has consented to the use of their email address and provided it to the sheriff for that purpose.

Item [12] outlines the transitional and savings provisions relating to the amendments. The amendments will only apply to trials or coronial inquests commenced after their commencement. To allow sufficient time for implementation and for changes to be communicated to the stakeholders, the amendments in the bill, once passed, will commence on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation. Before concluding, I thank those who contributed to the development of these important reforms. I acknowledge the work of representatives from the NSW Sheriff's Office, the Supreme Court and the District Court, and I extend my special thanks to the Hon. Justice Derek Price, former Chief Judge of the District Court, who conducted a significant amount of work in advance of the progression of the reforms.

I also thank the valuable contributions made by stakeholders and those in the Department of Communities and Justice who have been instrumental in the work. Finally, I thank the people of New South Wales who dedicate their time to serve as jurors. Their contribution is an essential and valued part of our justice system. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:19):** I thank the member for Prospect for his succinct summary of the detail of the Jury Amendment Bill 2024. With the exception of one matter that was the subject of an amendment in the other place, I indicate that the Opposition supports the bill as amended. For those who are interested in the position of the jury in the historical context of our system of justice, I commend the speech on the bill by my excellent assistant shadow Attorney General, the Hon. Susan Carter. She gave an incredibly erudite speech on the history of juries within the common law system, starting with William the Conqueror and moving forward from there. It was an excellent enunciation of the historical role of juries.

I make a few observations of my own as a legal practitioner of many years. Juries are incredibly important to our system of justice. They provide an important democratic oversight of what can be, at times, a very insular club of legal practitioners, as members of the public who participate in our system of justice. I recall the Hon. Justice Ian Callinan, AC, once observing that juries in criminal trials provide an incredible discipline to the trial process that is not always apparent in civil cases where there are no juries. I have appeared before juries—I have experience as a legal practitioner in trials involving civil and criminal juries. I have never appeared before a coronial jury, but the observations that I make probably apply equally to coronial inquests. Juries have a really important role in focusing a trial. In the modern world, they have the role of preventing the unnecessary proliferation of paper that has exponentially increased the legal costs in the many civil cases that are heard without a jury.

I bring a unique perspective to this debate because I have appeared in a number of civil defamation trials with juries, and I can compare that to the many commercial cases without juries where I have appeared. The use of oral evidence required in front of a jury greatly focuses hearings compared with evidence by adoption of a written statement or affidavit, which is commonplace in commercial cases. Those written statements or affidavits are often accompanied by many lever arch files of largely irrelevant documents that are never referred to by barristers arguing the case or in the judgement of the court. Indeed, many commercial judges now make it clear that they will not read a document unless it is specifically referred to in evidence or submissions, which I think is a recognition of the large volume of irrelevant documentary material that is frequently admitted into evidence.

Oral evidence is also not filtered by anybody else. As former Judge of Appeal the Hon. Harold Glass once observed, every now and again a drop of truth occasionally falls out of the bottom of an affidavit. That recognises the often heavily curated nature—by lawyers and even by friends and business partners—of affidavits and written statements. Frequently, oral evidence does not match a written affidavit or statement, and the witness is unaware of the inconsistency between the two because the written statement or affidavit is not necessarily the product of the recollection of the witness at all, but of what some other person wishes that they would give evidence of.

Jury trials have an important integrity about them, and keeping the jury system efficient and reliable is incredibly important. The Opposition supports the bill to the extent that it improves the efficiency of jury empanelment and operation. Many of the amendments in the bill derive from the review of indictable processes led by the former Chief Judge of the District Court, the Hon. Justice Derek Price. Those changes will enhance support for jurors and reduce the likelihood of aborted trials and hung juries. They introduce practical measures to arrest juror attrition. The amendments will also provide a broad discretion as to who is empanelled and facilitate additional or replacement jurors where appropriate. Those changes are welcome as they strengthen the justice system and provide a fairer process for all litigants. The amendments also recognise that modern jurors use email, which is a very sensible change in recognition of how the modern world operates.

I was listening very carefully to the member for Prospect and I thought he very fairly summarised the detail of the bill. Accordingly, as the bill has passed through the upper House with speeches given about it, it is not necessary for me to repeat what was said there or to repeat what was said by the member for Prospect. I indicate that the Opposition will support the bill in its amended form. It is not necessary for me to go into the subject of the amendment in the other place. I do not think there is anything more I need to say other than that the Opposition supports the bill.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (18:26):** I support the amendments to the Jury Act 1997 in the Jury Amendment Bill 2024. The bill makes various amendments aimed at improving the operation and management of juries within our judicial system. It is necessary to understand the reasoning behind those amendments, the background that required them and the content of the bill. First, let us explore the background that has highlighted the need for the proposed changes.

The amendments can be traced back to a thorough review of indictable practices in the District and Supreme courts, led by the distinguished former Chief Judge of the District Court, the Hon. Justice Derek Price. That comprehensive review identified areas where improvements are needed to streamline jury empanelment, strengthen support for jurors in fulfilling their duties and limit unnecessary expenditure of resources on trials that culminate in abortive outcomes or hung juries. Furthermore, it is important to highlight certain amendments that were initially proposed but have undergone revision. For instance, the proposal to reduce the minimum deliberation time for majority verdicts from eight hours to four hours was not passed by the Legislative Council on 7 May 2024. That decision highlights the careful considerations and deliberations involved in the shaping of the bill.

Now let us turn to the content of the bill. The proposed amendments within schedule 1 encompass various components aimed at supporting the efficiency of the jury process. They include provisions clarifying conditions for juror exemption or excusal, granting greater discretion to courts and coroners for empanelling additional or replacement jurors, and facilitating summons delivery via email under specific circumstances. The bill clarifies what constitutes good cause for seeking excusal or exemption from jury service. There is currently some ambiguity regarding what constitutes good cause. While it is appropriate to have flexibility in the application of this definition, it is useful to make clear that good cause can include temporary disabilities or other physical or mental conditions. These may include issues such as back pain that would prevent a person sitting for extended periods, or significant anxiety that would prevent a person performing as a juror due to previous experience with the justice system, such as having been a victim of crime.

Schedule 1[1] to the bill adds a note to section 14A (d) of the Jury Act 1977 to clarify that a person can have good cause to be exempted or excused from jury service if temporary disabilities or other physical or mental conditions would affect a person's ability to perform the functions of a juror. This amendment will provide additional clarity to the courts, the sheriff and the public. It is important that individuals who are not able to properly engage with the jury process are excused from the jury pool at the start of the process. If individuals with legitimate reasons to be excused are empanelled on juries, there is an increased likelihood that they will then need to be discharged after the trial commences.

When a juror is discharged during the trial, there is a risk that the whole jury will need to be discharged due to fairness concerns. This can result in delay, placing additional stress on complainants, witnesses and the accused, and could result in wasted expenditure. This amendment is about ensuring juries are empanelled from the outset with jurors who can perform their functions. Additionally, outdated technical requirements, such as the



necessity for a court order to permit jury separation in criminal trials, have been expunged, thereby streamlining procedural complexities.

The amendments extend protections to part-time employees by ensuring they are not disadvantaged by their employers when being called to perform jury service. This provision ensures fairness in the treatment of jurors, irrespective of their employment status. Furthermore, amendments are proposed to strengthen the powers of the sheriff to investigate improper conduct related to juries, thereby safeguarding the integrity of our jury system. These provisions highlight the Government's commitment to upholding the sanctity of the judicial process and ensuring the impartiality and integrity of jury deliberations. Significantly, stakeholder consultation has been integral throughout the preparation of these amendments.

The input and feedback from heads of jurisdiction, members of the judiciary, Government officials, and legal stakeholders have been sought at various stages of the process. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, and the amendments are tailored to address the comprehensive needs of our judicial system. The amendments to the Jury Act 1977 represent a culmination of comprehensive reviews, stakeholder consultations, and a commitment to upholding the principles of justice within our legal framework to ensure equal access to justice for all. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:33):** I join in debate on the Jury Amendment Bill 2024, which will make miscellaneous amendments to the Jury Act 1977. The bill has been introduced to make improvements in the operation and management of juries in the great State of New South Wales. The amendments emanate from a review led by the former Chief Judge of the District Court, the Hon. Justice Derek Price, of the processes around juries in the District and Supreme courts. The amendments will improve the efficiency of empanelling a jury and enhance support for jurors in the performance of their role. The bill also seeks to reduce the expenditure of resources on trials that are untimely aborted or result in hung juries. Essentially, the bill seeks to improve efficiency and ensure fairness in the way juries are conducted in this State.

The history of juries is quite interesting. They date back to ancient Greece. In the Athenian legal system, there was the concept of lay judges, who were known as dikastes. My pronunciation of ancient Greek is not good. If only the member for Rockdale was present in the Chamber, he could have helped me. Unfortunately, he is absent because of illness. I wish him a speedy recovery so he can return to this House and help me with my ancient Greek. We also have the concept of a jury in that all-important document that became the platform for our democracy and legal system, *Magna Carta* 1215, which states:

No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.

That is where we get the concept of being judged by a jury of our peers. It is a fundamental pillar of our justice system. I commend this Government for seeking to improve the way juries work in New South Wales. The use of juries in New South Wales became standard practice for criminal trials in 1839 and in 1844 for civil trials. Unfortunately, the *Magna Carta* mentioned only free men, not free women. In the 1800s, only men who owned property or served in the military were eligible for jury service.

It was not until the Jury (Amendment) Act 1947 that women were allowed to take part in trials as jurors. Like many things, that is a fantastic development. For example, take this House tonight. The member for Liverpool is seated in the Chamber and the member for Drummoyne is in the chair. May the fairer sex continue to contribute more to our great State. Currently, the only people who are ineligible for jury service are certain public office holders who include, thankfully, members of Parliament, judicial officers and lawyers, people employed in certain public sector roles, people with serious criminal convictions, people who were undischarged bankrupts, and those who do not have a firm understanding of the English language.

I turn now to the amendments in the bill. Items [1] to [6] and item [11] of schedule 1 to the bill will amend the Act to aid the efficient empanelling and selection of jurors. The amendments include clarifying when a juror should be exempted or excused from service, which will provide the courts and the coroner with greater discretion; empanelling additional and replacement jurors; and allowing a summons to be sent by email in certain circumstances. Through the introduction of email, we can gauge how far juries have come from ancient times to today, which is commendable.

**Ms Charishma Kaliyanda:** Still in ancient Greek?

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** I do not believe emails were sent around the time of *Magna Carta*. There are several editions of *Magna Carta* and I saw one several years ago in the Federal Parliament. It is an amazing piece of history. I am very grateful to have seen it. Item [7] of schedule 1 removes an outdated technical requirement that the court make an order to permit a jury to separate in criminal trials. Item [8] of schedule 1 ensures that part-time employees have the same protections as full-time employees and are not prejudiced by their

employer when they attend jury service. Item [10] and item [11] of schedule 1 extend the powers of the sheriff to investigate improper conduct in relation to juries to support the integrity of the jury system. Those amendments seek to ensure that people are better able to conduct their duty as citizens.

I reflect on the many citizenship ceremonies that I have attended in my capacity as a member of Parliament. I have the privilege of representing three local government areas within the electorate of Leppington—Liverpool, Camden and Campbelltown—so I attend plenty of citizenship ceremonies. When I get to speak at them, usually in Camden and Campbelltown—they do not usually get me to speak in Liverpool for some reason—I tell people that one of the most important things is for them to conduct and execute their role as a citizen, which includes being a juror and voting. That is a special privilege. We often talk about the importance of voting, but we should also reflect on the importance of being a member of a jury and judging our peers.

When bringing anything to this House, it is important to engage with stakeholders. I am happy to report that the Government has engaged with stakeholders and consulted widely as part of the amendments in the bill. The Department of Communities and Justice consulted heads of jurisdiction, other members of the judiciary and key government and legal stakeholders during both the statutory review that I mentioned earlier and in the development of the bill in particular. That included extensive consultation with the stakeholders responsible for overseeing and managing the selection and operation of juries, including the Sheriff's Office, the District Court and the Supreme Court. Further consultation was undertaken on the drafting and final form of the bill.

In short, the bill is an important piece of legislation that ensures that justice is improved and made more efficient and that we do not suffer from circumstances where cases are aborted due to issues with the jury. All members in this place want justice to work efficiently and effectively. The bill will go a long way for things like hung juries and ensuring that the right people are on juries. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (18:42):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate—namely, the member for Wahroonga, the member for Mount Druitt and the member for Leppington. The Jury Amendment Bill 2024 makes a number of miscellaneous amendments to the Jury Act 1977 to improve the operation and management of juries in New South Wales and provide more support to the people who fulfil their civic duty to serve on a jury. The bill was introduced in the Legislative Council in October 2023 and included an amendment to implement the sole recommendation of the statutory review of the amendments made to the Jury Act 1977 by the Jury Amendment (Verdicts) Act 2006, which introduced majority verdicts in criminal proceedings in New South Wales.

The proposed amendment to section 55F of the Jury Act would have enabled a majority verdict to be returned by a jury in criminal proceedings where a unanimous verdict had not been reached after jurors had deliberated for a period of time not less than four hours, replacing the existing requirement for jurors to deliberate for not less than eight hours. The bill was referred to Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities. The committee considered whether the amendments in the bill impact on procedural fairness and an accused person's right to a fair trial. I thank the committee members for their detailed consideration of the bill.

The committee primarily considered the proposed reduction to the minimum period of deliberation from eight hours to four hours for majority verdicts and whether the amendment strikes the right balance between an individual's right to a fair trial and an efficient justice system. Following consideration of the issues considered by the committee, an amendment was moved and passed in the Legislative Council to retain the eight-hour minimum period of deliberation, instead of reducing the period to four hours as originally proposed.

Report No. 61 also considered item [7] of the bill, which will remove the requirement for a court to make an order permitting the jury in criminal proceedings to separate at any time after the jury retires to consider its verdict. New South Wales is the only remaining Australian jurisdiction to have an explicit requirement to make an order permitting the jury to separate. Removing the requirement would bring New South Wales into the modern day and in line with other jurisdictions.

In the majority of cases, the requirement for juries to remain physically separate is not considered necessary in a modern justice system. The rule stems from a historical requirement that juries seclude themselves from others while deliberating. Requiring a jury to separate no longer achieves the intended aim of the provision. Even when sequestered, jurors can be influenced in a number of other ways, such as by speaking to others on their mobile phones or accessing the internet. If the trial is particularly sensitive or subject to media attention and the judge determines it is in the interests of justice that the jury remains sequestered, the bill provides that the court can order that the jury does not separate to protect the trial.

Report No. 61 also considered item [11] of the bill, which provides that a summons, notice or other document may be served via email. Concerns were raised that the amendment may impact disadvantaged and marginalised people if they are unable to access emails and, as a result, do not respond to a jury summons and

receive a fine. Jury summons and notices will be sent via email only to those who have opted in for email service and have provided an email address to the sheriff for that purpose. Postal service will continue to be the default method of service used by the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office intends on undertaking an education campaign to encourage jurors to elect to receive summons electronically instead of via post where they are comfortable to do so. This amendment aims to increase efficiency and reduce the costs associated with empanelling juries.

Finally, report No. 61 considered item [10] of the bill, which increases the investigative power of the sheriff with respect to improper conduct by a third party towards a juror. The Sheriff's Office is best placed to undertake such investigations as the sheriff's officers, unlike police officers, are not parties to the criminal proceedings. The amendment will allow the investigation and resolution of instances of improper conduct quickly and reduce the risk to jurors and to the integrity of the trial. Investigations into improper conduct will only be undertaken by sheriff's officers who are trained to identify matters that require immediate referral to police. Any matter involving serious criminality will be referred to the NSW Police Force for investigation.

I thank the member for Wahroonga for his contribution to the debate. Juries do play an important role in criminal trials, and the Government is committed to improving the jury system to ensure that it is efficient and reliable. I also thank the member for Mount Druitt and the member for Leppington for their contributions to the debate. The bill makes a number of amendments that will improve the efficiency of jury empanelment, provide enhanced support for jurors to perform their role and reduce the expenditure of resources on trials that are ultimately aborted or result in hung juries, where possible. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

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

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER, AO**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:49):** I congratulate Professor Barney Glover on his 10 years of distinguished service as Vice-Chancellor of Western Sydney University—my alma mater. Throughout his tenure, Professor Glover has enhanced the university's research impact and student success, overseen sector-wide reforms and navigated the challenges brought on by global disruptions such as the COVID pandemic. Under his leadership, the university has expanded its international outlook and reputation while remaining deeply connected to its Western Sydney roots. Professor Glover has been hailed as a bold and transformative leader who has advocated fiercely for our region. Through initiatives such as Western Growth, he has played a pivotal role in shaping the region's city centres and fostering new economic prospects. Professor Glover's influence has been instrumental in the rise of tertiary attainment and economic prosperity in Western Sydney. I extend my best wishes on his future endeavours. His exemplary leadership and dedication have left an indelible mark on the community of Western Sydney.

#### **TONINO'S PENSHURST PIZZERIA**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:50):** I congratulate a local small business in my electorate called Tonino's Peshurst Pizzeria that recently celebrated 45 years of being in business over two separate locations. That is an amazing milestone. As a family-run business since 1979, Tonino's Peshurst Pizzeria has been serving up to our local community hot, fresh and delicious pizza for longer than I can remember. Growing up just down the road, I vividly recall visiting Tonino's as a kid with my dad. I make special mention of Tony, Anthony and Angela, who have all played an important role in making delicious pizza and memories for such a long time. Running a successful small business is no easy feat. However, I know firsthand that the team has tackled every challenge head on and has always come out stronger on the other side. I give a special thanks also to everyone who continues to support small businesses locally. Without the support of the community, businesses like Tonino's would not be able to survive. I congratulate the team once again on a successful 45 years.

#### **RILEY SANDSTROM**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:51):** I rise to recognise the extraordinary achievements of a young and remarkable individual, Riley Sandstrom, from Culburra. At just 10 years of age, Riley has exemplified excellence and sportsmanship beyond his years. Riley recently represented New South Wales at the School Sport

Australia athletics championships in Tasmania. During the competition Riley not only competed in multiple events but also secured top-five finishes in the combined track events that included the 100 metres, 800 metres, long jump and shot-put. But what truly sets Riley apart is his spirit of camaraderie and teamwork. When the Northern Territory relay team found themselves short of competitors, without hesitation or prompting, Riley volunteered to run for that team, showcasing his dedication not only to the sport but to the values of kindness and cooperation. For his outstanding representation of our State and exceptional sportsmanship, Riley has deservedly been honoured with the NSW Government State Representative Award. I congratulate Riley.

### SCONE HORSE FESTIVAL

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (18:52):** The Scone Horse Festival is well underway and the VIP awards for 2024 are in! Congratulations to Julee Gilmore on being named VIP of the Year for her tireless contribution to the festival and her exceptional leadership. Paige Baxter is the Young Achiever of the Year, with the young equestrian recognised for her dedication and passion that sets a high standard for young achievers. Denman's Tony and Pam Parry accepted the award for Horse of the Year for the remarkable performances of their champion Clydesdale mare, Dalswinton Charlotte. Lifetime Membership Awards were presented to Bill Howey, Jim Callinan and Mike Pritchard for their lengthy dedication to the Scone community and the Scone Horse Festival. There was proof that hard work does not go unnoticed, with Outstanding Service Awards presented to Brett Jones and Steven Wicks for their unwavering dedication and service to the Scone Horse Festival. I acknowledge all of the award recipients and thank them for their contributions.

### NEWCASTLE NORTHSTARS ICE HOCKEY CLUB

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:53):** Tonight in the New South Wales Parliament I thank the decision-makers at the Newcastle Northstars Ice Hockey Club who have taken in the para-ice sled hockey team as one of their own. As a former summer Paralympian, I had the opportunity to try the crazy winter sport of para-ice sled hockey at the Hunter ice rink. We strapped ourselves onto aluminium sleds with two short blades, donned full body armour, including shoulder pads, shin pads, elbow pads, gloves and a sturdy helmet, accompanied by two hockey sticks with metal prongs, to speed as quickly we could across the ice to hit the puck into the goal. The Newcastle Northstars has done an amazing job adopting the para-ice hockey program. Dawn Cherie and Adrian Abebe are sensational coaches who are working hard to develop skills and drills to turn us from rookies into real competitors. Being on the ice brings an absolute smile to my face as my teammates and I slide, manoeuvre, crash, tip over and smash the puck as hard as we can, fall over and get up and do it again. I thank the Newcastle Northstars hockey crew. It is fabulous to cheer on and compete beside the able-bodied women's and able-bodied men's teams.

### TEACHERS RE-ENGAGE

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:54):** Today I acknowledge the nearly 150 former teachers across New South Wales who have taken up the Government's offer of the Teachers Re-engage program to help alleviate the ongoing teacher shortage crisis. One such teacher is Laura Monk, who left the profession after battling through the gruelling COVID-19 pandemic years, which left countless teachers in burnout. Laura has returned this year and accepted the call as a full-time teacher for year 3 at Forestville Public School in my electorate. I thank Laura. While this program may not be a silver bullet for resolving the persistent teaching staff issues in schools across the State, it is another important tool in our arsenal. I know many teachers are struggling with high workloads and stress, so I commend all those returning to our classrooms statewide in the name of supporting the vital education of our young people. To all our teachers, I say, "Thank you. You are all amazing and doing an amazing job."

### HUME REGION SCOUTS

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:55):** I recently had the privilege of attending the annual report presentation of the Hume Region Scouts, which was hosted by the Wattle Grove Scouts. It was a pleasure to acknowledge the work of Liverpool district section leaders Bryan Binskin and Kim Budge. Kim is the district Joey Scout Leader for children aged five to seven years, and Bryan is the District Scout Leader for children aged 11-15 years. They have a big job across the Liverpool community, supporting the five scout groups in the Liverpool district at Hoxton Park, Green Valley, Liverpool, Wattle Grove and Chipping Norton. As part of the global Scout Movement, they are at the forefront of equipping young people with skills, resources and relationships that will help them navigate life. This is even more valuable considering the unique challenges posed on young people and their families by modern life. Skills like resilience, problem-solving and patience are important, regardless of age. I thank Sean Budge for inviting me and for the warm hospitality of the Wattle Grove Scouts. They do amazing work with kids across Liverpool.

**FINN O'KEEFFE**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (18:56):** I acknowledge the incredible work of 13-year-old Finn O'Keeffe of Oyster Bay for assisting with the rescue of people with a disability and their carers at Oyster Bay. The group of people with a disability and their carers had hired two boats for the day from the nearby Como Marina on 24 February this year. However, their outing took a turn for the worse when they drifted off course and became stuck in thick mud due to the falling tide in Oyster Bay. Upon recognising that the group were in distress, Finn along with Jeremy, another local, jumped into action to rescue the 15 stranded passengers and ferry them to safety. It was Finn's knowledge of the mudflats—thanks to his love of fishing, crabbing and exploring—that proved particularly helpful, with both wading through waist-deep, thick mud while pulling the kayaks behind them to bring the group back to shore. I take this opportunity to thank both Finn and Jeremy for their courageous actions in undertaking this rescue and wish them many happy days along the banks of the Georges River.

**VANESSA SOKALIK**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:57):** I recognise local therapeutic programs coordinator at North West Community Services, Vanessa Sokalik. Vanessa stands as a beacon of support and empowerment within our community. With a wealth of experience and a heart dedicated to positive social change, particularly among our most vulnerable youth, she embodies the essence of compassion and resilience. From her pivotal roles as a youth coordinator to her current position as therapeutic programs coordinator, Vanessa has continually championed integrity and quality in every endeavour. Her visionary leadership has breathed life into our youth centre, a testament to her commitment to meeting emerging needs and bridging gaps in our community. Through her unwavering dedication, Vanessa has forged trusting relationships with those often marginalised by society, guiding them toward achieving their life goals. Without a doubt, she is a local gem whose impact resonates deeply, and we are profoundly grateful to have her help. Recently, I hosted a youth forum with Vanessa. Her professionalism and experience resulted in a fantastic event, drawing great results from all who attended. I could not let Neighbourhood Centre Week pass without acknowledging Vanessa.

**JORJA FAWKNER**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (18:58):** Tonight I acknowledge the recent achievements of Bathurst local Jorja Fawkner. From managing a cafe to opening a permanent jewellery business, Jorja has never shied away from a challenge. Currently studying psychological science at Bond University, Jorja has returned to her first love of reading by writing and publishing her very own novel. Jorja's first novel is due for release on 24 May by London publishing house Barnes and Noble. The romance novel, called *Cornelia Street*, follows two main characters, Daisy and Rowan, living in a small town in a love story full of twists, turns and haunted pasts. Jorja's dream is for young girls to find themselves a little slice of heaven inside each book they read. *Cornelia Street* is dedicated to those girls. I congratulate Jorja on her courage to follow her passion at such a young age and achieve her dream with outstanding success. The Bathurst community is excited for *Cornelia Street's* release, and we look forward to watching her future successes as well.

**PENRITH DISTRICT NETBALL OPENING SEASON MARCH-PAST**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:59):** Earlier this month Jamison Park in Penrith was awash with colour for the annual Penrith district netball opening season march-past. It was a colourful start to the season, with the march-past being led off by Penrith RSL Pipes and Drums band on an overcast day. It was evident that all 18 clubs and players had put so much time and energy into vying for number one spot and the coveted Jan Jackson Trophy. It was a pleasure to be selected as a judge for the march-past on the day, and it was by far the toughest job for that day. Congratulations to Cambridge Park Netball Club, which took out top honours for the second straight year, and to the runners-up, Glenmore Park Netball Club. Well done to all.

**TRIBUTE TO JOHN WALTON, MICHAEL CRONIN AND DECLAN HILLBRICK**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (19:00):** There is sadness in the area when we lose people in our electorate, but it is a chance to reflect on their impact on our lives. On 12 March we farewelled John Walton of Silverdale. Missed by wife Rhonda, children Amelia and Daniel, and grandchild Alexander, his peaceful passing left a void in the hearts of his family and friends. On 22 February we farewelled Michael Cronin, remembered by his wife of 62 years, Margaret, his five children and his nine grandchildren. He was known for his kindness and generosity, and he changed the face of Thirlmere. Our thoughts are also with Paul Hillbrick, the father of young Declan Hillbrick. Declan's death in January has impacted Paul, sister Emma and mother, Alison. Paul is an active member of the community, known for his regular column in *The District Reporter* newspaper. The loss of a child is an especially challenging time, and I offer my condolences and support to the Hillbrick family. Farewell to John, Michael and Declan. Rest in peace.

**LOCKWOOD BUTLER**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (19:01):** I acknowledge Mr Lockwood Butler for being awarded his NSW Marine Rescue Long Service Medal. The medal is awarded to members of Marine Rescue NSW to recognise the enduring commitment and service of volunteer members with Marine Rescue NSW. Lock, as he is known, has demonstrated exceptional dedication and contributions to Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie as a volunteer for the past 10 years. He has been involved in countless rescues and assists during his service in the Lake Macquarie region. Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie is a pinnacle of the Swansea electorate and broader Hunter region through the outstanding work that they perform in ensuring our boaties and waterways are safe. The volunteerism and sacrifice the organisation exhibits is admirable and showcases the very best of what the community has to offer. I congratulate Lock on his remarkable achievement. I thank him for his ongoing commitment to enhancing the safety of the Swansea community.

**RYDE ELECTORATE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (19:02):** I ask the House to join me in congratulating two of my constituents, Ralph Buchanan and Joseph Sun, on 50 years of service as justices of the peace. Their unwavering dedication to upholding justice and serving the community is commendable and deserving of our highest praise. Throughout their five decades of service, Ralph and Joseph have demonstrated the integrity, fairness and compassion that is so typical of JPs in New South Wales. Without interruption, they have ensured our community has access to a range of services, earning them the respect and admiration of all who have known them. It was therefore fitting that we hosted them in the New South Wales Parliament in April, alongside other JPs across New South Wales with equally impressive tenures of service. In growth communities like Ryde, there is an ever-enduring need to invest in current and future services. Our JPs are no exception, and Ralph and Joseph have done an extraordinary job ensuring that our community is well serviced. They are wonderful examples, who show no signs of slowing down. We thank them for their invaluable and continuing service for over 50 years.

