

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 7 August 2024

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Bills

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2024

First Reading

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

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

[Notices of motions given.]

Members

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The SPEAKER (10:18): Before calling the member for Northern Tablelands, I extend a warm welcome to his guests. The member has jumped a little too soon; he will resume his seat. That is lesson number one. I welcome Cath Moylan on this auspicious occasion. I am sure she would have much better control in similar circumstances. Welcome to the children, Lucy, Rory and Milly Moylan. I welcome the member's parents, Deidre and Paul, and siblings, Paddy and Felicity. There might be a giveaway in those names. I also welcome the member's uncle, Captain Bob Dagworth—I like the beard!

Welcome to the mayors and deputy mayors of the seven councils in the Northern Tablelands electorate. We love having local government so well represented here, particularly those from the regions. I also acknowledge and welcome the immediate former member, Adam Marshall, and Chris Moran, the Vice-Chancellor and CEO of the University of New England. Welcome to those whom I have not recognised. If it is your first time here, I hope you are enjoying your experience in Australia's first Parliament. I also acknowledge a number of members of the other House. I will not name them all, but they are obviously stalwart supporters and members of the National Party. I thank them for being here. I call the member for Northern Tablelands.

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (10:20): To stand in this place as the member for Northern Tablelands I think will always be the greatest privilege of my life. To be able to stand up in Parliament and fearlessly represent the people of my electorate is an honour and incredibly humbling. Around 250 metres from where we are today is the Hyde Park Barracks. As we all know, those barracks were originally accommodation for male convicts who were transported to the fledgling colony of New South Wales for all manner of offences. In 1833 a young, cranky 24-year-old Irish rebel by the name of James Moylan spent his first night in the colony in a hammock in the barracks. He would have been hot. He would have been uncomfortable. He would have been short, because he was a Moylan. I imagine that he certainly would not have thought as he lay there that, in less than 200 years, his third great-grandson would be standing just next door as an elected member of State Parliament making his inaugural speech.

Mum and Dad have got the best seats in the House, in the Speaker's gallery. They are fundamental to my being here today. Mum and Dad are a quiet, unassuming, hardworking couple who gave me, my brother, Paddy, and my sister, Felicity, the very best start in life. Like most country kids, my memories of childhood all revolve around the family farm. Like all farm kids, I grew up driving utes, operating machinery, farming paddocks, shooting pigs and working cattle. It was a great way to grow up. My first awareness of politics occurred while sitting on a tractor in December 1991. I was with Dad, listening to the ABC coverage of Paul Keating's successful challenge on Bob Hawke. I still remember watching Dad. On the one hand he looked quite happy that Hawkie was gone, yet on the other hand he looked terrified that Paul Keating was about to become Prime Minister. I asked Dad how he voted. He said, "I vote for the Country Party." I asked him why and he said, "Because they're the only ones that look after us in the bush." I have remembered that to this day.

Mum is the one of the hardest working people I have ever met. I like to think and hope that in some way I have inherited some of her grit and determination. Mum was a registered nurse and her work ethic is consistent with all nurses, particularly those in the bush. I have said it on a number of occasions in the last few weeks, but our nurses really are the backbone of our healthcare system in the regions. Personally, I think it is time that we started paying them properly. Growing up, I was also incredibly fortunate to have an older brother, Paddy, who is in the gallery today, to look up to—because he is somehow a lot taller than me—and a younger and much smarter sister, Felicity, to be constantly in awe of. I thank you guys for coming today. Mum, Dad, Paddy and Flea, it is undoubtedly the case that without growing up with you and our background, I would not be here today.

I grew up on a farm to the west of Gunnedah. Gunnedah—or "Funnedah", as locals like to call it—is a cracking town with a rich political pedigree. My colleague the Hon. Sarah Mitchell is a Gunnedah girl. Former Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson is a Gunnedah boy. The new Nats candidate for the seat of Parkes, Jamie Chaffey, is a Gunnedah boy. Of course, the former member for Northern Tablelands Adam Marshall is yet another Gunnedah boy. I will talk about Adam later. At the age of 12 I packed up a brand-new suitcase that Mum had bought from Treloars of Tamworth. Where is Kev?

Mr Kevin Anderson: Right here, buddy. I'm listening.

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN: I followed the family tradition of becoming a boarder at St Joseph's at Hunters Hill. Joeys is a school with a deep history and has educated many members of my family. I made lifelong friends at school; I am pleased to see a few Joe boys in the gallery today. Thank you for coming. Jack Freeman sends his apologies. He does not like leaving the Narrabri shire. He also said that he would prefer to change the oil in his spray rig, which is fair enough. Joeys taught me the value of hard work and never giving up, lessons I hope will stand me in good stead in this place. I was fortunate to be taught and influenced by some incredible people at school, including John Reading, Brother Ernest, Magdy Habib, Mark Halsted, Mark Williams, and my year 12 history teacher, Michael Burns.

After I finished year 12 at Joeys I was keen to get out of Sydney and back to the country. I followed my brother and enrolled in a combined law degree at the University of New England. Today I proudly wear a UNE tie in the Chamber. During my five years at UNE I was a St Albert's College kid. Like so many people across my electorate of Northern Tablelands, I say that I am ex-Albies with a lot of pride. Albies was a great way to learn. What better way to undertake your tertiary education than living with some of the best people you will ever meet. Those have been lifelong connections, to the extent that everyone who featured in my campaign material was ex-Albies. Some of my memories from Albies are a little hazy. For that, I blame in particular Messrs Brennan, Martin and Stephen. I am pleased to see Tom Brennan in the gallery with that dashing moustache. Thank you for coming.

My five years at university were by far some of the best of my life. The University of New England is a world-class organisation that for over 70 years has provided a tertiary education to kids from right across the world. More importantly, in my opinion, it has provided a tertiary education to kids from the regions who otherwise would not be able to afford to go to uni. I am honoured that Professor Chris Moran, Vice-Chancellor and CEO of UNE, is in the gallery today. Thank you so much for coming, Chris. I look forward to working with you, doing whatever I can from this place to help UNE in the future.

Miraculously, by 2003 I had finished my law degree. I packed up my Armidale life and moved to Moree. I had spent a lot of time in Moree over the holidays and knew there was a lot of opportunity out there. Mark Houlihan and Basil Downes from Webb and Boland took a chance on me and I landed a litigation job as a junior solicitor. I was incredibly fortunate to get a job at Webb and Boland. It is a stand-out amongst regional firms. When you tell people that you are a solicitor from Moree they automatically think you do criminal law, but we actually did not do much criminal law at all. My old firm has a client base that would be the envy of most city firms. The size of the work that we did was absolutely fantastic, as were the people I did that work with. I will miss them all.

I spent 21 years at Webb and Boland, during which time I worked with and against some incredibly gifted and honest lawyers. At times, though, the work was tough, particularly between 2017 and 2022, when there appeared to be what is best described as a legal war of attrition against our farmers in the north of the State. During those times the work was awful. As a solicitor in the bush, your clients become your friends. You feel the lows and celebrate the wins with them. To all my clients, especially those with whom I went through the trenches in the Land and Environment Court, thank you for mostly taking my advice. Thank you for not giving voluntary interviews. I hope you realise how many sleepless nights you gave me during those tough years.

Ultimately, though, it was those tough years that steered me towards politics. I saw firsthand how the laws that are made in this place can have fantastic results for country people but can also have devastating results. I look forward to doing what I can in this place for the short time that I will be here to look after those of us in the

regions. To everyone I have worked with over the years at Webb and Boland, thank you. To Mark Houlahan and Basil Downes, thank you for taking a chance on an untested graduate and thank you for giving me a job. I see some very decent lawyers sitting in the gallery today. I have been fortunate to meet and learn a lot from the likes of Matthew Puleo, David Carroll, Christopher Taylor, Cliff Ireland, Nick Kirby and Callan O'Neill. Thank you for coming.

In 2005, chance played her biggest card on me when the mighty Bulls first XI, for which I was the opening batsman, was rolled for about 150 runs less than what we were chasing. I scored a very impressive duck. As I had the afternoon to spare, I jumped in a car with a few old Albies mates and we headed west to a fundraiser for Teddy Horsbrough at a little place called Carinda, west of Walgett. At that fundraiser I met a Bingara girl by the name of Catherine Young, and we were married roughly two years later. Cath, you know what you mean to me. You are the kindest, most supportive and funniest person that I have ever met, and you are so patient with this new job. Thank you for everything.

To our kids, Lucy, Rory and Milly, I know you're all very excited to be here and have a day off school. Hopefully one day you will appreciate the significance of this. I will just go off script for a minute. On my election night when we won the by-election, Andrew Fraser came up to me and he said, "Right, Brendan, get Cath and the kids and we'll do your entrance." To which Lucy said to me and to Andrew Fraser, "Why bother? It's only State Parliament. It's not Federal. No-one cares." To which Andrew Fraser responded, of course, "Rah, rah, rah, rah, rah." To Catherine's family, the Young family of Bingara, thank you for all of the help that you have given Catherine and I over the years for our little family.

I have come to this place as a by-election baby, as they say, and I am here today because of the resignation of the former member Adam Marshall. I am proud to call Adam a mate. He has set the benchmark in this place for what it means to be an effective, hardworking local member. Adam has also set the benchmark for how to transition a seat. My seat has never been transitioned from party to party ever before. Adam was a successful local member because he always put the people of the electorate first; the politics came second, and that is the approach that I have already adopted. The people of our electorate expect and deserve an active, hardworking and accessible local member, and that is what I will be. Adam, thank you for setting the benchmark for the rest of us to aspire to. I value your friendship. I respect your guidance and wisdom. Thank you for everything that you did during my campaign to get me here today.

Many in this place will know that a by-election is tough. There is only a very brief window. As a candidate you have to be well supported and you have to work hard. The support that I had during my by-election was incredible. I see so many Nats members sitting in the gallery today. Our Nats members in those god-awful canary yellow shirts braved the cold throughout the campaign, and I cannot thank you all enough. To our State electorate council chair, Janetta Matchett, who is here, thank you for all of your hard work and your friendship over the years. I thank the Moree branch executive, former Australian cricketer Peter Taylor, Geoff Manchee, Peter Gall and Brad Cogan. I am particularly pleased that Peter Taylor is here today. PT, my brother and I grew up in the backyard pretending to try and get your bowling action, but we could never quite master it. Thank you for all of your help over the years and for your friendship.

In my opinion, the best decision that was made throughout the by-election was when Tory Mencshelyi decided that she would assist my campaign and run it. Tory is a truly brilliant campaigner but, more importantly, she is a thoroughly decent human being. Tory, thank you for everything that you have done for me and thank you for everything you are doing for our great party. I will be forever grateful that I had you in my corner. I value your friendship, and I am really proud to call you a mate. I look forward to watching, and hopefully in some way being involved in, all of the great things that you will do for our wonderful party.

To my Nats colleagues, thank you for the incredibly warm welcome you have all given me coming into this place. For all of your help during the by-election, thank you. As Nats, we all come from diverse backgrounds. We have farmers, physios, teachers, small business owners and even an ABC radio announcer, but our reason for being in this place is the same. At the end of the day, we are here to serve the people of regional, rural and remote New South Wales. Our role is to fight for the bush. We are at our best when we develop effective policy that will improve the lives of the people in our electorates and right across New South Wales. We need to develop good policy and fight hard for those policies to be implemented, and I look forward to helping in that process. Many years ago I joined the Nats because I loved the idea of a party that existed purely to serve the regions. I love the idea of a party that is based not on a political philosophy but rather on geography. Our sole purpose is to serve regional, remote and rural people. I think we do it well. We can always do it better, and I look forward to being part of that process.

Sitting down this morning upstairs at about 4.30 a.m. after I had finished chatting with the cleaner, I got to this point in my speech and I did not know where to go with it. I thought about what I would talk about and what my goals are in this place. At the end of the day, my goals are simple: I want to be a voice for my communities,

I want to always put the interests of my electorate ahead of my own interests, and I want to be a fearless advocate for the people of the Northern Tablelands but also for all of the people in regional New South Wales. Those of us from the Northern Tablelands are a diverse bunch. The issues in Boggabilla are vastly different to the issues in Armidale. It is my job when I come to this place to make sure all of those issues are listened to and fought for. We are a geographically diverse electorate. Our electorate spans from the fertile plains of Boomi, or "Boomtown", as the locals call it, to the gorges of Ebor. We span from the Celtic country of Glen Innes to the cotton fields of Mungindi. In my opinion, the electorate encapsulates the very best of New South Wales.

Our communities expect and demand that I will work hard and achieve results. I am not here for my own personal gain; rather—like most of us here, I think—I am here to improve the lives of the people in my electorate. To the farmer spraying his wheat at Moree this morning, I am here to work for you. To the nurse coming off a 12-hour shift at Armidale Hospital, again, I am here to work for you. I am here to work for everyone in my electorate, whether you voted for me or not. This is my job and this is what I will do. The Northern Tablelands has an amazing community spirit. That spirit is on display today, with every mayor from the seven councils that make up our electorate here today, together with the deputies and the general managers. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for coming down. It means a lot. This speech is not as good as the last one we saw from the member for Northern Tablelands, so I apologise. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to improve the lives of everyone in our communities.

Mark Coulton once said to me that politics is the art of persuasion, and I agree with him. A good National Party member works hard in his or her electorate. Last month, my logbook said I did 7,400 kilometres. I told Adam Marshall that and he said, "Not enough, mate." We work hard as Nats, because we have big electorates, but I think it is also important that while I am in this place I work with the Government, even from opposition, and that's what I plan to do. I am not going to get anywhere in this place throwing mud for the sake of it. I want to achieve results for the communities in my electorate, and I want to go about that task with grim determination but also with grace and respect. At the end of the day, I am a servant of my communities and of the people who sent me to this place. I thank them for the incredible honour and privilege of standing here in the oldest Parliament in Australia. The promise I make to my electorate is simple: I promise to work hard and always do my best. Now it is time to get to work.

Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.

Bills

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 6 August 2024.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (10:40): I pick up from where I left off yesterday in my contribution to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024. The Treasurer has referred to the sham accounting arrangements of the previous agency, Transport Asset Holding Entity [TAHE], that we are reforming with this bill. It is important that we end those arrangements and protect rail maintenance going forward. The Treasurer said:

This Government prefers to spend the public's money fixing the state's essential services, not propping up a budget con that went terribly wrong.

We're determined to bring an end to this saga. The State's reputation for budget honesty was tarnished unnecessarily by the previous government's decision to use TAHE to hide the true cost of operating the railways from the State's accounts.

I welcome the commitments by the Minister for Transport in her second reading speech, in which she said:

With these changes, the Government ensured that TAHE is focused on maximising the safety and reliability of its transport assets. This shift will enable long-term investment in rail assets and the transport network. This bill enables the third and final stage of this reform. It amends the Transport Administration Act to adopt a new model for the management of the State's rail assets. This new model establishes a new entity with clear accountability for rail asset management across New South Wales.

I turn to the detail of the bill. The Sydney Trains review highlighted that the current operating model suffers from complexity and duplication across TAHE, Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains. That complexity translates to unnecessary costs and hinders effective asset management. The bill proposes a solution with the creation of a single, accountable entity—the Transport Asset Manager New South Wales. TAM will be a non-commercial statutory corporation, similar to Sydney Trains and NSW Trains. The transition signifies a shift from a profit-driven model to one focused on long-term strategic asset management across the entire lifecycle of our rail infrastructure. In stark contrast to the accounting trickery of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, the new model has the benefit of clearer accountability, streamlined operations and cost savings. That will allow TAM

to prioritise critical maintenance, invest in future upgrades, and ensure the reliability and efficiency of our rail network for years to come.

The second vital aspect of the bill addresses the growing importance of active transport—walking and cycling. The bill explicitly empowers Transport for NSW to champion active transport and to lead the mode shift towards these sustainable, healthy alternatives. Currently, Transport for NSW functions do not explicitly include active transport. The bill rectifies that to ensure Transport for NSW takes the lead in promoting active transport to encourage more people to walk and cycle. That goes beyond building infrastructure; it allows Transport for NSW to invest in programs and initiatives, like community grants, to support public authorities in enhancing public spaces and creating a more active, transport-friendly environment. It is not just about convenience; it is about a healthier future for our State. An estimated 1.5 billion walking and cycling trips are taken annually in New South Wales, and the Government is committed to doubling that number within 20 years. Active transport initiatives have a far-reaching impact. They reduce congestion, lower emissions, promote public health and revitalise neighbourhoods.

The Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024 presents a critical step towards a more efficient, sustainable and passenger-focused transport system. As this week is Rail Safety Week, it is the perfect opportunity to make these important changes. Each year on 18 January I join many people from my electorate and from far and wide to commemorate the Granville train disaster, which took 84 lives and injured a further 213. It was Australia's worst rail accident and was caused by poor maintenance practices. It happened in the first 12 months of the first Wran Government. Jack Ferguson was both Deputy Premier and my predecessor, as the member for the electorate then named Merrylands. The original inquiry into the accident found that the primary cause of the crash was "the very unsatisfactory condition of the permanent way", being the poor fastening of the track, causing the track to spread and allowing the left front wheel of the locomotive to come off the rail. In other words, the accident was found to have been caused by long-term failures in rail maintenance.

Memories of 18 January 1977 are etched deep in the minds of many in my community, along with the survivors, families of the victims and the first responders. Local heroes from Granville rushed to help, embodying the human spirit's resilience. Each year at the commemoration I reflect on our collective gratitude for the tireless heroes who keep the memory alive, the selfless emergency personnel and the unwavering support of the community. Each year we remember those lost not as nameless victims but as neighbours, families, friends and emergency services workers. The memorial wall in Granville, opposite the bridge and Granville station, stands as a beacon, ensuring their stories live on. The rebuilt bridge symbolises progress, while the memories serve as a reminder of life's fragility and of human strength.

I do not want my community, or any other community in the State, to face another rail disaster. By creating a streamlined asset management entity in TAM and empowering Transport for NSW to champion active transport, the New South Wales Government is laying the foundation for a future where our transport infrastructure supports a healthy, vibrant and connected New South Wales and prioritises safety. The bill is not just about infrastructure. It is about people and fostering a culture of health and wellness by encouraging community interaction and prioritising a sustainable future—not accounting tricks. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (10:46): I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024. As previous speakers have mentioned, the bill amends the Transport Administration Act 1988 to transform the Transport Asset Holding Entity [TAHE] and reinforces Transport for NSW as the lead agency for delivering the Minns Labor Government's active transport aspirations. The bill will convert TAHE from a State owned corporation to a new government agency called the Transport Asset Manager New South Wales, or TAM, replacing TAHE as the owner of the State's rail asset portfolio. The bill is the final step in reform delivered in stages by the Minister for Transport. I commend the Minister, her staff and those in the department who have been part of delivering this reform for their work.

In November 2023 the Minister issued a directive to the board of TAHE to reduce the centrality of commercial imperatives as a guide to its operations. In December of last year, the legislation was amended to focus TAHE on the principal objective to undertake its activities in a way that is safe and reliable. A safe and reliable transport network is a reasonable expectation, and the work of the Minister has been instrumental in ensuring that it is the goal of our government agencies above all else. As we have seen all too often recently, it can be devastating for staff and our community when our public transport network experiences issues and cannot be relied upon, or even worse, when residents are, sadly, injured or killed on the network. Therefore, it is only right that safety and reliability be placed at the heart of the Government's agenda for our public transport network. It is what our community expects of us.

Currently, TAHE's status as a State owned corporation means it is intended to operate with a commercial imperative, much like any other business, and expected to return dividends to its shareholders—in this case, the New South Wales Government. The current functions of TAHE include the holding, management, operation and

maintenance of its transport assets, as well as the establishment, financing, acquisition, construction and development of new transport assets. TAHE also facilitates access to the part of the New South Wales rail network that it owns and is able to acquire and develop land to enable it to carry out its other functions. TAHE's rail-related assets include tracks, tunnels and bridges, stations, rolling stock, signalling systems, and over 300 million square metres of transport-related land holdings.

The Sydney Trains review found that TAHE's capacity to effectively manage its assets is hindered by a complex operating model across TAHE, Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains. That complexity increases costs in what is already a challenging environment. The review panel recommended a new operating model for asset ownership be designed to reduce complexity. This change will ensure that there is a single entity with clear accountability so that a strategic approach can be taken to the management of rail assets throughout their full life cycles. Again, that is what our community expects of government—to ensure accountability within our public institutions and to ensure best bang for the taxpayer buck.

The transition of TAHE from a State owned corporation into a non-commercial statutory corporation delivers on Labor's election commitment to reform TAHE and makes the new body, TAM, similar to other bodies such as Sydney Trains, NSW Trains and Venues NSW. The bill will also make changes to the functions and objectives of Transport for NSW to ensure that it is able to take a leading approach to promoting active transport and improving the activation of public spaces. This will ultimately broaden the remit and function of the agency in line with the Government's priorities.

As it currently stands, Transport for NSW functions do not explicitly include active transport. The bill will rectify that and ensure that Transport for NSW is explicitly and without question the lead agency for active transport projects and the promotion of mode shift to active transport. This Government has made it clear that, where possible, it wants walking and cycling to be the preferred way to make short trips, as well as a viable and safe option for longer trips. To do that, we need to develop and deliver active transport and public space activation programs. Transport for NSW has a proven track record in this regard, having delivered programs such as Safer Cities, the Vibrant Streets Package and Community Improvement Districts.

Expanding Transport for NSW objectives and functions is essential to equipping the agency to develop and implement critical programs, projects, strategies and campaigns that will help realise the Government's active transport and public space activation commitments. Schedule 1.1 to the bill does this by giving Transport for NSW two new objectives. One is to promote active transport and its integration with other modes of transport and the other is to improve the activation of public spaces. That is of great strategic significance because our public transport stations and stops are often highly accessible and accessed spaces. Therefore, it makes sense to shift the responsibility of activating these spaces to the same agency. Evidence from all over the globe suggests that activating these spaces will also have a role in making our public transport network safer, creating a virtual cycle where more community members are encouraged to utilise our public transport network and hopefully reducing our reliance on private transport and the road network, and alleviating the congestion issues across the road network.