**KATIE FERGUSON**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:03):** In order for big changes to be achieved, individuals must stand up and make a noise. Katie Ferguson has been that person for Gillieston Public School and the broader community of Gillieston Heights for many years. Following a long advocacy campaign, in last year's budget the New South Wales Government committed to the redevelopment of the school. None of this would have been possible without the strong advocacy and the hard work of our former P&C president, Katie Ferguson, who has been a powerhouse. I note that she also got a commitment from the former Government. She rallied parents and the community to call for improved facilities and had input into parliamentary committees to ensure that the Gillieston voice was heard loud and clear. The upgrade will include the replacement of demountable classrooms and additional ancillary spaces, which is vital to the growing community of Gillieston. Katie is very humble about her contribution. However, I join with the local community to thank her for this enormous effort. I was thrilled to present Katie recently with a NSW Government Community Service Award in recognition of her significant efforts on behalf of her community.

**ELEANOR POWELL**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (19:04):** Tonight I recognise the significant achievements of Eleanor Powell, who has been contributing to Meals on Wheels in Grafton for 50 years. She began volunteering in 1974, when the Meals on Wheels service was a part of St Andrews Church. Back then volunteers organised driving rosters and cooked and delivered hot meals. They cooked them up in a big pot, and they used their own vehicles. Between 1994 and 2016 Eleanor was responsible for organising the rosters. In 2021 she was inducted into the Meals on Wheels NSW honour roll. She also serves as a volunteer for the Carrs Creek School, serving as president for 30 years, and is a life member of the Jacaranda Festival, contributing 56 years of continual service. I congratulate Eleanor on her achievements. This House and the State owes her a great deal of gratitude.

**ZONTA CLUB BLUE MOUNTAINS**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:05):** The incredible Zonta Club of the Blue Mountains is committed to making positive impacts in the fight for women's equality and health. Just one of the initiatives that this group of courageous women continue to focus upon is the production of sanitary birthing kits for mothers-to-be in developing countries. These environmentally friendly kits include necessities such as biodegradable plastic bags and cloth, vegan soap, surgical gloves, swabs, sterile string and blade. These basics items support the safety of women and newborns during and after childbirth. A former educator for over 35 years, Zonta Club Blue Mountains member Maree Cairns is the driving force behind this wonderful initiative that is championing maternal health and newborn survival. Maree is a much-loved and respected member of our

community, displaying a tireless devotion and passion for many worthwhile causes. Zonta Club Blue Mountains, along with the international Zonta Club movement, has done much to improve women's health and wellbeing, particularly in developing countries. I highly commend Maree and all members of the Zonta Club of the Blue Mountains and thank them for the remarkable, compassionate and life-changing work that they do.

#### **EMPIRE BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:06):** Tonight I speak about a fantastic community group in my electorate in the town of Empire Bay, the Empire Bay Progress Association. The association, headed by President Ken Shaw, and dozens of dedicated volunteers give so much to the Empire Bay community. Most recently, it organised another truly outstanding Anzac Day service, which I had the honour of attending once again this year. The association is the cornerstone of the Empire Bay community, and the cornerstone of the Empire Bay Progress Association is the Progress Hall. The hall has been the centre of countless family events, dance classes, children's activities and elder gatherings since its establishment in 1929. It also has a significant historical worth to the community and requires constant upkeep to ensure that the hall is in tiptop shape. That is why I was absolutely delighted to recently announce \$50,000 in funding for cladding replacement for the hall. The progress association has worked hard to keep the hall in the best shape, and the \$50,000 investment will ensure that the hall serves generations to come. Congratulations to the association.

#### **ENGADINE COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (19:07):** This week marks Neighbourhood Centre Week, running from 13 May to 19 May. It is a nationwide celebration highlighting the pivotal role of neighbourhood and community centres across Australia. In my electorate, we have the privilege of highlighting one such remarkable centre: Engadine Community Services. Since its establishment in 1971, the centre has been a cornerstone of our local community, tirelessly serving individuals from diverse backgrounds, connecting them, nurturing their growth and fostering a vibrant atmosphere of inclusivity and togetherness. Engadine Community Services epitomises the essence of community care, responding to the needs of vulnerable individuals by providing essential services, facilitating connections to support systems and offering a wide array of inclusive programs. Some of the programs include free tax help, a community library of DVDs and books, seniors programs like "Computing for Seniors", social exercise groups like tai chi, home visits, assisted shopping, volunteering information, kids playgroups and a comprehensive toy library. We extend our deepest gratitude to Engadine Community Services for its enduring commitment and compassionate efforts.

#### **GUMNUT CHILD CARE CENTRE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:08):** Gumnut Child Care Centre in Gundagai recently marked a significant milestone, celebrating 30 years of dedicated service to families and children. Established in 1984, Gumnut child care has become a cornerstone of the community. Over the years, its commitment to excellence in providing a safe, stimulating and enriching environment for children has remained unwavering. The journey of Gumnut child care over the past three decades is testament to the dedication of its staff, the trust of the families and the continuous support of the Gundagai community. Indeed, Gumnut child care has impacted the lives of generations of children and their families. As Gumnut Child Care Centre celebrates this milestone, it looks back with pride on its achievements and looks forward to the future with a steadfast commitment to continued quality child care for the Gundagai community.

#### **JUNIPER BERRY FARMING**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (19:09):** I was delighted to see Adriane Reardon's story on ABC's *Landline* program about local farmers from Bibbenluke, near Bombala, in the Monaro electorate, growing world-class juniper berries that are now being used by North of Eden distillery. Locally produced gin has had a boom over recent years, but most of it is made with imported berries. I congratulate local farmer and agricultural scientist Lucy Vincent and her husband, Bruce Campbell, on growing such an in-demand crop in a climate that suits the berries. Lucy and Bruce established their orchard in 2018. Since then they have cultivated 600 trees across their property. Their product is so good that it has been studied by researchers at the University of Tasmania and has been found to be at or above the international benchmark for essential oil content. High quality, world-class agricultural produce is one of the things that the Monaro is known for, where we have the perfect climate for growing juniper berries. I wish Lucy and Bruce all the best with their venture.

#### **SUZY DOMINGUES**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (19:10):** I recognise Suzy Domingues as the current and inaugural NSW SES Woman of the Year and Outstanding Female Leader. The NSW State Emergency Service is a volunteer-based organisation that provides emergency assistance to the people of New South Wales 24 hours a

day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. With more than 10,000 volunteers across the State, the Waverley-Woollahra unit is incredibly proud of Suzy's achievement. NSW State Emergency Service volunteers come from all walks of life, bringing with them many different skills, interests and backgrounds. They are united by the purpose of supporting their communities in times of need. For Suzy to receive these awards is a reflection of her leadership and commitment to an incredibly important organisation. I congratulate Suzy and thank all the SES volunteers.

### **NATIONAL NETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:11):** I celebrate the outstanding achievements of the New South Wales netball teams at the National Netball Championships in Frankston, Victoria, from 9 April to 14 April. The under-17 and under-19 teams displayed unparalleled skill and determination, representing the State with distinction among the nation's best. The under-19 team excelled, sweeping all nine games, securing the gold medal with a 42-32 victory over Queensland. Their triumph exemplifies their hard work, strategic precision and the spirit of New South Wales netball. Although the under-17 team narrowly missed out on bronze, losing to Victoria in overtime, their resilience in the face of adversity promises growth and future success. I give special commendations to Frederika Schneideman, who was named the tournament's most valuable player, and Hope White, who was best on ground in the final. Their achievements highlight the calibre of talent and dedication within our teams.

### **FAMILIES OF VETERANS GUILD**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (19:12):** I recognise the War Widows Guild of NSW, which has changed its name to Families of Veterans Guild. After extensive consultation with its members, the new name better reflects its broadened commitment to all veterans' families, beyond war widows. It is about ensuring that those families receive support and recognition from the moment their loved ones don their uniforms. For many decades, the guild has been dedicated to improving the lives of the families of Australia's veterans, who have sacrificed so much for our country. The guild has done this by providing these families with a voice and a community, facilitating access to services and entitlements, and supporting their social and emotional wellbeing when they need it throughout their life journey. It was a great pleasure and honour to have recently visited CEO Renee Wilson and her incredible team at their Chatswood office in the electorate of Willoughby. I thank them for hosting me, but most of all I thank them for the great work they do to help the families of our veterans.

### **MRS ELFA LILLIS**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:13):** I ask members to join me in congratulating Mrs Elfa Lillis on the remarkable milestone of celebrating 30 years as principal of All Saints Grammar School in Belmore. Beginning her career as a teacher and now leading the school with passion and dedication, Mrs Lillis embodies commitment and excellence. She is much loved by the school community, who are all immensely proud to benefit from her leadership and guidance. Over the past three decades, Mrs Lillis's unwavering commitment to education and her vision for a nurturing learning environment have touched the lives of generations of students. Her leadership has not only shaped minds but also fostered a sense of what defines the school's spirit. Mrs Lillis's journey of dedication to excellence is truly worthy of celebration. I wish Mrs Lillis all the success as she continues to inspire students and future leaders.

### **THE HILLS STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE UNIT**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (19:14):** I acknowledge the Hills State Emergency Service unit for the terrific work it does within my community. I recently had the opportunity to catch up with leaders Phillip Hickman and Joseph Vurchio, who have served the Hills SES for many years. Recent weather events, including flash flooding, were promptly responded to by members of the SES unit to restore community safety. The work of the Hills SES goes beyond responding to emergency events, and each and every week of the year extends to community education and prevention strategies. The SES plays an important role in supporting locals with flooding readiness and preparation, connecting the community with live updates on road closures, and helping with the clean-up after damage. I thank the Hills SES unit volunteers for their continued support of my community. I look forward to working with them to ensure community safety into the future.

### **AUTISM ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (19:15):** Since 2007 the Autism Advisory and Support Service has done amazing work providing a range of services to support, advocate for, help, educate and guide families who have a family member with autism. Its mission is simple and powerful: to empower children and adults with autism and their families through knowledge and support. Earlier this month I had the privilege of attending the service's hope charity ball, raising much-needed funds for its great work. I thank founder and CEO Grace Fava; Chief



Financial Officer Stephanie Cusack; People and Culture Manager Hamdia Khan; as well as the wider service team, who provide speech pathology, art therapy, psychology, social group coordination, music therapy, and support and administration capabilities. I thank them so much for all the work they do.

#### **BETTY'S PLACE WOMEN'S REFUGE**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:16):** It is worth placing on record the amazing efforts of the 185 people who gathered together to raise \$102,000 for Betty's Place Women's Refuge in Albury. In particular, I pay tribute to Rosy Seaton, the owner of the Boat Shed at Lake Hume, who for five years now has been hosting the event. I also note the late Jim and Jenny Toole. After Jim passed away in December 2023, he expressly wished to leave their house to Betty's Place, which was a magnificent gift. Jim and Jenny's house belonged to Bob and Betty McLean, after whom Betty's Place is named. This was an amazing effort. Finally, I pay tribute to Di Glover and the team at YES Unlimited, who do so much for victim-survivors. There is no place for violence in my community.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Some of those grassroots organisations do incredible work.

#### **SMUDGE THE PYTHON**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:18):** This year's Sydney Royal Easter Show was an exciting time for the Andrews family from Salt Ash in the Port Stephens electorate. Local dad Adam Andrews has a passion for cold-blooded native fauna, a passion he shares with his kids: Noah, 12; Flynn, 11; and Jessica, six. Even mum Kayleigh gets involved. This year was the family's fourth showing at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and I am pleased to say that they struck success, with their Stimson's python Smudge taking out first place in the antaresia category. But Smudge was not the only winner. Adam and Noah entered other snakes that they have reared and bred, coming away with two second places and one third place. Like me, members might not be the biggest fan of snakes—I can see the perplexed look on your face, Mr Temporary Speaker—but they can certainly appreciate the dedication and hard work that the Andrews family have put into their collection. I congratulate the entire Andrews family and, of course, Smudge the python. Although, I must say that Smudge is one constituent I do not feel the need to meet.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:19):** Tonight I talk about an issue that is rocking our State and our nation. It is not a new problem but, tragically, unthinkable, it has been getting worse. Domestic and family violence affects people in every one of the electorates we represent in this place, including my own, and it must end. So far this year, 28 women across Australia have lost their lives at the hands of an intimate partner. The most recent was young Molly Ticehurst from Forbes. This Parliament, the people of New South Wales and our nation mourn the loss of Molly and the tragically long line of other women before her who were also murdered by an intimate partner. It is entirely unacceptable that one in four women over the age of 15 have suffered violence from an intimate partner or family member.

It is shocking that our local police now spend 60 per cent of their time responding to reports of domestic and family violence. The police Minister, who is in the Chamber, told me that translates to one domestic and family violence incident every 3½ minutes in this State. It is a gut-wrenching reality women and children right now, in Port Stephens and across the State, are living in fear for their lives in their own homes. It must end. Currently more than 14,000 children are in the care of the State, and it is safe to say that the vast majority of them are from households of violence. These children carry the trauma of family violence, family breakdown and family losses over their entire lifetime. This is not how we as Australians picture ourselves, but it is an uncomfortable truth that must be told. With the rising rates of gender-based violence, our communities have taken to the streets shouting, "Enough is enough." Like me and every member in this place, they are angry, frustrated and, quite frankly, many are frightened.

For the sake of the women whose lives have been lost, the children they have left behind, those women who have been scarred for life and those currently living in fear, we must act—and we are. Last week the Premier announced an emergency package to start tackling the scourge of domestic and family violence—a package designed to support communities to start saving women's lives. Importantly, the \$230 million package includes more support for women and children escaping violence, but also initiatives designed to prevent violence occurring in the first place. Prevention is key to ridding our communities of this cowardly crime, so there is \$38.2 million in funding for the State's first ever domestic, family and sexual violence primary prevention strategy.

When we announced our emergency package last week, we said it was just the beginning. This week, we have introduced to Parliament our package of reforms to the justice system. There are initiatives to strengthen our laws and make our communities safer.

Our justice reform package will make it more difficult for people accused of serious domestic violence offences to get bail. An alleged offender of a serious offence will have to demonstrate why they should be let out into the community—essentially, flipping the onus of proof. For those who are granted bail and released back into the community, our reforms will require that they are monitored electronically to keep women safe. For bail applications involving alleged offenders of other domestic and family violence offences, decision-makers will now have to consider domestic abuse "red flag" risk factors like sexually abusive or coercive behaviours, stalking, harming pets and, importantly, the views of victims and family members are to be considered when relevant to safety. Finally, we will be making sure these commonsense, practical considerations are taken into account for bail applications.

Our justice reforms will also tackle a frightening and increasing trend of surveillance, where tracking devices are used as a tactic to maintain control over victims. Our proposed changes to the law will also ensure that bail decisions made on a weekend are made by magistrates, not registrars. Again, these changes are a start. They are designed to address the very real risks posed by perpetrators of domestic and family violence, and they are long overdue. We hope that the Opposition will support our proposals to strengthen the legal system and save women's lives. Our emergency package and the suite of justice reform initiatives have been designed in deep consultation with stakeholders from domestic and family violence service providers, advocates and victims, and alongside the legal fraternity.

I am grateful to everyone who assisted the hardworking Attorney General, the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. We will continue to walk together on this path towards a safer society for women. Finally, I acknowledge the important work done daily in my community by the Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services and the Yacaaba Centre to support women. They have done the hard yards for years, helping women at the lowest, scariest and most dangerous times in their lives. This scourge of domestic violence in our communities must end.

#### **TRANSPORT ACCESS PROGRAM**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:24):** Our role as members of Parliament representing our individual electorates is to make the lives of our constituents easier and better. One of the ways the previous Coalition Government made people's lives easier was through the money it allocated to the Transport Access Program to invest in important infrastructure upgrades to make public transport facilities more accessible, modern and secure. In a practical sense, this includes installing new lifts and associated access improvements. It can also extend to putting weather shades over platforms and providing greater access to parking. Every member of our community deserves to be able to access public transport. I fought hard to have every train station in the Wahroonga electorate upgraded to ensure everyone could access them.

Many of the train stations in my electorate are over 100 years old, so they had a lot of stairs, reminiscent of a different era. This prevented people with a disability, a pram or luggage, or seniors, from being able to safely and securely access the train station platforms. I am incredibly proud to have delivered, as part of the previous Coalition Government, much-needed upgrades to the railway stations at Pymble, Wahroonga, Warrawee, Thornleigh, Normanhurst and Killara. Waitara train station was the final station in my electorate to receive an upgrade, and I was delighted to officially open it recently. The lifts provide greater accessibility to the train station platforms for those in wheelchairs, with prams and with luggage. The upgraded train station also features beautiful Indigenous artwork, which draws inspiration from our native flora.

But these upgrades are so much more than aesthetic uplifts. They have real impacts on real people. I had the pleasure of meeting a young man whose life had been dramatically impacted by train station upgrades in my electorate. In 2019 I met local high school student Chase Burch. Chase approached me at Warrawee railway station one day on his way to school. I was there campaigning for the State election. He has spina bifida. The condition impacts the spine, meaning he uses a wheelchair daily. Chase told me that the proposal to install lifts at the train stations in my electorate would profoundly change his life. He thanked me. He could not have known how much work was required to get the lifts, so I was extremely happy to meet him and receive that feedback. Chase told me that once the lifts were installed, it would mean he could get on a train to go to Gordon Library to study for his HSC with friends and that he could get a part-time job at Rebel Sport and travel there by train. Getting a job gave Chase more financial freedom, and he was able to build a bigger community of friends.

Recently I caught up with Chase and he told me that a lot of what he has achieved and accomplished is because of the lift at his local railway station. He says he would not have been able to build up his independence without it. Many seniors, parents with prams and others have said the same to me. Many of us take for granted

being able to use public transport or other facilities. For people like Chase, a lot of thought needs to be put into how they get to different places. That is why programs like the Transport Access Program are so critical for governments to invest in, to ensure that every member of our community, regardless of their ability or age, can access critical services like public transport.

Stories like Chase's should remind every member in this Parliament that the decisions we make in this Chamber have a very real and direct impact on the people in our electorates. People like Chase should be at the forefront of our minds when we make decisions. They should be at the forefront of the Government's mind when it is allocating funds in the upcoming State budget. Where is the Government spending the public's money and whose life will it impact? The Government must continue to invest in making our State's public infrastructure more accessible and secure for our constituents. I thank Chase for sharing his story, and for reminding me and everyone in this Parliament that we are here to make a real difference in people's lives across the State.

The transformation of the railway stations in my electorate has been absolutely incredible. I have heard many stories of elderly and other people falling and injuring themselves on the large number of narrow, small stairs that are difficult to get up and down. So the option for people to use lifts if their level of mobility requires it has seriously improved people's lives. That is what we are here for, and I am very glad to remind the House of such matters.

### MULTICULTURAL HEALTH

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:29):** Liverpool is home not only to one of the largest hospitals in the Southern Hemisphere but also to a vibrant and increasingly diverse multicultural community. That provides unique challenges and opportunities in delivering high-quality health care that is accessible to all community members. Often when considering access to healthcare services and information by multicultural communities, the translation of resources into community languages is the limit to the investment and imagination of bureaucrats and decision-makers. That was the case during the peak of the COVID pandemic and restrictions, when the needs of and feedback from cultural and linguistically diverse community groups and healthcare workers fell by the wayside.

I draw the attention of the House to the achievements and work of Associate Professor Christine Ji. I had the pleasure of meeting her earlier this year. We had a fascinating discussion about her research and recent publication in the area of multicultural translation and social inclusion—her academic specialisation. In addition to being a long-time resident of the Liverpool area, Associate Professor Ji's internationally renowned work has enhanced the knowledge of what should be best practice in health communication for culturally and linguistically diverse groups. She is a published author and respected in her field.

I am privileged to have been gifted a copy of Associate Professor Ji's most recent work, entitled *Translation Technology in Accessible Health Communication*, which she co-authored with Pierrette Bouillon from the University of Geneva and Mark Seligman, the President of Spoken Translation, Inc. The publication is a much-needed exploration of how policy and decision-makers can better use technology to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities. In her book Associate Professor Ji states that "in modern Australia multiculturalism is widely recognised as a key to prosperity and social cohesion". We understand that in this place, and it must inform the lens through which we frame the system that impacts those who live in this wonderful State.

Through her work at the University of Sydney, Associate Professor Ji has made an outstanding contribution to promoting health equality and better access to health education resources and services for culturally and linguistically diverse Australians. In her book, she observes that "authorities in Australia only adopt translation technology in medical and health settings conservatively, despite increasing demands during the pandemic crisis for more timely, direct and effective engagement with diverse communities". They say that necessity is the mother of progress, but we seem to be lagging in this important space. Over the past few years, it has become clear that there is a shortage of accredited translators and interpreters who can help some of our most vulnerable community members navigate health and mental health services, domestic and family violence support services, and other supports necessary to help them not only survive but also thrive.

It is a matter of not only recruiting translators and interpreters but also working out how to structure and resource a system where the most acute need is often in the area of rare languages. While those who speak rare or uncommon languages in our communities may be in most need of such services, how can our health services plan and recruit personnel when they do not know enough about how often and where those translators may be called to assist? As Secretary of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, the national peak body of translators in Australia and a member organisation of the International Federation of Translators, Associate Professor Ji is an expert consultant to national multicultural organisations and not-for-profits. She is on the advisory board of multiple community health projects, including the cervical cancer community translation project, which is part of the National Cervical Screening Program. Her advice has informed the development of

proposals from the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia to NSW Health on initiatives promoting multicultural health.

In recognition of her international leading expertise in multilingual accessibility research and sustained community engagement, in 2024 Associate Professor Ji was appointed a member of the working group of multilingualism of UNESCO's Information for All Programme [IFAP]. She has been invited by the IFAP secretariat to develop policy briefs for UNESCO on recent developments in multilingual accessibility for Australians from multicultural backgrounds. With such a depth of wisdom at our fingertips, I look forward to sharing those ideas with my colleagues so we can improve outcomes for all our communities and the system we work within.

## REGIONAL SPORT

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:34):** For those of us in the regions, sport is a big part of our social fabric. Whether it is school kids on a Saturday morning, colleagues meeting up after work or our sporting teams progressing through the rounds of the various local competitions, sport brings us together. I was proud to be a part of a Coalition government that invested heavily in sport in the regions, especially in projects that increased participation, promoted healthy lifestyles and fostered vibrant communities. An important focus of those funds was encouraging the participation of girls and women and people of varying abilities in sport. We kicked some big goals across the Cootamundra electorate, delivering significant investments that went towards fostering emerging talent, including among women and girls. Projects that have recently come to fruition include six new netball courts in Cowra and female amenities at the West Wyalong Golf Club, while the community in Ungarie are also cheering following the completion of their new netball courts.

Other recent projects of note include tennis courts at Narrandera and the world-class Marrar Campdraft Arena. The importance of such investments was again reinforced for me when I stopped by a netball training session at the Ganmain Grong Grong Matong Lions Football Netball Club last week. It had not long received the news that our community had been successful in securing a \$1.7 million investment towards building female change rooms and amenities at the club, along with new lighting. As president Jason Hamblin said, "It is truly life changing for those who will benefit from these new facilities." I commend the Government for recognising that and call on the Minister to ensure there is a similar commitment in next month's State budget to investment in regional sporting projects like that one.

It is not just the large-scale projects and investments that have a big impact. When it comes to our local sporting clubs, often a little can go a long way. That is where the Local Sport Grant Program, introduced by the previous Coalition Government, comes to the fore. In my electorate local clubs recently secured grants to help with a range of projects. The Temora Rugby League Football Club received funding for its new equipment storage shed. The Narrandera Lizards Junior Rugby League Club is going to buy a new line marker. The Northern Jets Football and Netball Club has plans to expand. The Narrandera Pony Club is looking to build new horse yards. The Junee Basketball Association is working towards a program to grow the club. The Jugiong Polocrosse Club is going to buy a new public-address system. The Young Touch Association will buy new player uniforms and equipment. There are many worthy clubs with projects in need of investment, and I encourage the Government to ensure that funding for grassroots sporting projects is included in the June State budget.

For many in our regions, sport is not simply a pastime; it is a pathway to success for many talented individuals. Two members of the Matildas, Ellie Carpenter and Clare Hunt, honed their skills on soccer fields in the Cootamundra electorate, while two rising track superstars, Grace Krause and Indi Cooper, shone on the world stage at the 2023 Commonwealth Youth Games after perfecting their skills locally. Recognising the pivotal role that the Regional Academies of Sport network plays in nurturing and honing the skills of our young athletes, I joined with fellow MPs from southern New South Wales in writing to the Treasurer and the Minister for Sport, asking that funding for the academies—particularly the Southern Sports Academy—be secured well into the future.

We have made great progress in recent years, but there is always more to be done. The New South Wales budget is just around the corner, and I urge the Government to provide the necessary funding to ensure equitable access to sporting resources and opportunities for regional communities. By investing in sport and recreation, we are investing not only in athletic talent but also in the health, wellbeing and future success of regional communities.

## SYDNEY ROYAL AGSHOWS NSW YOUNG WOMAN COMPETITION

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:39):** In 1962, 20 young female ambassadors entered the first Royal Agricultural Society Miss Showgirl competition, with hopes of representing their regions and working as ambassadors for women throughout rural New South Wales. It was

part of a strategic push to strengthen ties with regional agricultural societies through zone conferences, field competitions and symposiums. At its heart, the competition aimed to broaden the experience of young rural women, strengthening their communication skills and boosting their confidence, in the hope they would return to their communities better equipped to take on future leadership roles. Many of the most eminent women in our regions have come through that process and gone on to do incredible things with hospital auxiliaries, the Country Women's Association, NSW Farmers, and a whole raft more. The format was simple and has remained essentially unchanged. Each local show society holds a competition, with the winner going on to compete at a zone level. Finalists from each zone then compete at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

The judging criteria have also remained unchanged. Over the course of a series of interviews, talks and functions, contestants are evaluated on personality, confidence, ambition and goals, general knowledge, rural knowledge, presentation, and speech. Finalists are asked to demonstrate knowledge of their local community and current affairs. Apart from their potential ambassadorial qualities, contestants are also judged on their involvement in and experience of rural affairs. It is much more than a beauty contest. In 2022 the name of the competition was changed from the Miss Showgirl competition to the Sydney Royal AgShows NSW Young Woman competition, recognising the role of the Sydney Royal show and, importantly, the agricultural shows that bring these young women together. The young women entering demonstrate purpose and ambition and that they are ready to face the challenges and rewards offered by the agricultural show movement and are deserving of the title and the role of custodian and ambassador.

I congratulate Caoilfhionn King, who won the title. She is a 24-year-old farrier. She entered the competition to expand her skill set and gain confidence and knowledge about Maitland. She has been a volunteer and committee member of Donkey Welfare With Heart for 10 years. She has gained valuable experience in this time. She is passionate about donkeys, aiming to improve their welfare, share knowledge, and teach the community about the wonder of these beautiful animals. Her favourite thing about the show is that it brings rural life into the city, particularly in rural regions such as Maitland. She spends countless hours in the donkey section with other committee members, helping it run smoothly and educating the public with interactive activities.

I congratulate runner-up Gemalla de Beuzeville-Howarth. Gemalla is a 20-year-old train driver studying for a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology. She entered because she hopes to learn about the community, get involved and make a change. Gemalla has volunteered for the Picnic Train for four years. This involves a traineeship in firemanship, working to become a full-time fiery on the steam train, as well as being a passenger attendant and guard. She loves meeting people from different communities and learning about the towns she visits on her travels with the train. Gemalla is passionate about seeing women in non-traditional roles. Through her studies she is stepping into the unknown in both the train industry and the science sector. Her favourite thing about the show is bringing the community together, and she loves seeing all the different displays about agriculture, arts and crafts, cookery, woodworking and much more.

I congratulate finalist Meredith Blair, a 19-year-old cadet journalist from Maitland who works in the Upper Hunter. She entered the competition to get out of her comfort zone and to try something new. Meredith has a keen interest in the Maitland and District Historical Society and in visiting Grossmann House and Brough House in Maitland. Her passions are telling stories and listening to people's experiences in our community, and hearing what matters to our regional communities, particularly in the Hunter. Her favourite components of the Maitland Show include the petting zoo and spending time with friends and family to create memories.