That is exactly the kind of public transport policy that many in my community speak with me about. Liverpool has one of the largest hospitals in the Southern Hemisphere, and many health and other workers would travel on public transport if it was safer and more accessible. Activating our public transport hubs and spaces will help to make travelling on public transport safer and reduce the current reliance of many workers in Liverpool on cars and the inadequate local parking infrastructure, which also impacts local residents. I receive almost weekly complaints about the pressure placed on local streets and local parking infrastructure by the huge demand from cars, which we can address by improving access to public transport.

We have a huge opportunity to tackle the endemic issues that plague many of our suburban centres. I realise that Liverpool is not alone in experiencing these challenges. I must say, however, it is disappointing to see that this space was left entirely vacant throughout south-west Sydney over the previous decade of the Coalition Government. We could have had a much broader opportunity to address some of these issues if we had tackled some of these challenges earlier. For this potential impact alone, I commend the bill to the House. But, as members can see, there are many reasons why the bill makes sense. As we have frequently seen, there are many examples where, if it is not somebody's responsibility, it is nobody's responsibility. The bill makes activating our public transport spaces the responsibility of TAM. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (10:54): I contribute to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024 in my capacity as the shadow assistant Minister for Transport and Roads. In the other place, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and shadow Minister for Transport and Roads will provide greater commentary on the bill and on the Opposition's position. I will not seek to replicate that commentary in this place today. The Opposition will not be opposing the legislation, but in reality this legislation is merely words on a page masquerading as legislation or reform. The bill seeks to change the Transport Asset Holding Entity, or TAHE,

from a State owned corporation to a New South Wales government agency called the Transport Asset Manager New South Wales or TAM.

This legislation only achieves a name change and a different accounting methodology. It also achieves wasting the time of drafters tasked with preparing the bill and public servants tasked with implementing the changes set out in the bill, and yet more time in this place dedicated to insubstantial, immaterial and unimaginative reform. Calling it true reform would be an overstatement of epic proportions, as I note that previous members have attempted to do. I highlight to the House a relative immateriality of the exercise that is the bill. If one was to find any substance or meaning in the bill, adopting a "glass half full" view of the world, the bill inserts into the objectives of Transport for NSW the promotion of active transport and the activation of public spaces. That said, one does not require a law or the bill or any change to do this. I say that because the previous Government already did it.

My predecessor, Dr Rob Stokes, served as the first New South Wales active transport Minister. He quite literally embodied that role. I remember a Pittwater paddle where we were all waiting onshore to set the paddlers off. We were waiting for the then member for Pittwater. I was then a councillor and I was there with the then Federal member for Mackellar, Jason Falinski. As we were waiting for the member for Pittwater, we were looking out across the water at Winnererremy Bay and we literally saw the sun glistening off the wet body that was Rob Stokes paddling into shore. He had set off from some other vantage point to come and join us, such was his commitment and dedication to active transport. He was very fit and active in that portfolio.

We all know the benefits of active transport to the social, economic and environmental vibrancy of the city. But we do not need a change to the Act to ensure that is achieved in any way, shape or form. The bill creates a new agency, the Transport Asset Manager, to replace TAHE, which was a State owned corporation. I am sure the Government will claim that as a key election victory; however, we know that this will not make any material change. That change creates concerns about how the new agency will be governed and how appointments will be made, be it to the head of that organisation or be it to an advisory panel that is proposed to be established. The question has been raised as to how the Government will appoint people to the advisory panel, which could receive nearly \$500,000 of taxpayer money each year.

The question we need to ask is: Will the Government use it to appoint its union mates, who are not qualified to sit on that advisory panel? The question we need to ask is: Will the Government appoint its union mates or jobs for the boys or its friends and buddies from the unions to head up the organisation? These questions must be answered. The Government says that the board will be appointed through an independent process, through the secretary or the department. Given what we have seen from this Government to date with the appointments of senior bureaucrats and public servants, we can have little faith that that will be the case. I make some points that were raised by the relevant committee in the Legislation Review Digest about the inappropriate delegation of legislative powers. I will quote directly from the Legislation Review Digest, because I think it is instructive and it is important that it is on record in this place:

Proposed section 14 of the Bill would provide TAM with the power to delegate the exercise any of its functions under the Bill to 'an authorised person', and the delegate would be able to sub-delegate the functions to another 'authorised person'. Under proposed subsection 14 (3) of the Bill, 'authorised person' may mean 'a person of a class prescribed by the regulations or approved by the Minister'. The Bill does not include any provision specifying or limiting what amounts to 'a person of a class prescribed by the regulations or approved by the Minister', or set any qualification requirements for a person to be delegated functions.

Therefore, the Bill may provide for a wide power of delegation of statutory functions. The Committee notes that the provision may effectively delegate statutory powers and functions without any oversight by the Parliament. Under proposed section 14, private individuals could be delegated statutory functions that the public may expect to be performed by public officials. The Committee prefers that the delegation of statutory functions be detailed in primary legislation to ensure appropriate parliamentary scrutiny over the exercise of these functions. For these reasons, the Committee refers the matter to Parliament for consideration.

The challenge that the bill proposes is an inappropriate delegation of powers over which this place will have no power or say whatsoever. The Government should consider how it deals with that issue as the bill is considered further by the Parliament. Another issue raised by the Legislation Review Committee is around the commencement by proclamation. The challenge with that is there is no certainty whatsoever as to which parts of the bill will commence when and when relevant persons will be appointed to the positions that are needed. The Legislation Review Digest states:

The Committee notes that part of the Bill would commence by proclamation and generally prefers legislation to commence on a fixed date, or on assent, to provide certainty for affected [users], particularly where the legislation in question affects individual rights or obligations.

It is somewhat concerning that the Government has failed to address this issue. But what is most important in relation to the bill is that, yet again, the Government is failing to provide any substantial reform. As the former Premier noted yesterday, in public life we need to be imaginative, creative and bold, and we need to be passionate and brave in our policy decisions. The bill simply does not achieve any of those ends whatsoever. The Opposition

does not oppose the bill. The shadow Minister in the other place will provide greater detail and more reasons in relation to that, but the Government needs to be aware that we are watching the appointment of various persons to the advisory panel and as the head of the TAM because that will cause us the greatest concern.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): It being 11.00 a.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for question time. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I extend a very warm welcome to guests in the Speaker's gallery and the Cooper Gallery. I will acknowledge a number of people and groups in particular. I will indulge myself as the member for Lake Macquarie—members know I rarely do that—and welcome and acknowledge staff and volunteers from the Car 2 Home Project. I know the member for Charlestown joins me in that welcome. The member for Charlestown and I have had a lot to do with the project over the years. I acknowledge all the great work that it does in a very difficult space. I am sure that all members have many great people in their electorates helping people who are disadvantaged, particularly during the housing crisis.

I also welcome in the galleries guests of the member for Manly: David, Emma, Zoe and Abbie Olofinsky. I welcome guests of the member for Cabramatta from Cabramatta Public School: principal Mr Ben Kirkman, teacher Ms Lorraine Greenhill and a number of students. I acknowledge a guest of the member for East Hills, Nasser Murad, a student from Condell Park High School, who I believe is doing work experience with the member. I also acknowledge a guest of the member for Granville, Ruqaia Alhelou, a student intern at the member's office. Ruqaia is from Gaza on an Australian awards program sponsored by the foreign affairs department. That is very significant. I welcome Ruqaia. Indeed, we welcome everybody to the Parliament.

Mr Ron Hoenig: And the dingoes.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House wishes to acknowledge the dingoes who visited Parliament this morning. I wish to acknowledge The Dingoes, the band of my youth.

Question Time

QUESTION TIME

The SPEAKER: Are there any questions?

Mr Mark Speakman: Mr Speaker—

Ms Eleni Petinos: Mr Speaker—

Ms Julia Finn: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I note the deep interest of the member for Miranda and the member for Granville in parliamentary democracy, but I call the Leader of the Opposition.

CONSTRUCTION, FORESTRY AND MARITIME EMPLOYEES UNION

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:07): My question is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Minister advocate for a royal commission into the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union's criminality?

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (11:08): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that very important question. The Premier made his views known a couple of days ago. But let me tell the House what the Government is doing and has already done. The Government has made it absolutely crystal clear that we do not tolerate any corruption, any criminal activity, any of that, anywhere on construction sites, on building sites or anywhere in any sector at all—no intimidation, no harassment, absolutely nothing at all. We are stern, we are firm and we are taking very strong action. The Premier and the Government have made it very clear. These allegations are very serious.

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: The action that we are undertaking is that we have moved to suspend—

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will come to order. The Minister will resume her seat. I will hear the point of order from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Mark Speakman: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The Minister is refusing to answer a direct question. What is she doing? Will she advocate for a royal commission? I did not ask what else she may be doing or what outrage she may have. I asked if she will be advocating for a royal commission. It was very specific.

The SPEAKER: I was listening to determine whether the Minister would reach the threshold of direct relevance. The Minister did not answer in the way the Leader of the Opposition would have liked her to, but she referred to the Premier's previous answer. I may have missed that.

[Opposition members interjected.]

Opposition members will settle down while I make my ruling or they can leave the Chamber and consider it there. The Minister will assist the Chair by being directly relevant to the question.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: The Government has made its view clear with respect to the royal commission. We have moved to suspend the CFMEU Construction and General Division's affiliations with the New South Wales Labor Party. We have asked the Fair Work Ombudsman to review enterprise bargaining agreements.

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

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: We have referred all allegations of inappropriate behaviour to the Construction Compliance Unit. We are introducing legislation in conjunction with the Federal Government. We are taking strong action. I hope Opposition members support it.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:11): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier please update the House on what the Minns Labor Government is doing to address the adverse and growing impacts of social media on young people and children?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:11): That is a really good question. If we ask parents across New South Wales and the country, they will tell us about the deep concerns they have about their children's access to social media and, according to the data and the evidence, the increasing psychological toll and the mental health impacts of widespread, ubiquitous access to social media by young people across the country. If we look at the rates of happiness, the increase of mental health and psychiatric distress amongst young people directly coincides with the widespread use of social media right around the world. To me, this looks to be a global, almost universal experiment, which is completely unregulated, on the young people of the world and, in particular, Australia. Our Government has decided, in conjunction with the South Australian Government, to have a social media summit to get experts around the table to understand what the implications of this new—

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I am absolutely amazed. The social media summit will get the experts around the table to understand the implications of social media use, particularly on young minds. My view is that, at best, it is a giant time suck for young people and, at worst, it has serious deleterious effects on their mental health and wellbeing. This social media summit will be held on 10 October in New South Wales and on 11 October in Adelaide. It is the first time that I know of where two State governments have come together to hold a social policy summit not related to border issues or Federal-State relations. At the end of the day, two heads are better than one. We have to give credit to the Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, who has led the discussion and action across the country in relation to the widespread use of social media, particularly by young people.

A psychiatric study from 2019 found that adolescents who spent more than three hours per day on social media face double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes. We cannot turn a blind eye to this. In relation to the Opposition's question about us doing nothing, the Government took a decision on term 1, day four last year, when the education Minister banned mobile phones in New South Wales public schools. That decision was taken in the interests of young people across the State. We made a decision that the use of mobile phones in New South Wales schools would make it difficult for students to get their heads around maths classes, to understand the intricacies of Shakespeare or to solve a science problem. I know many adults who find it difficult to concentrate when a mobile phone is in front of them. Why would we expect children to be able to? *[Extension of time]*

We are collecting data on what this change has meant in New South Wales schools. I can report some statistics from South Australia, which shows a 63 per cent decrease in social media incidents, a 50 per cent decrease in behavioural issues and a 10 per cent decrease in violence-related incidents in South Australian public schools since the ban was introduced. Prominent adolescent psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg said, "Most

civilised countries have recognised that classrooms are no place for mobile phones." But it is not universally praised. On 10 May in this House the member for Hawkesbury said on this issue that the words "institute" and "ban" in the New South Wales Government's plan to institute a mobile phone ban in public schools this year would "go beyond my liberal values of freedom of speech and the right to choose. We are not living in a communist country."

Chinese communist countries banned TikTok, Facebook and Twitter; it is our kids who have access to it. Her intervention rests on a premise that a child is in a position to make a decision to spend 22 hours a week on social media. This is brand new for this generation of young people. We have made a decision in relation to New South Wales public schools. Thank goodness for the National Party because at its conference—I have to give it credit for this—in June this year a motion was moved that stated, "The conference calls for a ban on the use of mobile phones by primary and high school students during school hours while on campus." That motion was lost. We cannot rely on the Opposition, but we will rely on the experts. At the end of the day, something needs to be done.

CONSTRUCTION, FORESTRY AND MARITIME EMPLOYEES UNION

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (11:17): I direct my question to the Minister for Small Business. As happened with the money received from Ron Medich, will the Minister advocate for levying Labor MPs to fund the Australian Labor Party forfeiting the over \$400,000 it received from the CFMEU after Secretary Darren Greenfield was charged with bribery offences?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Wahrenonga will come to order. The Minister is quite capable of answering the question.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:17): That was an interesting question from the member for Miranda. Unlike members on the other side of the Chamber, we have taken action. The Minister for Industrial Relations was quite clear that we will not tolerate that type of behaviour. A lot of that behaviour happened under the Opposition's watch when in government, and a lot of the contracts were managed by the former Government.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: The former Government did nothing about it. This Government has stood up and acted on it. The action that we are taking is precise. It will get the job done and deliver stability to the industry.

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

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: The member for Miranda has asked the ALP to return donations to the CFMEU while the Liberal-Nationals Coalition has kept its donations from the member for Kiama and Daryl Maguire—and do not even get me started on the inquiry into the donations that were involved at Hills Shire Council. So you are really dropping pretty low, coming from where you—

Mr Chris Minns: Where's the Free Enterprise Foundation money? Where's that money?

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: What about the Free Enterprise Foundation? Where is that money? I ask the Leader of the Opposition. Where is the Free Enterprise money? There is none of that. At the end of the day, we are taking the necessary action.

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

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: We will leave it at that.

The SPEAKER: I hope Opposition frontbench members have got it out of their system. I remind the member for Terrigal that he is on two calls to order. I remind the member for Wahrenonga that he is on one call. However, quite a few Opposition members have escaped being called to order, including the member for Port Macquarie, whose behaviour today has been terrible.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (11:20): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plan to build the schools that growing communities need?

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:20): I certainly can answer this question, which I know is of great personal importance to the member for Camden and her electorate. I wish members a happy Public Education Week. In

this week, we celebrate all of our 2,200 schools, but I will give a shout-out to a particular one. I celebrate particularly Blaxland High School because thanks to the incredible Fox sisters, who both graduated from Blaxland High School, if Blaxland High School was a country it would have been above 189 nations on the medal tally. Well done! I think you will find that Jessica Fox was the dux of that high school in 2011. Crucial to delivering the transformative gift of public education to our children is the ability to offer it to every child in their New South Wales locality, no matter where they live. But, of course, we inherited a system that—

Mr Dugald Saunders: Give over.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Dubbo to order for the first time. Under Standing Order 249A, I direct the member for Dubbo to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of two minutes.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Dubbo left the Chamber at 11:21.]

Ms PRUE CAR: The member for Dubbo might want to say that to the faces of the families who live in Gregory Hills, because those families live in the suburb that is the best example of what the Opposition did when it was in government: announcing first that there should be a primary school in 2018, then doing absolutely nothing while student enrolments grew in that community by 145 per cent.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: While they sat on their hands, young people bought homes, built homes and started having families. It is not brain surgery. They need to go to school. They need to go to primary school and then to secondary school. We are very proud because, after turning the sod just over 12 months ago, the Premier and I and the Labor member for Camden opened that school once and for all for that community. I remind the House, of course, that one of the major reasons that we have a Labor member for Camden—right on cue. *[Extension of time]*

Opposition members think this is hilarious. But, to families who need schools, it is actually quite important. It says a lot about Opposition members that they think this is so funny. When those families went to the previous Liberal member for Camden, he said, "Who knows how long it will be, but it definitely will be before 2027." It is now there because of a Labor government. Those opposite did absolutely nothing on this school, and nothing they say will take away that fact. Let us use another example, not far from Gregory Hills but this time in the north-west of Sydney, closer to the people I have the joy of representing. In the community around Box Hill and Gables, which, I have to say, even surpasses the communities of Gregory Hills and Gledswood Hills, enrolments grew by 1,000 per cent. What does a sensible government committed to public education do in that case? When the Coalition was in government, it did not deliver one school.

Ms Kellie Sloane: You cut their budgets.

Ms PRUE CAR: Does the member even know where Box Hill is, for God's sake? These people have moved in and enrolments grew by 1,000 per cent. The former Coalition Government did not deliver one school. The local member, the member for Hawkesbury, when asked, said, "Really good question. I actually don't have an answer. I don't have an all-in-one answer." What sort of representation is that? For that level of care for that growing community, the Coalition just promoted that member to shadow Minister for Western Sydney. I cannot wait for her to defend her party's record when it was in government of not delivering the schools and the life-changing gift of public education that our communities in Western Sydney deserve, because its record on this is absolutely shameful.

The SPEAKER: I welcome the member for Dubbo back to the Chamber.

WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (11:25): My question is directed to the Premier. I personally thank the Premier for his promise to stop the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall. My community voted strongly against the previous Government due to that plan. I have written to the Minister for Water to seek a repeal of part 5A of the Water NSW Act 2014. What is the delay in repealing a few lines that will stop future water Ministers from inundating the national park and raising the dam wall? Will he commit to work with me to get the Act changed back, to back up his personal statement and legislate against any future government pursuing this terrible plan?

The SPEAKER: I will call the Premier, although the question was probably out of order for a number of reasons. I think the Premier can answer it.

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:26): I thank the member for Wollondilly for her question. I know that she has been a passionate advocate in relation to this issue and had a position, prior to the election campaign, that was validated or endorsed by the overwhelming support she got from her community at the last election. We had a similar view in relation to Warragamba Dam. The cost associated with increasing the wall's

height jumped from an original estimate of \$600-odd million to several billion dollars. I think that did not take offsets into consideration, as well, which added to the cost. Obviously, no concrete had been laid. The engineering associated with such a massive change was huge.

Those who understand the flooding issues in Sydney's north-west and the Nepean know that 45 per cent of floodwaters do not come over the top of Warragamba Dam; they access the valley through other rivers and tributaries. I remember the part 5A addition, the legislative change that was moved two Parliaments ago. I spoke against it. I was shadow Minister for Water at the time. I am happy to work with the member about that particular aspect of the legislation. Perhaps I can report back to her in the House when we have considered the request.

FIRST HOME BUYERS

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (11:27): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces in his capacity representing the Treasurer. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to enable more first home buyers to enter the property market in New South Wales?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:28): I thank the member for Blacktown for his question. He is always keen to make sure that first home buyers are getting going. In fact, he is keen to make sure that everyone who needs a home gets one. Last month marked one year since the Minns Government expanded the First Home Buyers Assistance scheme. That program provides stamp duty support for people buying their first home, and it means more first home buyers paying little or no stamp duty at all. Given that the Government inherited a housing crisis from those opposite, it is timely that a year on from the introduction of the scheme—

[An Opposition member interjected.]

They hate us talking about houses. They hate giving first home owners a fair go. They hate giving renters a fair go. They hate giving people living in social housing a fair go. In fact, anyone would think they had introduced a bill in the other place to stop housing. The evidence of this Government's changes are in. At least 33,365 first home buyers received an exemption or concession on their stamp duty. That is a 43 per cent increase in first home buyer support year on year. That equates to an average saving of \$20,479. That is an increase of almost 25 per cent compared to the earlier program. More first home buyers are receiving more support because of the changes introduced by the Minns Government.

Not only is that a genuine cost-of-living relief, it also gives first home buyers an advantage if they are bidding against investors or home —members opposite. The new thresholds have resulted in more than 18,000 first home buyers receiving greater support under this program than the previous program. First home buyers in Western Sydney are among the largest group of beneficiaries from this scheme. The member for Blacktown will be especially pleased to learn that 1,952 first home buyers in the Cumberland and Blacktown local government areas bought their first homes with savings of \$20,414 in stamp duty under this scheme. In Parramatta, 1,700 first home buyers got a benefit. In the Penrith local government area, 1,350 first home buyers got a benefit.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

That is in a year. I hear members opposite say, "Is that all?" But that is more than when they were in government. In Canterbury and Bankstown, 1,186 first home buyers received a benefit. In the Campbelltown council area, 1,144 first home buyers received a benefit. Frankly, the good news is in everywhere. In Riverstone, there was a 251 per cent increase in the number of first home buyers who received a benefit. *[Extension of time]*

In Liverpool, 624 first home buyers received a benefit. The Leader of the Opposition has been quiet since he was chased. He is probably thinking about which Nationals frontbencher he is going to fire next. But I think he has also been busy writing to new constituents. In his electorate, there has been a 77 per cent increase in the number of first home buyers receiving assistance to buy homes in Cronulla. This Government is the best friend to first home buyers in Cronulla since Michael Egan was the member. The benefits of the scheme do not stop there. Even the residents of Mosman are receiving a benefit. Under the Liberal-Nationals Government, 21 people received assistance. Under Labor, that figure has more than doubled, with 48 first home buyers in Mosman receiving assistance.

It is not only metropolitan areas that have benefitted. Regional towns that have included stamp duty cuts include Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and Dubbo. Dugald is back in the Chamber. He does not get much support from his Coalition partners. Gurmish really stepped up into the role of acting leader of The Nationals in his absence. He was very, very keen to get his hands on the reins. But Dugald's constituents are getting a fair go under Labor—we have your back. When discussing how well the Government's housing plan is working, it is only fair to point out what the Opposition's plan is. As I said earlier, members opposite have introduced legislation and they are absolutely committed to stopping first home buyers in New South Wales getting a shot at buying a home.

Instead of chirping from the sidelines, it would better if members opposite withdrew their anti-housing bill today and directed the shadow housing Minister to pull it off the business paper in the Legislative Council. I do not think he had permission to put it on there in the first place. The Opposition should get behind our plans to make sure more first home buyers are getting a fair go and there are more homes for them in well-located areas, close to transport, jobs, services and amenities.

BUILDING INDUSTRY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (11:33): My question is directed to the Minister for Building. CFMEU wage deals are pushing up the costs of new apartments by 10 per cent per year. When building approvals are at a 12-year low under the Minns Labor Government, why is it allowing to continue?

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Before I call the Minister, I will hear the point of order from the member for Campbelltown.