I thank all the incredible women who do so much work behind the scenes to ensure the success of the presentation night, particularly Margaret Enright, President of the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association, who has run the competition for some 20 years or more. I congratulate a former Miss Maitland, Jaslyn Arens, on being recognised as the Agricultural Societies Council Next Gen. And I thank Kate Mannell, who relinquished her 2023 title last weekend. I wish them all the best.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (19:44):** I speak today on an issue dear to my community: renewable energy and a complete no to nuclear energy. As members know, yesterday I was shut down by the National Party when I tried to make a contribution to a public interest debate on nuclear energy, ruling that it had no future in New South Wales. A Labor woman of colour too was denied the opportunity. It is terrible because we have been talking in this House about intimate partner violence and misogyny. When we see those attitudes towards women in this place, it is disappointing. I am sure it was more political, but it is disappointing when women are silenced in this Chamber. I rely heavily on an incredible article in May's *The Monthly*, by Marian Wilkinson, who has done a deep dive on the national capture of the National Party, in particular, but also the Coalition at the Federal level.

The predictability of the Coalition at the Federal level waging a war on renewables is so stark and would be so laughable if it were not so horrendously serious for communities across the country, particularly for

communities that have experienced the extreme weather events of the past few years. Just this week the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shockingly predicted that we are already locked into 2.5 degrees of warming globally. Those of us who are paying attention have believed scientists from across the world for over 50 years. The seminal text *The Limits to Growth* was published in 1972, commissioned by the Club of Rome, and outlined almost to the letter what we are experiencing today. That is not to mention the countless reports and the scientific evidence that told us the same thing.

In my first term here I saw that the Liberals and The Nationals were in complete denial of climate change. Then they had their moment on the road to Damascus sometime in my second term. Maybe it was the five-year drought, the Black Summer bushfires or the 2017 floods. Who knows? But it was a great thing to see. When I heard the announcement about creating renewable energy zones in regional New South Wales and that there were targets with no road maps or detail, just a transition plan for mining workers with large amounts of money being invested, the sceptic in me thought, "The Nats think they can make some money out of all this." But I thought, "Whatever works." But after the Coalition dramatically lost Federal Government, the worm turned. Unfortunately, it has turned in the New South Wales Coalition as well. It is back to the dark ages of thinking that the latest tech bro's buzzy technology that none of us understand will save the day. Back then, it was carbon capture and storage. It failed. Now it is nuclear—small modular reactors and micro-modular reactors.

Here enters the lobbyist and Queensland squillionaire Trevor St Baker and SMR Nuclear Technology. Mr Baker happens to be very critical of Federal Labor's plans to fast-track renewables. He is very wealthy, a former coal baron and very close to former National Party President Larry Anthony, whom Baker employed as a lobbyist through Anthony's company, SAS Consulting. Larry Anthony was the chairman of Coalition for Conservation. Suddenly the speaking notes of Trevor St Baker and his company, SMR Nuclear Technology, have become the speaking points of Liberal National Party Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, and his coal-to-nuclear absurdity.

In the latest GenCost report by CSIRO, comparing the prices of power generation, small modular reactors emerge as the highest cost technology compared to solar and wind by a large margin. I am pleased to see that State Labor is progressing and escalating our road to the renewable future. There is so much potential. We look forward to working with them. I say to The Nationals members who have decided to distract us with the idea of small nuclear reactors that they are dinosaurs. They need to sit back and let everyone else get on with it.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY TENANTS SERVICE

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (19:49):** It is an unfortunate truth that if you are a renter in New South Wales today you are under stress. In many cases, that stress is severe. Most members will know of at least one person who has recently faced rent hikes and had to leave their rental home. It is an incredibly disruptive and difficult process. I recently met with Western Sydney Tenants Service, known as WESTS. The program is run through the Western Sydney Community Legal Centre and is based in the Parramatta electorate. While I know the current situation for renters is bad, I was still shocked by some of the stories I was told. While WESTS is doing the very best it can, many of the case studies the staff took me through mirrored each other in a depressingly repetitive way. Each story was about people who are suffering.

I was struck by the sheer number of people in the Parramatta area experiencing rental stress and facing or dealing with eviction. Many people have either a real or perceived threat of homelessness weighing down on them, and there is a lack of accountability in the current system. It appears to me that, in this moment, there is a one-way street where landlords hold too much of the power. I am also cognisant of the knock-on effects of the crisis and the broader impacts from the ruptures that rental pressures and evictions bring. Those impacts are felt by children and then by the schools that are trying to support them. There are impacts on other community services helping vulnerable people and the elderly who are made homeless or have to move from their communities. There is pressure inside the family unit that at times becomes a combustion, leading to family and domestic violence. There is pressure on workplaces where people are struggling to find workers.

I will describe some of the clients WESTS told me about. In one case, a pensioner had resided in her rental property for 20 years. In that time the landlord had ignored her repeated requests for serious repairs that needed to be done; however, she had not faced rent increases. She recently received a rent increase out of nowhere that was well above the median market rent for her area. WESTS attempted to negotiate on her behalf with the agency and landlord but was knocked back. It now has to support her through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], but her prospects are dim. She is not even considered a long-term tenant.

In another case, the WESTS client was a single father under pressure, trying to provide stability for his children but without a steady income stream due to casual employment. He does not always receive his wages on time, making it impossible to always pay his rent on time. He was given a rent increase notice and attempted to negotiate, given his tenancy history with the landlord. That was rejected and he received a no-grounds termination.

WESTS tried to challenge the notice as retaliatory at NCAT. In the end, all that was possible was to negotiate an extended vacant possession date to avoid repossession by the Sheriff's Office, which would have been traumatic for his children.

I applaud the Western Sydney Tenants Service and its workers. They have tertiary qualifications in social work, psychology, business, law and medical science. They are carrying the stress of supporting renters with the limited actions or recourse they are able to achieve under the current system. They often have to take heart in the small mercies they can gain for their clients when they really want to be able to achieve permanent stability for them. Many of their clients come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, making dealing with a rental system that is already stacked against them even harder and placing added pressure on the WESTS staff who, on top of doing their jobs, in effect have to try to translate a complex system to their clients.

WESTS has not received any increase in funding since 2003, and that needs to change. It has undertaken important work with the Tenants' Union on law reform, but juggling all the demands on the service has put it under serious strain. It receives requests for support at NCAT on a daily basis—far more than it can support in its current capacity. Its ability to undertake casework is increasingly limited, leaving the staff in an awful situation where they have to make decisions about selecting the most desperate clients to support. I have met with my colleague the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading and the Rental Commissioner to discuss how we can best support WESTS. The challenges are huge, and I know the Government is thinking deeply about the structural issues. I commend WESTS to the House. I thank the staff for their service to my community and to Western Sydney every single day.

### **ALBURY WODONGA HEALTH AND ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:54):** As part of my ongoing advocacy for health in my community, I made a representation to the Minister for Health in early April this year. I raised the issue of physical health infrastructure, as planning continues for the \$558 million Albury campus redevelopment. I also addressed the critical issue of digital infrastructure, drawing attention to the fact that Albury Wodonga Health remains without an electronic medical record [EMR] system. Electronic medical record systems centralise a range of information such as medication management, pharmacy, oncology, palliative care and fluid management. An integral part of the *eHealth Strategy for NSW Health 2016–2026*, the EMR digital system is now available at over 187 NSW Health sites, funded by the former Coalition Government.

The rollout of the eMR Connect program has made it easier for medical professionals across New South Wales to access a patient's complete medical records. Statistics show over 23,000 New South Wales clinicians are using EMR at any one time. Disappointingly, this important program does not cover Albury Wodonga Health. As a cross-border health service, it is managed by Victoria. For several years I have been advocating for the improvement of digital capability at Albury Wodonga Health to enhance the quality of patient care and improve health outcomes.

In December 2021 I flagged my concerns about the ongoing use of paper-based forms and documents at Albury Wodonga Health with the then Minister for Health. I noted that another important piece of digital infrastructure, the Patient Administration System [PAS] in use at our two hospital campuses, operated on two separate databases. In response, the then Minister for Regional Health, Bronnie Taylor, shared her belief that a single PAS system for Albury Wodonga Health would reduce clinical risk, increase efficiency and enable the health service to meet its New South Wales and Victorian reporting requirements. The project for a single PAS has not been without challenges, but I understand it is moving closer to implementation.

I further raised digital capability with the Victorian Minister for Health in a meeting in July 2022. At the time the Minister acknowledged work was being carried out on a health information exchange, contingent on the passage of legislation in Victoria to amend the Health Services Act 1988. That would enable a centralised electronic system to allow public hospitals and health services to share specified patient health information to provide medical treatment to patients. The Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2023 came into effect in Victoria on 7 February 2024. It enables the establishment of the new system, with rollout across Victoria yet to occur. It is important that Albury Wodonga Health benefits from that integrated system. Speaking at the Albury Wodonga Health annual general meeting on 12 December 2023, board chair Jonathan Green told the gathering:

Our staff have called for targeted investment in our infrastructure and our digital systems.

When compared to our metropolitan colleagues our digital maturity is trending downwards, whilst city hospitals continue to trend upwards.

Increasingly, contemporary practice relies on Electronic Medical Records to enhance clinical safety, and more investment is needed to bring Albury Wodonga Health in line with best practice.

A research paper released last week by the Productivity Commission, entitled *Leveraging digital technology in healthcare*, revealed that the introduction of an EMR and alert system in a public hospital reduced overall pathology tests by 6.3 per cent and imaging by 12.5 per cent. Researchers also revealed that the introduction of an in-hospital EMR system would shorten stays in both admitted and emergency care. The report states:

This is a result of improved clinician workflow as delays in accessing patient information and test results from paper records are minimised, allowing for faster decision-making and patient flow.

We assume that the magnitude of these effects are a 22% reduction emergency department (ED) length of stay and a 6% reduction in admitted care length of stay.

In response to my latest representations in April, the Minister for Health stated that while Victoria manages the electronic medical record system:

We welcome the opportunity to continue discussions with the Victorian Department of Health on information sharing to support patient care and improved health outcomes for people who live in the border region.

I thank the clinicians who have raised this issue with me. I also acknowledge the Minister for Health for his response, and I will continue to urge both State governments to work together to address the issue. The expert evidence of the Productivity Commission is clear: The uptake of the coordinated Electronic Medical Record system within Albury Wodonga Health would be hugely beneficial for both patients and our dedicated healthcare workers.

### NAKBA DAY AND ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:59):** Today, 15 May, is Nakba Day. It is the day when Palestinians around the world commemorate the Nakba, or catastrophe, that started on 15 May 1948, forcing the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians from their homes. Some 530 towns and villages were destroyed, with homes seized and occupied or demolished. Those who lost their homes have never received compensation and have been denied the right of return. As a result of the 1948 Nakba and later displacements, including the 300,000 displaced from the occupied West Bank and Gaza in 1967, there are now over seven million Palestinian refugees around the world, including in my electorate of Granville.

The past seven months of Israel's war on Gaza, which followed the disgraceful terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October, have brought back painful memories of the Nakba for the oldest members of the Palestinian community here in Australia and have outraged and traumatised many others with family and friends in Gaza. In fact, I have received more letters, messages and emails from my constituents about this issue than any other in my nine years in this place. On 9 October Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant declared in a televised speech:

We are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel, everything will be closed ... we are fighting animals and are acting accordingly.

Later that day he doubled down and said:

Gaza will not return to what it was before ... We will eliminate it all.

Certainly, over the past seven months many more Palestinian lives have been lost and many more have been displaced than during the 1948 Nakba. Over 35,000 people have been killed, including over 16,000 children, and most of Gaza's population of 2.1 million have been displaced from their homes. More than half of those homes have been destroyed along with every mosque, every university, libraries, schools, churches, hospitals and medical facilities. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, the general assembly, countless world leaders and our own Government have repeatedly called for a ceasefire to no avail. The deplorable situation and warnings about the imminent danger of starvation are reminiscent of warnings from United States [US] diplomats and humanitarian workers during the original Nakba. In October 1948 James McDonald, the first US ambassador to Israel, warned:

Arab refugee tragedy is rapidly reaching catastrophic proportions and should be treated as a disaster.

He went on to warn specifically:

... approaching winter with cold heavy rains will, it is estimated, kill more than 100,000 old men, women, and children who are shelterless and have little or no food.

In December 1948 R. T. Schaeffer, the director of the American Red Cross, described the situation of refugees in Gaza as the worst:

In one camp of 10,000 we visited [there was] no tent that did not have patients with dysentery; all were suffering hunger.

He went on to report:

Arab villages are still being burned in the Gaza District and refugees are continuing to pour into the pocket from Gaza to Rafah ...



During the past seven months, time and again, there have been orders to evacuate. On 13 October the population of Gaza was ordered to evacuate to the south within 24 hours as the Israel Defense Forces commenced bombing Gaza city and other parts of northern Gaza. Hundreds of thousands fled south to tent cities in Rafah. More recently, Prime Minister Netanyahu has ordered the evacuation of Rafah, even though the border has been closed and there is nowhere safe to go. Some 450,000 Palestinians have now fled Rafah. They are being forced into what Israel calls a "humanitarian zone" that, in fact, has no medical infrastructure.

Meanwhile, gangs of settlers have repeatedly attacked aid convoys. Only today delivery trucks travelling from Jordan through Hebron were blocked, protestors set fire to three of eight aid trucks, bags of flour were torn open and food was thrown on the ground. Last week a road was blocked with rocks to prevent aid deliveries. On top of that, Israeli authorities are routinely rejecting shipments of aid in Sinai. In recent years the Israeli right everywhere has referred to the 1948 Nakba—which is, in fact, illegal for Palestinians in Israel to discuss openly—as a jeer and a threat to Palestinians. It has also been revived during the current conflict by the likes of Israel's agriculture Minister and member of the security cabinet, Avi Dichter, who in November last year said, "We are now rolling out The Great Nakba."

This followed on from leaflets warning residents to flee to Jordan or "wait for the Great Nakba" being left on hundreds of cars in the town of Deir Istiya in the West Bank on 27 October. Earlier this year the radical settler movement Hilltop Youth released their own song celebrating the historic settler rampage against the Palestinian village of Huwara. The lyrics include:

What is burning down ... Huwara  
Houses and cars ... Huwara  
Evicting from [Huwara] old women, the young and girls too

That is not to mention some of the more aggressive statements from Itamar Ben-Gvir, the Minister for National Security. In January he said, "Israel needs to occupy Gaza and stay there," and he has called for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails to be killed to ease overcrowding. And who could forget Prime Minister Netanyahu invoking Amalek on 28 October. This latest Nakba must end. Never again means never again for anyone.

### ZIG ZAG RAILWAY

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (20:04):** This month marks one year since the iconic Zig Zag Railway in my electorate reopened to the public. It was closed for about a decade due to fires, floods and landslips in the area. Located in Lithgow, the Zig Zag Railway is a historic tourist destination that takes passengers on train trips up and down scenic cliff faces. The former New South Wales Government contributed about \$5 million to make the restoration of the popular tourist attraction possible. Volunteers of the Zig Zag Railway Co-op Ltd have spent the past decade restoring seven kilometres of track built into the side of the Blue Mountains overlooking picturesque scenery and refurbishing steam locomotives to their original glory after multiple floods and fires destroyed the railway and workshop. The revitalisation of the Zig Zag Railway, the last of its kind in Australia, has been key to attracting visitors to the Central West. It is a local drawcard that has had people heading further over the mountains for an authentic steam-era experience.

Since May 2023, 55,000 passengers have climbed aboard the steam locomotive and experienced one of the most scenic train rides in the world. That has brought over \$1.5 million to the local visitor economy. The railway has been operating every second weekend, with six trips per weekend. But, due to popular demand, the team has added three trips every Friday. Hundreds of coach tours have added the Zig Zag Railway as a must-stop destination, which is fantastic news for the local township that has boomed with visitors filling cafes and other tourist attractions. From train and history buffs to families with young children heading for a great day out, the Zig Zag Railway is once again a celebrated part of our heritage. When visitors come to our regional towns to see the attractions on offer, they stay in local accommodation, buy souvenirs from local shops and dine in local eateries. This type of attraction supports not just the railway but every other service around it, and events like this help to drive the visitor economy and ensure that our local shops and eateries are supported.

The Zig Zag Railway is one of New South Wales's greatest engineering feats, providing the first rail passage across the Blue Mountains and opening up regional New South Wales. Some of us in the House today can probably remember Thomas the Tank Engine, which was one of the highlights. I remember it from when I was a lot younger. The redeveloped railway has supported jobs in Lithgow, boosted tourism across the Blue Mountains and strengthened the local economy. The only way is up from here. The demand is there for additional operating days and expanded tour offerings from places like Scenic World in the Blue Mountains and from train enthusiast groups in Sydney. The team has big plans and a bright future. An additional functioning locomotive would allow the Zig Zag Railway to become a midweek service for touring groups and would boost patronage numbers to 1,000 people a day. That would be an incredible feat, which would do wonders for tourism across this part of regional New South Wales, not just Lithgow.

At the end of the day, none of this would have been possible without the outrageously passionate team of volunteers who have lived and breathed the restoration of that railway for the past decade. On behalf of Lithgow and the wider community, I thank the six local staff and 45 active volunteers for revitalising tourism in the Central West. All passengers, past and future, thank them for making the experience a reality and instigating all the fun and laughter that the Zig Zag Railway brings to visitors and volunteers alike. That can be seen in the smiles of all the people who enjoyed hopping on the train over the past 12 months and in previous decades. I invite all members to visit this iconic tourist destination the next time they are passing through the Central West.

### **NORDS WHARF PUBLIC SCHOOL**

#### **LOCAL SPORT GRANT PROGRAM**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (20:08):** I acknowledge the work of several community groups that are supporting local community projects with grants provided by the Labor Government. Community groups and sporting organisations are at the heart of our community and are powered by volunteers who give up their own time to lodge grant applications, oversee projects and coordinate events. It is always a pleasure to visit and meet with these groups and acknowledge their work in Parliament. Tonight I acknowledge Nords Wharf Public School, Principal Meg Nellands and the team who were successful in securing a grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish an Anzac memorial garden.

The garden was made possible with the support of the Swansea RSL Club and the Swansea RSL Sub-Branch. The Anzac memorial garden has not only beautified the front of the school but also serves as a teaching tool and remembrance space for those who have served our country. It was great to join Ms Nellands and the Swansea RSL Sub-Branch at the Swansea Anzac Day service and record a video to commemorate the opening of the garden. The garden will be cherished by students for years to come and become an important part of students learning the importance of Anzac Day. I thank the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Swansea RSL Club and the Swansea RSL Sub-Branch for supporting the Anzac memorial garden at Nords Wharf Public School.

I acknowledge also the local sporting clubs that have been awarded grants under the Local Sport Grant Program, which provides up to \$20,000 to individual clubs and associations, with \$50,000 available to each electorate. Across the State, 579 projects were funded in the latest round of the program. In the Swansea electorate, the program provided more than \$3,000 to the Northlakes Junior Rugby Union Club for the purchase of new tackle bags and footballs as the club continues to grow. The Pelican Croquet Club received more than \$5,000 to purchase a ride-on mower to help maintain the courts and nearby grounds. That will be of great assistance to the club, which relies entirely on volunteers to help maintain the grounds. The Redhead Bowling Club was awarded a \$22,000 grant to replace seating and shelter for those watching the action on the greens—it can get vigorous. Club members are very excited about the upgrades to the club.

The Swansea Outrigger Canoe Club received \$11,500 for the purchase of an 006-outrigger canoe. The Swansea Outrigger Canoe Club is a growing club with members aged from 23 to 66. Many members are older women. The Valentine Eleebana Cricket Club received \$2,000 to upgrade junior cricket equipment and support the development of female cricketers. Lastly, the Valentine Eleebana Football Club was awarded a grant of more than \$13,000 to replace lawnmower and brush-cutter equipment to maintain its five fields. This funding is so important to help our local clubs and volunteers provide more opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the benefits of sport and active recreation. I look forward to visiting all the successful applicants and seeing the new equipment and club upgrades in person.

### **KIM SATTLER**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:13):** In 2021 I had the great pleasure of awarding Kim Sattler the Shellharbour Local Woman of the Year award. Tonight, Kim is present in the Chamber, along with Sally Stevenson from the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. They are two amazing women who have taught me so much. I am so proud they are here with me tonight. I welcome them both. The Shellharbour Local Woman of the Year award recognised Kim for her incredible, compassionate and unceasing paid and unpaid work in the Shellharbour electorate. She is relentless in her commitment to and work for the community. She is driven by an unwavering belief in social justice, equality, equity and human rights, especially the rights of women, young people, workers and the oppressed. The Kim Sattlers of this world are a gift to our community. Tonight I honour her. At the end of last year, Kim retired from an incredible career of community and union work. For the past nine years she was a specialist domestic, family and sexual violence worker at the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. As the executive director of the centre, Sally Stevenson said:

Kim was the wisdom, the strength and the calmness that was integral to the centre. Her vast experience, her north star of social justice, her humour, her art, her aromatherapy and her community work with refugees and First Nations people were invaluable to the centre.

In 2015 Kim conducted a groundbreaking research project at the centre, the Breaking the Silence project, which worked with women with an intellectual disability who had experienced domestic and family violence. For far too long, women with disabilities experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence have been totally ignored and disregarded by the health and disability service systems and, more broadly, our society. Kim interviewed women and disability and domestic violence workers to gain a better understanding of how to provide more effective support to women with intellectual disabilities experiencing or escaping violence.

Using that research and in consultation with Greenacres Disability Services, Kim developed an Australian-first personal health and wellbeing program that can be delivered in workplace settings. Since then, Kim has delivered countless workshops to men and women, workers and clients on issues of safety, domestic and family violence, and personal health and wellbeing. She has supported and counselled women with disabilities and relentlessly advocated on their behalf for their safety and their right to services. Kim changed the landscape in the Illawarra for women with disabilities who were experiencing or had experienced domestic, family or sexual violence. Astonishingly, 94 per cent of women with disabilities have experienced family or domestic violence.

Two years ago, Kim established the beautiful Weavers program at the Illawarra Women's Health Centre. It is a peer-based voluntary program that links carers who have experienced caring for loved ones with dementia or aged cognitive decline with carers who now have those responsibilities. The volunteers support current carers to navigate the often overwhelming labyrinth of aged-care services, the health system and the NDIS, whilst enduring isolation, loneliness, loss and grief. Those are only two recent examples of what Kim has achieved during her 50 years of work in the non-government, youth, women and community sectors in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Kim has been a proud union member since she was 16 years old and a member of the Australian Services Union [ASU] since 1986. Not many people can beat their chests over that.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** She doesn't look old enough.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** I thank the Minister and agree with her entirely. Kim's lifelong commitment to workers' rights and the union movement is very close to my heart. The Minister and member for Swansea, member for Heathcote, member for Penrith and I are all proud trade unionists. All the union girls are in the Chamber tonight. Kim also worked on a number of community grassroots campaigns, including Save Shellharbour Hospital, Save Our Steel, and the ASU equal pay campaign for community sector workers. Kim is a fighter of the highest integrity. If someone is in the trenches, Kim will be there with them, shoulder to shoulder. She was relentless in her support and campaign for the referendum for First Nations recognition in our Constitution and the Voice to Parliament. Kim's lifelong commitment to social justice is absolutely remarkable. She is a true and selfless community activist, unionist and advocate. I am proud to know her, have her living in my electorate and, most importantly, call her my friend.

## RURAL AND REGIONAL PAEDIATRIC SERVICES

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:18):** Giving our children the best possible start in life is one of the most important actions our society can take. The first 2,000 days of life, from conception to the fifth year, are critical for children to be healthy and happy and develop as they should. Without that attention beginning while they are in the womb, children are at risk for a range of poor outcomes, including, for example, developmental delays in speech, motor skills and learning. We can all agree that every child deserves a nurturing start to life and, if that care is not given, then we have failed that child. That is not acceptable for any child anywhere. No child should be left behind. All children should have access to high-quality paediatric assessment and treatment but that is not the reality for all children. Specifically, I am talking about a lack of paediatric assessment health services for families in rural and regional New South Wales.

In some areas a shortage of paediatricians is worsened by a shortage of allied health services such as speech and occupational therapy and clinical psychology. Families often face long waits to get the help they need—a challenge made worse by the tyranny of distance in remote areas. In my electorate paediatricians have reported soaring rates of behavioural problems in children with corresponding rates of missed diagnoses because of a lack of resources. There have even been reports of children aged five or six still wearing nappies or suffering speech problems that should have been detected much earlier. The critical GP shortage is adding to the problem, with many children being referred to specialists—despite waiting lists of up to two years—when the problems could often have been tackled at the primary health care level. All of that adds pressure to specialist providers, with some occupational therapists, for example, having no choice but to close their books to new patients.

At a broader level, a recent survey of parents at the Royal Far West in Manly found that over the past 18 months more than 80 per cent of parents or caregivers had reported difficulties in accessing local speech therapy, occupational therapy or psychology services. More than 70 per cent of respondents to the survey said that waiting times for local services were too long. Almost 60 per cent said that local services were inconsistent. The health costs of the shortages are obvious not just for children and their families but also for the future of our

communities. I understand that approximately 10 per cent of children will require some form of developmental assessment. For most, it will be relatively minor—perhaps involving work with speech therapy or physiotherapy. For some, there will need to be more comprehensive assessment, which could be provided in primary care or by generalist paediatricians. For those children there are long waiting lists and many of the most vulnerable miss out or receive help much later than they need it.

Then there is a small number of children who will require significant highly specialised assessment and treatment, and currently in rural and regional New South Wales perhaps half of those children are missing out. The children missing out are the most vulnerable and need help the most. The Royal Far West has rightly pointed to the need to improve services for those children in rural and regional New South Wales. It has proposed a model for expanding services involving Wagga Wagga and Dubbo and the Western and Murrumbidgee regions. But in the end, whatever the model, we need better services delivered locally. We need to expand the number of practitioners available and make sure that they have the professional support they need. We must make sure that for the most seriously affected there are specialists who can deliver the service in our rural communities and support the generalist practitioners who live and work there and build up that capacity.

I understand the fiscal challenge facing the Government at this time, but equally I am heartened by the health Minister's commitment to improving health services in the regions. That is a credit to this Government. Regional communities are grateful, but I urge the Government to take those extra steps towards delivering better developmental assessment services for children across the State. According to Royal Far West, international research shows that for every dollar spent on effective early childhood intervention there is a \$13 to \$25 return to society. But it is not about money; it is about our children and our communities. By making the investment, regional and rural families will thank us and we will see the benefits for generations to come.

#### TRIBUTE TO DAVID STUART ARCHER

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (20:23):** I notify members of the House of the sad passing of Mr David Stuart Archer. David will be remembered as a pioneer in the Australian and global mining and resources industry; a much-loved husband to Vicki and father to Paddy, Venetia and Emily; a devoted grandfather to beautiful grandchildren; and a wonderful uncle. He will also be remembered for his love of hiking, surfing and Australia. From his Sydney beginnings, David carved out a globally successful career and lived in London for many years. His distinguished career included being the founder and developer of PowerTel Ltd, which deployed one of Australia's most extensive inter-capital and inner-city fibre networks for business customers; the founder of Savage Resources Ltd, a multinational mineral producer and refiner; and a developer of Savannah Resources, which became the leading, hard rock conventional lithium company in Europe. Above all else, he was a loving family man.

David was a non-practising barrister of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. He held a Bachelor of Economics and was a fellow of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. He had wide experience in the mining industry for over 30 years, with specific expertise in the development and operation of copper and gold projects and, more recently, lithium. His deep experience and professionalism earned him respect far and wide. From the pages of the *Financial Times* to many company announcements, his passing was noted with great sadness around the world. I know that David enjoyed maintaining a close eye on Australian politics. He kindly sent me a note when I became a Minister and subsequently wished me all the best at the most recent election. I am sad that Elissa and I will not have the opportunity to catch up with him again in Sydney.

From all of us in Sydney, I offer our deepest and sincerest condolences to Vicki, Paddy, Venetia, Emily and the family. In perhaps a fitting nod to their home in London, I offer a comment from the late Queen Elizabeth II, who was quoting British author Dr Colin Murray Parkes when she said, "Grief is the price we pay for love." Whilst we are half a world away, we share their grief. David was a much-loved and respected figure. He will be greatly missed. Vale, David.

#### GENDERED VIOLENCE

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:26):** It has been a rough, heartbreaking few weeks. Gender-based violence is once again in the headlines. On good days, I feel hopeful that all the efforts of a society that prides itself on instilling values centred around equity and compassion will win out in the end. But then there are the darker days when we all feel despair and we wonder, "Where are we going wrong?" I know that there is no simple answer to that question. There is so much to unpack. It is exhausting, confronting and overwhelming but we must do it because the violence we see against women cannot continue. We all have a part to play in ending gendered violence. That is a difficult pill to swallow for many of us because if we are not one of the perpetrators then we probably tell ourselves that we are therefore not contributing to the societal horror.

If we dig down though and acknowledge that gender inequality provides the platform upon which violence against women seeds then we must take a long, hard look at the places in our own lives where we, be it unknowingly or otherwise, assist in perpetuating the narrative and commit—all of us—to changing the paradigm. Gender inequality exists in many forms and can be broken down into myriad examples ranging from the pay gaps that can exist between men and women to the gendered roles and expectations in family dynamics. Some of those practices and beliefs may seem insignificant or harmless enough on the surface, but they feed into a narrative where women are perceived as being less than—less worthy, less capable, less relevant or as having the right to less agency over the way we live our lives.

At a later date I will talk more in this place about the significant and long overdue reforms being introduced by the Minns Labor Government that will support our transition to a society where gender equality is the norm and where violence against women no longer exists. Today, however, I will focus on the things that we can all be doing every day to support our communities in making the shift. We are right to expect action from the powers that be, but we all have a responsibility to call out gender inequality and violence against women every single time we see it. At those times in between, when it might not be happening right before our eyes, let us keep the conversation going. Let us keep educating our kids so we break the generational patterns where they exist, and let us be driven by the belief that violence against women is preventable.

The second annual Commonwealth Status of Women Report Card was released this year. One thing the report card highlighted was that, believe it or not, in 2024 Australian women still earn less than men. They do more hours of unpaid care and they are less likely to hold leadership positions, with only 9 per cent of CEOs in the ASX 300 being women. Why is that still the case? It is not that we bring less to the table, that we are not as capable or that we are less educated, but yet here we are still fighting to prove our worth and convince others that we deserve to be remunerated equally for our contributions.

We are still shaking off tired, outdated perspectives that value the male over the female, and I am so perplexed by that. When we drill down into the core issues propping up gender inequality, it is important that we do not adopt a blame culture directed at all men. I have raised two sons who see the world through a lens of gender equality, and every day I encounter good men who are in no way affronted when women demand to be treated as their equals. Those balanced beliefs are key, but naming the times when we see women portrayed as having diminished social value is equally crucial. We can no longer ignore the link between gender inequality and violence against women; if we are serious about ending that violence then we cannot pretend that that connection does not exist.

Women in this country have been calling out for equal rights for over a century, with many men standing alongside us. But still too many fly the flag of the patriarchy and strive to disempower women, when, in essence, those behaviours speak to a deeply embedded fear of the true strength and potential of women in our society. I thank every woman and every man who defies the destruction of the feminine. As Pakistani activist and 2014 Nobel Prize winner Malala Yousafzai said, "We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back." I look forward to living in a world where that is the mainstream philosophy that we live by—where gender equality is the norm and violence against women is filed away as a tragic chapter in our past.

I finish by acknowledging some of the incredible work undertaken by organisations in the Blue Mountains that are, in the main, made up of women and are challenging gender inequality every day via their work with families: the Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre and its EViE project, Thrive Services, Gateway Family Services, Central Tablelands and Blue Mountains Community Legal Centre, our neighbourhood centres, Mountains Youth Services Team, our teachers and schools, and the Blue Mountains City Council through its gender equity strategy.

### ULMARRA FERRY SERVICE

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:31):** I stand alongside my small community of Ulmarra and Southgate and, more broadly, the rural users of the ferry service in my electorate. For the past 130 years or so, the ferry has served the communities in their daily commute across the mighty Clarence River. After all, the Northern Rivers is a river community. School students, emergency services, farmers moving tractors and equipment, and timber mills are just a few of the daily users. In my maiden speech in this place, 12 months ago almost to the day, I said that I would congratulate the Government on positive programs and outcomes, and I think I have done that. I also said that when the interests of my community were not being well served by the Government, I would respectively disagree and highlight that fact.

Yesterday I tabled with the Clerk's office in Parliament a petition containing about 6,000 signatures calling on the Government not to axe the Ulmarra Ferry service. I thank the community, who came together to organise the petition and did the hard work to gain those 6,000 signatures. Ulmarra is not a big place, but it is a vibrant community and its members have worked hard to ensure that the signatures were on the paper. I congratulate

Steve Pickering, Sue Kearney and many others who pounded the pavement to collect those signatures. It turns out Sue is also a bit of a vocalist, penning a song about the ferry called *Ferry across the Clarence*. If anyone would like a copy, I am more than happy to make that available.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Why don't you sing it?

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** I could hum it. I thank the shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and member for Upper Hunter, for joining me to launch the community petition in Ulmarra in late March. The closing date of the petition was no secret and it was no accident that the Minister made her decision on the same day, which was last Friday. On the same day that those 6,000 people wanted to ensure that their voices were heard, the decision was made to axe the Ulmarra Ferry. On Friday afternoon when the Government pushed out a social media post that drove the last nail into the coffin, axing the Ulmarra Ferry service that had served the community for 100 years, I can only imagine the letdown, the disappointment, the disengagement and the sheer disbelief that the service was being axed just to save a few dollars, whilst those in the metropolitan area continue to have their transport subsidised by the public purse.

On top of those 6,000 signatures, I received 106 letters and emails from concerned residents, and I will share some of those with the House this evening. One wrote, "My husband and I attended the meeting yesterday in the park and we spoke to you briefly. Please be advised that our business operates a logging and sawmilling business in the Ulmarra area, and this ferry service is absolutely essential for us to be able to continue with our business." Bill wrote, "I fully support the campaign to save the Ulmarra Ferry. In these times of escalating costs and high petrol prices, we deserve a trip that now takes us four kilometres." That is compared to the 62 kilometres the new trip would take. Shelley wrote, "I write as a citizen of Ulmarra. Losing this vital piece of infrastructure will destroy our tiny community. It now makes our round trip 60 kilometres, not four kilometres." Bobbie wrote, "I write in support of your petition, Mr Williamson, regarding the Ulmarra Ferry. It is unfair that regional residents have to pay just to get to work—an extra 64 kilometres for me in my round trip."

I was surprised, frankly, to hear the Minister say in question time today that the Labor Party represents the bush and the country. Where I come from, that is not the community sentiment. They are disappointed in the decision that has taken place and hurt by the lack of community consultation. They are urging the Minister, as I am, to reconsider her decision. The community of Ulmarra and Southgate feel bitterly let down by the Government.

### BLUESCOPE MASTER PLAN

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:36):** The Heathcote electorate includes a thriving arts and education community, especially in the Illawarra. I am proud to be a passionate advocate for the sustainability of future jobs, education, industry and creative arts, and I am proud to be part of a Government that is investing in them for our region. Today I commend the commitment made by the New South Wales Government in allocating \$500,000 towards investigating the necessary transport infrastructure to support the proposed redevelopment of BlueScope's surplus industrial land at Port Kembla.

BlueScope's ambitious master plan for the 200-hectare landholdings adjacent to the steelworks marks a transformative step towards creating a next-generation multi-industrial precinct, with the potential to create 30,000 jobs for the area and economy, as well as transport infrastructure. It is essential to recognise the ripple effect of such developments across the Illawarra, including in the Heathcote electorate. The proposed redevelopment promises to not only create thousands of jobs but also open doors to new industries and educational opportunities that will undoubtedly impact our electorate. Industries such as clean energy, defence, film, education and creative arts are crucial for our region's economic diversification and resilience.

The inclusion of a creative arts hub opens avenues for collaboration and inspiration, benefiting thriving arts communities across the Illawarra. The prospect of a new super TAFE aligns with our commitment to education and skills development, ensuring that our workforce remains adaptable and competitive in a rapidly evolving landscape, especially with many mining and energy businesses transitioning into the clean energy sector. Moreover, the planned transport infrastructure enhancements, such as the assessment of Five Islands Road, signify a broader strategy to improve connectivity and accessibility right across the Illawarra. That foresight is crucial in facilitating the seamless flow of goods, services and people, fostering economic growth and social cohesion across our region.

Additionally, the redevelopment presents an exciting opportunity to host spectacular events or festivals, with plans for an 8,000-seat amphitheatre. That amenity will not only enhance the cultural vibrancy of the region but also offer a venue for community gatherings, performances and celebrations, further enriching the social fabric of our community. The planned redevelopment of BlueScope holds immense promise for our community, offering unprecedented opportunities for employment, education, training, economic growth and cultural enrichment.

I commend the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders involved in realising this transformative project, including the Minister for Roads, the Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, as well as BlueScope and all stakeholders involved. The BlueScope Master Plan is not just a Port Kembla initiative; it is a catalyst for progress that reverberates throughout the entire Illawarra and South Coast region, including my beloved Heathcote electorate. I stand proud to witness such concerted efforts towards building a brighter future for our community. I eagerly anticipate the continued collaboration and progress as this development unfolds.

#### CUMBERLAND CITY COUNCILLOR STEVE CHRISTOU

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (20:39):** Last week, I and so many others were horrified to see the Cumberland City Council vote to ban same-sex parenting books from eight council-run libraries. During the debate, Councillor Steve Christou, who supported the ban, told the meeting, "This is not Marrickville or Newtown." I am proud to represent an electorate that is the yardstick for celebrating diversity, inclusion and the unique contributions of the queer community in our society, and I am proud to represent an electorate that is the scourge of right-wing bigots. That being said, we need to address the myth that queer people exist only in certain postcodes—that we have the queer community over here, the migrant communities over there, the religious communities over there, and that they are all somehow separate. It is completely false to suggest that being queer and a person of faith are somehow mutually exclusive. In fact, in the Newtown electorate, we are proud to have the Metropolitan Community Church in Petersham, which is open to everybody, including members of the LGBTIQ+ community. We know that people travel to its services from across the State because they feel included and welcome.

This kind of flawed thinking pits marginalised communities against each other and wrongly suggests that homophobia is somehow an integral part of religious or non-white working-class communities. That is just false. It is exactly the kind of thinking that Councillor Christou and those who are peddling that kind of excuse to spout queer-phobic drivel rely on. They exceptionalise places like Newtown—and make our community seem like some strange outlier, when they themselves are very much the ones out of step—in order to censor parenting books or vilify drag performers. Here is the truth: We know that queer people are part of every community, and they are something to celebrate. LGBTIQ+ children are born into all sorts of families all across the State. The implication that there are not beautiful parents outside the inner city who love their children unconditionally and celebrate their identities is deeply offensive to all of those parents.

Queer migrants and refugees who come to this continent and become integral parts of intersecting communities are important to remember. Over a third of same-sex couples in Australia were not born on this continent, so let us stop pretending that members of the LGBTIQ+ community have a certain look about them or that they come from a particular background. In the electorate of Newtown, our community is continuously working to recognise and celebrate the beauty of rainbow families in our schools, our early learning centres and our libraries. I am proud to represent a diverse electorate that is so welcoming. But it is absolutely not enough that there are a few queer neighbourhoods around Sydney that celebrate diversity. Every single member in this place needs to be standing for equality and against homophobia, transphobia and bigotry. Every person in this place has a responsibility to welcome and celebrate rainbow communities; but, sadly, many are not.

While I recognise the New South Wales Labor Government has been careful to say just enough positive things to their LGBTIQ+ community, and while we welcome the apology for historical homophobia by the New South Wales Government, it is important to recognise that there are still many laws in this place, which are supported by this Government, that provide exemptions that allow people to continue to discriminate on the basis of people's gender and sexuality. We know that there are members of Parliament who invite notorious transphobes to give talks in this very building. The rainbow community deserves more than simply platitudes. To that end, I acknowledge the member for Sydney, who has drafted a comprehensive bill to move us forward on LGBTIQ+ equality. The Greens have been pushing for changes such as self-ID for trans folk and anti-discrimination protections for decades, and we will continue to support them.

It is clear that those laws are needed now more than ever, and the New South Wales Government must not delay. That means putting its full support behind the bill and recognising that when it comes to equality, we cannot compromise. In the absence of real leadership from successive governments over many years, activists have taken to the streets. Tonight they are responding outside the Cumberland City Council meeting with chants and cries in support of equality and rainbow rights. Caroline, who is a Cumberland City Council resident and proud grandmother to a rainbow family from that area, has worked with Equality Australia to gather over 40,000 signatures calling for the council to rescind its book-banning. It is people like Caroline who we should be celebrating in this place, and we should be thanking her for her commitment to equality for all.

### BOCCIA NSW STATE TITLES

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:44):** It was a pleasure to attend the New South Wales State titles for boccia in Penrith over the weekend of 13 and 14 April. I was able to talk with some of the enthusiastic competitors and I was even allowed a practice run with Bohdi and local Penrith Boccia Club member Fiona. I am pleased Madam Temporary Speaker is sitting down because it might surprise her to know that I was comprehensively beaten. I know my limitations and they really showed me up. I am sure there have been many accolades for this fabulous sport in this place, but I wish to add mine.

Boccia is a sport that is specifically designed for people with disability. It is the most inclusive sport in the world for those with the most significant physical impairments. Boccia is one of only two Paralympic sports developed for people with a disability that does not have an able-bodied equivalent. Boccia has been the fastest growing Paralympic sport in the past five years. As part of the 2024 New South Wales State titles medal award ceremony, it was with great pride and admiration that I welcomed many passionate competitors to Penrith from all over our State. I especially want to mention Jamieson Leeson for her outstanding achievements not only in this competition but in the sport overall.

On the day, Jamieson was inducted into the Boccia NSW Athletes Hall of Fame by the President of Boccia NSW, Barry Edwards. Mr Edwards acknowledged her dedication, hard work, and exceptional talent, which have propelled her to become one of the best boccia athletes in the country and earned her a well-deserved place among the elite. Her remarkable journey to reaching number two in the world rankings in 2023 is a testament to her unwavering commitment and relentless pursuit of excellence. As a valued partner to Daniel Michel in the BC3 Pairs, their consistent dominance, holding the number one world ranking for over a year, showcases Jamieson's exceptional skills and teamwork. Jamieson's accolades as the BC3 National Champion in 2022 and the BC3 NSW State Champion in 2023 further solidify her status as a formidable competitor in the sport. Her dedication and achievements have undoubtedly left a profound mark on boccia in New South Wales, inspiring future generations of athletes to strive for greatness.

Jamieson's achievements are a source of pride and inspiration for us all, and I am honoured to recognise her outstanding contributions to the sport of boccia. We will all have our fingers crossed for the team that has qualified for Paris: the BC3 teams of Dan Michel and his ramp operator, Ashlee Maddern, and Jamieson Leeson and her ramp operator, Jasmine Haydon. I note they are not yet official until Paralympics Australia selects them with the announcement due in early June. We wish them every success in your boccia career and, if selected for Paris, we will all be cheering them on from Oz.

### AUBURN ELECTORATE EVENTS

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (20:48):** The Auburn electorate is celebrated for its vibrant festivals and events, and this year our calendar has been exceptionally full. From Ramadan to Nowruz, Easter, and the Lunar New Year, I extend a heartfelt thanks to Cumberland City Council and Bankstown City Council for their tremendous efforts. The one-night Ramadan market in Auburn and the month-long festivities in Lakemba are testament to the dedication of our council staff, who work tirelessly to make these events spectacular. The Lunar New Year celebrations in Griffith Park and Lidcombe, as well as the burgeoning Nowruz festival in Merrylands, attract tens of thousands of visitors. Those festivals not only enliven our shopping precincts but also support local small businesses. As winter approaches and festivals become less frequent, the local eateries remain vibrant. Whether sampling fusion dishes at Tarim Uyghur, enjoying traditional Turkish lentil soup at Ali Baba or indulging in the double lamb at Auburn Kebab House, Auburn's culinary scene is unmatched.

In the north of the Auburn electorate, one may think that they are on holiday in East Asia, but welcome to Lidcombe, where over 20 delicious Korean barbecue spots await, alongside numerous delectable Japanese eateries. To the south, Chester Hill is also emerging as a culinary hotspot, especially for those with a sweet tooth. From the irresistible pistachio donut fries at Eat Street's Bad Bar to the delectable baklava at Chehadi Sweets, there is something to satisfy every palate. As we celebrate the diversity of our larger centres, let us not overlook the charm of our smaller shopping areas. Birrong, for instance, boasts a cake shop renowned for its exquisite pies and baked custard tart, which is my personal favourite. In Berala, one can savour classic fish and chips or enjoy a hearty meal at the Berala Hotel Bistro. Regents Park is famous for its delectable charcoal chicken. Each location offers a unique taste of our community.

It has been a challenging year for small businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector, yet our local dining spots have brought the world to our doorstep, making it unnecessary to travel far to enjoy global cuisine. While we anticipate the next great festival, with events like Bankstown Bites on 27 July and the Cherry Blossom Festival starting 17 August—where I highly recommend the tempura mushrooms—there is no need to visit the city or fly overseas to travel. Our local businesses need support and offer the world at your doorstep. Your next holiday is



just around the corner. I take this opportunity to pass on my thanks and appreciation to the staff at both local councils. Their hard work often goes unrecognised, yet they are the true heroes who bring our community together.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I can also vouch for the custard tart.

### **ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (20:51):** Tonight I raise issues concerning the Royal North Shore Hospital, a precious institution of the Willoughby electorate. There is a range of issues, challenges and opportunities currently shaping the hospital now and into the future. The hospital has served the community well since its founding in a cottage on Holtermann Street in Crows Nest in 1887, which I spoke of in my maiden speech. My great-great-grandfather, George James, was on the founding committee and, like so many locals, raised funds and support among local people and the community to establish the hospital. It is where my mother trained to be a nurse and worked for over 20 years, and where my dad, my sister and I were born. This is personal for me, and I am proud of my family's enduring connection and contribution to the hospital. So many other locals have a personal story about the hospital.

Today the Royal North Shore Hospital stands as a cornerstone of the Willoughby community and serves 1.1 million people across our great State. It was recently recognised as the fourth best hospital in Australia and among the finest 150 hospitals around the world, and rightly so. I congratulate and thank everyone who works hard to make that possible and earns it that reputation. One matter I make clear is my community's dissatisfaction with the cuts to palliative care due to a heartless decision by the Minns Labor Government. Over \$13 million in funding is being stripped from that vital compassionate care for those at the end of their lives, including at our local hospital. It is a cruel blow for our hospital and community, and I denounce the decision of the Minns Labor Government to cut \$250 million in palliative care funding across the State.

I also put on record that funding for the Royal North Shore Hospital went backwards in the budget that was handed down last year by the Minns Labor Government. In a growing and ageing community with a rising need for the Royal North Shore Hospital's services, it was wrong and should not be repeated in the coming State budget. A further matter to mention is the current draft clinical services plan for 2024-29 that is being consulted on by the Northern Sydney Local Area Health District. I thank the district for the document, for sharing it with the community and for listening and consulting. I will be joining a session about the document next week and encourage one and all across Willoughby to do so. One item in the document that needs careful consideration is the forecasted population growth in our area. In Crows Nest alone, another 30,000 people will live locally in the next decade. I will have more to say on that in coming weeks.

One of the keys to the success of the Royal North Shore Hospital is its partnership with Ramsay Health Care, which operates the North Shore Private Hospital very well. The private hospital is a leader in many fields, not least of which in robotic surgery, which is complementary to and adds significantly to the capabilities of the broader hospital site. The benefits of co-located public and private hospitals were particularly well exemplified during the COVID period, when hospitals were under so much pressure. At that time, staff, facilities, resources, equipment and more were shared to the betterment of our community and State. That capability and collaboration should continue. I would like to see Ramsay Health Care given certainty and opportunity going forward to continue to operate the North Shore Private Hospital. I put on the record my basic understanding that there needs to be a longer lead time, given the nature of the presence, investments and opportunities, for the North Shore Private Hospital to have certainty going forward.

A key issue of opportunity, and some present concern too, is the recently produced 40-year master plan for the Royal North Shore Hospital site and the associated future of the Herbert Street site. The path ahead for our venerable local hospital demands deep attention and action in the community and here as policymakers. Royal North Shore Hospital has faced challenges, including past attempts by the Iemma Labor Government to privatise hospital land to fund a redevelopment during the early 2000s. That plan was halted in 2011 by then health Minister Jillian Skinner, who placed a moratorium on the sale. The current master plan must serve the best interests of our community and preserve the integrity of Royal North Shore Hospital. For two years I have said that the view of the community is that hospital land must be utilised to serve the healthcare needs of the community, and I believe that must be met.

There is a balance to be struck, and the hospital has needs in terms of accommodating staff and visitors, hosting suitable related retail space and space to partner with academia and business. A concern that has been expressed to me is that the present plan has too strong a focus on commercial and retail space, a medi-hotel and diverse accommodation, and other uses that are not clinically oriented. I am engaging with and listening carefully to hospital staff, the community and the local area health board to seek to ensure that the hospital's future is optimised. As always, I believe good outcomes are born out of good processes.

I have raised with relevant leaders my concern that the general community of the North Shore, including the people of Willoughby—the very people for whom the hospital exists—were not consulted as part of the development of the plan. That was an error, in my view. What is at stake here is not merely the physical footprint of the Royal North Shore Hospital but the very essence of what it stands for—a beacon of hope, healing, care and community. There must be a truly long-term view taken because I, and everyone locally, want to see our children, grandchildren and more have access to a world-class hospital locally that meets the needs of the community today and for generations to come.

### WESTERN SYDNEY AEROTROPOLIS

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (20:56):** There has been much discussion in the media in recent months about progress at the Western Sydney airport and aerotropolis. I have been vocal in my support of the airport and aerotropolis both in the House and in my community. However, while much of the focus has been on Bradfield, suburbs in my electorate, like Kemps Creek, Catherine Field and Rossmore, have been overlooked. While those areas are designated aerotropolis precincts, they have yet to be rezoned and possibly will not be for decades. They remain in a figurative holding pattern while, nearby, planes get ready to make their journeys. Unfortunately, while those suburbs retain their traditional rural zoning, they have not been spared the impacts of nearby developments.

I recently took a drive around the area with a couple of constituents to see the impact firsthand. One agricultural and gardening supplier has recently been working with Sydney Water to process waste and incorporate it into their products, causing a strong odour that I will not go into too much detail to describe. To its credit, the supplier has undertaken work to improve the odour impact on nearby residents. In addition to the landscaping and gardening suppliers, there are at least three tips, a brickworks, and silica and sandstone plants within a radius of a couple of kilometres.

Since the announcement of the airport, speculators have also moved in to land bank in anticipation of the increased value and development potential that a major airport brings. In their attempt to cover the holding costs of the land, some speculators have resorted to land uses that not only clash with the rural surroundings but flagrantly breach council and State regulations. Illegal construction, transport and trucking businesses have sprung up all over Kemps Creek and surrounding suburbs. Trucks and other large vehicles have also become an ever-present sight due to construction of the M12, airport, metro and aerotropolis. Those trucks and heavy vehicles—a product of both legal and illegal uses—have, predictably, torn up rural roads.

Local streets have become dangerous and undrivable due to the damage caused and the plethora of potholes that have resulted. Many constituents have come to my office in frustration at the lack of action from Liverpool City Council. One resident in Kemps Creek has reported that at least three-quarters of the neighbouring properties are home to illegal land uses. Compounding the issue, in the past year or so Liverpool City Council has changed the way that it investigates compliance complaints. Previously, all complaints were investigated. The view taken at the time was that not investigating would expose council to unacceptable risk should the cause of the complaint result in property damage, injury or worse.

The new policy, supported by a majority of the elected body, now sees council apply a risk-based approach, where compliance officers are left to make a call as to whether a complaint from the public warrants further investigation. This has inevitably led to accusations of inconsistency. An elderly family had the full force of Liverpool City Council's compliance team bear down on them, with visits from rangers and letters threatening fines in the millions of dollars, all for a car awning being out by a few centimetres. A humble farmer was threatened with ruin for erecting a simple structure to protect his crops. Meanwhile, large construction, transport and mechanical companies are free to conduct their intensive, pollutive uses in previously idyllic rural areas, seemingly with no penalty.

Whereas fresh air and the sounds of kookaburras and other wildlife were once the main appeal of places like Kemps Creek, Rossmore and Catherine Fields, noise, potentially dangerous odours and dust are now the new daily reality. People who have lived there for decades in semi-rural tranquillity have had their peace and quiet turned upside down through no fault of their own. They deserve a decent quality of life as much as anyone else. Residents accept that progress is coming and all whom I have spoken with welcome it. They are excited about the airport. However, this transition from a semi-rural oasis to an aerotropolis must be handled better, and the cop on the beat, Liverpool City Council, must do better. In recent days I received a letter from Liverpool City Council stating that the properties I have mentioned are being investigated. Nevertheless, the council must do better.

### STATE BUDGET

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (21:01):** In just over a month's time the State Government will deliver its second budget since the election. This evening I take the opportunity to put on record a number of concerns and

a wish list of sorts for the community of Ryde. Since the election in 2023, my community in Ryde has suffered from a suite of broken promises, poor policy outcomes and chronic underinvestment in what we all know is a substantial growth area in Sydney. This has been exacerbated by the Government's dogged pursuit of short-term political wins rather than sustainable long-term outcomes—the very thing that we need in a place like Ryde. Without putting too fine a political point on it, I note that this is only the Government's second budget. The 2024 budget is its opportunity to correct that record and to restore confidence in good government that is future focused and able to set aside partisan politics.

To date, this Government has given every impression to those in communities like Ryde who did not vote Labor that they should be punished. This is wrong on any objective measure, and unbecoming of a government elected on a self-described platform of integrity. In the electorate of Ryde alone, we are racking up a number of broken election commitments. Number one and most egregious was the promise before the election to save TJ Millner Field. In recent times, the Government has done a 180-degree backflip on its pre-election position. There has never been a funding commitment and there has been no flagging of a future funding commitment. In addition, the Government has actively intervened to reject efforts to make that land public. It is a broken promise that needs to be, and can be, addressed in the forthcoming budget.

The Government took to the election a plan to fix local buses in Ryde, including by restoring the M52. This has not occurred—in fact, bus routes have gotten worse. I am inundated with complaints and in just the past couple of weeks I was informed by Busways, the local provider, that the M52 is not something that has even been canvassed with them by this Government. It is another broken promise. There was a commitment to build the Eastwood Cultural Centre and yet no funding was delivered in the last budget to make that a reality. This budget is an opportunity to set that record straight. There have been commitments to build new schools in Macquarie Park. The Government has big plans for new housing, but it has no plans for infrastructure to make that sustainable. Kids simply will not be able to go to school if the planning approvals are granted and the school approvals are not made alongside them.

Of course, we have spoken ad nauseam in this place about the range of voucher programs that have been cut: Back to School, Creative Kids, Active Kids, First Lap, and Before and After School Care vouchers. Before the election, it was promised that they would all be restored, but after the election that was not the case. It needs to be addressed in this budget. Labor was not up-front about a number of things that it snuck through after the election. The single largest rezoning in our history, including 8,000 apartments in Macquarie Park, was never mentioned before the election and yet after the election Labor tried to impose it without any sustaining infrastructure. Cancellation of the restoration of Ryde Hospital's birthing unit was never mentioned before the election; the restoration is now off the cards. A cancellation of plans to widen Victoria Road was never on the agenda before the election; the plans are now gone.

The Government is demolishing the old Meadowbank Public School hall, despite promising before the election that it would stay. It has attempted to develop the North Ryde Common and Macquarie Mental Health Hospital site, despite never mentioning it before the election. No sites have been identified for building the new schools that were committed to; funding for local public schools and palliative care has been cut; there is a proposal to introduce two-way tolling, which is going to have an enormous impact on Victoria Road in my electorate—again, it was never mentioned before the election—zero progress has been made on the Macquarie Bus Interchange and there have been delays in delivering the West Ryde multisport facility. The list goes on.

Then there are the things we need that have not even been planned yet, such as funding for the Northern Centre's SafeT program to help women who escape domestic violence; new police and fire stations in Eastwood; new MRI, mental health and dialysis services at Ryde Hospital; an additional school to accommodate the State-led planning reforms and growth; conversion of the old Sydney Water facility in West Ryde into community space—not yet another development or sale—a strategy to upgrade the Blaxland/Balaclava Road after the Federal Labor Government cut funding from that important project; upgrades for North Ryde, Ermington and Ryde public schools; and, of course, a new ambulance. Labor governments love to refer to their budgets as Labor budgets. I would rather they deliver a State budget, where all citizens—regardless of age, gender, culture, profession or the political stripes of their local member—are treated fairly and with respect. We need a budget for all, not just for some.