Mr Greg Warren: Standing Order 128 (3) (a) is very clear that a question cannot ask for an expression of opinion. It is very clear that the Opposition's question is asking for an opinion. The question is also inconsistent with Standing Order 128 (2) (b). It is argumentative.

The SPEAKER: I will consider the matter at a later time. In my opinion, the question is not strictly asking for an opinion. It could well be that there is a reason. I do not know; I do not endorse the question one way or another. But it is not evident that it requires the Minister to express an opinion; the answer may well be factual. I will not know until I hear it. At this stage, I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister has the call. The member for Wahroonga will come to order. I call the member for Wahroonga to order for the second time.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (11:35): I thank the shadow Minister, and member for Willoughby for his question. The reports we have seen about the CFMEU are concerning. This Government is not going to tolerate that sort of behaviour at any worksite or in any workplace. We all know that there are significant macro factors affecting the costs in the construction industry. It is important to all of us to make sure that we allow the construction industry to move forward and operate in a way that works for the industry and employees. That is why my good friend the Minister for Industrial Relations has undertaken significant work relating to the CFMEU.

I will list the actions the Government has taken. It has moved to suspend the CFMEU Construction and General Division's affiliation to the New South Wales Labor Party. It has asked the Fair Work Ombudsman to review the CFMEU's enterprise bargaining agreements in New South Wales. It has referred all allegations of inappropriate behaviour on New South Wales construction sites to the Construction Compliance Unit within NSW Industrial Relations. It has made an application to the Industrial Court of NSW to put the CFMEU Construction and General Division into administration. It has contacted contractors on New South Wales Government-funded construction sites to remind them of their obligations.

Mr Tim James: Point of order: The question was expressly about wage deals and costs to build new apartments. The Minister has not addressed the question.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The question referred to those issues and asked why the Government is allowing a situation to continue. The point of order taken by the member for Campbelltown was not far from being valid. Therefore, I will give the Minister some leeway in answering the question.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: The Government is moving to make sure that the issues raised in the media around the CFMEU are addressed quickly. Everyone can see what the Government has done. If members opposite want to talk about costs and money, we should talk about the Opposition's money trail.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order—

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: They are mafia figures. The mob donated to the Liberals, and they kept the money.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat while I hear the point of order from the member for Dubbo.

Mr Dugald Saunders: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was about building costs.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Dubbo will resume his seat. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: At a key Liberal fundraiser, they took mafia money for access. If members opposite want to talk about money in the construction industry, they should talk about the mob and the Liberal Party. [*Time expired.*]

ANZAC DAY RETAIL TRADING HOURS

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (11:38): My question is addressed to the Minister for Veterans. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's commitment to extend retail trading restrictions on Anzac Day to ensure that the service of veterans is recognised?

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) (11:38): I thank the hardworking member for Bega for his question. On 10 July the Premier announced the New South Wales Government's intention to amend the retail trading hour restrictions on Anzac Day. Yesterday, the very hardworking Minister for Industrial Relations did just that by introducing the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. In recent years, Anzac Day has continued to grow in popularity within the community as more and more people turn out to commemorate the sacrifice of our service men and women. But for too long some in our community have not been able to attend commemorations due to having to work.

Extending restrictions on trading on Anzac Day will allow workers and businesses to pay their respects to those who have lost their lives to protect our country. This will allow young people, particularly, who work in some of the bigger retail organisations to participate in important Anzac events. Some of those young people might be army cadets or members of volunteer organisations who march in communities around the State. It provides our whole community the opportunity to come together for a whole day to commemorate the sacrifices of our service men and women.

The decision is supported by the veteran community, with the president of RSL NSW Mick Bainbridge saying it will allow their members, veterans and their families to attend commemorations in Sydney and across New South Wales and be with their families during that time. That sentiment has been echoed by Renee Wilson from the Families of Veterans Guild, who said that it was an important decision by the New South Wales Government to ensure that Anzac Day remains a day that acknowledges that the freedoms we enjoy today exist due to the sacrifices of our service men and women.

Currently, retail businesses are restricted from trading on Anzac Day until 1.00 p.m., unless exempt under the Retail Trading Act 2008. Following consultation, the New South Wales Government has sought to extend that restriction to cover the entire day. Automatically exempt businesses under the Retail Trading Act include restaurants, cafes, takeaway food shops, chemists, florists, fruit and vegetable shops, newsagencies, nurseries and petrol stations, but businesses may, upon application, be exempt from Anzac Day trading restrictions if there are exceptional circumstances to operate and it is in the public interest to do so. The new restrictions are similar to those in other States and will bring New South Wales in line with the rest of the country in how we observe Anzac Day. [*Extension of time*]

I echo statements made by the Premier that, whilst the change will be an adjustment for some, it is a small price to pay to place Anzac Day where it should be, as one of the most important commemorative days on the nation's calendar. I take the opportunity to commend the Minister for Industrial Relations for taking the lead on this important reform. I also commend the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association and RSL NSW for their collaboration in assisting to find the right balance for New South Wales with these restrictions. It is important for the community to come together and acknowledge what has been a profound sacrifice by generations of Australian service personnel on behalf of their country.

Our changes to trading hours will help to preserve Anzac Day as a nationally significant day to honour those who have served our nation so that we continue to enjoy the freedoms we have today. I have to say that, over the last few years in particular, following COVID restrictions, the number of people attending Anzac Day ceremonies has gone up considerably. I also note that, because of the way that communities want to have their specific celebrations, there is, across New South Wales, a staggered approach to marches and this change will ensure that those smaller organisations that want to have their commemorations after 1.00 p.m. can do so with the whole community. It is a sensible reform, which I think is backed by most members in this place, and we look forward to getting the bill through the House and honouring service men and women across our community.

PUBLIC SERVICE WORKPLACE PRESENCE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (11:43): My question is directed to the Minister for Women. What input did the Minister have in formulating the Premier's Department circular of 5 August affecting women working from home?

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (11:44): I thank the member for Port Macquarie for her question. The issue of the public service and its workplace arrangements has been discussed by department secretaries.

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

Ms JODIE HARRISON: It is a decision that has been made by the Premier's Department in consultation with each of the departmental secretaries. I note that it has been made very clear by the Secretary of the Premier's Department that existing arrangements under industrial agreements relating to flexibility for public service employees are still available to them. Wherever there are flexible arrangements in relation to industrial agreements—and they have been in place for a number of years now—people who are seeking flexible arrangements will continue to be able to access those arrangements on an individual basis based on the needs of the workplace and the needs of the individual.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will come to order. The member for Vaucluse will come to order. The member for Dubbo will be directed to remove himself from the Chamber again if he continues to interject.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

The threshold for throwing out the Premier is a lot higher than it is for the member for Dubbo.

Ms Kellie Sloane: The Minister walked out on a question about women.

The SPEAKER: That is not the case. The member for Vaucluse should be careful. I will hear briefly from the Minister in response to that statement.

Ms Jodie Harrison: I ask that the member for Vaucluse withdraw her statement.

The SPEAKER: The member for Vaucluse has been asked whether she will withdraw her comment about the Minister walking out on a question relating to women. It is not a debate; the answer is yes or no.

Ms Kellie Sloane: I cannot withdraw that, Mr Speaker, because she walked away—

The SPEAKER: Then the answer is no. The member for Vaucluse will resume her seat.

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (11:46): My question is addressed to the Minister for Families and Communities. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to move the State's most vulnerable children out of unsuitable emergency accommodation?

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (11:47): I thank the member for Auburn for the important question. When we came to government 15 months ago, I promised that, after more than a decade of indifference by the former Government, members on this side of the House were committed to making a difference to the lives of vulnerable children and young people in New South Wales. The first part of that challenge was to, at long last, be open and honest about the broken child protection system in New South Wales that was spiralling out of control. Since then, the Audit Office of New South Wales, the NSW Ombudsman, the Children's Guardian and the Advocate for Children and Young People have confirmed everything that we have been saying since we came to government: that the child protection system is in dire need of significant reform.

Recently the Auditor-General described the child protection system designed by those opposite as "inefficient, ineffective and unsustainable". Where was the concern of those opposite when they were in government? What did they do to address the issues and look after the vulnerable children in this State? They did nothing. They outsourced the system to non-government providers and walked away. They walked away.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahroonga will come to order. I call the member for Wahroonga to order for the third time.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: The number of foster carers in New South Wales has plummeted and the number of children holed up in hotels, motels and caravan parks has skyrocketed. On Monday, the Advocate for Children and Young People released her special inquiry final report into so-called alternative care arrangements.

The title of the report is *Moving cage to cage*, which shockingly is how one young person described their life in the hotel-motel cycle. This was a young person who was in the care of the State and deserved so much better. I acknowledge and thank the Advocate for Children and Young People, who has dealt with these matters sensitively and ensured that the voices and experiences of those young people were heard. I also pay tribute to the young people who bravely shared their stories as part of this special inquiry.

The final report details the heartbreaking experiences of 21 children and young people who were placed in these inappropriate, high-cost emergency arrangements. Their stories are harrowing and hard. They confirm the need for significant systemic reform. Most shockingly, these are the stories that were swept under the rug by those opposite.

Ms Lynda Voltz: Mr Speaker, I seek an extension of time for the Minister to elucidate her answer. I also ask that you call to order this element to my right so members can actually hear the answer. In particular, I refer to the member for Kiama.

The SPEAKER: I will not refer specifically to the member for Kiama or that "element"—which is an unusual term. All members will come to order and be respectful of the Minister while she is answering the question. I grant her an additional two minutes.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Instead of fixing these problems, the former Government relabelled the types of placements. Opposition members tried to hide the fact that children and young people were living in hotels, motels and caravan parks with 24/7 shift workers. They were being shifted amongst those places, instead of being placed in safe and nurturing homes. Children in those settings are often disconnected from their schooling, their families and their friends.

Mrs Leslie Williams: What are you doing?

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: They are denied relationships that are so critical to their wellbeing and sense of belonging. As if that was not bad enough, these high-cost emergency arrangements can cost taxpayers upwards of \$2 million a year for each child. It is a horrifying amount of money, but even more horrifying are the poor outcomes for children. Our Government is committed to significant reform because vulnerable children deserve so much better. We have already begun the work to tackle these issues. I have heard members opposite say, "What are you doing?" We are doing the difficult work with the Department of Communities and Justice to remove vulnerable children from those arrangements and find better, more appropriate arrangements.

Mrs Leslie Williams: And have you done it?

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I can hear them say, "Have you done it?" We have.

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

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Since November last year, the number of children in high-cost emergency arrangements has been reduced by 125. In just eight months we have achieved a 25 per cent reduction. We have avoided a cost to the taxpayer of \$125 million. Most importantly, we have found safe and nurturing homes for those children and young people. Members can trust me when I say we are not done yet. This Government's high-cost emergency arrangements team is working around the clock to get more kids out of those places. I want the kids who contributed to this report to know that their voices have been heard and that they did not share their pain in vain. Thanks to the advocate, I met with some of the awesome kids who were part of the inquiry and their stories hit me hard. Those stories will sit with me while we continue to make a difference for the most vulnerable kids in this State.

NSW POLICE FORCE GIFT POLICY

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (11:52): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will she ask the NSW Police Force to launch an investigation into any use of taxpayer funds to purchase alcohol, as Transport for NSW did in 2022?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:53): First and foremost, I address the issue raised by the shadow Minister. As I understand it, the police commissioner was made aware by the previous police commissioner of a precedent of ordering bottles of wine as courtesy gifts for visiting commissioners and other dignitaries from other jurisdictions and overseas. The bottles of wine have also been used as auction items for charity events. The shadow Minister would know that, as he was in the ministry when that occurred. As I understand it, following this precedent, the commissioner ordered bottles of alcohol from the same supplier as the former commissioner did. In fact, I am a little surprised to be asked this question by the shadow Minister because those purchases were made when the shadow Minister was the Minister.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Bankstown will come to order. The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There is no ban on giving alcohol as a gift to dignitaries. My understanding is that the practice of giving wine to visiting dignitaries was an established practice by the former commissioner under the stewardship of members opposite. As I have said, as far as I am aware the current commissioner gives

gifts of alcohol to visiting commissioners, to dignitaries and to charities as auction items. As members know, we have parliamentary wine branded with the New South Wales Parliament seal. I am sure that all members have given wine as a gift. To me, it really does seem like quite an ordinary gift to give. Regarding the matter of allegations referred to by the member in the other place, I am advised that the Professional Standards Command has referred those questions and allegations to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, which is appropriate. The proper process should take its course.

DAVID BERRY HOSPITAL

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (11:55): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is empowering the local community to have a say on the future of the David Berry Hospital site?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:56): What a very good question from a hardworking member. Members on this side of the House know exactly why. Even in the darkest of times for her community, the member for South Coast stood with her community and that is why she is in this Chamber today. David Berry Hospital is a unique hospital. It was a parcel of land—

Mr Gareth Ward: When have you visited?

Mr RYAN PARK: Don't worry, I will get to you. I am easing in. We build into it, like a 1,500-metre race. David Berry Hospital was gifted to the community. It has its own legislation, which is backdated to 1906. What was never in doubt is that land will remain in public hands. That was never in doubt.

Mr Paul Scully: It was. They would have sold it.

Mr RYAN PARK: I clarify that it was never in doubt for members on this side of the Chamber.

The SPEAKER: Government members will come to order.

Mr RYAN PARK: We are building a close to half-a-billion-dollar hospital redevelopment for Shoalhaven. Obviously those buildings at David Berry are no longer clinically appropriate to the services delivered. Those services will be delivered through the new Shoalhaven redevelopment, which the community would understand and expect. What I can announce today, which is very important, is that we are going to do two novel things. First, we will be bringing back legislation to this Parliament that, secondly, is the result of community consultation and engagement about what that site looks like and what the community feels is needed there.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: This is a novel approach. As a result of this announcement today we will be engaging with, listening to and responding to the community. But I am concerned that there is one member in this Chamber who has spoken about sell-offs and privatisation and getting rid of David Berry, and that is the member for Kiama. We know that of course—

Mr Gareth Ward: This is like getting mauled by a guinea pig. Gee whiz! Put your back into it.

Mr RYAN PARK: You'd know about that, mate!

The SPEAKER: I do not think the member for Kiama wants to leave the Chamber, but he may wish to. I call the member for Kiama to order for the second time.

Ms Liza Butler: I seek further information.

The SPEAKER: I grant the Minister an additional two minutes.

Mr RYAN PARK: My mum will be happy. That audience of four will be happy. It does not surprise any of us on this side, particularly about health services, that the member for Kiama would be talking about privatisation, because he sat in a government and a Cabinet that wanted to privatise Shellharbour Hospital. That is what he wanted to do. He sat in a cabinet that wanted to privatise Maitland Hospital. He sat in a Cabinet that wanted to privatise Wyong Hospital. He sat in a Cabinet that wanted to privatise five hospitals across New South Wales. More than that, down our way he also has form, because we have this thing called a port. There are not many of them around the country.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kiama will not get dragged into a debate.

Mr RYAN PARK: Who was the guy who sat in the Government that privatised our port and we got pennies for it? It was the member for Kiama. We know he loves nothing more than privatisation; it is in his DNA. The community can rest assured of a number of things. It will remain in public hands.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: We on this side will bring legislation back, but that legislation will be informed by them and by what that community needs, wants and deserves. We will not be going off on our own and developing legislation without contacting, consulting and engaging with the community, because we believe that is important. We will not be lectured by a member who sat in a cabinet and a government that could not wait to privatise and sell off publicly owned assets and services. He was addicted to it—he loved it—and nothing has changed.

REGIONAL BUS FARES

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:01): My question is directed to the Premier. I have a letter from Transport for NSW—not the Minister, in fairness, but her department—indicating that regional bus subsidies have been axed, which means that fares for a concession card holder travelling between Bomaderry in my electorate to the far South Coast will increase from \$2.50 to as high as \$65 one way. I ask the Premier to take this question on notice. Given that regional seniors and pensioners are some of the most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, will the Premier please reverse the cuts?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:02): I will take the question on notice.

BIOSECURITY

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:02): My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, in his role representing the Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to increase the State's planning, resilience and response to biosecurity?

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (12:03): I thank the member for Cessnock for his question, and I also thank him for having me in his electorate recently to visit Kurri Kurri TAFE. We are all well aware of his interests in agriculture. We were able to see some of the facilities there for viticulture and animal husbandry, and some of the great work being done there. I acknowledge his great support for our farmers and our natural environment across New South Wales.

I am pleased to advise the House that the Government is delivering a \$946 million package of programs in the 2024-25 budget to directly address the major agricultural issues relating to invasive species, pests and weeds that threaten our food, landscape and livestock. That issue is so important that the Government appointed the State's first Independent Biosecurity Commissioner in July. The appointment of the commissioner strengthens the impact and accountability of the funds announced in the budget. The commissioner will provide independent and impartial advice to the Parliament and the Government on the program's effectiveness and the opportunities for improvement. It was terrific that the Premier was at the NSW Farmers conference to announce those measures recently.

Last year, our farmers produced \$21 billion of gross value. That is the second highest year on record. In practice, that looks like 10 million tonnes of wheat, 990 million litres of milk, six million head of beef cattle and 26 million head of shorn sheep, as the largest wool-growing State in Australia. Invasive species cost New South Wales around \$2 billion per year in lost production, and that will increase if we do not take action. That is why the Government has committed almost a billion dollars to identify, control and destroy the pests and weeds that threaten our agricultural businesses. Yesterday I spoke in this place about the importance of New South Wales funding to guard against the incursion of fire ants coming over the border from Queensland. But there are many threats that are important for us to acknowledge and address. The same approach will be needed as we deal with feral pig numbers, which exploded after recent wet seasons.

Mr Dugald Saunders: What about a fox bounty?

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

Mr STEVE WHAN: He might know a lot about old foxes but I am not sure about the rest. We have committed to spending \$13 million a year on the problem, making it the biggest feral pig program anywhere in the country. To date, through baiting, trapping and shooting, we have reduced the number of feral pigs by over 100,000 in a nine-month period. That is a record and far outstrips our original target of 87,000. I thank the farmers on the 5,000 properties that took part in the operation. It has been a real partnership, and as the numbers show—*[Extension of time]*

That is an incredible effort, but there is a lot more work to do in that space, as well as in others. I also want to highlight the efforts made with Hudson pear. For those who do not know what Hudson pear is, it is a pretty nasty, ugly plant that grows in hard-to-reach terrain and is a real threat to agricultural productiveness, particularly in north-west New South Wales. I acknowledge the efforts that the member for Barwon has made to ensure that the Government is addressing that particular problem. Clearly, the previous Government was not listening to the member for Barwon. We are using aerial inspections to identify outbreaks. We have sprayed tens of thousands of hectares already, and we will continue that hard work to eradicate the weed in the coming years. That is one of the reasons why the record funding is there. We need to stay on guard with biosecurity. We cannot let our defences down. That is why we continue to work with industry and landholders to make sure that we are addressing these issues. It is particularly important across the State.

I could spend another hour talking about the various weeds around the State, particularly in the Monaro, and about the various feral pest species that need to be dealt with. I know there is a huge effort going on with deer in the south of the State and in Monaro. It is really important that we have an Independent Biosecurity Commissioner. Dr Marion Healy served as our interim commissioner since Labor took government and was officially appointed last month to the role—she has over 20 years of experience across agriculture, biosecurity and food safety—because the Government understands the threats it needs to deal with in the area. As the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads keeps telling us, it is the Labor Government that is dealing with these issues in New South Wales. Labor is the party of the country, born in the country, delivering for the country and represented by some fantastic members from Country Labor.

Committees

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY

Reports

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: As Chair: I table the report of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety entitled *E-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales*, dated 8 August 2024. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Reports

Mr ROY BUTLER: As Chair: I table the report of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development entitled *Performance of the Regional Investment Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund*, dated August 2024. I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

BUSINESS LAPSED

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 general business notice of motion (for bills) Roads and Crimes Legislation Amendment (Offences Repeal) Bill 2024, and general business orders of the day (for bills) Independent Commission Against Corruption (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill 2023, Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2023, and Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2023 have lapsed.

Bills

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (12:11): I make a short contribution in support of the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024. The bill progresses two reforms. One relates to the management of the rail network, and the other relates to active transport and the activation of public spaces. While dealing with different aspects of transport, both of these reforms will enable improvements to the integrated transport network across our State. Firstly, the bill will overhaul the Transport Asset Holding Entity [TAHE] and will establish in its place

a new entity called the Transport Asset Manager New South Wales. The Government has decided to maintain a dedicated strategic asset manager for the publicly owned rail assets in New South Wales, but it will be focused on the safety and reliability of assets rather than delivering returns to government.

The Government is reforming the operating model to clarify roles and responsibilities, and to simplify the currently complex arrangements that exist between TAHE, Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains. Strategic asset management is critical to ensure that passengers, freight operators and communities across New South Wales enjoy the full benefit of the Government's investment in the rail network. Transport Asset Manager New South Wales, or TAM, will be established by the bill to have clear accountability for asset management so that a strategic approach is taken to managing the full life cycle of our rail assets. Removing complexity in the management of assets will support Sydney Trains to deliver reliable and resilient services for passenger and freight customers.

While previous member contributions have diminished the importance of the bill, it is critical to understand that it is a significant shift to focus on safety and reliability, not on making money. TAM's functions will include holding, managing, operating and maintaining transport assets. It will also establish, finance, acquire, construct and develop transport assets. TAM may also enter into contracts with other arrangements with public transport agencies so that it is able to manage assets on their behalf. In performing these functions, TAM's principal objective is to undertake its activities in a safe and reliable way. I repeat: This is about safety and reliability, not about finances.

It is the Government's intention for the Minister for Transport to direct TAM so that it does not carry out railway operations or operate any transport service unless it has the written approval of the Minister. Further, TAM will be required by the Minister's direction to have an agreement with Sydney Trains and NSW Trains to carry out maintenance on the relevant train networks. This is to maintain the integrity of rail operations and maintenance. TAM will also be required to comply with the State's asset management policy, which seeks to ensure that all New South Wales Government assets are managed to support its service delivery outcomes.

It is passengers who bear the cost when asset management is not done. The Sydney Trains review found that around 50 per cent of delays and train cancellations were directly due to a failure of Sydney Trains to fix infrastructure. In response, the Government launched the Rail Repair Plan in June last year, at an estimated cost of \$97 million. It is the biggest coordinated program of rail maintenance ever undertaken in Sydney. This maintenance blitz was aimed at reducing equipment failures in order to restore reliability for passengers. Trackwork, maintenance and reliability upgrades are crucial across our ageing rail network.