#### **TARRAGAL OUTRIGGER CANOE CLUB**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (21:06):** I congratulate the Tarragal Outrigger Canoe Club on achieving some outstanding results at the recent New South Wales State Titles held in Port Stephens. Despite being a very young club, President Louise Vangestel's vision to remove barriers to anyone wanting to paddle has created an inclusive and supportive space that is seeing positive results in and out of the water. Congratulations to steerer Louise Vangestel and paddlers Nelda Samy, Jo Richards, Nat Rataj, Erin Braund, and Vanessa Fordyce. They were gold medal winners in the Master Woman 12k Short Course event. Congratulations to steerer Craig Bissett

and paddlers Adam Beavis, Iva Motusaga, Simon Petley, John Seisun and Richard Addison. They were the gold medal winners in the Master Men 12k Short Course event. Congratulations to steerer Brett Beswick and paddlers Kerry Miller, Vincent Healey, Jacob Reid, Jasmine Lee and Susan Garseke. They were silver medal winners in the Masters Mixed 12km Short Course event.

A particularly proud moment for the entire club was the fantastic result of its Penang Penguins youth team, who won the Novice Men's race. The team, led by steerer John Seisun and club paddler Bob Platt, comprised four boys from the Frank Baxter Youth Justice Centre on the Central Coast. This win was an amazing effort when you consider that some of the boys who participated were initially unable to swim, had not done any water sport before and have, by all accounts, had a tough start in life. This wonderful program and collaboration between the Terrigal Outrigger Canoe Club and the Frank Baxter Youth Justice Centre was created by the club's president Louise Vangestel.

There is 60 per cent Aboriginal representation in the Frank Baxter Youth Justice Centre. Louise approached the centre's assistant manager, John Maher, to learn what sporting programs were available for the youth to participate in. Louise's enthusiasm and passion, coupled with the club's vision to recognise local Indigenous peoples and to work to increase social equity for Indigenous youth, convinced John to authorise a couple of paddle sessions. John wanted to see how the boys would respond to the program and to assess whether the program was in line with the Department of Justice's vision and objectives for offsite programs.

The program has now been running for just under four months. Twelve boys have come through the program so far, with others joining each week. I am so pleased to confirm that John and the carers have reported that the program is exceeding all expectations, with benefits such as community involvement, connection to land and sea, and connections to the members of the Tarragal outriggers like family—that is, Aunts and Uncles showing belief in the boys regardless of their past. In particular, female and male role models from Tarragal outriggers have driven respect for the women of the club. Other benefits for the boys include learning ocean skills, learning their role within the canoe on the open ocean, and working together as a team of six, as well as in two- and one-man canoes.

John Seisun and Craig Bissett, along with Louise and Tarragal outrigger members, are driving the sessions and the learnings imparted to the boys that come with the power of the ocean. Having grown up nowhere near it, many of the boys had never been in the ocean, could not swim and had never experienced the incredible feeling of riding a wave, let alone in a canoe. The personal growth that the members have seen in the boys is truly incredible. Louise recounts one example recently where the canoe huli'd or flipped off Wamberal in big swell. The boys had been trained in what to do when that occurs, and each boy performed their individual role perfectly and calmly, and made it back to the beach. Each one then wanted to go straight back out again to keep chasing waves.

Louise tells me that when the boys initially tried paddling, they were introverted, made no eye contact and displayed no confidence in or out of the water. When asked a question, there were only mumbled responses. The difference now is truly incredible. When the boys arrive for their paddle session, they now fist bump each other and hug the supporting club members on the beach in thanks, as they excitedly discuss and unpack their learnings from their huli. Their personal growth has been phenomenal. Everyone involved in watching members of the special club feels so grateful to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

The positive impact of the program is undeniable. Louise shared that one of the boys, who is now eligible for one day per week release from the Frank Baxter Centre, approached club member John Seisun to go paddling with him on his day release to learn more about the two-man canoe. That kind of outcome is proof that the program and collaboration is working to create a sporting pathway to help the group of youth make better choices in the future. I congratulate Louise and everyone involved in the truly fantastic club, which continues to enrich our broader community and make a positive difference to the lives of our Indigenous youth. It is one of the many reasons that Louise Vangestel was also made Terrigal Woman of the Year. It has been a huge pleasure and privilege to see the development of the club and the deliberate attempt to work positively with our community and especially the Aboriginal youth on the Central Coast. I congratulate the Tarragal Outrigger Canoe Club.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY TOURISM

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (21:11):** I speak about the fantastic tourism opportunities that are afforded to Western Sydney residents and future tourists. As members know, Western Sydney is a vibrant and thriving region of our State with a large economy, and presents great opportunities for economic development. Part of that opportunity relates to Western Sydney as a desirable tourist destination for travellers, as well as the opportunity for residents of the Winston Hills electorate to enjoy world-class activities and recreation close to home. As one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, Western Sydney has experienced rapid population growth, increasing employment opportunities in manufacturing, logistics and professional services, infrastructure

development, and business investment. As a lifelong resident of Western Sydney who has seen how investment can drive change for the region, I have a keen interest in ensuring that the residents of the Winston Hills electorate continue to see our region grow in opportunities and investment.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with the managing director and his team from Winter Sports World to discuss their plans for a facility in Western Sydney. Winter Sports World represents an innovative approach to snow activities by bringing accessible and affordable snow to the heart of Western Sydney in Penrith, with perfect conditions 365 days a year. The "snowcation" experience is seen in different facilities around the world as a large tourist attraction. The activities that a Winter Sports World facility would offer include skiing, snowboarding, snow play and ice climbing. Those experiences are often far too expensive or impractical for many families across Western Sydney and in the Winston Hills electorate. Having those facilities in the heart of Western Sydney represents a fantastic economic and recreational opportunity for the whole region.

The facility would also include restaurants, cafes, conference rooms and a world-class hotel with more than 150 rooms. The managing director spoke about the importance of catering for first-time and beginner skiers or snowboarders, as well as school, corporate and tourist groups, and having a space for elite athlete training. He spoke about the importance of delivering a range of sustainability outcomes, including net zero carbon readiness, resource efficiency and social sustainability, and being nature positive. The project will generate thousands of jobs and inject significant economic benefit into the local and statewide economy. I look forward to Winter Sports World progressing its exciting development.

The residents of Winston Hills have also been talking to me about their trips to Sydney Zoo during the recent school holiday break. Sydney Zoo is another great example of how Western Sydney is attracting tourism and economic opportunities. Located just up the road from Winston Hills, Sydney Zoo is a fantastic, friendly attraction that is home to over 4,000 animals, Australia's largest reptile and nocturnal house and an aquarium. One of the highlights is the white rhino, which I am sure the member for Upper Hunter understands is the second largest land mammal in the world. It amazes me that Western Sydney is home to one of those African-native mammals.

Just down the Great Western Highway is a waterpark attraction known as Raging Waters, which recently finished its 2023-24 summer season. Raging Waters is home to over 40 slides and attractions that cater for people of all ages. It is another terrific example of how Western Sydney is becoming a leader of tourism in this State. I can personally attest that one 14-year-old resident named Finnley Taylor certainly got more than his fair share of value out of his season ticket this year at Raging Waters.

Eastern Creek motorsport park is not only a professional racetrack that hosts competitive supercar events. That motorsport park provides different experiences for beginners, driver and rider training, four-wheel driving—the list goes on. On top of those tourist and recreational facilities, Eastern Creek is still the venue for regional cross-country carnivals and drag racing shows. As a long-term resident of Western Sydney who grew up locally, it is great to see how Western Sydney is transforming into a destination that offers first-class facilities and activities. I remember from when I was much younger the efforts it took to catch trains to the beach for a day out with friends or to travel far and wide for opportunities that are now on our doorstep.

Locals would remember ice skating at Blacktown being the heart of recreation; now we see a transformation across the region that offers opportunities far beyond what I could ever have imagined. It is great to know that future generations will benefit from those changes. The transformation will be supported and increased by the opening of Western Sydney's airport in the years to come. That will attract international tourism for our region and provide economic opportunities that we have never seen before. I look forward to seeing how the residents of Winston Hills and people right across Western Sydney will benefit from that generational change.

#### **HUNTER VALLEY BUS ACCIDENT**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (21:16):** I speak about the tragic Hunter Valley bus crash that occurred last year. It is important that I speak on behalf of a community that is upset and dismayed by how the justice system has played out. In particular, I speak of the recent decision by the DPP to accept a downgraded guilty plea deal by the driver of the bus involved in the incident. The implications of that decision are significant. The manslaughter charge carries a 25-year term, whereas the charge of dangerous driving causing death carries a maximum 10-year term. Knowing that the sentence will almost certainly be less than the maximum, and with a 25 per cent reduction due to the guilty plea, an offender could be out on parole in just a few years.

Our justice system needs to be fair, and it needs to be seen as fair by our whole community. Our legal justice system is an important part of the grieving process for the victims, victims' families and victim-survivors. We rely on the DPP to do its job to the best of its ability and with the fullness of its reach. It is independent but not above criticism. It is important to place on the record the impact of the DPP's decision on the people it affects.

I will now read a statement by Leanne Mullen about how the decisions over the last week have affected her and her family:

As you know, my daughter Rebecca Mullen was one of the 10 people who lost their lives in the Hunter Valley bus crash on 11 June 2023, almost 12 months ago. On that night we received a call from friends travelling behind the bus about what had happened and, told that they couldn't find Bec, our son spoke with a person very close to us who told him that Bec had passed away. When we arrived, we were kept away from the scene by police who I acknowledge were doing their job in a respectful and responsible manner.

I wonder if anyone can imagine what it is like to live with the fact that you stood 20metres away from your daughter's dead body, being denied access to your baby girl. What it is like to repeatedly try and hold your husband and son back from their desperate attempts to get to her. To listen to police being quite vague and using terms like "missing" and "unaccounted for" in reference to someone that you love. To know that you couldn't hold your baby close, whilst her body was still warm and her spirit still evident. To not be able to kiss her forehead, hold her hand, tell her we were there for her, that she was not alone and say all you needed to say about how much she was loved, how proud we were of the person she had become, how we promise we will carry her memory with us for as long as we live.

Being denied these moments have tormented me. In fact, as I have slowly gained more knowledge, the first 48 hours after the incident haunt me. I didn't know this at the time as we were blocking all information from news outlets to try and deal with what had occurred in private. My daughter ceased being a person that night, instead becoming a piece of scientific evidence. Not blaming the police, they were doing their job, but that is the harsh reality. Her body was an object to be studied, measured, photographed. I wonder if anyone realises that my daughter's body laid with her friends in the cold, inside the bus, against the concrete gutter and metal guard rail for close to 48 hours before she was moved. It is irrational in all ways, I know, but I am haunted knowing how cold it was on those nights and I wasn't there for her. It keeps going over and over in my head that if I had been paying attention, I could have taken her a blanket and asked that they keep her warm.

I want people to think back to the footage shown to the nation repeatedly of the bus being on its side, my daughter is in there. Footage of the bus being righted, it bouncing on the road as it landed. It was a "delicate" operation apparently as the victims were still inside the bus it was reported. My head has been torturing me constantly thinking about what they did to my daughter's body during that process. Was she tied down, was she taped down, was she so tangled in the seats that she didn't move, did they just let her fall. Every scenario, over and over in my head, night after night. We did not get to see our daughter for over two weeks after the accident and when we did it was in a cold and sterile morgue.

I have kept this part of my grief and journey over the last 11 months to myself. I did that because I had a strong belief, a trust, that in sacrificing my rights as a mother to hold my daughter close as she left this Earth, the police were gathering evidence that could be used to ensure justice was done in relation to this crime. Accountability would come by using the evidence they collected over those 48 hours. That my sacrifice as a mum would be worth something meaningful in time.

Sadly, it wasn't the case. My daughter and her friends weren't worth the effort of a trial.

I have lost my faith and trust in justice. The powerlessness of it all is crippling. The realisation that the truth is not your right to understand is confronting.

It has torn apart any progress we have made recovering from this nightmare we find ourselves in. I am the one with the life sentence of knowing that the people who could make a difference decided that they would not fight to properly honour Rebecca and her friends in the way they deserve. They decided to do what was easy and timely, rather than what was right. I cannot reconcile that in my head at all and will be hurt by this decision every day for the rest of my life.

That is the voice of Leanne Mullen. I hope that, by reading her statement here, I allow her voice a chance to be heard. I finish with this. May the victims rest in peace. May the victim-survivors' journey of recovery continue. And may the families remember that the love of our community will always be there for them, as we know that their grief will be eternal.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:24 until  
Thursday 16 May 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

#### **PICTON VIEW CLUB VISIT**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—The Picton VIEW Club visited my office this week to share with me the work they do in the community. VIEW stands for Voice, Interests and Education of Women, with clubs located across Australia, and the Picton VIEW Club has 55 members. VIEW Clubs of Australia is a leading women's organisation and support network that empowers women to have their voices heard on issues of importance in Australian society. Through their admirable fundraising efforts for the Smith Family, VIEW Clubs make a remarkable difference in the lives of disadvantaged Australian children and their families and also for the women of our community. Picton VIEW Club proudly sponsors, sponsoring five students on the Smith Family's Learning for Life Program. Offering a chance for connection and contribution, they provide an opportunity to give back and help others in need and break the cycle of poverty for young people. This VIEW club in my Electorate, along with the many others located Australia wide, make a considerable difference in people's lives, and I thank you all for your invaluable efforts and contributions.

**MACARTHUR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION INC 2024 SEASON LAUNCH**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—The Macarthur Football Association Inc. held a successful launch event in March to kick off their 2024 Community Season. I wish all the clubs the very best for an exciting and rewarding season ahead! The Macarthur Football Association Inc. [MFA] oversees football competitions for 24 member clubs across Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly. Wollondilly Electorate Clubs include Burragorang District Soccer Club, Douglas Park Wilton Football Club, Picton Rangers FC, Tahmoor Soccer Club Tahmoor Taipans. Football in Macarthur can be enjoyed by male and female players from the age of five, and is a great way to stay healthy, to participate in the community and to develop connections and friendships. Clubs are run as not-for-profit organisations, with dedicated volunteers giving their time and efforts to keep the clubs running. These volunteers do their hard work behind the scenes, at training sessions and on game days for the benefit of our youth and community, and I am thankful for all they do. I look forward to getting rugged up and attending some games this season to enjoy the enthusiasm of the spectators, and team spirit of the players.

**WOLLONDILLY SMALL BUSINESS SHORTLISTED FOR AWARDS 2024**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Wollondilly has once again shone in the 2024 Australian Small Business Champion Awards, the country's premier small business awards program. Presentations occurred over two nights in April in Sydney and one small business from Bowral came home a winner - Hannaford Eyewear in Bowral. Congratulations also go to the nominees from Wollondilly. From the thousands of entrants, we are proud of the following small businesses who were finalists in their categories: From Bowral, Ladies Behind the Tradies for Accounting Bookkeeping Services; Samuel Gee Pies and Pastries, Balaclava, in the Bakery category; The Stress and Trauma Clinic, Bowral, in the Psychology category; Earth Property Buyers Agents, Mittagong, in the Real Estate Buyers Agent category; Dust N Ranch Outfitters, Bowral, for the Retail Sole Operator; John Winter Carpets, Mittagong, for the Trade Services category; Five Littles, Bargo, for the Fast Food/Takeaway Shop category; Windy Oaks Produce, the Oaks, in the Fresh Food category; Steins Plumbing Solutions, Silverdale, for the Plumbing Services category and Kalinya Estate, Bargo, in the Tourism category.

**ANZAC DAY**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in recognising school leaders from the Ryde electorate who assisted with Anzac Day services on 25 April 2024. Anzac Day is such a solemn occasion for our community, and it is fitting that generations - young and old - come together in remembrance. I particularly acknowledge Alice Monden from Marsden High School, for agreeing to MC Ryde's official service. She represented her school with distinction and presided over a timely and professional ceremony. She was joined by Callan Flynn from Holy Cross College, who eloquently shared the stories and letters of soldiers from the frontline, reading passages from 'Ryde Goes to War 1914 - 1918'. Finally, I acknowledge Epping Boys prefect, Akshit Shrivastava, who recited 'The Ode', and with it, commanded the respect and honour befitting this occasion. These students represent a future that those on the battlefields fought to protect, and it makes me proud to see yet another generation carry the Anzac legacy forward. We are blessed in Ryde with incredible local schools, with reputations built on the backs of their students. Alice, Callan and Akshit have once again elevated this standard, and are deserving of our thanks.

**KEVIN CHAN**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Kevin Chan who was recently appointed a Justice of the Peace in my electorate of Ryde! JPs play such an important role and reflect the community face of our justice system. At its core, the appointment of a person to Justice of the Peace is all about service. I thank Kevin for this service. As a JP, you are responsible for upholding the values of honesty and impartiality as you execute your official duties for the benefit of our local community. In a fast-growing community like Ryde, the demand for JP services is growing exponentially, and I feel fortunate as the local Member of Parliament to see so many high-quality individuals willing to raise their hands. Your appointment as a JP underscores your character, integrity, and dedication to public service. Congratulations once again on this well-deserved appointment and thank you for the difference I know you will make in the lives of those you serve.

**DAVID BYRNE**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating David Byrne who was recently appointed a Justice of the Peace in my electorate of Ryde! JPs play such an important role and reflect the community face of our justice system. At its core, the appointment of a person to Justice of the Peace is all about service. I thank David for this service. As a JP, you are responsible for upholding the values of honesty and impartiality as you execute your official duties for the benefit of our local community. In a fast-growing community like Ryde, the demand for JP services is growing exponentially, and I feel fortunate as the local Member of Parliament to see so many high-quality individuals willing to raise their hands. Your appointment as

a JP underscores your character, integrity, and dedication to public service. Congratulations once again on this well-deserved appointment and thank you for the difference I know you will make in the lives of those you serve.

#### **BALCOMBE HEIGHTS SENSORY GARDEN, SOD TURNING**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Balcombe Heights Sensory Garden has been a long-standing project driven by Connie Keith, Chairperson of the Balcombe Heights Estate, Section 355 Committee. On 11 April 2024 I was pleased to join Connie along with the Federal Member for Mitchell, Alex Hawke, the Mayor of the Hills Shire Council, Dr. Peter Gangemi, Hills Shire Council General Manager Michael Edgar and Councillors for the ceremonial sod turning to mark the commencement of the construction of the Sensory Garden. A smoking ceremony was conducted by Peter Williams from Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Cultural and Education Centre. Connie thanked landscaper, Tig Crowley for the concept plans and for working pro bono on the project for the last two years. Talk about the establishment of a community or sensory garden stated five years ago in 2019 and as such it fantastic to seek the project commence. The project has been funded with a grant in the amount of \$627,464 through the State Government Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program (formerly known as WestInvest). Thank you, Connie, for your dedication to the project.

#### **CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE, JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, RECOGNITION OF SERVICE**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I acknowledge the outstanding service of all Justices of the Peace who serve our community. Within the Castle Hill Electorate recently nine (9) Justices of the Peace were recognised as having attained the milestone anniversary of fifty (50) years' service. I acknowledge Noel Love, Daniel O'Dea, Cecil Fisher, Doug McClymont, Ross Page, Brian Pusep, Terry Manderson, John Maker and Valerie Evans for attaining fifty (50) years' service. Justices of the Peace are volunteers who are appointed by the Governor of New South Wales to provide a service to our community. Justices of the Peace provide an essential service including witnesses a person making a statutory declaration or affidavit and certifying copies of documents. Our community relies on the services provided by Justices of the Peace for many aspects of our lives including applying for passports, witnessing documents for court proceedings, or opening a bank account. I am pleased to acknowledge and honour the service of those who have achieved fifty years' service. I extend my deepest congratulations to those who have achieved fifty years of service and to all Justices across the State.

#### **AUSTRALIAN PAKISTAN CHAMBER OF TRADE, COMMERCE, AND INDUSTRY, GALA DINNER**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I acknowledge the importance of the economic and cultural ties which exist because of the strong relationship between our nation and Pakistan. On 18 April 2024 I attended the Gala Dinner at the Madison Conference Centre, Dural. The Gala Dinner was organised Australian Pakistan Chamber of Trade, Commerce and Industry otherwise known as APCC. It is important to note Australia and Pakistan enjoy a longstanding, strong and growing relationship, underpinned by deepening people-to-people links. The total value of exports from Australia and Pakistan during 2023 was AUD \$1,040B with imports AUD \$464M. APCC plays a pivotal role in fostering and promoting joint ventures in tourism, education, commerce, and trade between our two nations. I acknowledge the presence at the Gala Dinner of His Excellency, Mr Zahid Hafeez Chaudri, the High Commissioner for Pakistan; The Honourable Mr Ali Sevin, Consul General for Turkey; and Mr Qamar Zaman, Consul General for Pakistan. Lastly, I recognise and express my deep appreciation to Muhammad Asif and the entire team at the APCC for your work to foster and grow the relationship between Pakistan and Australia.

#### **GAVIN WILLIAMS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise and remember Gavin Williams, a valuable member of the Forster Surf Lifesaving Club who unexpectedly passed away. Gavin was described as an "outstanding asset", "a loveable larrikin" "a great teacher" he spent much time protecting others - logging over 900 hours of lifesaving duties in rostered patrols, beach monitoring by drones, emergency callouts, and nippers training. Gavin had a huge list of accomplishments, in 2015 he was awarded the Forster SLSC Gordon Godwin Club Person of the Year and the Highest Number of Patrol Hour award. In 2017, Gavin, off-duty successfully resuscitated a neighbour on a driveway in Forster. Gavin received the 2018 Newcastle Permanent Branch Rookie Official of the Year award, and the following year named the 2019 Newcastle Permanent Branch Masters Lifesaver of the Year. For the third year in succession Gavin was mentioned in the 2019-20 Newcastle Permanent Branch Awards for Excellence for his role in launching UAV surveillance along the Lower North Coast. Gavin possessed a Bronze Medallion to promote beach safety and, as a trainer, passing on his knowledge, skills and passion for SLS to others. Vale Gavin Williams, you will be truly missed.



### NSW SES FORSTER PACIFIC PALMS UNIT

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise the NSW SES Forster Pacific Palms Unit for their invaluable assistance during the damaging April storms. The unit's 20 volunteers attended and completed 72 jobs – 71 calls for assistance and one flood rescue during the three-day event which resulted in flash flooding and damage to properties and roads throughout the region. A small community in the Myall Lakes, Green Point was hit by a waterspout, turned mini tornado which caused a path of destruction knocking down trees and power poles leaving many residents with leaking roofs and no electricity. I would also like to recognise Tuncurry Rural Fire Brigade, NSW RFS – Green Point Brigade and Fire & Rescue NSW Forster who assisted the Forster Pacific Palms unit with multiple calls for assistance. Thank you for once again being our local heroes, pulling together to keep our community safe during and after this disaster.

### PAWS IN THE PARK

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—Paws in the Park has returned once again in 2024. Held last Sunday the 5th of May at Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park, the event, while undoubtedly of interest to pet enthusiasts, stands as a routine fixture in our community calendar, offering a great opportunity for pet owners and enthusiast alike to get outside and meet other likeminded pet loving people. This year's event included Two-kilometre dog walk, food, drink and pet stalls, a fantastic dog parade, free health checks as well as a special guest appearance from Chase from Paw Patrol. Congratulations to all the pets and owners who came home with awards. In addition, I would like to thank Camden Council for organising this wonderful event and all the volunteers and stallholders who worked tirelessly to make this year's Paws in the Park one to remember.

### MITCHELL JARVIS

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—I would like to acknowledge St Paul's Catholic Primary School student, Mitchell Jarvis. Mitchell first picked up a shot put 9 months ago during his primary school athletics carnival. After a stellar performance he was selected to represent his school at the Wollongong Zone carnival. Mitchell then placed first for under 10 Boys and went on to represent the Wollongong Zone at the Mackillop selection trials where he finished 2nd. Mitchell successfully qualified to represent NSW Catholic schools at the NSW PSSA Championships at Sydney Olympic Park back in October last year. Mitchell competed against 40 other athletes from Public, Catholic, and independent schools across NSW and despite the nerves received a bronze medal. He then qualified to represent NSW at the School Sports Australia Track & Field Championships held in Launceston in November. He qualified for the finals and placed 5th overall in Australia. Considering he had no prior shotput experience this is an exceptional result. This year, Mitchell has started training with a throwing coach in all throwing disciplines. Congratulations Mitchell on your fantastic achievements. We are excited to see how far you can go in 2024.

### THE MACLEAY TO META

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Born in Kempsey, Libby Sinclair lives in Berlin and works as a lawyer for Meta formerly Facebook in Germany. Growing up in Frederickton Libby wasn't surrounded by big tech lawyers however, regardless of the lack of exposure, Libby carved her own career path. Libby attended St Joseph's Primary School, completing her HSC at St Pauls College Kempsey. After completing her schooling, Libby spent a gap year in Great Britain and Germany. After many years holidaying, studying and living in Europe, Libby officially bought an apartment in Berlin in 2022 where she now resides with her wife Katharina and dog Marie. Libby worked at many casual jobs in Germany to improve her German with the aim to one day work as a lawyer in Germany. Libby completed a Bachelor of Laws degree at University of Wollongong, before bridging her qualifications with the one-year Master of Laws which she completed in Germany and Finland. Libby stated she wanted the young people growing up in the Macleay to know there are limitless opportunities to do anything you want where every you want. Well done Libby!

### KEMPSEY'S YOUTH LANEWAY FESTIVAL

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—The Macleay Youth Laneway Festival has returned with a flourish, drawing sizable crowds of locals and visitors to Kempsey's central business district. I am here today to praise its success. On Saturday, April 13, the event, which was a part of the state's Youth Week celebrations, turned the city centre into a bustling centre of activity. Live music, roaming acts, kid-friendly events, street art, food trucks, and market stalls were all appreciated by the attendees. In addition to providing entertainment, the event presented a platform for upcoming local artists to showcase their talents. It was an avenue for individuals to represent their culture and gain confidence in the area. This event is a great representation of the local talent we have within our small communities. I congratulate the volunteers, businesses, groups, and artists that helped make this event a huge success. Our sense of community was unwavering even in the face of a little rain, there was an amazing

turnout and a breathtaking fire-twirling display to cap off the evening. A job well done from all parties in the collaboration of the festival.

### **BIG-HEARTED COMMUNITY CELEBRATES BELLINGER RIVER DISTRICT HOSPITAL HISTORY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Bellinger River District Hospital is proud of the outstanding outcome of its most recent 120th anniversary gala, which raised a staggering \$11,500 thanks to the generosity of surrounding businesses and community members. It was a sophisticated event with exquisite canapés, live entertainment, and attendees dressed to impress, bringing the community together to remember the priceless service the hospital has offered since 1903. The quantity of money donated that evening will have a direct positive impact on the community's health and wellness by helping to improve patient treatment and purchase equipment. That evening, a heartfelt thank you was given to several incredible people for their unwavering efforts in supporting and advancing both the event and the hospital over the years. Pauline Murphy, the volunteer coordinator, Trevor Cheney, the deputy director of nursing Chantel Baker, and employees from Bellinger Hospital and Pink Auxiliary were among them. This event has again shown us the power of care, compassion, and collaboration within the Bellinger community. Their combined efforts are producing significant benefits and I congratulate the community on their efforts.

### **FORSTER TUNCURRY ATHLETICS CLUB**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise the Forster Tuncurry Athletics Club for their outstanding achievements at the NSW State Little Athletics Championships. Six young athletes competed in Sydney and represented our community. The athletes out-did themselves to earn their place amongst the state's best - Olivia Delardes, Charlotte Allan, Jasmine Lette, Ella McDonald, Harry Lynch and Zara Rahman. For three athletes, it was their first time qualifying for the carnival. Harry (9 years boys) came 21st in the 400 metre sprint and 9th in the 800 metre run. Charlotte (10 years girls) came 11th in the long jump. Zara (10 years girls) came 7th in shot put. Ella (12 years girls) took gold in high jump, 20th in the 80m hurdles, 11th in long jump, 20th in the 200 metre sprint and 6th in the triple jump. Olivia (13 years girls) came 23rd in the 1500 metre run. Jasmine (13-14 years girls multi class) took gold in the 100 metres and 200 metres run, silver in the shot put, long jump & javelin and 3rd in discus. Congratulations on your individual achievements and your achievements as a club, what fantastic results!