Some parts of that network are over 100 years old. We all know that when trains are unreliable, it encourages people to walk away from our public transport system and use our already choked roads instead. Sydney Trains has had great success in delivering this program and has removed more than 1,900 rail defects, three months ahead of schedule. The seven-month average peak for on-time running is now the best it has been since 2021. Regular trackwork is critical for safety, reliability and efficiency for the millions of people across New South Wales who use the rail network to get around.

The bill is not limited to just the rail network. It will make changes to the objectives and functions of Transport for NSW to make it clear that Transport is the lead for this Government in promoting active transport and activating public spaces. The Government wants active transport to be the preferred mode for short local trips. An estimated 1.5 billion walking and cycling trips are taken per year across the State. Promoting cycling and walking—including, where possible, a shift from the private vehicle—will deliver benefits for our local communities. People will feel more connected and be healthier. It will improve the enjoyment of shared spaces and add a sense of vitality and vibrancy to our communities.

The bill finalises the move of two great teams from the department of planning into Transport. These teams are responsible for leading programs and driving change to create walkable, safe, sustainable and welcoming places that are beautiful and inviting for people to access and enjoy. Again, this is crucial to encourage people to access our public transport system both day and night. It is important for people to feel safe when they decide on whether to use private or public transport. The Cities Revitalisation and Place team already has some great wins on the board. The team is working with Griffith City Council on the "Safer Cities: Her Way" project, which aims to make public spaces around transport hubs safer for everyone, especially women, girls and gender diverse people. The program will deliver up to \$1 million worth of public interventions, with the help of the community, through a co-design process.

This project will see the installation of lighting and wayfinding signage, upgrades to pedestrian bridges, the creation of murals and public art, and an increase to the amenity of bus shelters, as well as new landscaping, street furniture, footpaths and gathering spaces—all designed to encourage people to use public transport. The bill will enable two important reforms, both aimed at improving the transport network across New South Wales. These

changes support a safe and reliable rail network, the activation of public spaces, and the promotion of active transport. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:19): I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024. During my contribution I will refer to the importance of active transport and the benefit that it brings for communities and, indeed, a healthy society. Before I do that, I acknowledge the efforts of the Minister for Transport and her team in bringing the bill before the House today. She has taken a very progressive, proactive and reformist approach to her portfolio, along with her team and the Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Coogee, who is also actively engaged in reforming a system that desperately needed reform. For the purpose of my contribution, the bill states:

The object of this Bill is to amend the *Transport Administration Act 1988* (the **Principal Act**) as follows—

- (a) to enable Transport for NSW (**TfNSW**) to promote active transport and improve the activation of public spaces,
- (b) to convert the Transport Asset Holding Entity of New South Wales (**TAHE**) into the Transport Asset Manager New South Wales (**TAM**) and provide for TAM's functions.

I will refer to the Transport Asset Holding Entity as TAHE and the Transport Asset Manager as TAM. At the end of the day, the bill is to put in place long-overdue central reforms to ensure that we are developing an optimal model for the delivery of transport services in New South Wales, whilst also providing for focused and strategic asset management and assurance. TAHE will be overhauled and the establishment of TAM will ensure that we optimise and maximise the full potential within active transport and throughout the transport network to make sure that it is fit for purpose.

With the indulgence of the House, I advise that I recently had the privilege of representing the transport Minister in Picton. I joined the wonderful member for Wollondilly at the opening of a park in the area. It was a great example of the State Government collaborating with local government to develop an area of land into an active transport space. Communities, local families and local residents can utilise that space not only to actively transport from one area to another but also to do a bit of exercise along the way. It is an exciting innovation. I commend the member for Wollondilly, who played a pivotal role in establishing that park during her time with council, which is coming to a close for her shortly. That is one example of the Government working well with all stakeholders. There are no better and stronger stakeholders than the local government sector when it comes to active transport.

That example highlights the other opportunities in and around all of our communities. My own electorate has the Nepean River and the Georges River, which provide opportunities to be out in the environment using active transport modes to get from one place to another and to do a bit of physical fitness and get out and about. I note that my good friend the member for Camden, along with the Mayor of Camden, Councillor Ashleigh Cagney, opened an active transport area, which includes machines for people to do exercises along the way. Like the Camden electorate, the Campbelltown electorate has a rich Aboriginal history that we are very proud of. We also have a rich colonial history that goes back to Lachlan Macquarie and John Macarthur and Elizabeth Macarthur. We have a good story to tell in my region and the best way to tell it is to show people. The Government is committed to telling those stories by providing spaces for active transport as well as resources to keep fit and be active.

This is one of many reforms that the Government is putting in place. It is a welcomed change to the Act. I commend the Minister for Transport, who has taken a progressive, reformist, front-foot approach. She lets nothing stand in her way to ensure that she achieves the Government's agenda. We are committed to ensuring that we are doing everything we can to put in place active transport resources. We are making all the changes that we can. To conclude—like I said, this a brief contribution—it is important to take the opportunity to highlight the significance of active transport and commend the Minister for taking a reformist, progressive and proactive approach in achieving not only the Government's agenda but also better spaces for communities across New South Wales. I thank the House.

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (12:25): I contribute to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024. As the Minister noted, the amendment of the Transport Administration Act 1988 incorporates active transport and the activation of public spaces as explicit functions and objectives of Transport for NSW. The bill also reforms asset management and establishes a new entity called the Transport Asset Manager, TAM, of New South Wales. I first focus on how the broadened remit of Transport for NSW will deliver for the people, businesses and communities of the State. By promoting active transport and the activation of public spaces, Transport for NSW will drive a number of New South Wales Government priorities. The first priority is to create a safe and integrated transport network by increasing active transport options, including making it easier for kids to walk and ride to and from school.

Before I mention the second and third priorities, I speak further about children travelling to school and give a big shout-out to the Minister for Transport, Jo Haylen, her staff and Transport for NSW. During last year's election I was told repeatedly that parents have been asking for a school bus for their children living in Padstow Heights attending Menai High School. Parents had been asking for that bus since the school catchment area was changed and the children no longer had a dedicated bus to get to school. Having no bus meant that children had to travel from Padstow Heights all the way to Padstow by crossing very busy roads, in some cases, and then catching the local bus back past their homes to go to Menai High School. That was the same in the afternoon, but in reverse. That added over an hour per day in travel time for the children.

Disappointingly, that continued request for a dedicated bus fell on the deaf ears of the previous Liberal Government and the previous local Liberal member. Our Government listened and took action. I am happy to say that this matter was fixed with the support of our transport Minister and we now have a dedicated school bus traveling directly to and from Padstow Heights to Menai High School, providing safe travel and saving time. This was a great win for the children and families of Padstow Heights.

The second priority is city shaping and precinct making by activating and enhancing public spaces, transport assets and precincts to make them safer, more attractive, more vibrant, smart and better connected. The third priority is housing supply and cost of living by enhancing amenity and connectivity within new and existing communities to support increasing density through the provision of more affordable transport modes and infrastructure. The bill will also finalise the transfer of two teams from the planning department to Transport for NSW. Those teams are impressive. To date, the Cities Revitalisation and Place team has worked with over 100 councils leading programs to create walkable, safe, sustainable and welcoming places that everyone can access and enjoy. Those programs have a positive impact on the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of individuals and communities, and provide the economic benefit of supporting local business.

The second team, called the Smart Places team, leads the use of smart technology and data solutions in shaping cities and precincts. They enable innovative pilot programs such as the Digital Smart Kerbs program in Campbelltown and Penrith. That pilot could give Transport for NSW and councils better information about how to get the best out of kerbside space. Kerbs are hot property: Taxi ranks, parking areas, bus stops and loading zones all compete for kerbside space. Improved information will let us optimise the network and see an uplift in economic productivity in key urban centres, supporting freight and mobility service providers and local businesses. Transport for NSW will take the lead on delivering active transport and the activation of public spaces across the State, working in collaboration with councils and other New South Wales government agencies.

I also speak in support of the establishment of TAM. Creating TAM as the owner of all publicly owned rail assets in New South Wales will deliver considerable benefits for the State. Effective asset management supports a safe, resilient and reliable rail network for our passengers and the movement of goods across the State. When we do not take a strategic approach to asset management, when things like maintenance are not prioritised, it impacts on passengers. TAM will be the single entity with clear accountability for asset management. It will ensure that investment in rail delivers the expected outcome for the State from an asset assurance perspective. TAM will establish a clear link between budget and asset performance, providing Transport for NSW with information and options to manage the performance of the integrated transport network. The benefits of adopting a whole-of-life-cycle asset management approach will be clear. The bill delivers two great reforms for the future of transport in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (12:31): I speak in favour of the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Transport for bringing it to the House. The bill will amend the Transport Administration Act 1988 and basically has two key aspects. The first is to convert the Transport Asset Holding Entity, TAHE, from a State owned corporation to a statutory corporation called the Transport Asset Manager of New South Wales, or TAM. The functions of TAHE include to hold, manage, operate and maintain transport assets owned by it and also to establish, finance, acquire, construct and develop transport assets. Additionally, TAHE facilitates access to the part of the New South Wales rail network that it owns, and it is able to acquire and develop land to enable it to carry out its other functions.

The second aspect of the bill, which I will focus more on in my speech, is to incorporate active transport and the improvement of the activation of public spaces as functions and objectives of Transport for NSW. The bill makes changes to the functions and objectives of Transport for NSW to ensure that it can take the lead on promoting active transport and improving the activation of public spaces. Those active transport and public space activation initiatives, programs and services have the added benefit of reducing congestion in urban centres, reducing emissions, supporting community health and improving the vibrancy and amenity of neighbourhoods. I note the member for Vaucluse is in the Chamber. She led for the Opposition in debate on this bill. In her contribution she said:

I highlight that the approach to promote active transport and public ... activation is bipartisan.

I note that the member for Vacluse is still in her first term. To actually complete that sentence we should also add the words "as long as the upgrades and activation occur in Coalition electorates".

Ms Kellie Sloane: We had an active transport Minister.

Mr STEPHEN BALI: Please listen; you weren't here. My speech will let the member for Vacluse know exactly what the Opposition's position was. Opposition members will argue that, when they were in government, they spent record amounts of money on station upgrades. And, yes, that is true—after selling Western Sydney assets and privatising electricity, they promised station upgrades in return. But somehow most of the station upgrades were in Coalition electorates. For example, on 23 November 2021 the member for Miranda said in this Chamber regarding the Como station upgrade that people had to climb 30 steps and that created mobility issues. Miranda is obviously a Liberal electorate. Como station, which had approximately 1,660 entries and exits per day, was upgraded before Doonside station, which had 6,400 entries and exits per day. That is four times more at Doonside station than at Como station. But somehow Como jumped to the top of the list.

Doonside station, which is in a Labor electorate, has far more people using it, many more steps, an extremely steep and long ramp, and a larger community of about 25,000 people surrounding it. They need access because the railway line splits the community in half. There are schools, shops and services on both sides. Yet that station was ignored under the previous Government. Even worse, the station was actually earmarked in 2011—in the last year of the previous Labor Government—and then was cancelled by the Liberals on the first day of their Government. There were a lot of other speeches in this House. All the Coalition members waxed lyrical in the Chamber about how wonderful their station upgrades were, while many of our Labor electorates dropped off the list. The former Liberal Government did no independent needs-based assessment. The Auditor-General also indicated that Doonside station was ranked thirteenth most in need. That was in 2018, when the previous Liberal Government was already boasting about a \$2 billion program with 470 stations upgraded, 58 with accessible uplifts. That was wonderful, but the stations in need were actually dropped down the list.

Ms Kellie Sloane: What is the point you're making?

Mr STEPHEN BALI: The member for Vacluse will not bother to listen. In a private member's statement the member for Miranda talked about the extensive community consultation that took place to design Como station:

... a unique tribute to Como, and honours the history and natural beauty of the suburb whilst remaining modern and sustainable. It is aesthetically beautiful, with considered detail, and is such a fitting tribute to our community.

...

... the word "Como" within the tile panelling of the underpass. Additionally, the accessibility ramp was decorated with historical depictions of Como station over 100 years ago just south of the Georges River. In the 3D work, you can see a steam train entering the station, as a reminder of our community roots.

Doonside station finally got upgraded, thank god, after a massive debate in Parliament. But I remind the Liberals that it was built in 1880, five years before Como station in 1885. In comparison, I note the consultation for Doonside station—a station in a Labor electorate. When I rang up and asked, "Can we have our input? Can we have meetings?", the response from the transport department at the time was, "Yes, we know your history. See the webpage for further details." Thank God there has been a change of government—talk about a two-tiered approach.

As I said in this House in June 2018, Doonside station had 22,000 passengers using it per week versus the newly—at that stage—announced Hawkesbury River station, which had 550 people. Wahoonga station had 16,000. Somehow Doonside kept being pushed down the list. It was even reported in the media that then Treasurer Perrottet, also the member for Hawkesbury at the time, announced the Hawkesbury River station upgrade because he did not realise that it was not in his electorate of Hawkesbury but actually in the Hornsby electorate. He even acknowledged it—"Whoops, some other station got it." As I said, 550 people use that station versus the 23,000 people who use Doonside station. Those people in Doonside were left stranded. After the member for Miranda gave her speech, the former member for Vacluse said:

The lift created a sense of amenity and had such a practical impact on the elderly and young mums with their strollers, who could traverse from the train station platform all the way up to the buses and in between to the shops.

I agree with that, but the priority for building stations ought to be based on need rather than the Coalition Government reordering the list for political advantage.

Ms Jenny Leong: You should make them all accessible.

Mr STEPHEN BALI: We should make them all accessible, but I realise there is a budget and a process to deal with that. A handful of residents at Hawkesbury River station, Como and many other stations were deemed

by the previous Liberal Government to be more important than the 25,000 residents of postcode 2767. Four times more people use Doonside than Como. We lodged a petition in this place signed by 11,000 people. The Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, and member for Coogee was thrown out of the Chamber during that robust petition debate. The member for Miranda at the time described the Liberal policy as a "new Future Transport Strategy which will provide a—

Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua: Point of order: The member for Blacktown has referred to the member for Miranda multiple times during his contribution to debate. If he wishes to speak about the member for Miranda, I ask that he does so by way of substantive motion.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): I do not uphold the point of order. Some references have been made to the member for Miranda, but that does not require a substantive motion.

Mr STEPHEN BALI: I seek an extension of time. I could have finished my contribution; I have only 30 seconds left. [*Extension of time*]

Obviously Coalition members still do not listen. I gave examples about improving the access and amenity of the area. I am praising the member for Miranda because she talked about her station upgrade and the communication that took place between the then Department of Transport and the local community. But when that upgrade took place, other stations were presented with an off-the-shelf model. The Labor Government is now looking at how to present stations in a fair manner and negotiate with the community. The Como community has a brilliant station. I had a look at it; it is absolutely fabulous. But, unfortunately, other stations were left floundering.

To deliver those stations, we need to communicate with the local community. That will provide the best outcomes for the community, including for walkability and the use of different types of transport. All communities should be treated equally. They should have a voice and representation. People should not be excluded because of how they vote. I hope that we, as a Labor government, do not do that to Liberal electorates. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:43): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2024. I thank members representing the electorates of Mount Druitt, Vacluse, Shellharbour, Heathcote, Balmain, Coogee, Cessnock, Granville, Liverpool, Riverstone, Tweed, Newtown, Campbelltown, East Hills, Leppington, Pittwater and Blacktown. Those members debated the second tranche of reforms to TAHE and addressed a range of issues across the Transport portfolio that are important to them and their constituencies. I will address some matters that were raised in relation to the bill. First, I challenge the Opposition's characterisation of this legislation as a "name change" or "shifting of the accounting methodology".

The reality is that this is the final stage of a process we started last year to ensure that the Transport Asset Holding Entity's operations are guided less by commercial imperatives and that its number one job is to maximise the safety and reliability of its transport assets for the people of New South Wales. Changing it from a State owned corporation to a public, non-financial corporation—similar to Sydney Trains, NSW Trains and Venues NSW—will create a new operating model that delivers on our Government's election commitment to reform TAHE. I see this bill as an important reflection of the Government's priority that the Transport portfolio is focused on people and community, in contrast with the former Government's focus on consumers. This makes very clear where the Government's priorities lie, and we are reforming in that manner.

The bill makes it clear that the responsibility of Transport for NSW is to the people of New South Wales. It is explicit that its functions are to plan for a transport system that meets the needs and expectations of the public and the safe and reliable delivery of public transport services. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of people with varying mobility needs being able to access that transport system and those essential services to participate in their local communities. The Transport Administration Act makes this explicit. In section 2B, a common objective of the public transport agencies is to contribute to the delivery of social benefits, including greater inclusiveness, accessibility and quality of life. The need to ensure that people using mobility devices are included in our transport system is a clear feature of the work in active transport and the activation of public spaces.

The Active Transport Strategy and the *NSW Guide to Walkable Public Space* acknowledge that people with a disability can find it harder to use walking and bike paths. There are barriers like uneven or narrow footpaths, bollards and other obstructions, and fit-for-purpose infrastructure has an important role to play in that. In accordance with Standing Order 188A, I address two issues raised by the Legislation Review Committee in its digest of 18 June 2024. The first issue is the breadth of powers proposed to be available to the Transport Asset Manager New South Wales [TAM], and the second is the breadth of the delegation powers. The proposed

functions of TAM include the following: to provide services or facilities that are necessary, ancillary or incidental to its functions; to conduct any business or activity—whether or not related to its functions—that it considers will further its objectives; and to exercise its functions outside New South Wales, with the authorisation of the Minister.

The first two provisions continue the functions currently available to TAHE under section 11 of the Transport Administration Act, which themselves were a continuation of the functions given to TAHE's predecessor, RailCorp. Similar powers are available to other transport corporations, such as the Ports Corporation under the Ports and Maritime Administration Act 1995. Sydney Trains, NSW Trains and Sydney Metro each have the power to conduct any business, whether or not related to their functions. Transport for NSW also has the power to conduct any business, whether or not related to its activities under any Act, and to exercise its functions within or outside New South Wales. These powers are set out in section 8H in schedule 1 to the Act. The necessary, ancillary or incidental provision is not intended to confer independent or unrelated functions on TAM. It will enable TAM to provide facilities or services that are required to support, or arise in conjunction with, the exercise of its specific functions.

For example, one of TAHE's present functions is to acquire land. Ancillary or incidental functions would include the power to execute the contract relating to the acquisition of the land and the power to register the land with NSW Land Registry Services. Similarly, the provision empowering TAM to conduct any business or activity, whether or not related to its listed functions, is intended to be a provision that will enable TAM to use its available resources to achieve its legislated objectives. For example, this power would provide TAM with the flexibility to administer its asset base in compliance with its legislative objectives. Activities currently undertaken by TAHE that comply with its objectives may not sit squarely within a listed function. These include, for example, sale of advertising space at railway stations; heritage projects, like the St James tunnels restoration; development and restoration of rail trails; and EV charging stations.

In relation to exercising functions outside of New South Wales, TAHE's current operating licence provides that TAHE may, in connection with the performance of its functions, conduct business or activities outside New South Wales, with the written approval of the Minister. This is consistent with the power proposed in new section 7 (6) in the draft bill. Examples of business conducted outside of New South Wales by TAHE include the Kingston railway station in the Australian Capital Territory. It is an interesting fact that it is owned by TAHE in Canberra and leased to third parties. Cross-border leases also relate to various rolling stock—for example, our Millennium trains. The wording of the bill in these respects is consistent with practice to date. It has been approved by the Parliament in respect of other similar entities with similar roles, requiring adequate functions to ensure they achieve their objectives.

Turning to the delegation powers, I note that TAHE in its current form as a State owned corporation [SOC] does not have any power of delegation. Accordingly, TAHE has had to enter into various agency arrangements with third parties, such as Transport for NSW and Sydney Trains, and granted powers of attorney to those entities so that they can exercise functions and sign documents on behalf of TAHE. TAM will be a government agency, not a SOC. It is therefore appropriate that TAM, like other government agencies such as Transport for NSW, be provided with powers to delegate its functions. TAM will be able to delegate the exercise of its functions to "an authorised person". Under new section 14 (3) in the bill, "authorised person" means:

- (a) a member of staff of TAM, or
- (b) a person of a class prescribed by the regulations or approved by the Minister.

Transport for NSW currently has the same power to approve a class of authorised persons in relation to the delegation of functions of Sydney Trains and NSW Trains in sections 36K (3) and 37K (3) of the Transport Administration Act. Insofar as "authorised persons" are prescribed in the regulations, such regulations are subject to parliamentary scrutiny. I understand that Parliament might be concerned by the power of the Minister to approve who should be an "authorised person", without similar parliamentary scrutiny. However, Ministers are accountable to the Parliament through budget estimates and other mechanisms, so parliamentary oversight is still available.

The de-SOCing—as some people would like to describe it—of TAHE and the establishment of TAM will simplify the current complex arrangements and establish a new entity with clear accountability for rail asset management. That is what is critical—the clarity around the management of our valuable and essential assets. It will ensure that the entity that owns the rail network is focused on maximising the safety and reliability of those transport assets. The shift will enable long-term investment in rail assets, in our transport network and in our Government's broader objectives.

The bill broadens the functions and objectives of Transport for NSW to ensure that the agency has appropriate legislative functions to carry out this important work. Specifically, the bill enables Transport for NSW to develop and implement critical programs, projects, strategies and campaigns that will help us realise the

Government's active transport and public space activation commitments. These programs, projects, strategies and campaigns will help us direct the future of our transport network, making sure that it is centred on public and active transport and that they become, in every opportunity, the modes of choice for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Ms Kobi Shetty.

Consideration in Detail

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

Ms KOBİ SHETTY (Balmain) (12:53): By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-93E in globo:

No. 1 Definition of "active transport"

Page 3, Schedule 1.1[1], proposed definition of *active transport*. Insert after line 25—

(vi) the use of a manual wheelchair,

No. 2 Definition of "active transport"

Page 3, Schedule 1.1[1], proposed definition of *active transport*, paragraph (b), line 26. Omit "device." Insert instead "device,"

No. 3 Definition of "active transport"

Page 3, Schedule 1.1[1], proposed definition of *active transport*. Insert after line 27—

(c) the use of a motorised mobility device.

Example— a motorised wheelchair or a mobility scooter

These amendments will update the definition of "active transport" to ensure that they recognise and include people with disability and people with limited mobility in the bill. Specifically, the definition of active transport will be amended to include the use of a manual wheelchair or motorised mobility device—for example, a motorised wheelchair or mobility scooter. This will ensure that when it comes to the infrastructure and the services required to facilitate shared streets—that is, streets that are for people and not just cars—people with disabilities and needs and people with limited mobility are not simply an afterthought to be managed and addressed by calling on anti-discrimination legislation. These important amendments create provisions that I would like to have seen included in the Government bill. I am pleased that we have consulted with the sector on the bill and have been able to consider these important inclusions. I urge members to support the amendments.

A number of further proposed amendments were circulated on sheet c2024-93E. I appreciate the manner in which the Minister's office has engaged with me on the issues that I have raised. I am confident that we will be able to reach a positive outcome on those issues. To that end, I have decided not to move those amendments today so that we can continue our discussions on those matters through further conversations, including with our colleagues in the other place. I look forward to those ongoing discussions.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:55): I thank the member for Balmain for her commitment to creating better spaces for people to safely walk, ride and move around our city and our State. I thank her and her team for their ongoing conversation in this important space. The Government does not oppose The Greens amendments. The amendments will add mobility devices in the meaning of "active transport"—particularly manual wheelchairs, motorised wheelchairs and mobility scooters—and add "accessibility" to the purposes of activating public spaces. Our Government recognises the importance of people with varying mobility needs being able to access transport options, essential services and participate in their local communities.

A common objective of the public transport agencies is to contribute to the delivery of social benefits, including greater inclusive communities, accessibility and quality of life for everyone. This is currently set out in section 2B (h) of the Transport Administration Act. This is also consistent with other provisions in the bill that seek to ensure accessibility through the new functions and objectives of Transport for NSW relating to the activation of public spaces. The need to provide for the inclusiveness, accessibility and quality of life of people using mobility devices is front and centre of a range of different strategies that guide our work in active transport and the activation of public spaces. As I referred to earlier, the Active Transport Strategy notes that 3 per cent of the New South Wales population use some kind of mobility aid. That strategy explains:

To ensure everyone can access transport we need inclusivity to be at the forefront of our planning, delivery, and operations.

That approach to devices used by older people or people with a disability is also consistent with the New South Wales Road Rules. Under the New South Wales Road Rules, wheelchair users are designated and have the same rights and responsibilities as other pedestrians. Current law and practice already support the promotion of the needs of people using these types of mobility devices. The Government agrees that it would be appropriate to explicitly name the devices to ensure that this focus continues. In light of those considerations, the Government does not oppose The Greens amendments to the bill.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-93E be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

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

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

Third Reading

Ms JO HAYLEN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

COAL MINE SUBSIDENCE COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 19 June 2024.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:59): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. The Liberals and The Nationals will support the bill. The Coalition has always been a leader in advocating for responsible mining practices, ensuring safety and providing fair and reasonable compensation for persons affected in relevant areas. The groundwork for this bill should be credited to the previous Coalition Government. Under the Coalition Government we passed the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017. A statutory review of the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017, upon which this bill is predicated, was initiated in 2022 by the then Coalition Government. It has taken the Minns Labor Government a year to respond to the nine recommendations suggested by the statutory review.

Mining subsidence—the sinking of the ground surface due to underground mining activity—affects primarily those living in regional New South Wales, some parts of which have been mined for over 150 years. This bill proposes various changes to enhance compensation protocols and safety measures for those who live near, work in and/or own mines. The bill will introduce minor updates, including updating the language referring to damage arising from subsidence and adding definitions for assessment reports, mining operations, pre-mining inspections and subsidence damage, while removing the definition for preventive or mitigative expense. It will also provide reasonable compensation for accommodation expenses for lessees if a building is uninhabitable due to subsidence and includes compensation for preventive or mitigative expenses only for pre-existing improvements or goods.

The bill will ensure that no compensation for damage to improvements will be paid if a pre-mining inspection was refused and will allow the installation of survey equipment to monitor subsidence risks. Claims for compensation must be lodged as approved by the chief executive of Subsidence Advisory NSW, and Subsidence Advisory NSW is to assess claims and provide assessment reports. The bill will enhance maximum monetary penalties for various offences and require the chief executive to consult with the public before approving or amending procedures. Furthermore, the bill will clarify procedures for assessing and determining claims, and notes that the chief executive must provide written reasons for determinations inconsistent with assessment reports. It will authorise the chief executive to evacuate people and arrange temporary accommodation if subsidence causes danger and will allow the recovery of expenses from coalmine proprietors if necessary actions are taken due to subsidence.

The bill will authorise funding for works to prevent or mitigate subsidence damage and notes that the chief executive is to require and recover costs for pre-mining inspections and related survey equipment. It also will prohibit the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service from delegating specific functions under the Act to the chief executive or any employee of Subsidence Advisory NSW. The NSW Minerals Council is a key stakeholder with respect to the bill. I thank the council and its hardworking staff for their time, expertise and

engagement on this bill and note some concerns raised on behalf of this significant and valued sector for New South Wales.

Their concerns relate to the relocation compensation of tenants. They would like to see the compensation limited to reasonable relocation expenses, excluding rent for alternative accommodations. Secondly, the council sought clarification around the role of Subsidence Advisory NSW in determining claims, and about due notice and information formally required. I urge the Government to consider the issues raised by the council and to continue those conversations and that important engagement with an industry so significant to our great State. I thank all those involved in the consultation process, including the Minister and his team, as well as the NSW Minerals Council. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (13:03): I speak on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. As we just heard, in 2023 a statutory review of the Act was carried out, and the report was tabled in Parliament in August last year. This review found that, while the objectives of the Act were still valid, the Act could be improved with amendments to clarify ambiguities in the Act to improve the claim determination process and expand the compensation framework and improve public safety. Mine subsidence is the movement of the ground that can occur after underground coalmining. Both active and historical coalmines can cause subsidence damage to buildings and other structures, ranging from cracked walls and jammed doors to more significant structural issues. When the Act was introduced in 2017, it provided for a system of compensation for damage caused by subsidence and reduced red tape for mine operators and initiated a fairer compensation system for residents affected by subsidence.

The Government is dedicated to ensuring that the Act and approved procedures remain fit for purpose and align with their intended policy objectives. Under the Act, claims for compensation are decided in accordance with the approved procedures, ensuring consistent and fair assessment and determination of claims. The bill aims to extend the application of approved procedures to the making, assessment and determination of claims, the review of the determination of a claim, and the steps that occur prior to mining commencing and prior to a claim being lodged. These changes would introduce a no-cost review process for claim determinations, facilitating the resolution of claim disputes and streamlining the claim process for property owners, claimants and mine operators.

The proposed amendments in the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024 will clarify the Act's operation and improve consumer and public safety while balancing the needs of mine operators in New South Wales. The Government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of property owners, tenants and the public. To do this, the bill proposes a number of amendments including extending compensation to residential tenants for reasonable relocation and short-term accommodation expenses when the property they are leasing is uninhabitable, under repair or under construction due to subsidence. It will introduce powers for Subsidence Advisory NSW to direct people to evacuate in a subsidence emergency. It will reimburse both property owners and tenants affected by subsidence events for relocation costs and other reasonable expenses, such as food, clothing and damage to property.

It will provide Subsidence Advisory NSW with the power to make payments from the fund to public authorities to repair infrastructure such as roads or sewers that may require emergency repairs following subsidence damage. Through the enhanced safety amendments in the bill, the Government is demonstrating that consumer and public safety is and continues to be its primary consideration. The bill seeks to clarify the operation of the Act and the role of Subsidence Advisory NSW during the assessment and determination of all claims. Currently, after a claim is lodged, Subsidence Advisory NSW conducts an assessment to determine whether the damage is in an area that may be affected by subsidence from an active mine. If the damage falls within this area, the claim is subsequently forwarded to the relevant mine operator for acknowledgement.

Following this, Subsidence Advisory NSW selects an independent assessor to carry out assessments. After the assessment, the assessor prepares an assessment report detailing whether the damage arose from subsidence and, where applicable, an estimate for the cost of repairs. However, there is confusion among stakeholders about whether mine operators assess and decide whether to accept or reject claims. To address this the bill proposes changes to section 12 and the inclusion of a new section—section 11A—in the Act to clarify that Subsidence Advisory NSW and the chief executive are responsible for assessing and determining all claims. This will remove any ambiguity regarding the claim assessment process and reiterate the fair and independent process of compensation.

By updating this bill the Government is also demonstrating its commitment to providing commonsense and flexible laws that increase accessibility for customers. For example, currently the Act allows a person to apply for compensation by lodging a claim through an online portal accessed via the Subsidence Advisory NSW website. However, the Act does not consider that some customers may have trouble with lodging their claims through the portal due to digital literacy or accessibility issues. The bill proposes an amendment to section 11 of the Act to give Subsidence Advisory NSW the power to set the way in which claims can be made.

This change will enable a person to make a claim for compensation in a way that is approved by the chief executive and enables claims to be lodged outside the online portal, creating greater flexibility and accessibility for customers. The bill was developed in consultation with the public and included 53 public responses through community consultation. In particular, consultation occurred with the community of the Southern Coalfield, where active underground coalmining is occurring. This bill will expand compensation to assist more people affected by coalmine subsidence and allow affected residential tenants to be compensated for accommodation and relocation expenses arising from mine subsidence damage. It will improve the claim assessment and determination process to support customers. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:09): I contribute to debate on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. I note that the statutory review initiated in 2022 and completed in 2023 made nine recommendations, which have been gladly taken up in this bill. Coming from the coalmining area of the Upper Hunter, I believe there is an absolute requirement to make sure that those who are impacted by mining are well looked after, in this instance by the mining companies. If the mining companies are long gone, the Government needs to step up to the plate and give back some of the huge royalties it has collected over time. It is totally reasonable for compensation to be given for accommodation and relocation expenses if a building is made uninhabitable due to subsidence.

However, this bill does not deal proactively with subsidence issues created by old mines in the ground. It is a missed opportunity, but the problem did not exist at the start of 2023. The issue arose with the Newcastle Mines Grouting Fund, which was cut by the Labor Government in late 2023. That fund required developers of new housing—and we all know how important it is to support new housing—to pay for grouting up to a capped cost. If the cost of grouting exceeded that cap, the fund paid the extra approved costs after the works were completed and validated by Subsidence Advisory NSW. That fund was very fair for developers. It was important in places such as Newcastle—and certainly, it should be extended to the full lower Hunter—where historic mines pose a huge risk to developers. The risk exists not only to the development plot but also because when they start grouting, the grout can fill up a number of adjacent plots. That was a real concern for the first developer in any of those locations.

The Newcastle Mines Grouting Fund was set up to make sure the business cases for new projects were strong. The fund gave confidence to builders that they would be able to construct new housing and not be left with a huge problem. The cancellation of the program raises an unacceptable risk to developments in Newcastle and the lower Hunter because of the loss of security against the unpredictable and expensive cost of grouting works. When builders start filling a hole and it just gets bigger and bigger, the cost can sink the viability of a new housing project. The fund is very important and needs to be reinstated. The Government could have considered that issue before it introduced this bill to the House. The fund was established in 2015, largely to deal with the two big mining seams that went through the middle of the Newcastle CBD.

In the scheme of things, it had very little impact on the budget. The whole fund supported approximately eight projects, with a value of \$1.1 million. That is not a huge amount. But developers that are working with tight project budgets are considering costs getting away from them, inflation and the risks that they are carrying. The idea of grouting creating huge overrun costs is huge. Private industry should not be carrying those kinds of risks beyond what developers know about through the information provided by the Government. It is an example of market failure. The Government has collected a huge amount of royalties from this industry. Mining has occurred in Newcastle for the past 200 years. The whole area has relied on the industry. It has provided a huge amount of economic benefit to the area.

If the Government wants to provide new housing then this is an opportunity to avoid subsidence in the future and help developers continue to expand housing stocks in Newcastle and, indeed, the Lower Hunter. Whilst this fund was designed for Newcastle, the problem exists throughout the Lower Hunter, particularly in areas where there were ground mines historically. In the electorate of the member for Cessnock there is a huge network of underground coalmines.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): There is not enough grout.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL: There is not enough grout in the world to fill those holes. At a time in the future when significant housing developments are being considered—when Cessnock starts seeing 15-storey buildings—there will be real risk for developers. That time may be well into the future, but the risk exists right across the area. In Newcastle those developments are already happening, and as they extend throughout the Hunter it will be a huge problem. It has a huge impact on redevelopment. The Government needs to look at this issue. It needs to recognise the huge benefit the mining industry brings to the coffers of New South Wales and return money to the communities that are affected. Right now we are talking about grout filling and subsidence, but there are many social impacts on our communities as a result of mining in the past, the future and right now.

It is important that funds such as the Newcastle Mines Grouting Fund are reinstated. It is important that the Resources for Regions fund, which is all about returning royalties to mining communities, is reinstated. Our communities are suffering in different ways as a result of the huge success of the mining industry in the Upper Hunter. As a result, the cost of housing is increasing. There are social challenges due to rosters. There are impacts throughout communities. These programs are all about making sure that the huge mining wealth returns to those communities. This Government has taken billions and billions of extra dollars out of these areas while reducing the amount going back into the communities. That is a great tragedy. We should stop that trend. I fully support the bill. I think it is great. But it is a lost opportunity to deal with the Newcastle Mines Grouting Fund and set up something that supports future housing and reduces risks for developers in a very cost-effective way.

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (13:19): I am happy to contribute to the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. I remind the member for Upper Hunter of the issues in the proposed bill which relate to safety for everybody, to make sure that workers and buyers of new houses are kept safe. Members will not forget Opal Tower. This is also the Government that has just recently put through workplace manslaughter laws. I represent a community in the northern Illawarra that has a lot of coalmining, both new and old pits, and a rich history in New South Wales, particularly in the seat of Heathcote.

In addition to its picturesque qualities, the Illawarra landscape is geologically resource rich, with coal discovered at Coalcliff in 1797 by Dr George Bass. Coalmining greatly impacted the establishment and settlement of communities along the Illawarra coastline, shaping the urban and industrial development of the area. Helensburgh, in the northern suburbs of the Illawarra, hosts Australia's oldest operating mine. The Helensburgh mine produces coking coal for Australian steelmakers and exports millions of tonnes a year. It was established by the Metropolitan Colliery in 1888.

Despite the rich history of coalmining and its benefit to the economy and local communities, mine subsidence risks arise. For the benefit of members across the Chamber, mine subsidence is the movement of ground that can occur after underground coalmining. After coal is extracted, the land above can sink and fill the hollow mine workings. This can cause tilts and strains on the ground surface. The bill is a significant step forward in ensuring that the legislation governing coalmining subsidence compensation is robust, fair and up to date with the evolving needs of our communities and of the coalmining industry.

The amendments presented in the bill are informed by the comprehensive 2023 statutory review of the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017. I believe they address critical areas that require modernisation and clarity. The amendments in the bill will significantly enhance the compensation framework, support claimants and improve the capabilities of Subsidence Advisory to respond to subsidence impacts and risks. The changes are crucial in ensuring that property owners, lessees and communities across New South Wales are adequately protected and supported.

Key provisions and amendments include consistent terminology. The bill standardises terminology related to subsidence damage, providing clarity and common understanding for all stakeholders. Also included is expanded compensation. Extending relocation compensation to tenants whose properties become uninhabitable due to subsidence ensures fair treatment for all residents, not just property owners and developers. Empowering Subsidence Advisory to arrange temporary accommodation and reimburse out-of-pocket expenses to residents during subsidence emergencies ensures immediate support and relief.

The claims process will be improved, with flexible claim lodging. Allowing claims to be lodged outside the online portal provides greater accessibility and convenience for all claimants, especially those who may struggle with digital submissions. Mandating pre-mining inspections ensures a fair process for determining subsidence damage claims, which promotes transparency and accuracy. Subsidence Advisory capabilities will be enhanced. It will have greater oversight of pre-mining inspections and the ability to install survey equipment to monitor subsidence risks, to ensure proactive management of potential damage.

New powers requiring mine operators to provide necessary information will enhance Subsidence Advisory's ability to assess and determine claims efficiently. Roles and responsibilities regarding claim assessment and determination will be clarified. Clarifying that Subsidence Advisory is responsible for all claims of compensation eliminates confusion and ensures a consistent, transparent process. Expanding the scope of approved procedures to include steps before, during and after claim determination provides comprehensive guidance for all parties involved. Penalties and enforcement will be increased. Increasing penalties to reflect inflation will ensure that the deterrent effect of penalties is maintained, promoting compliance with the Act.

Clarifying that compensation is for work to prevent or mitigate damage to existing structures only minimises confusion and ensures fair compensation practices. Granting the chief executive the authority to carry out or fund necessary works to mitigate and prevent subsidence damage will ensure timely and effective interventions. There will be comprehensive implementation of statutory review recommendations. The bill will

implement all nine recommendations of the 2023 statutory review, which reflects feedback from the public and stakeholders, particularly in the Wollondilly and Newcastle areas.

The amendments are designed to enhance the effectiveness and fairness of the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017. They provide clearer guidelines for compensation, improve the claims process and ensure that both property owners and the coalmining industry operate within a framework that is fair and transparent. They will ensure that the mines in my electorate, including the Helensburgh mine, are held to account if mining subsidence occurs. Those impacted by mining subsidence will receive fair compensation with a streamlined application process. The amendments will promote safe mining practices across New South Wales. I have built a career out of helping the community and giving everyone a fair go. The bill—and this Government—gives everyone a fair go. By expanding compensation, improving the claims process and enhancing the Subsidence Advisory's capabilities, the bill will ensure that people affected by coalmine subsidence right across New South Wales are adequately supported and compensated—and so they should be.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): It being 1.30 p.m., debate is adjourned. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour. I shall now leave the Chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

UNIVERSITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Steve Whan, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (14:31): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to bring the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 to the House. It is interesting to note that this is the first bill I have introduced to the House in nearly 15 years—it has been a little while—and the first I have introduced as Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. New South Wales public universities are at the heart of so many of our communities. Public university campuses are all over New South Wales, and every year they educate over 420,000 students. They create jobs in their communities. They provide a highly skilled workforce to support our economy. They are a crucial part of our State, our civil society and our future.

As Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education I have responsibility for the Acts that establish the 10 New South Wales public universities. Those universities have accountability requirements to the New South Wales Government. The bill I am introducing makes small but important amendments to the Charles Sturt University Act 1989, the Macquarie University Act 1989, the Southern Cross University Act 1993, the University of New England Act 1993, the University of Newcastle Act 1989, the University of Sydney Act 1989, the University of Technology Act 1989, the University of Wollongong Act 1989, the Western Sydney University Act 1997, and the University of New South Wales Act 1989. It is our role as a government to ensure that legislation is up to date, that it serves its purpose and that it is reflective of the needs of the communities it serves. That is why I bring to this House these amendments, which will update small components of each of the public universities Acts.

Universities Acts have been progressively updated since Australia's first university, the University of Sydney, was established here in New South Wales in 1850. The Acts we now recognise as the modern New South Wales public universities Acts were introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the Dawkins reforms ushered in a unified national higher education system. A patchwork of smaller institutions, universities and colleges of advanced education became nine, then 10, State universities. The regulation of the higher education sector that was once State and Territory based was moved to the Australian Government in 2012.

In 2011 this place passed the Universities Governing Bodies Act 2011, which brought in uniform provisions to re-establish the governing bodies of the 10 public universities and brought the language of the universities Acts into the twenty-first century. Since this time we have seen universities continue to grow and change. The higher education sector has grown immensely as the New South Wales economy has grown and our need for highly skilled, highly educated people has continued to grow. It is important we continue to update and improve the universities Acts when needed. This ensures they can continue to focus on their core business, outlined in the objects and functions set out in their Acts.

The amendments in this legislation aim to modernise and streamline the lands requirements in the Acts, including removing the need to gain approval for certain land transactions. As members may be aware, the 10 public universities require the Minister's approval if they want to sell or long-term lease land obtained from the State of New South Wales for nominal or less than market value. This is an important safeguard on assets

gifted to universities by the New South Wales Government for the purposes of the provision of higher education. However, for certain transactions, this role can cause unnecessary red tape and be a burden for both universities and government.

A major pain point is that the requirement for ministerial approval captures routine land dealings by universities around utilities infrastructure, for example, electricity transformers, overhead powerlines and substation kiosks. Seeking ministerial approval for such small transactions is an administrative burden for both universities and government and, frankly, slows processes down. Using a recent example, one university had to get ministerial approval to grant a lease to Ausgrid so that it could install an electrical surface chamber substation in a new building. Another university sought ministerial approval to grant a right of way allowing a utility company to access university property to maintain and service overhead powerlines.

Universities should be allowed to enter into such minor arrangements for utilities infrastructure without ministerial approval. This covers, but is not limited to, granting easements and leases for infrastructure such as stormwater drainage, pipes and other water infrastructure; electricity distribution infrastructure, such as underground and overhead power cables, substation kiosks and access rights of way; and gas infrastructure, like pipelines. The New South Wales public universities put forward a proposal to update and modernise the language of the public universities lands provisions, which reduces routine transactions that require ministerial approval where appropriate checks and balances already exist. These amendments will remove the requirement for ministerial approval for some routine university land dealings, like granting easements, and ministerial approval for leases up to 99 years for utilities infrastructure will no longer be required.

The important existing requirement for universities to gain ministerial approval for the sale of land or long-term lease of land for other purposes remains unchanged. I will provide some examples of how the amended lands provisions will work. The University of Wollongong would be able to directly grant easements for its innovation campus, including for sewerage pipes and access, underground electricity cables and access, and a substation and drains. The University of Sydney would be able to directly grant rights of carriageway past the site of one of its buildings, an easement for access to an electricity substation and high-voltage lines across a range of buildings.

Examples of transactions where my or any future Minister's role will remain the same, and where approval will still be required, include approval for Macquarie University to enter into a long-term lease for the RNA facility it is part of, with five other universities and the New South Wales Government; approval for the same university to long-term lease land to the Woolcock Institute and to Macquarie University Hospital, and to long-term lease sports fields to Sydney Football Club; and approval for Charles Sturt University to long-term lease land to Dubbo council for sport and recreation facilities as part of the Dubbo Health Education and Wellbeing Precinct. Obviously, for proposals where universities suggest that they would like to sell land for development they will continue to need ministerial approval.