### **HIHIFO SPORTS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE INC.**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Hihifo sports and community development centre was recently established with the aim of building a community and sports centre in Kolovai, Hihifo, Tongatapu, after the devastation left behind in Western Tonga as a result of the 2022 Tsunami. It was great to join the community for their fundraising dinner on Friday 26 May 2024 at Latana Venues in Bonnyrigg. There are no safe spaces or multi-purpose buildings that can provide safe shelter or an evacuation centre for the district, so these efforts will make a huge difference to the communities affected by providing physical, emotional and social support. Some challenges in Tonga that the community centre aims to address includes: play groups for pre-school/early childhood education; classes/lessons on Tongan culture for young generations; social activities to assist the youth in building on their careers and future employment; gym for community use; enhancing skill sets of Hihifo women via Tongan craft workshops. It was especially great to see my good friend from Granville, Hahano Namoa, who has been heavily involved in the fundraising efforts. I look forward to seeing the fruits of this great initiative flourish in your community.

### **CANREVIVE INC.**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—It was really wonderful to visit CanRevive Inc. on April 11, 2024 at their Western Sydney Centre in Westmead Centre. I had the opportunity to catch up with President Eric Yeung, A/Professor Stephen Li and the Support Service Coordinator for the Western Sydney Centre, Kristy Cheung. The team at CanRevive Inc. does great work to support people with cancer from the Chinese community during their cancer journey. It was established in 1995 at Haymarket Sydney, by two cancer survivors and one carer to support Chinese speaking people through their cancer journey. Its aim is to help to minimise the impact of cancer on patients and their families by providing information and emotional support to cater for their cultural and linguistic needs by providing information, support services, links to allied health, and activities to help people with cancer and ensure that no one faces their cancer alone. A fantastic initiative by a fantastic group of people. Organisations like this truly make a difference in our community and I commend you for your noble efforts. Keep up the amazing work.

### PALESTINIAN AUSTRALIAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I had the pleasure of joining the Australian Palestinian Welfare Association's inaugural Eid event for the newly arrived families from Gaza. The event was organised in partnership with the Western Sydney Community Centre and the Gaza Children's Fund. I commend all the volunteers and local businesses who donated their time and goods to this event. They were able to create an environment of community kindness and safety as well as joy for the families who have recently escaped the war zone. The Palestinian Australian Welfare Association is a recently created organisation established especially to assist the displaced families arriving in Australia. It aims to help in the settlement process by providing financial assistance as well, as support and advice. The Association is made up of volunteers who are tirelessly working to make life better for the Palestinian families. The volunteers are collecting donations to assist in paying for flights, accommodation, as well as coordinating and sourcing furniture, food vouchers, toiletries and other essential items needed for survival in Australia. Well done to the team led by Kassem Chalabi for all their effort. I look forward to supporting and attending future events by the organisation.

### KHMER NEW YEAR FESTIVAL 2024

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 13th April, 2024, I had the pleasure of attending the Khmer New Year festival held at the Wat Khemarangsaram Temple in Bonnyrigg. It was an enriching experience filled with vibrant cultural displays, traditional music, and delicious Khmer cuisine. The atmosphere was with joy and camaraderie as families and friends came together to celebrate this auspicious occasion. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Chanthly Lim-Chum and the Khmer Community of NSW for extending their warm invitation to me. Their efforts in organizing such a successful event not only fostered cultural appreciation but also created a sense of unity within the community. The festivities provided me with an understanding of Khmer traditions and customs, leaving a lasting impression on me. It was a privilege to witness the cultural richness and diversity showcased at the festival, reflecting the resilience and spirit of the Khmer people. Attending the Khmer New Year festival was truly a memorable experience, and I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this celebration of culture and community.

### WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS FC MEDAL PRESENTATION NIGHT 2024

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the evening of Tuesday, 30th April 2024, I had the pleasure of representing the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon Chris Minns, at the Western Sydney Wanderers FC Medal 2024 Presentation Night. It was an evening filled with excitement, celebration, and recognition of outstanding achievements within the football community. As I stepped into the vibrant atmosphere of the event, I was struck by the sense of anticipation and camaraderie among players, coaches, supporters, and officials alike. Throughout the evening, I witnessed the acknowledgment of exceptional talent, hard work, and sportsmanship displayed by the players throughout the season. From rising stars to seasoned veterans, each recipient of the prestigious medals and awards exemplified the values of integrity, teamwork, and perseverance. As I mingled with guests and shared in the jubilation of the occasion, I couldn't help but feel inspired by the profound impact of sport in bringing communities together and fostering a sense of unity and pride. I thank Chairman Paul Lederer, CEO Scott Hudson and the Western Sydney Wanderers FC for the kind invitation to this event.

### LUNAR NEW YEAR 2024 AT THE MINGYUE LAY BUDDHIST TEMPLE

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the 17th February 2024 I had the privilege of representing the Premier of NSW the Hon Chris Minns, at the Lunar New Year Celebrations hosted at the Mingyue Lay Buddhist Temple, organized by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society. The festival presented a rich tapestry of cultural experiences, engaging attendees in both spiritual and festive realms. The mesmerizing lion dancing added a dynamic and symbolic element to the festivities, embodying strength, courage, and good fortune. The fireworks further enriched the atmosphere and resonated with the diverse audience. My heartfelt appreciation goes to the Mr James Chan and Mr Vincent Kong from the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society for extending their gracious invitation. The event brought together State and Federal MPs which included: Nathan Hagarty, Charishma Kaliyanda, Jason Yat-Sen Li and Anne Stanley, reflecting a shared commitment to cultural celebration and community unity. The Lunar New Year festivities provided a platform to honour traditions, fostering a sense of harmony and goodwill. Being part of this celebration allowed me to witness the meaningful contributions of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society in promoting understanding and unity within our diverse community.

### SAM HODGES

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Sam Hodges, from Lake Illawarra, for being environmentally savvy and taking it upon himself to collect litter along his daily walks in the Illawarra. Fed up with the sheer amount of litter he encountered while walking his dog along the Blue Mile, Sam ducked out to Bunnings, picked up an \$8 grabber, and incorporated rubbish pick-ups into his routine. At the end of each

walk, he easily fills a bag, sometimes two. As a new year's resolution to raise awareness of the issue in his community, Sam has set a goal to keep track of how much rubbish he picks up in 2024. Venturing out four or five times a week, he has racked up more than 40 bags since 1 January, each weighing about 1.5 kg. On that trajectory of around 60 kg of rubbish in about 80 days, Sam is on track to collect 270 kg of rubbish this year. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Sam on this commendable initiative, raising awareness and hoping for change and have people thinking just a little more carefully about their waste disposal.

#### NIC SIMS

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Nic Sims, teacher at Barrack Heights Public School, who represented Warilla Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club at the NSW Surf Lifesaving State Championships in Manly in March 2024. Mrs Sims claimed gold in the swim, board, ski and iron race (swim, board, ski and run all in one race), and a silver in the beach flags. Wonderful results. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Nic Sims on this wonderful achievement and wish her well in all her future sporting endeavours.

#### OAK FLATS HIGH SCHOOL

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Oak Flats High School's Agriculture team who has achieved an amazing second place in The Royal Easter Show School Produce Competition. Oak Flats High School's entry was full of produce grown across five school gardens. Their students began planting and preparing for the competition in late 2023 and early this year. They moved mulch, manure, compost, and soil; planted and weeded gardens, pulled tape off cardboard to sheet mulch, collected snails and other pests from the garden beds, drew artwork, and then harvested the produce at the right time. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Oak Flats High School on this remarkable achievement.

#### REPAIR IT LAKE MAC

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Repair It Lake Mac for being awarded Lake Macquarie City Council's Environmental Leader of the Year and their continued, outstanding work in the Swansea Electorate. Repair It Lake Mac was established in 2018 as a grassroots community project of the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance to create a repair café. The service delivers regular, free community repair cafe events around the lake, fixing small furniture, electrical items, clothing, tools, toys and more. As a result, Repair It Lake Mac has diverted 1.5 tonnes of waste from landfill. The organisation further provides talking sessions and morning tea to educate people about re-using and repairing unwanted items. Lake Macquarie City Council acknowledged their tremendous contributions to the Lake Macquarie community and the environment by awarding the organisation LMCC's Environmental Leader of the Year and highly commended in the field of Lake Macquarie Group of the Year. Congratulations Repair It Lake Mac, you are well deserved recipients of these awards and a critical part of the Swansea community. I look forward to hearing of the continued success of your service.

#### SWANSEA-BELMONT SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Swansea-Belmont Surf Life Saving Club for their remarkable performance at the 2024 NSW Surf Life Saving Championships. This year, the NSW Championships encouraged thousands of competitors, spectators, and volunteers to travel to the Northern Beaches to compete in a diverse range of water and land surf lifesaving activities. Across all junior, senior and opens competitions, Swansea-Belmont demonstrated their tremendous talent and determination as they took home 18 gold medals, 16 silver and 10 bronze medals. As a result, the Club placed 4th overall on the open championship leader board, unfortunately just missing out on a podium place. Congratulations Swansea-Belmont SLSC on your exceptional effort, you are a credit to the Swansea community, and I thank you for your continued work to enhance the safety of NSW beaches and waterways. I look forward to watching the Club compete in the Aussies later this year.

#### TOM MITCH

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the formidable performance of Tom Mitch in the NSW Open Championship for track and field. Tom has been running since he was nine years old and committed to the lifestyle/training when he was 15 exemplifying his continued dedication and passion to the sport. He runs most days with the Sydney-based run crew around the Lake Macquarie region and the Swansea foreshore. Tom took out first place in the 1500 metre men's NSW Open Championships and claimed victory at the NSW titles in Sydney where he came from behind to win. Tom further achieved his personal best 1500 metre time at a Bankstown meet of 3:46:27. In 2022, Lake Macquarie City Council recognised Tom's prowess and talent in track and field, awarding him Lake Mac Young Sport Star of the Year. Tom now aims to make the final at the Australian

athletics Championships which will be held in Adelaide this month. Congratulations Tom on your continued success, you are a credit to the Swansea community, and I look forward to following your outstanding career.

#### **ST MARYS SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—I would like to recognise the amazing school leaders of St Marys Senior High School, Allayna Anna Sachin and Ankon Dam. Recently they were recognised for their achievements at the Penrith City Council Student Leaders Reception. The Penrith City Council Secondary School Leaders reception is an esteemed event that acknowledges the outstanding contributions of student leaders across the region. Allayna and Ankon have consistently demonstrated their ability to lead by example, inspiring their peers and making a lasting impact on our school community. Congratulations and I can't wait to see what the future has in store for you both!

#### **EVERGREEN EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—I would like to recognise Evergreen Early Education Centre for being selected as a shortlist for the Australian Small Business Champion Awards. This amazing achievement is a testament to the St Marys early education centre's commitment to having a positive impact on the children they care for, truly making a difference in these young people's lives. I commend Evergreen Early Education Centre on providing their services to St Marys and look forward to witnessing the centre positively impacting many more young people's lives.

#### **WIRRINGA BAIYA - ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S LEGAL CENTRE**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I would like to acknowledge the vital work of Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre. Wirringa Baiya works predominantly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from NSW who are survivors of domestic, family, and sexual violence. The Centre works to provide access to legal representation, advocacy, advice, and referrals. The term Wirringa Baiya means "Women Speak" and represents everything that the service aims to do - provide a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The Centre was opened thirty years ago when a group of Aboriginal women noticed a gap in services for Aboriginal victim-survivors. The Centre has developed exponentially since its opening, from its beginning as the NSW Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre to now employing five solicitors and helping countless women, Wirringa Baiya is an invaluable resource. Headed by CEO Christine Robinson, Wirringa Baiya is the first and only Aboriginal women's legal centre managed by Aboriginal women in NSW, and the first of its kind in Australia. Thank you Christine and everyone involved in the Centre for your tireless commitment, hard work and care; the work that you do is invaluable.

#### **HABERFIELD ASSOCIATION 2024 GARDEN AWARDS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I was honoured to recently attend the Haberfield Association 2024 Garden Awards. These long running Awards are a testament to the creativity and community spirit of the residents of Haberfield and it was heartening to see over sixty people turn out to celebrate all the entrants. The Awards are open to all the people of Haberfield at no cost. They celebrate gardens of all kinds and this year's categories included Whole Garden, Front Garden, Back Garden, Vegetable and/or Herb Garden and Garden feature/Critters. There were some stunning gardens that reflected hours of hard work from their owners and one truly unique red phone booth worthy of Superman! Congratulations and thank you to Jeff Malyon for his tireless work in organising the Awards along with other volunteers and the dedicated judges. Congratulations to each of the winners and all the entrants who make these Awards such a wonderful celebration of the unique character of Haberfield. I encourage everyone to take a wander and enjoy the beautiful gardens of Haberfield.

#### **VILLAGE WHOLEFOODS 7TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Congratulations to Village Wholefoods in Marrickville who have recently celebrated their 7th anniversary! Village wholefoods was started in 2017 by Suzanne and Paul after they noticed an excess of non-reusable packaging in supermarkets. Wanting to bring high quality ingredients to the Marrickville community in a sustainable way Village Wholefoods was born. Calculating cost by weight, the store encourages shoppers to bring their own containers from home and load up on all their pantry and household essentials – don't worry if you forget they also offer free bags and containers instore! Suzanne and Paul have truly created a village through their wholefoods by showing locals that shopping sustainably doesn't have to break the bank during a time that the cost of living is at the forefront of all our minds. I congratulate Village Wholefoods on a wonderful seven years of sustainability and join many others in wishing you many more anniversaries to come.

### CIMMARON SANDERS

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I thank and commend Oran Park Gazette's news reporter Cimmarron Sanders for providing Oran Park Public School's Year 6 Enrichment class students with an insight into what it's like to be a news reporter, as part of their unit on Journalism. The students interviewed Cimmarron via zoom, and in doing so were able to ask him thought provoking questions regarding how reporters gather and place together information. The students then went on to investigate and report on something of interest to them, with a range of topics covering the local and school community. They put their learnings from Cimmarron to good use by gathering their own research, conducting interview and writing editorials to contribute to a class magazine. I thank and commend Cimmarron Sanders for taking the time and effort to share some of his knowledge and expertise with the school students and I commend the staff and students on their commitment.

### GLENMORE PARK BASKETBALL CLUB

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate Glenmore Park Basketball Club on having completed a highly successful 2023/2024 summer season of the Penrith District Basketball Association [PDBA] competition. The club was represented by approximately 200 players across 28 teams, competing at Penrith Valley Regional Sports Centre each Friday and Saturday. I am proud to inform the House that a quarter of the club's 28 teams qualified for their respective grand finals. This is an extraordinary achievement and a testament to the club's quality, discipline and effort. Out of the 7 grand finalists, 3 became premiers, whilst the other 4 proudly finished runner-up. It was fitting that these achievements occurred throughout the 25th anniversary of the club, for which I also congratulate them. I congratulate and commend the club for representing our community so proudly and successfully and I wish them continued success in this winter season and beyond.

### NATALIE HOWE

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend award winning photographer, a Glenmore Park resident, Natalie Howe for the opening of her new photography studio in Glenmore Park. I thank her for her service to our community and beyond through her photography, in which she has created lasting memories for her clients. Natalie's quality and success as a photographer has seen her win countless state, national and international awards, including the National Newborn Photographer of the Year Award in 2016 and first place in the 2009 International Aperture Awards for the category of weddings. I'm pleased that her new studio will allow her to continue her commitment to her clients and I have no doubt that Natalie will add further awards to her already long list of achievements. I congratulate Natalie on the opening of the new studio and her success as a photographer and wish her further success in her career.

### STARS OF ORANGE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Exceptional' is the first word that comes to mind when it comes to describing the Orange community's fundraising effort in conjunction with this year's Stars of Orange. Stars of Orange is the Cancer Council's major fundraising event in Orange, matching local personalities with the city's dance schools to produce a performance for an evening of glamour, fun and fundraising. This year's result was an incredible total of \$315,000 to be put towards research, services and care. A shout out goes to the ten groups who performed during the evening. Their fundraising was responsible for roughly two-thirds of the overall total. They were led by Will Miller from Our City Real Estate and dance partner Maggie Morris, Lumiere Beauty, who raised \$50,000 through their routine with United Dance to win the fundraising award. While those who attended the evening function showed their generosity through a charity auction, the community at large should be congratulated on supporting each of the dancing acts' fundraising efforts in the weeks leading up to show night. It's well documented times are tough, especially in the bush yet the community again rallied and I congratulate the Cancer Council on this great initiative.

### RUSSELL SPENCER

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful contribution Forbes' Russell Spencer has made on behalf of recreational anglers in the central west. After 22 years, Russell stepped down as a volunteer with the Department of Primary Industries' Fishcare program. Almost 70, Russell has logged over 2000 hours of volunteer work and many more off the books, to Fishcare, but recognises he has benefited enormously from his involvement. An ex-serviceman, Russell was injured by a grenade explosion and then a back injury forced him to retire from work, leaving him battling bouts of depression. Fishing was his refuge and he became involved with the Fishcare program when urged by a friend. Since those days in 2002, Russell has spent time educating school children on sustainable river ecosystems and fish species and visited many inland waterways. His input earned him the title of Central West's Senior Volunteer of the Year in 2013. Hooked on fishing since he pulled in two yellowbellies at age three, Mr Spencer now spends time teaching his young

grandchildren the joys of catch-and-release angling. I thank him for his enormous contribution to the health of our waterways.

#### **LILLY BAKER**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate Lilly Baker on her second selection in the NSW Country women's rugby league team to take part in the four-day NRL National Women's Championship. A member of the triumphant Western Rams side which won the NSW country championships in early March, Lilly is a former NSW under 19 representative and is now fulfilling that potential in open company. Playing at club level with Orange Hawks league tag, Lilly has progressed to be a stalwart of the Vipers Women's Rugby League before being selected for the Western Rams. In fact, Western is proving a powerhouse of country women's league, winning its country championship final 28-12 against North Coast Bulldogs with Lilly playing a leading hand in the win to force her way into Country calculations. Lilly, who plays at lock, represented Country from March 21 against City, ADF, Papua New Guinea and Fiji at the national tournament played on the Gold Coast. She joined eight of her Western Rams' teammates in the side, further illustrating our zone's strength in the women's game. Well done Lilly.

#### **JERILDERIE FUN FAIR**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today, I would like to commend the organizers of the 2024 Jerilderie Fun Fair for their extraordinary efforts in creating an inclusive and vibrant community event. This annual fair, held at Monash Park Oval in Jerilderie, was designed to bridge the rural-metro cultural gap and offered a wide array of activities suitable for all ages. The fair included live music, rides, a market, and even an outdoor cinema, providing a day full of entertainment bringing the community together. The success of the fair can only be attributed to the hardworking organizing committee, who, despite the challenges that come with an event of this scale, managed to deliver an unforgettable experience for over 850 attendees. The dedication and enthusiasm of the Jerilderie Fun Fair organizers have not only benefited the community of Jerilderie but have also set a high standard for future events across the region. I would again like to commend and congratulate the organisers of this event, and I eagerly look forward to the 2025 Jerilderie Fun Fair.

#### **WALK FOR KATIE – DENILIQUIN**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today, I wish to commend the incredible efforts of those involved in the "Walk for Katie," a fundraising initiative led by Bec Rourke and supported by many friends and family. This event was dedicated to the memory of Katelyn Godfrey, who tragically passed away due to Long QT Syndrome, a heart signalling disorder that can cause sudden, fast, chaotic heartbeats. The walk aimed to raise awareness and funds for the Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndrome Foundation, which supports families dealing with this condition. Bec walked an impressive 252km and raised over \$7,000, far exceeding the target of \$500. The efforts of the community saw participants walk a total of 1000km. The funds raised will contribute significantly to the ongoing work of the SADS Foundation, helping to provide education, support, and advocacy to save lives and assist affected families. I would again like to commend everyone who participated in, and contributed to, the "Walk for Katie". Your commitment and hard work is truly appreciated.

#### **SWIMMING AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate the following talented swimmers from North Albury Swimming Club and Albury Swimming Club who participated in the 2024 Australian Age and MC Age Championships on the Gold Coast this April: Laylah Murray, Lilah O'Connell, Matthew Willis, Brodie Peacock from North Albury Swimming Club, along with Isabelle Rae, Sienna Toohey and Nicholas Tukuniu from Albury Swimming Club. These athletes showcased their incredible skills over nine days of intense competition. A special mention to the coaches Mitch Brown and Wayne Gould and local Albury clubs for their ongoing invaluable support. Well done swimming stars! Your talent, hard work and dedication have brought about these remarkable results at the national level. May your future in swimming continue to inspire others with your passion and dedication.

#### **STEPHEN HAYES AWARDED FOOTBALL NSW LIFE MEMBERSHIP**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Albury's Steve Hayes who has been awarded a Football NSW Life Membership. Mr Hayes' remarkable football journey began the young age of 11 in Forestville, on the northern beaches in Sydney, and continued over 50 years. Mr Hayes' dedication to the sport has been unwavering, with his last senior game played in the early 2000s at the age of 50. His legacy transcends beyond mere number of goals and saves: it embodies leadership. He proudly holds five life memberships - with Boomers FC, Albury Wodonga Football, Riverina Branch, & the Albury Wodonga Soccer Referees Branch. His pivotal role in steering Albury Wodonga Football Association [AWFA] as their president underscores his commitment to the sport's development at a local level. Throughout his busy football career he has had to make

significant sacrifices, supported by his loving family - Jenny and their three children, Ryan, Kiera and Torey. Stephen, I commend you for your incredible football journey and the impact you have had on the community and its players. Your dedication to this game is truly inspiring and deserving of this honour.

#### **JOHN DAVISON – 50 YEARS SERVICE**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to John Davison who received a Certificate of Appreciation for 50 years of service as a Justice of the Peace, on 17th April 2024. Presented by the Honourable Michael Daley, Attorney General in the Parliament of NSW, this award marked a rare milestone. Celebrating 50 years of Service, this award recognised outstanding JPs who have demonstrated great loyalty and longevity. John has generously volunteered his time, serving our community as a Justice of the Peace for 50 years. Since becoming a JP in 1972, John has been instrumental to many significant moments in our community. Justices of the Peace perform an integral role in our community, providing accurate and trusted verification services. Entrusted independent and impartial witnesses, Justices of the Peace certify legal documents, like powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits. They are key to the functions of our legal system, assisting courts and governing bodies to provide timely and fair outcomes. Congratulations John on this significant award. Thank you for your dedicated service to our community. I also thank the NSW Department of Communities and Justice for your considered advocacy and ongoing support for JPs in our community.

#### **WETHERILL PARK RETURN AND EARN DEPOT**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday 15th April 2024, I was delighted to celebrate the success of the Wetherill Park Return and Earn Depot and represent the Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister for the Environment, in our local Prospect Electorate. Local business owner, Mr Gaurav (Harry) Gupta, has run the Return and Earn collection service in Wetherill Park since 1st November 2023. It offers Return and Earn collection services for individuals, charities, sporting groups, schools, and local businesses. The depot has seen 19 million containers returned since opening, with an average monthly volume of 3.7 million eligible containers returned. Since 2017, the Return and Earn scheme has successfully processed over 11 billion bottles, cans and cartons for recycling. Over \$1.1 billion has gone back to NSW citizens in container refunds, and over \$54 million raised for charities and community groups. This includes in our local Prospect Electorate, where Harry and his team selected three local charities, One Heart Blacktown, Inclusive Skating Australia and One Meal Blacktown, to receive direct donations. Congratulations to Harry and all the Wetherill Park Return and Earn team on their wonderful event, and I look forward to celebrating their continued success.

#### **KENNETH THOMAS – 50 YEARS SERVICE**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Kenneth Thomas who received a Certificate of Appreciation for 50 years of service as a Justice of the Peace, on 17th April 2024. Presented by the Honourable Michael Daley, Attorney General in the Parliament of NSW, this award marked a rare milestone. Celebrating 50 years of Service, this award recognised outstanding JPs who have demonstrated great loyalty and longevity. Kenneth has generously volunteered his time, serving our community as a Justice of the Peace for 50 years. Since becoming a JP in 1972, Kenneth has been instrumental to many significant moments in our community. Justices of the Peace perform an integral role in our community, providing accurate and trusted verification services. Entrusted independent and impartial witnesses, Justices of the Peace certify legal documents, like powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits. They are key to the functions of our legal system, assisting courts and governing bodies to provide timely and fair outcomes. Congratulations Kenneth on this significant award. Thank you for your dedicated service to our community. I also thank the NSW Department of Communities and Justice for your considered advocacy and ongoing support for JPs in our community.

#### **ILLAWARRA SURF LIFE SAVERS**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces)**—At the end of April the 2023/24 surf life saving season ended with patrols taking down the red and yellow flags for the final time. It marked the end of another successful but busy year for volunteer surf life savers in the Illawarra. The provisional statistics on the season indicate that since 1 July 2023 there were 315 rescues, 9884 preventative actions and 469 first aid cases. Thirroul Surf Life Saving Club conducted the most rescues with 64. I would like to thank the members and volunteers from the Clubs that make up the Illawarra Branch – Austinmer SLSC, my own club Bellambi SLSC, Bulli SLSC, Coalcliff SLSC, Coledale SLSC, Corrimal SLSC, Fairy Meadow SLSC, Helensburgh-Stanwell Park SLSC, North Wollongong SLSC, Port Kembla SLSC, Sandon Point SLSC, Scarborough Wombarra SLSC, Thirroul SLSC, Towradgi SLSC, Windang SLSC, Wollongong City SLSC and Woonona SLSC – for the time they give up to keep people on our beaches safe. I also acknowledge the leadership of the Board of Directors of Surf Life Saving Illawarra, led by President Peter Evert for the additional time they put in to guide the branch and help to coordinate all of its activities.



**SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – EDMUND RICE COLLEGE**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Patrick Sirianni and Jack Wilson have been named as the 2024 Edmund Rice 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 extra curricula activities. Both 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 Patrick and Jack on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at school.

**SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – MOUNT KEMBLA PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Jordy Bradley, Edith Davis, Indie Perrow and Elijah Fedele-Sirotich who have been named as the 2024 Mount Kemplla Public School leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to lead by example. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extra curricula activities. Each of them will spend 2024 acting as role models for their peers and I have confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate Jordy, Edith, Indie and Elijah on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at primary school.

**SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – PLEASANT HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I acknowledge Katia Bernardi, Paddy Prendergast, Olivia Krstevski and Mitchell Jones who have been named as the 2024 Pleasant Heights Public School leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to lead by example. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extra curricula activities. Each of them will spend 2024 acting as role models for their peers and I have confidence that they will carry out their new leadership roles exceptionally. I congratulate Katia, Paddy, Olivia and Mitchell on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year at primary school.

**FOOTBALL ST GEORGE - LOCAL SPORT GRANT PROGRAM**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I have said it time and time again, but grassroots sport is truly one of the cornerstones of my community. I am so privileged that my local area is home for so many great sporting organisations. Today, I would like to specifically recognise Football St George, who recently received funding under the Local Sport Grant Program. Football St George received just over \$18,000 to support the great work they do in our community. Specifically, this funding will enable Football St George to buy equipment and gear for their 'Football4all' program. This is an inclusive program which promotes football participation for children and young adults with diverse needs. The funding will also allow team equipment to be purchased for their Junior Girls Representative Program, allowing our next sporting superstars to grow and develop their skills in a supportive environment. I would like to congratulate everyone from Football St George, including Chair Irene Hatzipetros, Chair Phillip Brown, as well as the team of directors and staff who have been fantastic advocates. I sincerely look forward to seeing the difference that this funding will make in our community.

**GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise Georges River Life Care, a wonderful local organisation who continue to offer valuable support to members of the community. As a charitable organisation, Georges River Life Care specialises in providing family violence support, emergency relief to those who need it and programs for vulnerable children, families and adults with disabilities. They have supported thousands of individuals since beginning their operation in Peakhurst in 2007. We know that there has been an increase in individuals seeking family and domestic violence support, however the team continues to go above and beyond for their clients. Local charitable organisations are truly one of the cornerstones of the Georges River area. There are so many people out there doing it tough and without organisations like Georges River Life Care, many individuals would not receive the support that they need. I would like to thank Chairman Andrew Scipione AO, CEO and Operations Manager Karen Power and the rest of the executive team and staff for their efforts over the years. I look forward to working alongside Georges River Life Care into the future and continuing to support their wonderful efforts.