These amendments create an appropriate balance of operational oversight over the lands and infrastructure occupied by public universities, and they reduce universities' and government's administrative burden for routine land dealings. The amendments will remove outdated, irrelevant requirements on residential college leases. Several of the changes to the Acts, which are the same across the 10 university Acts, are to modernise the language used. Updating the language will make it clearer for universities to know which types of land dealings require ministerial approval. It will also mean the legislation is more easily understood by the general public. This includes the amendment to remove a provision that requires leases to a residential college affiliated with a university to be at nominal rent and contain a term that the lease not be assigned. The provisions are not currently used and are contrary to the Retail Leases Act. The University of Sydney Act is the only one of the 10 public university Acts to define a "residential college". The phrase "affiliated with the university" is not defined in any of the university Acts. This requirement is therefore outdated and creates unnecessary confusion for universities in understanding their land responsibilities.

Separate amendments in the bill will allow vice-chancellors at five universities to sub-delegate functions. These amendments also include the addition of a sub-delegation function at five of the public universities whereby the respective vice-chancellors can sub-delegate functions delegated by university governing bodies where this delegation includes the authority to sub-delegate. This is not a general sub-delegation power. Currently, this provision already exists in the Acts of the other five public universities. It is proposed to add it to the Acts of Charles Sturt University, the University of NSW, the University of New England, the University of Sydney and Southern Cross University. Examples of sub-delegated powers include approving certain commercial or financial transactions, and the authority to approve certain human resources functions. Again, this is a sensible, measured change. It will mean greater consistency across universities in how their governing bodies work with their vice-chancellors and reduce administrative burden for governing bodies and university administrations alike. This

change will help to ensure governing bodies do not become a bottleneck for functions that can be sub-delegated to or by the vice-chancellor.

The bill provides for several small and appropriate changes to the 10 New South Wales public university Acts. The changes are measured, and importantly they largely preserve the important checks and balances on university land transactions already built into the Acts through our planning system. They also make small modifications to modernise, clarify and update the public university legislation. They are relatively minor changes. I flag to the House that a very comprehensive process is happening at a Federal level at the moment in consultation with the States over the Australian Universities Accord. A number of discussions are around governance at universities and various other aspects. As the Federal Government's position becomes clearer, we may need to come back and make further changes to the Acts. But at this stage, it would be premature to do that. The bill contains small changes to the legislation which seem quite sensible to me. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Steve Whan, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (14:44): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. I take a share of the Government's credit for introducing this bill, but all of the credit for the great work done on the bill goes to the Hon. Tara Moriarty, the Minister for Regional New South Wales in the other place, who has undertaken extensive consultation around the State in coming to the measures in the bill and the direction the bill takes. The bill is being introduced in this place because of the provisions relating to the introduction of bills regarding finances. On that basis, I have the privilege of introducing the bill to the Parliament. I am proud to be part of a government that has a plan for regional New South Wales. Central to that plan is the knowledge that our regions are vital to the prosperity and success of this State. As a government, we are continuing to work hard to support our regional communities, businesses and economies.

The Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024 modernises the Regional Development Act 2004 and is another example of this Government's commitment to supporting our regions. The bill is a key outcome of the New South Wales Government's Regional Development Roadmap, which is our plan for a fresh approach to investing in regional New South Wales to ensure we meet the needs of all communities. The road map includes three key parts: re-establishing the Regional Development Advisory Council to provide independent advice on regional economic development; our \$400 million investment in the Regional Development Trust; and, finally, modernising the Regional Development Act.

This Government is taking a new and different approach to how things have been done in the past, with a plan centred on sustainable, deliberate and impactful investment and independent advice so regional investment is in the places it is needed the most and in the projects that make the biggest difference to regional communities. Going forward, regional communities will know that the New South Wales Government is being strategic and considered in how it supports our communities to thrive into the future. Instead of having one-off programs as we saw in the past, we are providing long-term investment with far-reaching impacts. My hope is that this approach has bipartisan support and that, irrespective of political party, all of us are dedicated to long-term sustainable investment for our regions backed by independent advice.

Our regional communities have changed significantly in recent years, and that is presenting new opportunities and challenges. Regional New South Wales is home to more than one-third of the New South Wales population and supports much of the State's critical industries and infrastructure. Over the coming years our regions will be increasingly integral to our economy as regional areas support the growth of established and emerging industries. Our regions are no longer places of decline; some are areas of significant growth and dynamism. As a representative of regional New South Wales, that is a great delight. But we also know regional New South Wales is facing its fair share of challenges now and into the future, and we are working hard to make sure the future of our regions is being looked after.

The New South Wales Government recognises the changes and challenges in regional New South Wales, and that is why it is amending the Regional Development Act as a key step in sustainably supporting the future of our regions. I stress that this is one of several ways the New South Wales Government is supporting regional New South Wales. This Government has already made a significant financial commitment to our regions. Over

our first two budgets, we committed an initial investment of \$400 million in the Regional Development Trust. That money is for people living and working in regional New South Wales and will be invested strategically via the framework in this bill so its benefits will be felt for generations to come. In addition, the New South Wales Government has invested \$1.4 billion for regional schools, over \$450 million in regional hospital and health worker accommodation upgrades, and nearly a billion dollars towards biosecurity, which I had the pleasure of talking about in question time today.

The Regional Development Act was introduced in 2004 and provides for narrow financial assistance options focused on addressing market gaps and business development problems. The Act has not been reviewed since 2011 and, as it stands, lends itself to the kind of ad hoc investment style we have sometimes seen in the past. It is an Act made for a different time; a time when regional support was focused on financial assistance rather than investment and growth. The bill ensures the modern regional economy is supported by a modern investment framework in the regions. The people of New South Wales elected this Government because they wanted things done differently, and this is exactly what it is doing. It is focusing on strategic and sustainable investment. In September last year the Minister for Regional New South Wales announced a review of the Act to achieve that goal. New South Wales needs a modern legislative framework to govern the Regional Development Trust.

Critically, these changes are informed by what people who live and work in the regions have said about how the New South Wales Government can meaningfully support them. As part of the Act review, the Minister held a series of round tables across nine regional locations, attended by more than 200 representatives across local government, business, Aboriginal community and organisations, environment and education sectors. An issues paper was also released, which had 232 submissions. Expert advice was provided by the Regional Development Advisory Council, which Minister Moriarty re-established in December 2023. For context, the last time the Act was reviewed, a total of nine submissions were received.

The Government was delighted to hear directly from people living in our regions, and honoured by the time they took to engage with the process. The feedback was clear: The Act's current focus is no longer fit for purpose given the significant changes we have seen across regional New South Wales. The bill before the House today will address that feedback in three key ways. It will do so by updating the objects of the Act to reflect the needs and expectations of contemporary regional New South Wales, broadening the types of financial assistance available under the Act, and inserting new governance and reporting provisions to strengthen transparency of expenditure. The changes will enable the Government to deliver strategic, considered and fiscally responsible financial support as the principal means of investment in regional New South Wales. This is about delivering long-term benefits from sustainable regional investment.

I particularly acknowledge two groups who have supported the Government in delivering this important work. The Regional Development Advisory Council has provided advice on regional investment matters and helped to ensure that the regions remain at the centre of government decision-making. The advisory council comprises members with relevant skills and experience in regional investment, including rural and regional economics, primary industries, regional service delivery, finance and public administration, and Aboriginal enterprise. The Regional Development Reference Group has been invaluable as genuine representation of regional communities and stakeholders whilst we develop the program and amend the legislative framework. In particular, I acknowledge the contributions of Local Government NSW, the NSW Council of Social Service, the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, NSW Minerals Council, Business NSW, Civil Contractors Federation NSW, NSW Farmers, and Unions NSW.

Over the last six months the advisory council and the reference group have been involved in government investment planning and the development of the bill. These are the people who live in, work in and understand regional New South Wales. They have the expertise and experience necessary to advise on what regional New South Wales needs. I and the Government—as I am sure the Minister will when the bill goes to the other place—thank them for their involvement in the process to date. Even more, I thank the members of regional communities who attended the round tables across New South Wales and who contributed through the public consultation processes on the development of the bill. I say to them: You have been heard, and we are working hard to deliver what you have told us you need.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. The bill consists of several parts: updated Act objects, modern and flexible financial assistance provisions, robust new governance and reporting provisions, and other minor administrative updates. Consultation found that the current Act's narrow focus on gaps in the market and economic outcomes does not align with our communities' expectations around regional development. In effect, the objects of the Act set the scope for providing financial assistance. The bill will replace the current narrow objects with new ones and, in doing so, expand the purposes for which financial assistance can be provided to support regional development and identify the priority areas for investing in regional New South Wales. Developing our regions

includes investment in economies and communities, and these changes make it clear that social and economic considerations are critical to regional economic development.

Consultation feedback also supported broadening the range of investment approaches to cater to the different opportunities and needs within regional communities. The bill before the House responds to this feedback in two main ways: first, by creating more flexibility in the kinds of financial assistance that can be provided, and for what purpose; and, second, by ensuring the provisions for payments into and out of the trust are appropriate to accommodate these more flexible financial assistance arrangements. The bill ensures a broader range of entities can receive assistance for purposes aligned to the object of the Act.

The bill also broadens the type of financial assistance that can be provided by the trust so that any type of assistance will be able to be provided, including grants, subsidies, loans and tax rebates. The bill also provides for terms and conditions to be placed on grants of financial assistance and for securities against financial assistance in the form of a loan. The bill will also ensure that investments can be identified in a number of ways, including priorities identified by the Government and the community. The bill does this by providing for financial assistance to be granted both in response to an application and on the Minister's own initiative. This means that application processes for community-led initiatives will remain as an avenue under the Act to apply for and receive funding, but there will be other options available now too. These processes will be accompanied by a high level of rigour set out in the trust's governance framework and investment strategy.

The bill also makes subsequent provisions for payments into and out of the trust to accommodate the updated objects and financial assistance provisions. Additional circumstances will be added to the list of ways money can be paid into the trust. This will now include interest that the trust itself earns, interest and repayments from loan products provided under the trust, and money directed to the trust by a Minister or any other source. For futureproofing, the bill provides for additional methods of payment that may arise to be prescribed by regulation. The trust will also be able to receive funds from outside of Government. It is the Government's hope that, with bipartisan support, it can create a long-term vehicle for regional investment that is supported not only by Government but by the philanthropic and private sector.

In relation to payments out of the trust, the bill will allow for payments for procurements that support one or more of the purposes listed under the objects of the Act. This will support the delivery of effective investments by Government by providing for activities such as infrastructure audits or reviews of community needs, which would be used to target investments to areas of most need. The Government's approach to the trust is about ensuring a real and additional investment in the communities of New South Wales. The trust will not be used to pay for business-as-usual activities, and it will not be a substitute for other funding sources. The bill also inserts a provision to clarify that money from the trust may be invested in accordance with the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, which will enable the trust to earn interest on funds not otherwise in immediate use.

I will now talk about the robust governance arrangements and policies that will provide transparency about how these new financial assistance arrangements are managed. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that the investment of public money through the trust is informed by the best available evidence and guided by a clear investment strategy and governance framework. To deliver this, the bill requires the publication of a governance framework and investment strategy for the trust on the department's website. The governance framework will outline how the Government intends to guide the effective and transparent administration of the Act. The investment strategy will set out key focus areas and principles for investment. As the strategy will need to evolve over time to ensure it remains reflective of any changes in regional New South Wales, it will be a requirement that this document is reviewed every two years.

The key focus areas for investment under the trust currently are: one, sustainable regional industries; two, Aboriginal economic development and enterprise; three, community connection and capacity building; and, four, improving regional service delivery. The investment strategy will also set out investment pathways available under the trust. There will be pathways for both the community and the Government to identify priorities for investment. Proposals for trust funding will be rigorously assessed by the Regional Development Advisory Council, with support from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to ensure alignment with the trust investment strategy. The Regional Development Advisory Council will provide independent advice on the suitability of the investments to the responsible Minister, who will make the final decision on each proposal.

The bill is another demonstration of this Government's commitment to transparency, accountability and probity in the investment of public funds. The bill will make it a requirement that the Minister appoints a Regional Development Advisory Council. Currently the legislation provides that only the Minister may appoint an advisory council. Up until last year, it had been many years since a regional development advisory council was in place in New South Wales. It should not have been allowed to lapse in the past and it should not be allowed to lapse in the future.

The advisory council plays an important role in providing the Minister with advice on regional investment and regional development. Its expert advisory role is designed to ensure that the interests of rural and regional communities are at the centre of decision-making. As I have said already, the advisory council has played a critical role in informing the delivery of the Regional Development Roadmap to date, including the changes proposed by the bill. Mandating the council's existence will ensure that future governments will always need to have this source of expertise available.

To further support transparency, the bill will require the publication of an annual report on the department's website. The annual report will need to include information about payments from the trust and about the membership of the advisory council. The report will be in addition to the reporting requirements under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, which are met by the department's annual report. That measure, along with the role of the advisory council, will help restore public confidence in regional investment. Each year the public will be able to see how money from the trust has been invested, which is a simple yet important accountability measure. The bill also makes minor administrative amendments necessary to improve the functioning of the Act and replaces outdated references to department names and titles. The trust will be the funding source for initiatives that align with the legislative framework, and the bill is critical to ensuring that it can be properly administered going forward.

As I have said, this Government has a plan for regional New South Wales. One major part of that plan is modernising the Regional Development Act, which has not been reviewed in more than a decade. We have seen the lack of a modernised investment framework favour ad hoc support over considered investment in our regions. This Government is being responsible, responsive and strategic about how it can best support regional New South Wales for future sustainable success.

The Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024 will modernise the Act and support this Government's focus on regional economic development, transparency and accountability around the use of public funds. Our regions are at the heart of our economy and culture, and it is our responsibility today to do everything we can to see them succeed. I am proud to deliver the bill on behalf of the Minister for Regional New South Wales, the Hon. Tara Moriarty. I am grateful for the role that she has played in undertaking extensive consultation around the State to put the bill in place. She has done a terrific job. As a fellow Queanbeyan resident, I am particularly proud of the work she has done in that area. I am proud to be part of a government that is standing side by side with our regions and delivering meaningful change. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT (TRANSPARENCY AND FIT AND PROPER PERSONS) BILL 2024

First Reading

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

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

COAL MINE SUBSIDENCE COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (15:03): I contribute to debate on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. As members know, Wollondilly is a beautiful area. It is the catchment for Sydney at the top of the Bulli escarpment, home to valleys and rolling hills. These hills and valleys have a long history of mining, primarily coalmining, which now survives in the north and centre in two underground coalmines. It surprises people that longwall mines are so close to Sydney. While the miners employed in the mines do take care, by nature their work causes damage to property above ground. It is well known that subsidence can be felt up to 500 metres from the face of the mine wall. Above the mines in my electorate are existing villages and homes. Some of these villages and homes can get damaged from mining underground. I have seen in-ground swimming pools with water that is two inches from the top of the pool on one side and one foot on the other. I have been to homes where daylight can be seen through cracks in the walls.

I have no issue with the management of either of the mines in Wollondilly because they employ many in our community. But, in principle, our system relating to subsidence before this bill was unfair and one-sided. The mines were appointed to be judge, juror and executioner of any claim. These claims ranged from small cracking that could be patched to movements that rendered homes damaged beyond repair. Having the mine do the

pre-assessment, including choosing assessors, allowing no dispute of findings, assessing the claims and then finalising the claims, does not pass the pub test. Even if there is nothing untoward, my community has no faith that this is fair.

The new bill does much to restore that faith and integrity to the system. We will now have independent oversight as well as independent decisions for claims. I thank the Government for listening to the community. My community sought amendments to strengthen this Act in a number of ways. I will move these amendments as a group, reinforcing the independence and limitation of the mine in the final decision. I understand that the Government will not support the amendments and that this decision is a uniquely Wollondilly decision. Some of those changes would have seen the bill reinforce the new system that puts integrity and residents' fair interests at the heart of the decision.

While Opposition members expressed how the bill could have been improved for developers, my concern is simply about improving the situation for my community members and the mums and dads that may want to undertake small developments. The amendments seek to protect the potential of development applications that are submitted, undermined and then need to be changed. While the Government will not support the amendments today, my commitment is that I will always speak for my community. If this new system does not work, then I will speak to the Minister again. Wollondilly for too long has missed out, and I assure my residents that legislative reforms will be ongoing.

To that end, I thank my support team that guided me through the bill and guided the Government with submissions and meetings. Firstly, I thank Steve Baker for his extensive advice after years of representing my residents' claims as their solicitor. He is second to none in knowing the intricacies of the previous Act and the implications for the lives of residents. I also thank Sam Davis from Douglas Park and Nicole Pearce from Bargo. Both have been voices in their respective communities for the two mines that undermine their towns. Sam, along with Steve, gave written submissions that formed the basis of the new Act. While this matter does not affect them directly, their time and effort can be seen in the bill. Both Sam and Nicole have represented their communities on mining committees and met with Minister Chanthivong. On that note, I also thank the Minister and his team for their engagement with my office.

I thank a number of people who have spoken out about this issue in the past. Rivers SOS no longer exists, but I thank Caroline Graham and Julie Sheppard. In 2007, as mayor, I remember going to the Nepean River in a canoe and seeing the gas flames lit on the surface, rising from the cracks of the riverbed down to the mine. Twenty years ago Rivers SOS influenced many people in many ways, so the victory today is for them to share. Finally, I thank the residents of Wollondilly who have raised this issue with me and the former members of Wollondilly for speaking up. I thank them for not giving up. I have heard their voices and finally the Government has listened—congratulations. While we have a way to go with legislative reform in this area, the bill will make a huge difference to the lives of many families in Wollondilly. We have had a win.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (15:08): I speak in debate on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. I do so as the member for Maitland. Even before I had a seat in this Chamber, members of the community came to me with subsidence issues affecting their houses. In a particular case that I remember from 2008, the sad thing was that the person did not know that it was mine subsidence. They thought it was water. To its great credit, Hunter Water did go down the path of checking, but it could not find anything. That happened after the Pasha Bulker event, which you, Mr Temporary Speaker, would be well aware of, when there was a lot of water in the ground.

Over time it all dried out and then the problem did not arise again until 2015, when I was elected to this place. At that time there were the April 2015 super storms. Again, this person's property was completely saturated. They were going through all sorts of dramas—pressures on their marriage, pressures on their family and health issues because the house was constantly damp. It was a brand new house. It had only been built in 2008, so it had not been there for a very long time at all. And that had been the whole of their lived experience in that house, which was their dream home. Again, Hunter Water got involved. This time when it tested the water, it found that there were minerals in the water that indicated it was potentially mine subsidence, and it went forward from there.

I use that example to convey the impact that mine subsidence has on people in our community. People invest in a house, but it is a home. It is somewhere their family will live together. That is also true for people who rent. I am proud to be part of a government that is delivering this legislation because it looks at not only the property owners but also extending compensation to residential tenants. They also need that support for reasonable relocation or short-term accommodation expenses when the property they are leasing is uninhabitable or under repair or construction due to subsidence. The bill also gives powers to the Subsidence Advisory to direct people to evacuate in an emergency and to reimburse both property owners and tenants affected by those events for relocation costs, and other reasonable expenses such as food, clothing and damage to property. I will never forget going into that house and the stench of the water that had been through the carpets time and again. They were not

able to live in a small portion of their home, or even at times a lot of it, because of the issue. It makes me quite determined to get the legislative changes through.

I congratulate Minister Chanthivong on his work on this. We need to ensure that there is no ambiguity in the operation of the Act and that we are clear about who is involved in the assessment determination. That will restore public trust in this space. And it is not just houses, in fact. In my electorate, we are talking about mining claims that go back to the 1850s. Those have a huge impact on all sorts of buildings. If we do not have a system where there is clarity, clear responsibilities and compensation available to reimburse property owners and tenants, then that is a real problem. The bill also introduces flexibility to increase customer accessibility. Some of the people who have come to my notice in my electorate have not had access to online tools. That is, again, another issue. If someone lives in a house on a former mine site and something changes and suddenly it becomes impacted by subsidence, they may not have all the digital tools they would expect to have. Enabling a claim to be lodged without going through the portal is a good change.

I will not speak too much in debate on the bill. I just voice my support from the perspective of someone who lives in a mine-impacted area and provide that understanding for those who do not come from mining-impacted areas. Some of those mines were operating so long ago that the mapping is very difficult. There is always the expectation, "Well, you built in a mining area, so you should just expect it." We need to say, "No, that is not the case. These are mines that haven't operated in some cases for 100 years or more." People who build their lives and their homes in these locations need to be supported. Mining companies need to be responsible for ensuring that such incidents do not occur into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (15:14): I contribute to debate on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. A huge part of my electorate falls within the Newcastle Mine Subsidence District. Sinkholes are such a regular occurrence in Newcastle that most Novocastrians are very familiar with Maurie the Mole, the Subsidence Advisory mascot. If you say to someone, "If you see a hole," and they reply, "Don't think you're a mole," there is a good chance they are from Newcastle. Reports, complaints and correspondence from constituents seeking assistance with sinkholes and other damages caused by mine subsidence have been coming into my office for as long as I have been in this place and long before me as well. On behalf of all those constituents, I speak in support of the bill. It is hard to leave your home, especially when its structural integrity is in question. Who knows what you might come back to?

The bill will expand the compensation framework to allow residents to be compensated for accommodation and relocation, removing a huge pressure for people already going through a difficult time. The bill also seeks to ensure that renters can seek relocation compensation. Just because they may not own the house, that does not mean that it is not their home. Unlike those opposite, the Government is serious about improving renters' rights. We are taking a whole-of-government approach to that. It will also make compensation far more accessible by allowing claims to be lodged outside of the online portal. For many, using the online portal is not an issue; however, I know that some of the most vulnerable in my community struggle with online forms. We should be doing everything possible to ensure compensation is accessible for all. This amendment aims to do that.

The bill looks to clarify a number of misconceptions and ambiguities in the existing Act. It clarifies that compensation only applies to mine subsidence prevention measures on existing structures. It provides a more in-depth description of the compensation assessment and determination process and procedures, and settles the misconception that mine operators are involved in the assessment process. It clarifies the role of the Subsidence Advisory chief executive, who has the power to refuse development applications and make decisions on the use of affected property and land once it has been purchased from the owners. I know the clarifications will be a great help to my constituents seeking to lodge a claim.

The bill streamlines the mine subsidence compensation process by granting additional powers to the Subsidence Advisory. Those powers include making the Subsidence Advisory responsible for all pre-mining inspections and requiring coalmine operators to provide the Subsidence Advisory with further and additional information that may inform future claims and development requirements. The additional powers will increase the efficiency of the claims assessment process. The bill has been introduced following the statutory review of the Act carried out last year. That review sought and considered public feedback, which some of my constituents and business owners participated in. I thank everyone who contributed. Today we look to implement every recommendation made in that review and improve the coalmine subsidence compensation framework. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (15:18): The Greens support the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024, which adopts the nine recommendations resulting from the statutory review of the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017 in 2022 and 2023. It aims to improve protections and the compensation framework for people whose property or homes have been impacted by coalmining operations. The bill will, among other things, allow renters to make claims for compensation and payments associated with emergencies,

and increase penalties for a range of offences under the Act, including failure to take action to eliminate or minimise danger or carry out repairs. They are sensible changes and The Greens support them. We also welcome the fact that there is so much talk at the moment about renters in this Chamber. We love the fact that people are starting to recognise that renters also deserve rights and protections, and that the Parliament has woken up to the fact that one-third of people in New South Wales rent.

I acknowledge, though, that while the bill seeks to hold mining corporations accountable for the damage done to privately owned or occupied land, it does not grapple with the immense damage done to public land—national parks, waterways and air—and the damage done to country, the environment, species, the planet, and the people of New South Wales. Mining continues to decimate New South Wales through the Government's continued expansion of coalmining across the State. If we are to rely on financial disincentives to reduce the catastrophic impacts of mining operations, the culprits should be held financially accountable for not only the damage done to private land but also the destruction of public land, water and the air that we all depend on.

Members in this place must take seriously our responsibility to all people in New South Wales—not just current citizens but also future generations—and implement measures to prevent these practices in the first place. Mining corporations should not have licence to continue their climate-destroying practices in this State, and they should not be able to buy their way out of real consequences when they are held accountable for harm caused. While the bill seeks to compensate individuals, a whole group of people most affected by the decision to continue to approve and expand coalmining in New South Wales will not be compensated under the bill—they are, as we know all too well, young people. The people least responsible for the climate crisis are those who will have to face the uncertainty of the future that we have created for them. They will not be compensated by the bill before the Chamber. They are not landowners; they are not future landowners. At the rate things are going, many may never be landowners.

Young people will not benefit from the compensation that is afforded by the bill; they will not be compensated for the environmental damage that has been done and continues to be done to the climate that they will inherit—not that any financial compensation would suffice to justify the destruction that continues under the watch of State and Federal Labor governments, which are both addicted to coal. Young people's futures are held in the balance; they are vulnerable to corporate greed and government inaction. All around the world young people are asserting their legal rights to a liveable planet. In a 2021 world first here in Australia, in *Sharma and others v Minister for the Environment*, eight teenagers and an 87-year-old nun convinced the Federal Court of Australia that the Government had a legal duty to children when assessing fossil fuel projects. The judge in that case found:

The [Minister] has a duty to take reasonable care ... to avoid causing personal injury or death to persons who were under 18 years of age ... arising from emissions of carbon dioxide into the Earth's atmosphere.

While that ruling was ultimately overturned, it left a mark—a mark made by the young people who took the action—in the history books: the undeniable argument that the responsibilities of political decision-makers include the responsibility to protect future generations from the impacts of climate change. Since that finding, the Vickery Extension Project, which was at the centre of that case, is estimated to have added an extra 170 million tonnes of fossil fuel emissions to the atmosphere. Australia's Climate Change Performance Index ranking, which measures our policy responses to the climate crisis, remains at fifty-fifth out of 63 countries. Australia is still the world's second largest exporter of coal. What more do we need to do to get governments at both the State and Federal level to take the climate crisis and the impacts it will have on future generations seriously?

In 2024 this question sits with the highest international court in the world: the International Court of Justice [ICJ]. Vanuatu, in consultation with other nations, brought a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly to refer the ICJ to consider the obligations of States with respect to climate change. I acknowledge Toby, a local Newtown resident, who wrote to our office earlier this week to share the importance of this resolution and ensure that The Greens raised it in this place. The resolution was spearheaded by a young law student from the Solomon Islands and president of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, Cynthia Houniuihi. Young people are leading this movement, and the people of Newtown are standing with them. Toby and others across the State and country are calling on Australia to emphatically support this resolution and to make a strong bid to host the thirty-first Conference of the Parties, or COP31, in partnership with the Pacific, so that the voices and experiences of our region can be centred.

It remains to be seen what the ICJ will determine, but it is clear that the question of who wears the impacts of coalmining, and who bears the responsibility, extends much further than the current landowners whose properties neighbour the individual mine sites. It is time for the Labor Government to step up and get serious about acting on the climate crisis and stop coalmines in New South Wales, rather than simply tinkering around the edges with legislation that compensates some people while ignoring its responsibility to protect the people of New South Wales from the devastating impacts of climate change. It is paving the way for mining corporations

to continue destroying ecosystems across the State. Getting serious means no new coal or gas—and, in case Peter Dutton is listening, no nuclear either.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:25): I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. At the outset, I acknowledge Minister Chanthivong and his team for all the work they have done to bring the bill to the House after the statutory review. They have worked very hard on this very important issue. I will speak in two parts: obviously to this piece of legislation, but I also take the opportunity to talk a little about the mining industry in my community since Appin became part of my electorate. Before I do that, I acknowledge the member for Wollondilly. She has a long history of advocating for the mining industry throughout Wollondilly. My electorate goes down Appin Road, but throughout Appin many mining families' lifestyles rely on that industry.

The member for Wollondilly, who was formerly a council mayor and councillor, has a broader area down around Bargo and Tahmoor and South32, which was previously BHP—all of those areas. She knows all too well the importance of this legislation and how it will benefit families—probably better than I do. I am still learning a lot, given that Appin recently became part of my electorate. That said, I used to run coal trucks up and down Appin Road. Once upon a time I even ran shuttles out of the member for Cessnock's area when there were shutdowns for metallurgical coal out of Denman. I would run shuttles and do changeovers at Freemans Waterhole back in the day. That was very interesting and a lot of fun. I really enjoyed that time—but back to the legislation, of course. The issue before us was brought about by a statutory review of the Act that was carried out in 2023. Minister Chanthivong and his team have now brought the bill before the Chamber for members to debate and, ultimately, resolve.

The bill will expand compensation to assist more people affected by coalmine subsidence by allowing affected residential tenants to be compensated for accommodation and relocation expenses arising from mine subsidence damage, and introducing powers for Subsidence Advisory NSW to make payments from the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Fund to reimburse residents for reasonable relocation costs and to public authorities for infrastructure repair. The bill also, of course, improves the claim assessment and determination process to support customers by allowing claims to be lodged outside the online portal, in a manner and form approved by the chief executive of Subsidence Advisory NSW. The bill does a range of other things but, ultimately, it improves the compensation process for those who are affected by mine subsidence throughout New South Wales.

There have been many cases over the years on the Appin Road, particularly on the left-hand side. I have a good friend, a schoolteacher in Campbelltown, whose name I will not mention because he probably does not want me talking about it. I remember once while having a beer with him at the Bradbury Hotel he told me about how his lounge room had sunken down and he was in the process of getting compensation. Think about that happening: You are sitting around on a Friday night and having a couple of tinnies, watching the footy, and the old lounge room floor starts to sink underneath you. It is not a good way to end your week. That is a real-life example of one resident that I am aware of. More sensibly, it is a real example of what many people would experience in the areas.

I acknowledge that Temporary Speaker Barr is a strong advocate for industry and local families in his area. I credit him for that, as well as those members up in the Hunter, like the member for Maitland, and also the member for Wollondilly. They support this industry. They support local families. They try to find that balance between environmental preservation and making sure that people stay in work in the industry so that it not only survives but also thrives. Obviously, many controls dictate the market, but I acknowledge that making sure those families are represented, particularly in mine subsidence, is a priority for Temporary Speaker Barr and the member for Wollondilly.

As I initially said, I will touch on a couple of things about the industry in my electorate and my home, particularly as part of the 40,000 people who are employed by the mining industry in New South Wales. As members would know all too well, it is an industry that contributes more than \$220 billion—sometimes up to \$240 billion—to the economy in Australia. Much of that is in New South Wales; 37 per cent of gross State product is from the mining industry alone. That is an enormous number. I remember reading an article sometime during COVID. It stated that, if not for the mining industry, our economy would have been in an almost irreparable position and that we would not be in the position we are in today, irrespective of who was in government, because the market dictates and controls much of the economic circumstances that evolve from industry, particularly in the mining industry.

In the recent 2024-25 budget, the New South Wales Government invested \$37.7 million in mine safety and rehabilitation. I will come back to safety in the mining industry when I refer to the Appin mine disaster that happened 45 years ago. Of the \$37.7 million investment, \$13.6 million will be allocated to mine rehabilitation. That will be used over the next four years to rehabilitate mines and ensure the land is safe and stable after mining ends. It is another proactive and progressive step whereby this Government and the relevant Ministers, including

Minister Chanthivong, are working diligently to ensure that the industry is supported and, most importantly, that measures are in place to provide support to those families who are affected by mining. That is in the current budget. The Government has implemented other measures in the past, and more is planned for the future as this Government works progressively towards enhancing any legislation or any measures of support of the industry.

In conclusion, while it is a bit off-topic from mine subsidence, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the 14 workers who died in the 1979 Appin colliery explosion. The New South Wales Government webpage on the topic states:

His Honour, Judge A. J. Goran Q.C., Court of Coal Mines Regulation concluded in his report that a methane explosion started the coal dust explosion, following an accumulation of methane resulting from a flawed ventilation change. He concluded that the explosion began by an ignition in the fan starter-box and not the deputy's safety lamp, as initially speculated.

"I do not suspect that the deputy's lamp contributed in any way to the explosion. Indeed, having studied in detail the investigation of safety lamps, their defects and their inability, despite those defects, in most cases to propagate flame externally, I believe that reports of overseas explosion in mines where safety lamps have been indicted as the cause, should be treated with great reservation now."

On 24 July I was at a memorial service commemorating the incident of 45 years ago. The member for Wollondilly is in attendance every year, but I understand that she was an apology this year as she had other parliamentary matters that she was seeing to at the same time. We cannot be everywhere at once. I was delighted to acknowledge her contribution at the service and ultimately act on behalf of a colleague who I know is a passionate contributor to the memorial. The 14 people who died 45 years ago were Alwyn Brewin, 37; Francis Garrity, 37; Ian Giffard, 36; Geoffrey Johnson, 35; Jurgen Lauterbach, 30; Alexander Lawson, 35; James Oldcorn, 58; Peter Peck, 36; Robert Rawcliffe, 45; Roy Rawlings, 31; Karl Staats, 48; John Stonham, 41; Roy William, 27; and Gary Woods, 30. It was good to see our industry come out at the service. *[Extension of time]*

During the service, the importance of safety at work throughout the mining industry was highlighted. South32 was there, as well as other stakeholders. The company's commitment to safety is absolutely impeccable. It is welcome that it continually and progressively looks for safer processes in the industry. On this side of the House, we want people going to work in the same condition, safely, and going home after having been at work. Without any doubt, there are not too many industries or workforces more dangerous than the mining industry. I commend the industry for working progressively towards greater safety measures. I commend South32 and all other mine managers around New South Wales, particularly in my electorate. I believe that the tragic incident 45 years ago was the trigger to bring more attention to the safety of workers in the industry so that they go home safely to their families every night, unlike those 14 workers who tragically did not in 1979. I thank the House for its indulgence. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:37): I make a brief contribution in support of the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024. Coal mine subsidence refers to the sinking or settling of the ground surface due to the collapse of underground coal mines. This phenomenon can have severe consequences for the structural integrity of buildings, infrastructure and, most importantly, the lives of individuals residing in affected areas. Over the years, subsidence has caused significant damage to homes, roads and public utilities, and has led to financial strain and emotional distress for many families. This legislation is designed to address a critical issue that affects many communities across New South Wales, where underground coalmining has occurred for over 150 years. Currently, operating underground coalmines still exist in various parts of the State. The phenomenon of subsidence from both old and active mining operations can cause substantial damage to buildings and other properties, leading to significant distress for those affected.

The existing Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017 mandates that coalmine proprietors are liable for compensating property owners if their properties are damaged by active coalmines. This Act also empowers Subsidence Advisory NSW to administer the compensation system, assess risks and manage the impacts of subsidence. However, the statutory review completed in 2023 revealed areas where the Act could be improved to better serve affected communities. The bill proposes amendments to fully implement the recommendations of that review. Currently only owner-occupiers are entitled to compensation for relocation expenses if their properties become uninhabitable due to subsidence. The amendments will extend this coverage to renters, ensuring that tenants are eligible for compensation for relocation or short-term accommodation expenses. This change acknowledges the significant impact on renters, who are equally affected when properties they lease are damaged.

The bill seeks to simplify and enhance the claims process. Presently claims must be submitted through an online portal, which can be a barrier for some. The amendments will allow claims to be lodged outside of the online portal, providing greater flexibility and accessibility for all claimants. This adjustment is crucial for accommodating those who may face difficulties with digital platforms. The amendments will grant Subsidence Advisory NSW additional powers to support communities during subsidence events. This includes the authority to arrange temporary accommodation for residents required to evacuate, and to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses

for food, clothing and other incidentals during emergency relocations. These provisions will ensure that affected individuals receive comprehensive support during crises.

The bill will introduce mandatory pre-mining inspections directed by the chief executive, which are essential for establishing the condition of properties before mining commences. This process promotes a fair and efficient resolution of claims. Additionally, new sections will require mine operators to provide necessary information, such as survey data and maps, to Subsidence Advisory, ensuring they can efficiently assess and determine claims. Local infrastructure, such as roads and sewers, often requires emergency repairs following subsidence damage. Amendments to section 27 will ensure that Subsidence Advisory can fund these repairs, carried out by relevant public authorities. This change will guarantee that public infrastructure can be swiftly and adequately restored, minimising disruption to community services.

To eliminate confusion, the bill will clarify that Subsidence Advisory, not the mine operators, is responsible for all claims assessments. This will ensure transparency and fairness in the claims process. Additionally, changes to section 14 will detail the steps before, during and after a claim determination, and include a no-cost review process to resolve disputes efficiently. The bill proposes to increase penalties for existing offences, to reflect inflation, maintaining their deterrent effect. It also will clarify that compensation for works to prevent or mitigate damage is given only for existing structures, not future developments. This ensures that preventative measures are appropriately targeted and compensated. Proposed changes to section 26 will allow the chief executive to order the demolition of structures that are not feasible to restore. This provides a practical approach to dealing with severely damaged properties. Furthermore, limiting delegation powers ensures that the review process for claims is fair and not influenced by those initially involved in the determinations.

In summary, the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024 represents a comprehensive effort to strengthen the compensation framework, ensuring that individuals affected by coalmine subsidence receive the support they need. The passage of this bill is not only a matter of social justice but also of economic prudence. By providing adequate compensation and support, we enable affected individuals and businesses to rebuild and thrive, thereby contributing to the local economy. Moreover, investing in pre-emptive measures and infrastructure maintenance can prevent future subsidence incidents, saving substantial costs in the long run. By expanding coverage, improving the claims process, enhancing the powers of Subsidence Advisory NSW and addressing both current and future challenges, this bill demonstrates the Government's commitment to the wellbeing of our communities. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (15:44): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Amendment Bill 2024, particularly the members representing the electorates of Willoughby, South Coast, Upper Hunter, Heathcote, Wollondilly, Maitland, Newcastle, Newtown, Campbelltown and Mount Druitt. I welcome the support for the bill across the Parliament. In 2023 the statutory review of the Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017 found that the Act was operating as intended and meeting its objective. However, additional improvements were identified. The bill will make a number of amendments to the Act, all of which are based on the statutory review. Extensive targeted and public consultations were done during the review and development of the bill, and the feedback received from industry and community stakeholders has guided the final bill.

The bill will clarify ambiguities in the Act, improve the claims determination process and expand the compensation framework to support more people who are affected by mine subsidence. For example, the amendments in the bill will allow tenants to be compensated for temporary accommodation and relocation expenses. The bill will also introduce pre-mining inspections as a requirement in some circumstances. They are an added protection for property owners and will ensure that they are compensated adequately. This will ultimately increase the efficiency of the claims processes. Additionally, the bill clarifies the role of Subsidence Advisory NSW in the claims process and ensures that the integrity and fairness of the compensation system is maintained. The bill will also provide the chief executive of Subsidence Advisory NSW with more powers to carry out works to prevent damage and, where appropriate, to buy land and demolish houses that are beyond repair. I am sure that the communities of Wollondilly and Newcastle, in particular, will welcome the Government's move to implement all the recommendations outlined in the statutory review.

I will now respond briefly to points made by my colleagues. As the member for Willoughby acknowledged, the Government has engaged with the NSW Minerals Council to hear its views on the bill. Whilst I appreciate that the Minerals Council will always represent the interests of its members, the Government's bill will implement the recommendations of the statutory review and ensure that the compensation framework is fair and robust. The redrafting of the approved procedures will allow for further discussion on some issues raised by the Minerals

Council, particularly around review processes. Subsidence Advisory NSW is fully committed to engaging further with the Minerals Council and the wider community during the development of those approved procedures.

The member for Upper Hunter brought up the Newcastle Mines Grouting Fund. That particular program was funded and administered by the Department of Planning and Environment and is outside the scope of this bill. The Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act is not designed to facilitate new housing but rather to provide a fair compensation framework for properties affected by mining. But I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his support of the bill. I acknowledge the comment of my good friend the member for Wollondilly that she will be keeping a close eye on the implementation of the provisions in the bill. I very much welcome ongoing discussions with her if there are concerns within her community. I note the member for Wollondilly intends to move amendments to the bill, and I will speak to them at the appropriate time. Whilst I acknowledge the comments made by the member for Newtown against coalmining, I note that the issues raised are outside the scope of this bill.

As I mentioned in my second reading speech, we know that coalmining can have many impacts on our communities. One of these is subsidence. The bill before the House demonstrates this Government's continued commitment to provide a fair compensation system for those affected by subsidence. I thank the members of Subsidence Advisory NSW and NSW Fair Trading who supported the development of the bill, including through consultation with various stakeholders. I thank Joseph D'Ermilio, Warren McAllister, Nicole Lewis, Georgia Mellick, Jerson Balaton, Chinyama Zuze and Kevin Cen for their work and commitment to ensure the laws governing the compensation scheme for subsidence damage are fair, efficient and sustainable.

I also acknowledge the work of my office and thank Alicia Sylvester, my director of policy, and Ivy Tseng, my policy advisor, for their work on this important bill. I thank industry stakeholders, including the NSW Minerals Council, and the local communities of Wollondilly and Newcastle, who contributed to the statutory review and subsequent consultation on the bill. Their willingness to engage with the Government and advocate on behalf of the compensation framework is appreciated. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mrs Judy Hannan.

Consideration in Detail

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

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (15:51): By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 to 24 on sheet c2024-118E in globo:

No. 1 Rebuttable presumption

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 12—

[2A] Section 6A

Insert after section 6—

6A Presumption that damage is caused by subsidence

A person making a claim for subsidence damage is entitled to a rebuttable presumption that the damage is subsidence damage.

No. 2 Planned improvements

Page 3, Schedule 1[5], proposed section 7(2)(a), line 31. Insert "or planned" after "existing".

No. 3 Planned improvements

Page 3, Schedule 1[5], proposed section 7(2)(a), line 32. Insert "that are required by the Chief Executive" after "goods,".

No. 4 Liability for compensation

Page 3, Schedule 1[6], line 34. Omit all words on the line. Insert instead—

Omit section 8(1)(a). Insert instead—

- (a) by the Chief Executive from the Fund—in relation to compensation arising from an active coal mine, and

No. 5 Liability for compensation

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 34—

[6A] Section 8(4)

Insert after section 8(3)—

- (4) For the avoidance of doubt, the Chief Executive may recover an amount paid to a person under subsection 8(1)(a) from the proprietor of an active coal mine as a debt due to the Crown if the payment was made to prevent, mitigate or repair subsidence damage caused by the active coal mine.

No. 6 Limitation on claims

Page 4, Schedule 1[7], proposed section 9(1)(c), line 3. Insert "substantially" after "damage is".

No. 7 Liability for compensation

Page 4, Schedule 1. Insert after line 4—

[7A] Section 9(1A)

Insert after section 9(1)—

- (1A) The amount of compensation referred to in subsection (1) must be sufficient to replace the improvement with a similar improvement that performs the same functions as the original improvement.

No. 8 Limitation on claims

Page 4, Schedule 1[9], lines 11 and 12. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

Omit section 10(1).

No. 9 Liability for compensation

Page 5, Schedule 1. Insert after line 24—

[16A] Section 13(2)

Omit section 13(2) and (3). Insert instead—

- (2) A claim must be determined within the following periods—
- (a) in relation to liability—within 3 months of the claim being lodged under section 11, or
 - (b) in relation to the amount of compensation payable—
 - (i) within 3 months of the claim being lodged under section 11, or
 - (ii) if the extent of the damage to improvements or goods is unable to be ascertained due to ongoing subsidence at the property—within 12 months of the claim being lodged under section 11.
- (3) A failure to determine a claim within the period referred to in subsection (2)(a) is taken, for the purposes of this part, to be an acceptance of liability for the claim.

No. 10 Approved procedures

Page 5, Schedule 1[17], proposed section 14(2), line 27. Omit "may". Insert instead "must".

No. 11 Approved procedures

Page 5, Schedule 1[17], proposed section 14(2)(g), line 40. Omit all words on the line. Insert instead—

- (g) the assessment of claims with regard to the presumption under section 6A,
- (h) the timing for the assessment of claims with regard to section 13,
- (i) another matter prescribed by the regulations.

No. 12 Review of claims

Page 6, Schedule 1. Insert after line 3—

[19A] Section 15(2)

Omit "3 months". Insert instead "6 months".

No. 13 Review of claims

Page 6, Schedule 1. Insert after line 3—

[19B] Section 15(5A)

Insert after section 15(5)—

- (5A) If a claim made by a claimant is allowed as a result of a review under this section, the claimant may recover the costs associated with the review from the Chief Executive.