### LOCAL SPORT GRANT PROGRAM

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I have said it time and time again, but grassroots sport is truly one of the cornerstones of my community. I am so privileged that my local area is home for so many great sporting organisations. Today, I would like to congratulate a number of these organisations who have recently received funding under the Local Sport Grant Program. These organisations operate to the highest calibre and I could not be more proud of their efforts. I would like to specifically congratulate Phillip Brown from Football St George, Matthew Ellis from Georges River District Cricket Club, Richard Rice from Georges River Rugby, Lisa Da Silva from Connells Point Rovers FC and Jason Finlay from St Joseph's Riverwood Sports Club. As these individuals are incredibly dedicated, taking time to promote the health and wellbeing of our younger members of the community. All in all, these organisations received just under a combined \$50,000 worth of funding, which will make an enormous difference. I would like to congratulate all of the grant recipients and look forward to working alongside them well into the future.

### TROY BILLIN – YAMBA FISHERIES

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Congratulations goes to Troy Billin of Yamba Fisheries who was last week awarded for his exceptional quality products when he was announced as the 2024 Sydney Fish Market Seafood Excellence award winner in the Primary Producer category. Mr Billin has been catching premium quality seafood and selling it to some of the country's top restaurants for more than 25 years. After moving to Yamba, Mr Billin established Yamba Fisheries over 18 months ago to sell local products to the Sydney Fish Market. His commitment and dedication to supplying high quality seafood have been proven as he was nominated by a variety of industry figures for the award. Mr Billin received a plaque and a certificate for the award, and the honour will undoubtedly help continue growth for Yamba Fisheries as a business. Congratulations Troy, on such a prestigious and outstanding award.

### GLENUGIE FIREFIGHTERS - TED AND JUNE NORTHWOOD

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to recognise and thank June and Ted Northwood for their outstanding dedication and service to the Glenugie Rural Fire Brigade and the local community. Mr and Mrs Northwood's long-standing service as active firefighters, over the past 22 years, and their roles within the brigade exemplify their unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of their community. In addition to their operational roles, Mr and Mrs Northwood have also generously contributed to community engagement and catering duties, providing crucial support to the firefighting team, while fostering positive relationships within the community. The recognition of Mr and Mrs Northwood with 20-year clasps, for their Long Service Medals, is a testament to their selfless service, leadership, and dedication to the Glenugie Rural Fire Brigade. Their combined efforts have made a lasting impact on the brigade, its members and the community as a whole. Congratulations and thank you June and Ted, on your outstanding achievements.

### ELIZABETH "BESSIE" WEBB – TALLAWUDJAH CREEK...AND ME

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to acknowledge local author and historian on the launch of her latest book and ninth publication, "Tallawudjah Creek...And Me". Mrs Webb joyfully marked the official release surrounded by her loving friends, family and supportive community who warmly regard her as a living legend. In her book, Mrs Webb shares her childhood memories of growing up in an area filled with pioneering timber cutters and bullock teams. Tallawudjah Creek was a constant presence during the first 16 years of her life, shaping her love for the unique landscape of the Clarence Valley and its rural beauty. Published by Mike Jelliffe of Nenge Books in Coramba, who also attended the book launch, "Tallawudjah Creek...And Me" has been praised by readers for the author's insightful portrayal of the region's history. Joined by her children, Peter Webb and Lyn Weeks, Mrs Webb's book launch in Glenreagh was described as a remarkable day. I was privileged to be there on this special occasion, and I congratulate Bessie on this outstanding achievement. I look forward to hearing about your next project Bessie, well done.

### JEFF ALLEN - FIRE AND RESCUE NSW STATION 454 TARRO

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—In March 2024, Jeff Allen (aka "Steve") moved on after seven years of service since 2017. As with all good firefighters, Jeff had a strong commitment to safety, a promise of community assistance and an oath to protect those in peril. He believed heartily in the NSW Fire and Rescue motto: "We are Fire and Rescue NSW and we are PREPARED FOR ANYTHING". Jeff engaged with many Strike Teams over the years, and sometimes led the crews, acting as Deputy Captain. He always helped out behind the scenes, too - with community activities and events like the Santa Christmas Eve Lolly Run. Jeff served in the dynamic role of an on-call firefighter with dedication and bravery. I commend the work of all firefighters who risk their lives to protect their local community. The May 11 open day was an opportunity for people to learn

about this type of commitment, to meet these people who help keep us safe. Thank you for your service, Jeff. You have helped to make a difference. Enjoy that extra time with your family.

#### **STEPHEN FINNEY, JP**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Proud Novocastrian Stephen Finney OAM celebrated 50 years of service as a JP at a function on 10 April 2024 in the NSW Parliament House. Stephen is Secretary Treasurer of the Totally and Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association of Australia [TPI], Vice-President of both Newcastle RSL sub-branch and Newcastle and Hunter Region Vietnam veterans. He also serves as Director of Ceremonies for Newcastle and Hunter Region Veterans Inc, including Peace Makers. Stephen has been helping his compatriots for over 40 years, clearly understanding the needs of past and present defence personnel. Stephen served in South Vietnam (1969-70) and returned home to help his father, who was an inspiration for Stephen's involvement with ex-services at the Nelson Bay RSL, becoming a foundation member of NVV in 1974. After retiring from the workforce, Stephen began to organise ANZAC Day services. In the same way that he carries on with his father's work, Stephen has a wealth of knowledge he wants to pass on to someone younger, encouraging them to carry on the impressive service legacy he has built up. Thank you and congratulations, Stephen.

#### **PATRICIA FORSYTHE**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On Friday March 22, the Hon Patricia Forsythe AM was invested as the 8th Chancellor of the University of Newcastle. Patricia was a member of the NSW Legislative Council from 1991 to 2006, Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber from 2006 to 2019, was the Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand and served on several government and not-for-profit sector boards. She graduated from the University of Newcastle with an Arts degree and a Diploma in Education when the university had around 3,000 students - now she will be responsible for almost 38,000. Patricia taught at Jesmond High School and said that she is looking forward to returning to the classroom - this time to promote the university and to highlight the opportunities that a tertiary education can offer the Hunter region's young people. Patricia feels proud to be a part of the university community and is keen to know that the whole community feels that they can engage with each other on platforms of interest such as the University of Newcastle commitment to equity and promoting the institution's academic and research excellence on a national and world stage. Congratulations on a well-deserved appointment, Chancellor Forsythe.

#### **YASS ROTARY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Yass Rotary. Yass Rotary has established the opportunity for Yass residents to access free health checks. The health checks are conducted by a Registered Nurse undertaking blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure and overall well-being checks. These checks can in some cases detect underlying serious health conditions and encourage the need for a medical review. Yass Rotary also has a focus on young people, providing financial assistance for young people undertaking a range of further education and training. Rotary helps fund students participating in the High School Spectacular and those involved in the Science and Engineering Challenge. Yass Rotary is always on the lookout across the community for those in need and does all it can to support them. Yass Rotary is currently working with the Council to look at the redevelopment of parkland, envisaging that it would make an ideal area for visitors and locals alike to have views of Yass and important township landmarks. I take this time to sincerely acknowledge and thank all members of Yass Rotary for their tireless and altruistic work in improving and supporting their community.

#### **SOUTHERN HIGHLAND ENVIRONMENT**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I was recently taken on a day's exploration of the local environment across the Southern Highlands. Starting the day at Lake Alexandra and then to the top of Mt Alexandra, to marvel at the breathtaking views, and learn about the incredible hidden biodiversity so close to town. Venturing back to the Waratah Fire Trail, overlooking the Nattai River and Mt Jellore, I saw the areas that have undergone a huge transformation thanks to management by a dedicated group of volunteers, highlighting the importance of collaborative conservation. Then at the Craggs, where Barry Arthur, Environment Manager at WSC, made a presentation on the Council's Koala Program which is proudly supported by the NSW Government. Barry and his team have undertaken an incredible amount of work towards understanding and protecting koalas locally. Next stop was Jellore Nature Reserve with Willy Hall, who has worked tirelessly with the volunteers of the Jellore Flora Reserve and NSW National Parks to improve and preserve this ecologically significant area. By bringing together so many stakeholders and community members, the region is taking crucial steps towards ensuring that the Southern Highlands environment thrives for generations to come. Thank you.

#### **JODIE KELLER**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Jodie Keller. Jodie is a crucial member of the Occupational Therapy Team at the Goulburn Base Hospital. Jodie has consistently demonstrated

a high level of practical ability and shown initiative in her role as an Allied Health Assistant. Jodie has demonstrated working knowledge of government interfaces such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme, My Aged Care, and other NSW Health Systems, providing support and information to other staff members. Jodie's critical knowledge regarding processes, record systems and client data systems, has been able to identify and resolve errors and impart this knowledge to the team. Jodie has also been recognised for her initiative in exploring ways to improve processes to achieve team and patient safety outcomes, including processes for pre-admission orthopaedic and enhanced recovery after surgery. Jodie's exemplary work was recently recognised at the 2024 Excellence in Allied Health Awards where she was announced as the Allied Health Assistant/Technician/Support Person of the Year. I take this time to recognise and congratulate you on your commendable work and the well-deserved acknowledgement that you have received. Congratulations Jodie Keller and thank you.

#### **ALICE NEWTON**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate Alice Newton and her husband John, on the launch of their book *Wildflower Gems* from Burrendong Botanic Garden and Arboretum. Alice's journey with the Arboretum began when she was teaching home economics and needlework at Wellington High School. In 1958 when the school was transferred from Percy Street to the new complex facing Whiteley Street, there was a desire to plant native species, shrubs and trees to fill the front of the new school. Alice was recommended as the person to assist! Alice had studied biology and brought a box camera with her pocket money when she was around 14 years of age. Her fascination grew from here and over the time she transitioned to a film camera and eventually digital, embracing the evolving technology. She would go on to take hundreds of photos for the Arboretum and have the job of identifying and filing each. As a first-time author, Alice hopes that some of the book sales will make some money for the Arboretum, which is unique in that it only has Australian plants, no exotics from overseas and a rainforest equal to none away from the coast. Congratulations Alice!

#### **BRITTANY WILLETS AND DREW MCCALLUM**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge work colleagues Brittney Willets and Drew McCallum as they prepare to take part in their first ever marathon, whilst raising crucial funds for charities of their choice. Five months ago, Drew had never run more than 1.5 kilometres. Now he finds himself training rigorously for the monumental feat of completing a 42.2 kilometre marathon. Brittney is an experienced runner, however, despite her familiarity with running she is approaching this challenge with excitement as she pushes herself to new heights of endurance and achievement. Drew has dedicated his efforts to raising funds for the Black Dog Institute, not only contributing vital funds to their work but raising awareness of mental health in our community. Brittney has chosen to support the Australasian Leukaemia and Lymphoma Group which holds a deeply personal significance, after her dad was diagnosed with Lymphoma when she was in her early twenties. Inspired by each other's dedication and commitment, July 2024 will mark a significant milestone as they step onto the starting line together. Despite facing their own challenges along the way, they are united in their pursuit of personal achievement, and I wish them the best!

#### **EMMA HAWKINS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Emma Hawkins who recently achieved third place in the AWEX National Graduate Wool Classer Competition at the Sydney Royal Easter Show! Hailing from Mudgee, Emma completed a Certificate IV in Wool Classing at TAFE, a decision that would ultimately lead to an extraordinary opportunity! Emma's talent and dedication was not unnoticed as she completed her training, and she was selected to represent TAFE NSW in this prestigious competition. Competing against nine of the strongest graduates from across the country, the tightly contested competition required participants to class different types of wool into their lines and then make justifications for their decisions. Whilst the competition is a high-pressure environment, Emma's ability to remain composed and focused allowed her to approach each task with determination and finesse. Emma remains steadfast in her pursuit of a career in the agriculture industry. She has embarked on studying a Bachelor of Agriculture while immersing herself in practical experiences on her grandparent's super fine property. I am certain she will be one to watch in the wool and agriculture industry. Congratulations Emma.

#### **CHULLORA PUBLIC SCHOOL AND BANKSTOWN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL PREMIER'S READING CHALLENGE**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Chullora Public School and Bankstown Girls High School students have shown incredible efforts in this year's Premier's Reading Challenge with more students borrowing and reading books from school and local libraries. I am proud of the incredible efforts of our local schools and students in participating in the Premier's Reading Challenge and expanding their knowledge,

creativity and writing skills. Both principals from Chullora Public and Bankstown Girls High School have been impressed with their students completing the challenge early and keenly reading and swapping books amongst each other. The Premier's Reading Challenge presents a unique opportunity for our community's diverse school students to share their experiences in reading a wide variety of books, including fiction, non-fiction, picture books, poetry and drama, as well as those written by Australian authors. I would like to commend the local principals, librarians and students from our community that are involved in this year's Premier's Reading Challenge. I implore them to keep up their fantastic efforts in encouraging students to read more widely and immerse themselves in imaginary worlds, as well as embrace their creativity and self-expression.

### **BANKSTOWN SPORTS BULLDOGS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Congratulations to the Bankstown Sports Bulldogs for winning the NSW Premier Cricket second grade competition in their Grand final last weekend! The Bulldogs successfully triumphed against their local rivals, the Western Suburbs Magpies, taking home not only the big win but also the Albert Cup! Captain Mitch Hinds started the team off strong, winning the toss and electing to bat on the new wicket. The Bulldogs worked hard all day to keep the runs coming, finishing day one with 7 for 269. Their spirits remained high as did the pressure on day two. The wickets fell quicker than the team planned on Easter Sunday, seeing the Bulldogs out just 45 minutes into play. However, the team didn't back down without out a fight on day 4 when the Magpies graciously accepted their defeat, crowning the Bankstown Bulldogs the 2023-2024 season Albert Cup winners. My congratulations to the entire team, coaching staff and their dedicated supporters for this astounding accomplishment. It's always a pleasure to hear the continued sporting achievements coming out of Bankstown Sports Club. Keep up the good work and congratulations on the big win!

### **BANKSTOWN TOUCH PLAYERS NATIONAL "REBEL" CHAMPIONS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Congratulations to Bankstown Touch Football Association on their recent impressive victory. Their dedication, teamwork, and skill have truly shone brightly, showcasing the essence of sportsmanship and excellence. This win not only reflects their hard work on the field but also their commitment to representing their community with pride. They have shown their amazing work on and off the field. Bankstown Touch Football Association was formed in 2022 after the successful merger of Bankstown Touch Association and Bankstown Jets Touch Association. Their success is a testament to the support and encouragement they receive from their coaches, supporters, and the entire community. The president of the club, Andrew Smith, stated that people play Touch because it helps with fitness and allows them to do something they enjoy. Their achievement serves as an inspiration to aspiring athletes and demonstrates the positive impact of sports on individuals and communities. Congratulations, once again, to Bankstown Touch Football Association for their outstanding performance and commendable sportsmanship. This win not only brings glory to their team but also adds to the rich tapestry of sporting achievements in our community. Well done Bankstown Touch Football Association!

### **FOCUS ON EMERGING NORTHERN RIVERS CROPS - RICE AND HEMP**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—THERE are two emerging crops that have an exciting future in our region – rice and hemp – and the NSW Government is getting behind both industries to help them move ahead. In great news for the rice industry, the Government will introduce legislation this month for a new rice export marketing and trade arrangement for Northern Rivers growers. I have been working with local rice growers on this for years and advocating on their behalf. I acknowledge rice farmer Tony Carusi for leading the charge. There are developments in the legal hemp growing industry. This year the NSW Government set up the Hemp Industry Taskforce to support the expansion of the NSW industrial hemp sector. The 12-member Taskforce includes industry experts and leaders from the Northern Rivers: Andrew Kavasilas – the founder of Medical Cannabis Ltd; Tobias Kretschmar – Professor for plant breeding and genetics at Southern Cross University; Klara Marosszeky – the CEO of Australian Hemp Masonry Crystal White – director of Northern Rivers Hemp Growers Co-op. The Taskforce will consider market opportunities; the role of industrial hemp in transition to net zero; identifying legislative barriers to expanding production; research and development.

### **TWEED TOURISM COMPANY WINS GOLD IN AUSTRALIAN TOURISM AWARDS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I CONGRATULATE Tweed Tourism Company General Manager Sally Scott and her team on taking out the coveted gold for tourism marketing and campaigns at the Australian Tourism Awards held in Darwin in March. The winning Tweed campaign was a body of work aligned with a Covid recovery strategy that included promotion of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail, a 'Slow Road to Tyalgum' drive campaign, hosting of the Australian Society of Travel Writers' Convention and Australia's first Wellness Tourism Summit. Husk Farm Distillery, North Tumbulgum, was a NSW finalist in the Tourism Wineries,

Distilleries & Breweries category of the awards. Tweed Shire Mayor Cr Chris Cherry said the outstanding results were testament to the Tweed's proactive tourism industry, its compelling visitor experiences and impactful consumer marketing campaigns. "The extended state border closures during COVID-19, along with severe flooding in 2022, were very difficult times for our region, but these challenges galvanised our tourism partners," Mayor Cherry said. I'd also acknowledge the success of two other NSW finalists – Contained in Nimbin Accommodation, Nimbin, in the New Tourism Business category; and Vision Walks Eco Tours, Byron Bay, in the Tour and Transport Operators category.

#### **NORTH COAST LOCAL LAND SERVICES BOARD MEMBERS APPOINTED**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I WISH to congratulate two outstanding regional leaders on their recent appointments to the North Coast Local Land Services Board. NSW Minister for Agriculture and Regional New South Wales Tara Moriarty MLC in late April appointed returning board member, Bexhill's Jolyon Burnett, as board chair. Minister Moriarty also appointed former Kyogle mayor and sitting councillor Danielle Mulholland as a board member for her first four-year term. Mr Burnett has over 35 years' experience in the horticulture and agriculture industries, and I'm sure he will make a valuable contribution at the helm. Cr Mulholland, a lawyer, has a wealth of experience in good governance and says she hopes to bring an independent voice to the board. The North Coast LLS Board covers a region which extends from the Tweed Shire Council in the north to the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council in the south. During an extensive statewide recruitment process, 157 applications were received to join LLS regional boards across New South Wales. Of the 24 Ministerial appointments to 11 regional boards across the state, some have been re-appointed for a further and final term while others will be joining LLS for the first time.

#### **BETH HORTON**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—The Central Coast has lost a shining star, a beautiful woman whose smile lights up the room. Beth Horton was a ray of sunshine, and she will always be remembered for the happy and generous spirit that she gave so freely to those she encountered. Beth Horton, was a 39-year-old legendary disability advocate, wheelchair user, who was born with spina bifida and lived life to the absolute fullest. I met Beth as a youngster at wheelchair basketball training at Terrigal Stadium in the early 90s, and I knew she was destined for amazingness. Due to her generous, caring sense of humanity, she had been an incredible advocate, and support person for so many. She went on to be appointed as a disability support worker at TAFE, New South Wales and flourished in her job supporting and advocating for students with disability. Beth left us too early. 39 years old, Beth Horton had lived an exceptional life with great friends around her, finishing off her time on the planet with a cruise trip to Queensland. Always setting goals, chasing dreams, being a role model to many of us, Beth Horton, thank you for being who you were.

#### **BJ'S PJ'S**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I'm excited to congratulate local business owner, Belinda Jane Keehn, whose small business BJ's PJ's from Woy Woy has been selected as a finalist in the Australian Small Business Champion Awards! At her core, Belinda is passionate about educating and promoting ethical and sustainable businesses that offer natural organic fibres. Her mission goes beyond just selling products; it's about making a positive impact on the world. We each have the power to make a difference, especially through our fashion choices. Fast fashion is one of the largest polluters and contributors to carbon emissions, and we all have the power to change this. By purchasing wisely, as well as being mindful of where our clothes come from and where they end up, we too can support brands that prioritise sustainability and ethical practices. Small businesses like BJ's PJ's within Australia keep jobs domestic, and improve not only our economy, but our standard of living and livelihood too. Thank you once again to Belinda and her fantastic business, for making a difference within our community. Good luck and I hope you win.

#### **NG CENTRAL SCHOOL**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—As a former teacher, I am both proud and honoured to acknowledge NG Central School (NG) for their outstanding achievements. With a vision to empower students to make their own choices, nurture their talents, and tread their own path, NG's approach to support the students from Year 9 - Year 12 are progressive and inclusive. As a result, the students can carry those lessons with them for life. NG is equipped with a knowledgeable and passionate team that provides the toolset to help students from diverse backgrounds to overcome their challenges and reach their maximum potentials. One of the most significant outcomes from NG's educational strategy is their ability to reignite the love of learning of students and transform our young people's future after graduation. NG is a perfect example of innovation in education which I treasure. Moreover, this beautiful school showcases the Australian's ethos at its finest. I am grateful for the wonderful work of NG Central to shape a better future for our younger generations.

### OUR COMMUNITY PLACE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—This week is Neighbourhood Centre Week. From Monday 13 to Sunday 19 May, we mark this annual nationwide event to celebrate the role of the more one thousands 1,000 neighbourhood and community centres across Australia. This year's theme is 'Stronger Together', and today I want to recognise the extraordinary work of Windale's Our Community Place in the Charlestown electorate because their work is helping to achieve exactly that. Organisations like Our Community Place are at the heart of local communities, bringing together people from all walks of life to connect, learn and play. Under the leadership of manager Lydia Manusiu, with the support of senior program worker Alex Richardson and program support worker Teagan Pattison, Our Community Place has delivered a diverse range of activities over the years. With programs such as sustainable gardening, home maintenance, painting and drawing classes, drama classes for children, exercise for seniors, advocacy and online hub services, Our Community Place has had such an extraordinary impact in the Charlestown electorate community and beyond. My thanks to the staff and board of Our Community Place for all the extraordinary work they do.

### KOTARA HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I love to see local creativity, particularly from young people, and Kotara High School has delivered in spades. On Saturday 11 May, the school completed a three-night, four-engagement run of a jukebox musical called Popstars: The 90's Musical. Featuring a cast of seventy students and some of the biggest hits of the 1990s, from NSYNC's 'Bye Bye Bye' to Britney Spear's 'Hit Me Baby One More Time', this was Kotara High's first musical production in a decade—and was by all accounts a stunning success. The very talented young performers spent two terms rehearsing, nailing the lyrics, choreography and lines. The show's producer, who moonlights as Kotara High's head teacher of arts, Jason Foy, told local media he was impressed by the students' hard work and dedication. It is great to see a Charlestown electorate high school give local students a semi-professional theatre experience, and put on a show the whole community can enjoy. My thanks to Mr Foy, to all the students involved, and the school staff and parents who supported this endeavour. Great work!

### THE PLACE CHARLESTOWN

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—This week is Neighbourhood Centre Week. From Monday 13 to Sunday 19 May, we mark this annual nationwide event to celebrate the role of the more one thousands 1,000 neighbourhood and community centres across Australia. This year's theme is 'Stronger Together', and today I want to recognise one of the great assets of the Charlestown community, bringing us together and making our community stronger: The Place Charlestown. Organisations like The Place are at the heart of the Charlestown electorate community, and I can personally attest to the importance of the Place's facilities and programs for so many Charlestown locals. Ongoing programs include exercise classes for adults, yoga classes, dance classes, aerobics classes, support groups, and the adorable "Little Kickers" soccer program for kids aged from two and a half to five. The Place also offers great facilities for one-off events, courses and more. My thanks to the staff of The Place for all the extraordinary work they do.

### BEVERLY HILLS GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to recognise and congratulate a group of Year 10 students at Beverly Hills Girls High School on their recent success at the National Museum of Australia's school video challenge. The National Museum invited school students to tell stories about some of Australia's most historically significant events. The Beverly Hills Girls High School team centred its video on the abolishment of the White Australia Policy. Sarah Ghunaim, a member of the team, explained that "as someone whose parents are both refugees, we are appreciative of the abolishment of this policy – we would not be here in Australia if it had not happened, it truly opened the doors to multiculturalism in this country." I want to individually congratulate each member of this wonderful team – Fatima Azahraa Al Moudden, Sarika Tihim, Hebak Abdullahi, Maheya Hasan, Sarah Ghunaim and their teacher Helen Papadimatos. It is truly inspiring to see such a young group of students promote multiculturalism and initiate important conversations about the history of Australia. I have no doubt that these girls will make a positive impact on our community in the future and wish them all the best for their future endeavours.

### BEXLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and activism of the Bexley Chamber of Commerce over the past 100 years. I thank President Jeff Tullock, MC

Yasmina Kovacevic and the Chamber committee for inviting me as a guest of honour at their centenary celebrations. Turning 100 is a tremendous milestone and it's hard to do justice to the various achievements of the Chamber over the last century. One of the Chamber's most remarkable accomplishments was its advocacy work regarding the building of the M5 East which after opening in 2001 dramatically reduced local traffic congestion. Beyond this, the Chamber successfully lobbied for the public domain over the last 30 years, established a community bank in 2004 as well as hosting countless ad hoc events aimed at supporting cohesion amongst our community. Small businesses not only define a Town Centre but contribute significantly to our State's economy. At the centenary I met many old business owners who continued to trade, through good times and bad, some for over 40 years. I want to congratulate the Bexley Chamber for their selfless efforts in promoting the great suburb of Bexley as a viable business hub.

#### **SENIOR CONSTABLE RAY KERRIDGE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to congratulate Senior Constable Ray Kerridge on a wonderful career with the St George Local Area Command and thank him for his service and dedication to the community of St George. Senior Constable Kerridge joined the NSW Police Force on May 2, 2003, before being stationed at Kogarah. Throughout his career, Ray has had the opportunity to work in various roles, including general duties, anti-theft and served as a specialised crime prevention officer since 2009. After 20 years of service with the St George Local Area Command, Mr Kerridge is now retiring. Throughout his distinguished career, Ray has had many achievements and accomplishments. Some of his career highlights include managing the Cronulla Riots, the Northern River floods and being actively involved in COVID-19 duties. I want to sincerely thank Mr Kerridge for greatly contributing to the safety and well-being of our local community. On behalf of the St George community, I wish Mr Kerridge a wonderful retirement and express my deepest appreciation for his dedication to keeping us safe over the last 20 years.

#### **CRONULLA ELECTORATE JPS 50 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the service of five constituents of the Cronulla electorate who have been Justices of the Peace for half a century. Michael Evans and Angelo Nicholson of Caringbah South, Cronulla's Stephen Pratt and Barry Vandenberg and Dr Alan Watson AM of Gympie Bay have all been providing JP services for 50 years. 'JPs' are volunteers appointed by the Governor and they play an important role in the community by witnessing statutory declarations or affidavits and certifying copies of original documents. Their help is always appreciated when we need documents witnessed for things such as passport applications, starting a new job, for banking, superannuation, or personal legal affairs. Volunteer service is vital to making our community what it is, and I commend Michael, Angelo, Stephen, Barry, and Alan for their dedication to serving New South Wales as Justices of the Peace for so many years.

#### **TWEED HEADS CROQUET CLUB**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Community is an integral element of any village, town or city and there can be no better example of community than the Tweed Heads Croquet Club. I had the recent pleasure of attending the Club's 75th birthday in its current location and my take away from participating in this delightful event was the sense of community this Club provides to its members and neighbouring clubs. Led by President Penny Guthrie, the Tweed Heads Croquet Club provides not only the physical benefits of playing croquet in the varying forms of Golf and Ricochet croquet, but also incredibly important social and mental health connections and support. It truly is a wonderful, welcoming Club which is always looking to grow its membership. Open to players young and old, The Club will soon celebrate 100 years since its formation in its original location. The Tweed Heads Croquet Club is a lovely snippet of all things good in the Tweed.

#### **WALK FOR WOMEN**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I was proud to walk and take a stand with hundreds of Central Coast locals recently at Gosford to say no to the insidious crimes of domestic violence and coercive control. More than 400 people marched along the Gosford waterfront on Sunday, May 5 taking part in the Walk for Women, calling for government action to tackle the escalating incidence of violence against women. The walk which shared bipartisan support saw men, women and children walk to a rally on grassland near the Eat Street Café. The walk was an act of solidarity against this critical issue. Perpetrators have been put on notice and our community has zero tolerance to these despicable and cowardly crimes. A crisis response is not enough, we must do more to look at medium and long-term solutions. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the officers from the Brisbane Water Area command who were also in attendance. Responding to domestic and family violence incidents is a frequent and significant component of a police officer's work. Your professionalism and care in circumstances which are often highly emotionally charged, and unpredictable for first responders, victims and their families is remarkable.



### EMPIRE BAY TENNIS CLUB CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Empire Bay Tennis Club on an incredible milestone - 100 years of serving up joy on the courts! Despite the rain trying to dampen spirits, nothing could stop the recent celebration of a century of tennis at the Club. Stepping back in time with vintage clothing and rackets was a charming nod to the Club's rich history, reminding us that while equipment may have evolved, the essence of the game remains timeless. From the inaugural court to today's bustling matches, Empire Bay is a hub of sportsmanship and community engagement. Thank you for inviting me to join in the celebrations, it was a great community event. Here's to another 100 years of passion, camaraderie, and unforgettable moments on the courts of Empire Bay Tennis Club.

### FIRE AND RESCUE OPEN DAY

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I wish to take this opportunity to commend the fantastic work of so many firefighters across the Central Coast. Our local RFS volunteers, as well as Fire and Rescue firefighters, do an amazing job in protecting properties and lives in our community. Last weekend I had the pleasure of meeting many Fire and Rescue New South Wales personnel, who are stationed at Terrigal and Saratoga stations in my electorate as part of their annual open day. These open days are a fantastic opportunity for the community to meet our local fireies and get up close with the equipment and learn more about fire safety and being prepared in cases of emergency. The teams were on hand to educate hundreds of children and families, creating a fun and informative day for all. These open days are also an important reminder that in addition to putting out fires, our Fire and Rescue personnel also perform rescues at car accidents and respond to hazardous materials. I pay tribute to our local fireies for their service and thank them for working so hard to preserve properties and lives in our local community and across New South Wales.

### JUNEE TWINS FOREVER ETCHED IN HISTORY

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Our community is woven with the stories of many, including the 93-year-old twins, Peter and Ron Pickles, who have been a part of Junee's fabric since their childhood. Peter is a proud resident of Junee and the owner of our local Hardware store, his brother Ron moved out of the area now resides in Sydney. Recently a joyous occasion unfolded as both Peter and Ron, along with their extended family, including grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and members of the community, gathered in the grounds of Memorial Park in Junee. The occasion was to mark the story of the majestic Oak Tree, which they had planted over 80 years ago. This Oak tree began its journey in 1943, when Peter and Ron were asked by the Mayor at the time, Reverend Hobbin, if they would like to donate a tree from their back yard to the newly built Memorial Park in Junee. This majestic tree now stands at 20 meters high and 20 meters wide for locals and visitors to enjoy. Their story, a tale of resilience, generosity, and love for their community, serves as an inspiration to us all.

### ALL EYES ON THE SKY

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The Temora community was recently treated to a spectacular, free airshow thanks to the largest Formation Aerobatic Display Team in the Southern Hemisphere, The Freedom Formation Display Team. Renowned for their speed, manoeuvrability, and sleek design, the Team, consisting of 13 pilots flying 12 Van RVs and 1 Yak 55, displayed 15-minute routines flying in tight formations. Launching from the tarmac at the iconic Temora Aviation Museum, the pilots led by Team Coach, Jeremy Miller, showcased their precision and skill, demonstrating a series of awe-inspiring aerobatic manoeuvres that kept the audience captivated. This training is essential for the performance and safety of the Team as they look forward to competing in the upcoming Pacific Air Show on the Gold Coast. Temora has proven to be the perfect place for the team to practice their aviation skills and the team look forward to returning in June with a training camp to be held in July. The Team's precision and hard work, evident in their regular practice sessions, is inspiring and commendable.

### HEADER DRIVERS CONVENTION

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—On Friday, February 3 2024, the annual Narrandera Header Drivers Convention took place at the Narrandera Racecourse to raise much-needed funds for CanAssist Narrandera. The night consisted of farmers coming together to enjoy telling stories, drinking cold drinks, and eating good food. There were also various awards on the evening including the driver who was bogged the most in the past 12 months. The Convention brings the community together after the previous harvest season and the ahead of the upcoming sowing season. After two decades of operation, the Convention this year achieved a remarkable milestone, raising a staggering \$28,000 for Narrandera CanAssist. This amount surpassed last year's total of \$25,322 and stands as a testament to the community's unwavering support and commitment. Congratulations are extended to joint organisers Neil Seidel and Matt Anderson and their dedicated committee for orchestrating this successful event. A special thanks also to the sponsors of the evening who help make the event successful year after year. I hope the current sowing season is a success for all of our famers in the area.

**UNENTITLED AT 44**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the house "Unentitled at 44", a recent exhibition of photographs presented by David Watson and Denise Corrigan at their studio 44 in Rozelle. I was pleased to join David and Denise for their opening night and was impressed with the warmth of their gallery space, as well as the quality of their art. It was a wonderful event and a reminder how our community's strength of appreciation for art and culture draws people together across the inner west. Focusing on extreme weather events, land clearing and food security, and concern for country in the aftermath of the referendum, "Unentitled at 44" gives us much to think about and discuss. Congratulations and thank you to David and Denise for hosting this wonderful exhibition in our community.

**EAST HILLS RAPTOR BASEBALL CLUB**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—Congratulations to Isabella Kozanic, Nevaeh Fungelei, Isla Metuisela and Adele Acosta, four East Hills Raptor Baseball Club players who were selected to play in the inaugural NSW All Girls National Championship in Lismore last week and over the weekend. What a brilliant achievement for these young girls competing in the first national competition dedicated to Little League Girls. Representing NSW on the National stage at such a young age is an inspiration for all young girls in sports, and especially those playing baseball. The girls also competed in the Baseball NSW State Championships recently in the first all-girl Cronulla-Sutherland Junior Baseball Association Div 2 Little League Minors team. It is fantastic to see the growth of women and girls' sports in NSW and around Australia and I'm proud that these young local girls are a part of that. Congratulations to these trailblazers for making the team and for their participation in this first-of-its-kind event. I wish you all the best in your future sporting endeavours and pursuits in life.

**ASPECT HUNTER SCHOOL EXPO**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Deciding what to do when you leave high school is a daunting prospect for many teenagers. For those students with an Autism diagnosis, it can be even more so. Congratulations to the Aspect Hunter School who recently held a Preparing for Post School Life Expo, as part of their Work Education and Work Skills program. The event was funded by the Greater Charitable Foundation. The overarching goal of the program was to improve employment outcomes and opportunities for young autistic people upon transition to post-school employment or study. This year's expo featured 22 stalls which provided attendees with access to a wide range of services and organisations that can assist students, as well as their families and carers, as they move into adulthood. The school has a safe, caring, stable and inclusive environment for students, which is why transitioning to a new vocation can be particularly daunting. The expo enables links for families with key transition services providers. Congratulations to Aspect Hunter School principal Craig McNee and the team on their commitment to supporting students through to the next stage of their lives.

**MAITLAND ROTARY CLUBS GOLF DAY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the Rotary Clubs of Maitland whose combined efforts raised \$27,700 at their 2024 Golf Day. The day saw five Rotary clubs, those from Maitland, East Maitland, Rutherford Telarah, Greenhills Maitland, and Maitland Sunrise and, along with Maitland Rotaract stage their annual event at Maitland Golf Club. I was very proud to be a silver sponsor for this year's event, not quite as proud of our score at the end of the day but a great day was had on the greens. Regardless of the golf results, this year's fundraising focus was to raise money for the Maitland Healthstays Accommodation project. This project will provide economical, safe and accessible accommodation for patients, and their families and carers, who come from outlying rural and regional areas, to Maitland, to receive medical treatments and health services. I also congratulate Trevor Lynch, Chair of the Maitland HealthStays Accommodation Committee, and the whole committee on all their efforts to date. It is heartwarming to see these clubs and their volunteers coming together from across Maitland on the day and I look forward to the event again next year.

**EAST MAITLAND RSL LIFE MEMBERSHIPS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I wish to congratulate four East Maitland RSL NSW Sub-Branch members on their recent tributes. Auxiliary Life membership is an exceptional honour awarded to members with a minimum of 15 years continuous honorary service as an auxiliary member and to those who have also given at least 10 years outstanding service to the branch. Earlier this year Life Membership was awarded to Narelle Sattler and Lorraine Rutherford, I congratulate them both on their deserved recognition. Among the valuable work done by RSL NSW Auxiliaries across the state is the crafting handmade quilts, known as Thank You for Your Service quilts, to recognise the dedication of past and present serving members. These quilts were recently presented to Albert Ditton, Sub-Branch secretary

Judy Gargosky and Sub-Branch President Tony Mulquiney. Congratulations to the members of East Maitland RSL Sub-Branch on these awards, we are thankful for your service.

#### **SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF GREENWAY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to recognise the 70th anniversary of Greenway in Milsons Point. Greenway reached its amazing 70 year milestone in March this year, and I was fortunate enough to attend the celebrations. The event was organised by the wonderful Greenway Tenants Group. It provided a great opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the heritage of the building, and the sense of community it fosters within its walls. A little known fact about Greenway is that in 1954 it was the largest building in the Southern Hemisphere. Today, it is managed by St George Community Housing and is called home by 350 people. Greenway is such an important and recognisable part of the North Shore community. The celebration was enhanced by performances by the Red River Dance Group from Riverwood and the Swing Band from St Aloysius College. I would like to make a special mention of Bryce Gunn, who is the president of the Greenway Tenants Group, for all the time he dedicates to the community. I would like to thank all the members of the Greenway Tenants Group, who always advocate for residents and deliver vital community resources.

#### **FIRE AND RESCUE NSW OPEN DAY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to acknowledge the NSW Fire and Rescue Day that took place last Saturday. It seems that all children love fire trucks, and so do I. I will never miss an opportunity to attend a local Fire and Rescue Day and this year was no different. The day was a huge success, with children, and adults, lining up to meet firefighters from Crows Nest, Mosman and Neutral Bay stations. It is always a fantastic chance for the community to learn about fire safety and smoke alarms, while looking at specialised equipment and hopping in a fire truck. Unfortunately, this year the weather was a little miserable, but it did nothing to dampen the spirits of the day. Our firefighters are vital to our local community, and it was great to be able to show some support, as well as learn some really useful tips from them. Thank you to the crews who were there on the day for making it so fun and informative, and more importantly, thank you for always keeping us safe.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY BUSINESS CHAMBER LAUNCH**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker, the North Sydney Business Chamber is back, and I am thrilled that there is once again a passionate group of people who are determined for local businesses to network and help one another. We joined together with many local businesses at the Greenwood Hotel for the official launch. The North Sydney Business Chamber is run by a volunteer committee whose aim is to build a chamber focussed on the local business community in North Sydney. The committee fosters a supportive and inclusive culture, creating a vibrant and open community. It is such a fantastic addition to the North Shore. Once known as the North Sydney Chamber of Commerce, the new and improved North Sydney Business Chamber aims to host networking events that will help local businesses grow and flourish. I'd like to say a special thank you to President Yvonne Collier, and Vice-President Dr Vivienne Brimelow, as well as the entire volunteer committee, who have put so much time, thought and effort into the launch of the North Sydney Business Community. Thank you for supporting local business in the North Shore.

#### **MULTICULTURAL EID FESTIVAL AND FAIR**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—On 28 April, I joined the Member for Leppington and Councillor Dr Betty Green at the Multicultural Eid Festival & Fair at Fairfield Showground. This event saw those from across South West Sydney's Islamic community come out to celebrate the end of Ramadan. Now in its 39th year, the festival is the first, largest, and longest running multicultural Eid festival in Australia. It was started by the late Dr Qazi Ashfaq Ahmad OAM, a prominent Muslim community leader, in 1985 when he noticed that celebrations of Eid were confined to people's private homes and did not engage a wider cross section of the community. The festival has now evolved into a large and still growing event, and is keenly anticipated by the local community each year. It includes a huge variety of stalls that sell items including clothing, jewellery, perfume, and of course, food. In addition, the stage at the fair is open to people of all background to perform traditional dance, song, and plays. I wish to thank the MEFF Consortium for putting on such a great event, and look forward to attending in the years to come.

#### **CHRISTINE SCANLON**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I join so many across in All Saints Liverpool community in mourning the loss of Mrs Christine Scanlon, former Principal of All Saints Catholic Primary School. Mrs Scanlon served as Principal between 2013 and 2021, a significant period of time in a career spanning over 50 years. Before her time at All Saints, Mrs Scanlon served a number of Catholic schools in Mt Pritchard, Cabramatta, Prestons, and Miranda. In her final years as an educator, Mrs Scanlon mentored newer Principals in

neighbouring schools. This is an example of her selflessness, consideration of other educators and support for the future of teaching in south-west Sydney. Christine Scanlon is widely recognised by staff, students, families, and the wider community at All Saints as a giant of Catholic Education. Her work ethic, care and concern for the Liverpool community is unparalleled. My thoughts are with the All Saints community, past and present, as they mourn Mrs Scanlon, and I especially extend my sympathies to her husband, children, and grandchildren as they navigate this difficult period.

#### **JUDITH ARKLEY**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I have the pleasure of sharing with the House the important contribution of a long time resident of Cartwright, Judith Arkley. Judy Arkley has been an active member of our community for many years. She was previously the Secretary of the Community 2168 Action Group, which advocated for ongoing action on local issues in the 2168 catchment area throughout the course of the Community 2168 project. I note her personal commitment and care for local residents, having worked for years to uplift quality of life and service availability for residents through her advocacy with Liverpool City Council and other stakeholders. After hearing her speak at a public forum, I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Judy. We discussed the lack of youth activities and support for young people with Autism in the 2168 area, and how to better engage with local services in order to ensure young people are engaged in meaningful and constructive activities. As a result of our discussion, I am pleased that Judy will be part of an upcoming initiative to engage local stakeholders to make a positive difference in the 2168. I look forward to working with Judy further.

#### **VALE ARA VARTOUKIAN**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I pay tribute to the life of the late Ara Vartoukian, an immensely talented piano technician, who died at 64 on 14 April 2023. His passing is a great loss to the community of Willoughby of whom he was connected, particularly through his Armenian heritage, which is prominently represented in the proud diaspora within the Willoughby community. Ara grew up in Sydney and learnt to play the piano from an early age, yet he was drawn more to piano tuning, allowing these magnificent instruments to be played by the world's finest pianists. Ara completed the Piano Tuning and Technology Course at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music to launch his piano technician career, taking him to concert halls around Australia and overseas. Ara's expertise became highly esteemed internationally and in 2019 he served as the head technician for the prestigious Tchaikovsky Piano competition. Ara was not only a brilliant piano technician but a devoted family man. His wife remarked that 'he truly embodied the values of kindness, hard work and dedication to his family and craft'. Ara's service to music was recognised with an Order of Australia Award in 2016, he leaves behind a huge legacy.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I had the privilege of being invited to the launch of the North Sydney Business Chamber (NSBC) at the Greenwood Hotel on Wednesday 10 April 2024. The NSBC is run by a dedicated volunteer committee focused on building a business chamber to represent the interests of the North Sydney business community. With North Sydney representing one of Australia's great financial and commercial centres, the reformation of a business chamber is welcome and timely. As well as being a representative and advocate for business, the NSBC will seek to be a vibrant community that is open and friendly, and one that educates and supports businesses to reach their goals. Hitting the ground running, the NSBC already has a calendar full of events including lunches, socials and seminars. I commend the President of the NSBC, Yvonne Collier, Vice President Vivienne Brimelow and all Committee members for their vision and leadership. The success of local businesses matters immensely to our community, and I am so grateful for the NSBC and its vision to nourish the health of the local business community.

#### **VALE PROFESSOR MICHAEL COUSINS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I pay tribute to the life of Professor Michael Cousins who died on the 29 April 2024. Michael was a distinguished anaesthetist who served as Head of Anaesthesia and Pain Management at Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) in my electorate. Born in Sydney, Michael studied medicine at the University of Sydney. After graduating in 1963, he completed his residency at St George Hospital and undertook training in anaesthesia at RNSH. After working in anaesthesia in Canada and the US, Michael returned to Australia where he set up pain medicine centres in Adelaide and RNSH. In 1998, the Pain Management Research Institute at RNSH was recognised as one of only eight 'Centres of Clinical Excellence in Hospital Based Research'. With a career spanning more than fifty years, Michael dedicated himself to helping others through pain management. In so doing, he improved the quality of life for countless patients and his legacy changed the way that Australia and the world manages pain. I met and was impressed by Michael about 15 years ago during my time with Johnson and Johnson. I salute Michael Cousins' remarkable contribution to our country, and to the medical profession worldwide.

### ALL COAST ACADEMY SWIM CLUB

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to All Coast Academy Swim Club from Charmhaven for being a successful applicant in the 2024 Local Sport Grant Program. The swim club received \$5,522 to purchase and install a digital timing system to streamline and enhance the efficiency of our club meets. This timing system will provide a platform to record all race times electronically and automatically to update swimmer's records in the nationwide electronic system, relieving volunteers from having to do this manually. The Program provides up to \$20,000 to individual clubs and associations with \$50,000 available in each New South Wales electorate to increase participation in community sport with 579 projects awarded funding in this year's program. The Local Sport Grant funds help our local clubs and their army of volunteers to provide more opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the benefits of sport and active recreation.

### CENTRAL COAST DRAGON BOAT CLUB INC

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Central Coast Dragon Boat Club from Toukley for being a successful applicant in the 2024 Local Sport Grant Program. The boat club received \$10,000 to purchase a new dragon boat for the club members. The Central Coast Dragon Boat Club started in 2002 and steadily built to become one of the premier racing clubs in Australia with a diverse membership of paddlers including the team "Sea Dragons" and dragons abreast team the "Coastbusters", state representatives and social paddlers. The boat club paddle throughout the year on Budgewoi Lake at Toukley on Sunday mornings and one or two nights a week while also competing. The Program provides up to \$20,000 to individual clubs and associations with \$50,000 available in each New South Wales electorate to increase participation in community sport with 579 projects awarded funding in this year's program. The Local Sport Grant funds help our local clubs and their army of volunteers to provide more opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the benefits of sport and active recreation.

### AVALON WHAT'S ON

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—Members of Parliament will know very well the positive role that local Facebook groups play in connecting local community, businesses and keeping residents informed. The Pittwater community is served by many wonderful Facebook groups and Avalon What's On is no exception. The group has over 18,900 members and its success is a tribute to its wonderful admin and moderator team: Giles Stoddard, Kayla Visser, Lisa Hewitt, Jools Farrell, Louise Hayman and Deon Rowe. As most would be aware, Facebook can be a challenging place where keyboard warriors can run rampant. But, thanks to the selfless dedication of the admin team, Avalon What's On remains a safe space and friendly for our community to stay connected. Recent contributions have seen residents recommend local restaurants, find the best car dent repairer, stay up to date on local news, and share about live music events. The content of Avalon What's On is diverse, helping all members of the group find information and services that they need or find interesting. Facilitating this group takes hours every week. On behalf of the group's members, I thank Giles, Kayla, Lisa, Jools, Louise and Deon for their service to our community.

### KATHY ROBINSON

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I acknowledge Narrabeen resident and local business owner Kathy Robinson who recently completed the 750 kilometre 'Late Fe-mail Postie Bike Ride'. Together with her team, which included her daughter, sister, niece and friend, Kathy raised over \$6,000 for the Wings4Kidz charity, which works to provide air transport for rural youth requiring treatment in metro hospitals. Kathy has been the owner of Just Cuts Warriewood for over 10 years and is well known for her friendly and caring nature. Driven by a sense of adventure, Kathy decided to buy a Postie bike online and join 66 other women to complete the ride. Despite rain on day 3, the team of newer riders completed the trip and Kathy has already committed to doing it again next year. Congratulations, Kathy, on completing the ride, and thank you for all your ongoing generosity and service of the community.

### ENCHANTED BY THE SEA - THE STUDIO

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I congratulate local artist, Jo Bell, on her 'Enchanted by the Sea' exhibition. On display at Careel Bay Marina Avalon, the exhibition is inspired by the ocean and Australia's beautiful and diverse marine life. The exhibition will raise funds for the Organisation for the Research and Rescue of Cetaceans in Australia, an organisation that is focussed on the rescue and conservation of whales, dolphins, seals and dugongs in Aussie waters. In Pittwater, the ocean is central to our way of life, and I am so excited that there is now a local exhibit that both celebrates and supports our beautiful waters. Thank you, Jo, for your amazing

efforts bringing this exhibition together, and thank you to owners of The Studio, Amy and Matthew Young, for your support of local art. I look forward to visiting the exhibition and seeing what all the amazing reviews are talking about for myself!

#### **APRIL 2024 HAWKESBURY FLOOD**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, on 4th, 5th and 6th April 2024, record rain fell in the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment, causing the seventh serious flood in the past four years in Hawkesbury impacting turf growers, other primary producers and those living closest to the river. Once again, our community stepped up and helped each other with the support of NSW SES, NSW Police Force, NSW Fire and Rescue, NSW Reconstruction Authority, Transport for NSW, Department of Communities and Justice, Hawkesbury City Council, The Hills Shire Council and many other government agencies. I also recognise the great work of the Australian Red Cross and Anglicare. These organisations, along with a range of non-government organisations provided invaluable support at evacuation centres in Hawkesbury. Their teams of mainly volunteers provided psychological first aid, managed registration and greeted evacuees. Thank-you to every organisation that responded and the wonderful community helpers who supported Hawkesbury through another flood. Thank you Mr Speaker.

#### **OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE NORTH STRATHFIELD**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to congratulate Outback Steakhouse North Strathfield who has been awarded the Most Inclusive Employer Award at the Inner West Local Business Awards. This recognition celebrates their exceptional commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive workplace and business. By embracing diversity and promoting equal opportunities, Outback Steakhouse has created a workplace culture where team members from all backgrounds feel valued and supported. Outback Steakhouse North Strathfield is to be commended on this award which recognises their dedication and commitment to inclusivity. I want to sincerely congratulate the hardworking management and staff of Outback Steakhouse North Strathfield on this outstanding achievement. The collective efforts of the entire team serves as a shining example for other businesses to follow. I thank Outback Steakhouse North Strathfield for providing a wonderful hospitality business for our community to enjoy.

#### **2024 HAWKESBURY SHOW**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, the 2024 Hawkesbury Show was held on the 19th, 20th and 21st April 2024. The Show has been running since 1845. The event was blessed with beautiful, Hawkesbury autumn weather. I was pleased to see the large crowds and full event program. Hawkesbury has had a tough few years and it is was important to see everyone come out and enjoy each other's company and support local businesses. I congratulate the Hawkesbury District Agricultural Association President, Lynette Hudson, Deputy President Phillip Close, the other members of the Committee members, Section leaders, exhibitors, volunteers, competitors, Hawkesbury City Council, Clubs and everyone who pitched in to make the 2024 Show the best yet with over 60,000 people attending. I want to acknowledge the 2025 Sydney Royal AgShows NSW Hawkesbury Young Woman winner, Laura McKillop and 2025 Hawkesbury Rural Ambassador, Andrew Scarsbrook. I can't wait for the 2025 Hawkesbury Show. Thank you Mr Speaker.

#### **GEORGES RIVER FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the Georges River Football Club for receiving a funding boost of \$8,149.2 from the 2023/24 Local Sport Grant Program. By way of background, the club which is affectionately known to locals as the Tigers, first entered three teams into the Sutherland Shire competition in 1961. Today, the Tigers have over 360 participants competing in all levels of the competition from their home at Oyster Bay Oval. Through this funding, the Tigers will host a Female Football Gala as well as training nights to upskill female players, coaches and volunteers and encourage increased female participation, particularly at the coaching level. None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of the Tigers Executive Committee. I recognise President Aaron Jenkins, Vice President Dan Johnstone, Secretary Debbie Kearns and Treasurer Laure Croxson for their ongoing efforts. I thank the members of the Georges River 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.

#### **MIRANDA MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—Whilst the flight has certainly now laded, I acknowledge the Miranda Musical Theatre Company for the incredible production of 'Catch Me If You Can' which was showing at the new Pavilion Performing Arts Centre in Sutherland between 10 and 14 April. Formerly called the Miranda Musical Society, the Miranda Musical Theatre Company ("the Company") has been entertaining our community since 1967. Anyone familiar with their productions can attest to the quality of the performances and the immense talent

of the performers and individuals involved, a feat even more impressive given the not-for-profit nature of the Company. Catch Me If You Can was simply brilliant. Full of light, life and colour, this tale of redemption highlighted the sheer talent in the Company, the crew and volunteers who boast a formidable team. I acknowledge performers Daniel Simpson, Sam Anderson, Anthony Gibara, Roslyn Howell, Gianni-Mia Attrill-Dowling, Christopher Moletti, and Leanne Trumper alongside the Executive Committee Members Tim Dennis, Meredith Simpson, Mark Gardner, Gabby Robinson, Emile Lawson, Lauren Dennis, Karen Moseley and Murray Baker. I commend the Miranda Musical Theatre Company on the success of Catch Me If You Can and look forward to seeing The Full Monty in September.

#### **LIGHTHOUSE CHILDCARE HOMEBUSH WEST**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to sincerely congratulate the dedicated management and team of Lighthouse Childcare Homebush West on their win in the Early Childhood Centre category at the Inner West Local Business Awards. This well-deserved recognition celebrates their tireless efforts in providing a nurturing, inclusive, and supportive environment for young children to grow and thrive. Lighthouse Childcare's commitment to fostering a sense of community, creativity, and curiosity for little learners has made them a shining example of excellence in early childhood education. Their passionate educators and welcoming atmosphere has earned the trust and appreciation of families across our community. This award is a testament to their dedication to shaping the minds and hearts of future generations. This is the second location for Lighthouse Childcare and it is wonderful to see such widespread community support for their service. Once again, I congratulate Lighthouse Childcare on this outstanding achievement and wish them all the very best.

#### **LOLLIES 'N' STUFF - WINDSOR**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I had the sweet pleasure of attending the 10 year anniversary of the very popular Windsor business, Lollies 'N' Stuff on the 5th May 2024. This shop is a favourite of locals and visitors to Hawkesbury as they call into Windsor. Darren and Lucille Pead and their daughters, Erica and Emily operate this and two other businesses in Windsor. Their commitment to the region is commendable. The Lollies 'N' Stuff store has over 1000 varieties of sweets from around the world. They also stock gifts, toys, coffee mugs, games and puzzles. It was an honour to support a Hawkesbury business employing locals many of whom have gone onto to growing their careers. Lollies N Stuff may be Windsor located, but their on-line service caters to customers across the country. As Darren Pead said "he is committed to the economic health of the Hawkesbury." The Pead family are valued members of the community and contribute to the renewal of Windsor through planning consultations with Hawkesbury City Council. I wish the Pead family and Lollies 'N' Stuff another decade of success. Thank you Mr Speaker.

#### **MANLY WHEEL EAGLES**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and congratulate the dominant Manly Wheel Eagles wheelchair basketball team who have just received the exciting news that they will be joining the nation's best in the Australian National Wheelchair Basketball League. This wonderful announcement is the culmination of the Manly Wheel Eagles' continued domestic success in the State Waratah League, which includes a 2023 grand final placement in what was just their first year of competition. Having only started their journey in 2022, the Manly Wheel Eagles now compete at a regional, state, and national level, fielding both male and female athletes and even boasting local Paralympians among their ranks. I wish the mighty Manly Wheel Eagles all the best for their debut season in the Australian National Wheelchair Basketball League and have no doubt that their success will continue.

#### **SHAUN CONNOR AND JIM COLLEY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, sport has always been a core tenant of life in Manly and indeed on the Northern Beaches. The history of our sporting clubs and facilities and the storied achievements of the generational athletes they have helped produce are a testament to this. With the Paris 2024 Olympic Games now just around the corner, the Manly community has continued to live up to its proud track-record of producing Olympic talent. I am pleased to advise that sailing duo and childhood friends Shaun Connor and Jim Colley, who first met at a Manly Juniors Training Camp on the Northern Beaches, have both been selected to compete at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games representing Australia in the 49er Men's Skiff class. Shaun and Jim's selection in well-deserved and comes after several years of strong results across the globe, including an impressive fifth-place finish at the Euros championship in 2022. I wish Shaun and Jim every success as they brave the waters in Marseille and know that all of Manly and the Northern Beaches will be cheering them on in their hunt for Olympic gold.

#### **WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to pay tribute to the outstanding work of Women and Children First, a not-for-profit, community-based service for women and vulnerable families, primarily in the

North Sydney and Northern Beaches area, which includes my electorate of Manly. The organisation provides a range of services with a focus on women and children escaping domestic and family violence however, it also works with dads and couples. The vision is to ensure women, children and families are safe, secure, connected and provided with the opportunity and the environment to thrive. It seeks to equip everyone to step up and not stand by, providing the tools to build healthy, respectful relationships. The community in general and I believe many individuals are appreciative of the important work Women and Children First undertake. On behalf of the community, I thank them and wish them every success for the future.

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