No. 14 Appeals to the Land and Environment court

Page 6, Schedule 1. Insert after line 7—

[21A] Section 16(4)

Insert after section 16(3)—

- (4) For the avoidance of doubt—
 - (a) the proprietor of an active coal mine is not a party to proceedings initiated under this section by a person claiming compensation under this Act, and
 - (b) a person claiming compensation under this Act is not a party to proceedings initiated under this section by the proprietor of an active coal mine.

No. 15 Approvals for development within mine subsidence districts

Page 6, Schedule 1. Insert after line 27—

[29A] Section 22(10)

Insert after section 22(9)—

- (10) The costs, if any, that an applicant incurs as a result of complying with a condition of an approval given under this section must be paid by the proprietor of an active coal mine if the Chief Executive imposed the condition because the active coal mine may cause subsidence damage to the proposed improvements.

No. 16 Review by Secretary of certain temporary action directions

Page 9, Schedule 1. Insert after line 30—

[42A] Section 28 Review by Secretary of certain temporary action directions

Omit "Executive." from section 28(3)(b). Insert instead—

Executive,

- (c) if the direction involves the carrying out of works on land—the owner of the land.

No. 17 Pre-mining inspections

Page 10, Schedule 1[45], proposed section 31A. Insert after line 21—

- (5) If a report is produced as a result of a pre-mining inspection, the Chief Executive must not provide the report to the proprietor of an active coal mine without—
 - (a) the consent of the landowner, or
 - (b) an order of a court requiring the Chief Executive to provide a copy of the report to the proprietor.

No. 18 Requests for information

Page 10, Schedule 1[45], proposed section 31B(1), line 23. Omit "person". Insert instead "proprietor of an active coal mine".

No. 19 Requests for information

Page 10, Schedule 1[45], proposed section 31B(1), line 24. Omit "person". Insert instead "proprietor".

No. 20 Requests for information

Page 10, Schedule 1[45], proposed section 31B(4), line 33. Omit "person". Insert instead "proprietor of an active coal mine".

No. 21 Requests for information

Page 10, Schedule 1[45], proposed section 31B, insert after line 36—

(4A) In this section—

proprietor of an active coal mine includes a former proprietor of an active coal mine.

No. 22 Inspections

Page 11, Schedule 1[49], lines 5 and 6. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

Omit the section.

No. 23 Regulations

Page 11, Schedule 1. Insert after line 6—

[49A] Section 43 Power to enter premises without consent

Insert after section 43(3)—

- (4) In this section—

premises means an active coal mine or any premises associated with the management of an active coal mine.

No. 24 **Regulations**

Page 11, Schedule 1. Insert after line 12—

[52A] Section 51 Regulations

Insert after section 51(1)—

- (1A) Before the Minister recommends to the Governor that a regulation be made, the Minister must—
- (a) give a draft of the regulation to all landowners who will be subject to the operation of the regulation, if any, and
 - (b) give the landowners at least 30 days to make submissions to the Chief Executive.

To save the time of the House, I am happy for the question to be put without any further comment. My contribution to the second reading debate covered the reasons for these amendments.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (15:52): I thank the member for Wollondilly for her amendments and acknowledge her response to the feedback from the community she represents. I stress that this bill was strongly guided and influenced by the submissions received from residents of areas impacted by coalmine subsidence. It is the position of the Government that the amendments proposed do not uphold the objectives and the intentions of the Act and, therefore, the Government is not able to support the amendments.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (15:53): I make a brief contribution to debate on the amendments for the record. The Opposition, for the reasons outlined by my friend opposite, does not support the amendments.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): The question is that amendments Nos 1 to 24 of the member for Wollondilly on sheet c2024-118E be agreed to.

Amendments negatived.

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

Clauses 1 to 2 and schedule 1 agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL) BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 21 June 2024.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (15:54): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill 2024 and confirm that the Coalition supports the bill. Ensuring the residents of the Central Coast have secure, reliable, affordable and accessible local utilities is crucial. The bill's objective is to simplify the Central Coast Council's regulatory environment and reduce administrative overheads, which should benefit the people and businesses of the Central Coast. The Central Coast Council's water utility is the third largest in New South Wales, following Sydney Water and Hunter Water, and is notably larger than other local council water utilities across the State. It serves a population of approximately 345,000, including around 140,000 homes and businesses.

Prior to 2016, the Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006 enabled Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council to access common water supply and sewerage infrastructure and services, some managed independently and others provided by Hunter Water. Unique among councils, the Central Coast both operates under the Local Government Act 1993 and is recognised as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act 2000. Additionally, it is the only council with water and sewerage service prices regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales [IPART].

In 2016, the councillors of Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council resolved to amalgamate, creating the Central Coast Council. In October 2020, following years of turmoil and poor financial performance, the council was placed into administration, and concerns emerged about noncompliance with section 409 of the Local Government Act, which restricts the allocation of funding according to water supply or sewerage charges levied. A 2021 public inquiry into the Central Coast Council found regulatory complexity contributed to the challenges faced by the council. Under the administrator, the Central Coast Council has returned to a sustainable financial position, which is timely given next month's local government elections.

The bill makes changes to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992 and the Water Management Act 2000 to enable the Central Coast Council to operate solely under the Local Government Act 1993, consistent with other local water utilities. It will no longer concurrently operate as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act 2000. This bill addresses several key recommendations from the public inquiry into the council. It also takes into account other relevant reports on Central Coast Council's water supply and sewerage activities, including IPART's *Review of Central Coast Council water prices—Summary—Final Report*, dated May 2022, and its *Review of Central Coast Council water prices—Improving performance—Final Information Paper*, dated May 2022.

I turn now to the details of the bill. This bill confirms a regulatory framework for Central Coast water solely through the Local Government Act. Under this bill, the council would continue providing water services regulated by the Local Government Act. However, it would no longer serve as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act. IPART would remain as the independent pricing regulator. The bill amends the Water Management Act 2000 to remove the Central Coast Council as a water supply authority by eliminating Gosford City Council and Wyong Council from part 2 of schedule 3 to the Act. References to those councils are interpreted as references to Central Coast Council under clause 6 (a) of the Local Government (Council Amalgamations) Proclamation 2016. That change necessitates consequential amendments to the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018 and other necessary modifications to eliminate the Central Coast Council's status as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act.

Removing the council's designation as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act is expected to deliver several benefits. It will reduce the regulatory costs and complexity of operating under the Water Management Act and the Local Government Act. Additionally, it will eliminate the regulatory ambiguity associated with levying service charges under those two inconsistent legislative frameworks, particularly regarding the restrictions under section 409 (3) of the Local Government Act on using funds levied as a special rate or charge for water supply or sewerage services for other purposes. The change is also expected to reduce the regulatory costs of requiring the approval of the Minister for Water under section 315 of the Water Management Act for service charges set by the council while still being subject to IPART price regulation. Furthermore, it will regulate Central Coast Council's water supply and sewerage services in line with the regulatory framework that applies to all other New South Wales councils providing those services.

The Minister for Water possesses wideranging powers to oversee and direct the functions of water supply authorities under section 293 (1) (b) of the Water Management Act and the authority to approve service charges under section 315 of the same Act. Although removing the council as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act will eliminate those specific powers, the Minister for Water will retain the ability to exercise powers under chapter 6, part 3, division 2 of the Local Government Act regarding the council's water supply and sewerage services. Central Coast Council will also be encouraged to establish an advisory committee to aid in informed decision-making for its water supply and sewerage services.

The bill also ensures that there will be adequate oversight of the council's water supply and sewerage service pricing, with IPART continuing to regulate prices. That is for several reasons. In addition to the size of the Central Coast Council service area outlined earlier, the Central Coast Council's strategic location within the Sydney metropolitan area, positioned between the operational areas of Sydney Water and Hunter Water—both State owned corporations subject to IPART price regulation—necessitates continued oversight. Further, the interaction between Central Coast Council's water supply system and that of Hunter Water justifies additional price oversight. Lastly, given the current economic climate and high cost of living, there is a need for heightened attention to cost to customers of essential services like water supply and sewerage.

Through amendments to schedule 1 to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992, IPART's regulatory role will be formalised to include a reference to the Central Coast Council. Our consultation on the Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill found universal support among stakeholders. However, a potential shortfall was uncovered. Whilst the bill amends the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992 to enable IPART to continue determining pricing for water supply and sewerage services, it explicitly excludes IPART from determining stormwater drainage service charges beyond the current IPART determination, which expires on 30 June 2026.

Beyond the current IPART determination expiration, the Central Coast Council is enabled by section 496A of the Local Government Act and section 125A of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 to levy stormwater charges. However, as stormwater drainage charges are currently levied according to the IPART service levy determination under the Water Management Act, no provision for stormwater charges currently exists within Central Coast Council's general rates levy or any other special rates levy under the Local Government Act.

I am advised that currently stormwater drainage services contribute about \$23 million annually to the Central Coast Council's expenditure. Our advice is that procedurally the council will be required to undertake an expensive and time-consuming special rates variation process to adjust its rates base to cover that amount. We urge the Government to ensure arrangements are in place to adjust Central Coast Council's rates from 1 July 2026 to include provision for stormwater drainage services, and we will be following that closely. The bill also repeals the Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006 and the Central Coast Water Corporation Regulation 2016, and it will improve regulatory clarity.

Finally, the bill includes amendments to the Local Government Act to permit the Central Coast Council to use funds collected for water supply services for sewerage services, and vice versa. That flexibility is currently prohibited under section 409 (3) of the Local Government Act. Eliminating that restriction will enhance the council's capacity to manage cashflow and debt funding more effectively to deliver priority water and sewerage infrastructure assets. For instance, surpluses in the sewerage fund could be used to finance essential investments in water supply infrastructure. The restrictions on transferring funds between the water supply and sewerage funds, as mandated by section 409 (3) of the Local Government Act, are deemed unnecessary and inefficient. The bill will not remove the restriction under section 409 on using money levied for water supply and sewerage services for other unrelated council purposes. I note that the New South Wales Government will review the arrangements and consult with all councils across New South Wales to consider extending the same flexibility to them—a reform the sector is seeking.

I take this opportunity to thank Ministers Jackson, Harris and Hoenig and their offices for the briefings and open discussions on this bill and how best to optimise it for the benefit of the people most impacted by its expected passage. I thank my friend and colleague the member for Terrigal, the team at Central Coast Council, Brendan Guiney of the New South Wales Water Directorate and Mark MacNamara on my team. Working alongside them on the issues raised in and by this bill has been thought provoking and will pave the way for additional reform in the complex space of urban water security, supply and regulation. The New South Wales Labor Government must ensure the changes in this bill result in a reliable, financially viable water utility for the people and businesses of the Central Coast region and place downward pressure on prices, which will ultimately be the test. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:08): The Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill 2024 is very important for the community of The Entrance electorate and for the wider Central Coast. The most important part of it is that ownership of the Central Coast water and sewerage services is retained by the Central Coast people through the local government authority, the Central Coast Council. It is also important that the bill will resolve issues that contributed to Central Coast Council being placed in administration following a financial crisis and provide incoming councillors with a clearer regulatory framework for council provision of water supply and sewerage services.

Our council is unique amongst New South Wales councils that provide water supply and sewerage services. It is the only council that operates under the Local Government Act and is also constituted as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act. It is also the only council whose prices for water and sewer services are regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales [IPART]. These features are a consequence of the history of council amalgamation on the Central Coast, whereby the former Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council operated a joint water authority. We have one of the biggest dams in the State, the Mooney Mooney Creek Dam, as well as several smaller dams. We have a connection where we share water with Hunter Water. It is a big undertaking.

The joint water authority embarked on the process of turning itself into a corporation back in about 2006. That process was never completed, but it resulted in a whole bunch of dual regulation being built into the organisation. The process of corporatisation was halted with the change of government in 2011. The new Government took the view that council amalgamation was a priority. In 2016 we went down the road of amalgamating the two councils on the Central Coast, Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council, into Central Coast Council. One of the big problems not addressed by the former Government in that process was sorting through the dual regulation under which our water and sewer services are provided. That is what we are doing today. This is really important legislation.

The complexity of the regulation contributed to Central Coast Council's financial difficulties in 2020. In part, this was because at that time council accounted for revenue collected by its water and sewer operations as

unrestricted—it was arguably entitled to do that, as a water supply authority operating under the Water Management Act 2000—when the preferred view was that these should have been restricted funds under the Local Government Act 1993. As members will be aware, under section 409 of the Local Government Act funds collected for a specific purpose can only be spent in satisfaction of that purpose. In addressing these financial difficulties, dual regulation meant that surpluses in the sewer fund could not be used to meet deficits in the water fund and vice versa because of the restriction.

This issue remains relevant. By way of an example, recently council advised me that a current \$82 million upgrade to the Mardi Water Treatment Plant had to be funded by borrowing against the water fund, even though the sewer fund had sufficient reserves in place to meet that capital outlay. This bill will address that squarely by allowing funds in water and sewer to be used for a dual purpose and vice versa. This bill will amend three Acts and repeal one Act. It will amend the Water Management Act 2000 to provide that Central Coast Council is no longer a water supply authority. It will also:

... amend the Local Government Act 1993 to enable the Council to use special rates and charges received for water supply or sewerage services under the Local Government Act 1993 to provide either water supply or sewerage services ...

This will get us over the problem of one fund having more money than the other fund. It will also amend the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992 to provide that IPART:

... continues to have standing reference to determine the pricing for certain services provided by the Council, including water supply and sewerage services, but excluding stormwater drainage services ...

The bill repeals the Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006 and makes consequential amendments to other legislation. The bill will reduce regulatory complexity and ambiguity by removing council as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act and align the regulation of council's water supply and sewer services more closely with the regulation of all other councils that provide services under the Local Government Act.

Currently the Minister for Water has broad powers to control prices. While removing council as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act will remove those powers, the bill will ensure adequate oversight of council's water supply and sewer services by retaining IPART oversight of prices. That is important for the people of the Central Coast, and as a discipline on council in terms of the services it provides and the charges it levies against my constituents and people on the wider Central Coast. Currently, IPART sets maximum prices that council can charge its customers for water supply, sewerage, trade waste and other related services under the Water Management Act. The current IPART determination covers the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026. Transitional measures in the bill ensure that this IPART price determination will continue to apply and that there will be no increases in these costs for households over this period.

Retaining IPART as the independent regulator of council's water and sewerage service prices is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, council provides water supply and services to a population of over 350,000, including about 140,000 homes and businesses. As I have alluded to, we are a big entity—the third biggest water utility in New South Wales in terms of population after Sydney Water and Hunter Water. Council is 2½ times as large as the next largest water utility, which is the service provided by Shoalhaven City Council. We are much closer in size to Hunter Water. In this regard, IPART provides protection to customers through an open and transparent pricing process. It ensures that customers get safe and reliable services at an affordable and fair price. The current economic climate of high cost-of-living pressures requires increased attention to the costs that customers face for essential services such as water supply and sewerage.

Secondly, I note council's unique location in the Sydney metropolitan area between Sydney Water and Hunter Water, both of which are State owned corporations and also subject to IPART price regulation. Keeping that regulation in place for Central Coast Council seems to fit. IPART regulation in this regard is a strong performance driver towards achieving efficiencies in the supply of services. Ultimately this provides benefits by reducing costs to customers and taxpayers. Thirdly, the complex interaction between council's water supply service and Hunter Water, whose price is also regulated by IPART, warrants additional price oversight. IPART's regulatory role will be formalised through amendments to schedule 1 to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992, which will include a reference to Central Coast Council.

On pricing, I note for the record the benefits of IPART price regulation. Every couple of years the Bureau of Meteorology does what is called a national performance report of urban water utilities. In the last available report, from 2021-22, Central Coast water was the lowest cost provider of water supply services to a community in the nation. That has changed a bit since the 2019 IPART decision allowed our local council to increase prices modestly and brought those more in line with the prices currently levied by our nearest neighbour, Hunter Water. However, we are still one of the cheapest water supply authorities in the country by a long way, which I think has a lot to do with IPART's regulation. That is why it is important to continue that. [*Extension of time*]

I thank my colleagues in the House. As I said, when members compare the prices paid on the Central Coast with other council-operated water supply authorities across the State, they will find that we are one of the cheapest in the country, if not the cheapest, compared with other water supply authorities operated by councils in the State not regulated by IPART. We are miles ahead. That is an important point when we start to think about cost-of-living pressures for people in our communities. While IPART will continue to regulate prices for water supply and sewerage services, price regulation of stormwater drainage services will discontinue following the charging year 2025-26. Council is already transitioning to cost recovery for the provision of those services under a separate IPART price determination. The Government will work with council to see that continues.

As I said in my introduction, the bill will also allow council to use moneys collected in the supply of its water and its sewerage service to provide either water or sewerage services, getting rid of the restricted funds problem. That is important. I recall some of the reasoning behind the financial crisis, which I alluded to in my introduction. With respect to restricted funds, page 41 of the February 2022 report of the public inquiry into Central Coast Council by Roslyn McCulloch states:

The councillors were never informed that the unrestricted funds had been exhausted nor were they warned about the consequences of having no unrestricted funds available.

That was the environment the newly elected councillors were operating in. Some negative comments are made about the performance of council staff members Mr Carlton Oldfield and Mr Norman, who have thankfully moved on. Mr Norman was the chief financial officer at the time and he had no experience in local government finances. The inquiry report states:

The investment reports from October 2019 until the financial crisis, were designed to obfuscate rather than elucidate. The staff of CCC responsible for those reports bear a significant responsibility for the lack of knowledge on the part of the councillors for the unlawful use of restricted funds.

Ultimately the governing body is responsible for the misconduct of council staff. Its members paid the price for that when they were sacked and the council was put into administration. It is important for people to understand the sorts of difficulties that amalgamation caused on the Central Coast, which were not addressed by the former Government by way of fixing regulations, and the difficult environment that the elected body was working in as well. The bill will go some way to address the negative consequences of amalgamation. It is disappointing it has taken eight years and a change of government to face those consequences fully, as this Government has done. It is disappointing it has taken multiple reports and a public inquiry, the report of which I have just quoted, to bring to light the things that needed to be done and to clarify the issues we are addressing through the bill.

Simplifying the regulation of our water and sewerage services creates an opportunity to maintain prices. They are some of the lowest in the nation, and the Central Coast can be proud of that, but we need to work on it. We need to retain ownership of our water and sewerage services. They should be in the hands of the people of the Central Coast. The bill strengthens that position. We need to maintain our position as one of the lowest cost providers in the State. The bill is good for the Central Coast, and I commend it to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:22): The Opposition supports the Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill 2024. I thank all of those involved in bringing the bill before the House. I also thank the CEO of Central Coast Council, David Farmer, and his team who have spent a lot of time working on a solution for the Government to bring forward in this bill. The administrator Rik Hart tasked David Farmer and the team at Central Coast Council to look at the best long-term solution for the complex issue of the Central Coast water authority.

As outlined by my colleague the shadow Minister for Water, Steph Cooke, Opposition members had discussions with Central Coast Council. While the Coalition was in government, former water Minister Melinda Pavey also highlighted to Central Coast Council the need for it to identify the best outcome for the people of the Central Coast and for the council in moving forward with the third largest water authority in New South Wales. It is a huge utility, with assets worth multiple billions of dollars, which is owned by the people of the Central Coast. It should always remain owned by them, and we need to protect it. We must make sure that it delivers the highest quality at the lowest prices to the people of the Central Coast. Pleasingly, it is one of the lowest cost providers of water anywhere in the nation, and that is a good thing. But it also needs to deliver quality service and upgrade its infrastructure accordingly.

The water authority serves 345,000-plus people on the Central Coast, or around 140,000 homes and businesses, with three dams, three weirs, three water treatment plants, over 50 reservoirs and more than 2,000 kilometres of pipeline. It is important to note that before 2016 both Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council accessed common water and sewerage services, sometimes independently and at other times through that vital link to the Hunter. That is also an important link to the Central Coast; it is a back-up provider, should it ever be needed. Sadly, the councils were trying to be too smart by half, having the water authority covered under two

Acts of Parliament. That created the groundwork for the problems that the councils then faced managing the funds of one enormous corporation.

Central Coast Council is the only council whose water and sewerage service prices are regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales [IPART]. I echo the comments of every member who has spoken in debate on the bill about the importance of IPART as the oversight regulator in a monopoly situation, whether it be public or private. IPART has a significant role to play when it comes to the delivery of essential services such as water, sewerage and stormwater. The key provisions of the bill are those regulatory changes.

The bill amends the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992 and the Water Management Act 2000. It also enables the Central Coast Council to operate solely under the Local Government Act 1993, consistent with other local water utilities. The council will no longer operate as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act 2000. The financial management is very important. Under the bill, the council can continue to provide water services regulated by the Local Government Act. Most importantly, IPART will remain the independent pricing regulator of this enormous authority.

The bill also allows the council to use funds collected for water services for sewerage services, and vice versa, which is currently prohibited under section 409 (3) of the Local Government Act. That is where the problems have emerged for Central Coast Council. I echo the words of the member for The Entrance. I also received the same briefings from council with regard to its frustration in having excess funds in one account that it cannot shift to another to offset investment in infrastructure. The problem has cascaded through what was an appallingly run former council. That is outlined in the 93-page report of the public inquiry into the failure of Central Coast Council and the litany of errors that occurred, which most members referred to.

The report makes for very sobering reading. Anyone who is putting their hand up to run at the upcoming council elections in September, especially the former councillors, should read that report from cover to cover to understand the mistakes that were made by an elected body that lost sight of why it was elected, which was to represent the people of the Central Coast. Their failure amounted to the largest ever financial loss of any council in the nation's local government history. It is also important to note that the legislation repeals the Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006 and all of the related regulations.

The bill also amends the Water Management Act 2000 to remove Central Coast Council as a water supply authority. Amendments to the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018 reflect those changes. Those changes will help reduce cost and complexity. The bill simplifies the regulatory environment, reducing costs and operational complexities, which have been a vexed and troubling issue for the authority and the council for many years. It also eliminates ambiguity in service charge levies between different legislative frameworks. Again, I thank council for their work. They have worked productively with the Minister for Water. I also acknowledge the original work undertaken by former water Minister Pavey when we were in Government to start the discussions with Central Coast Council about unscrambling this very complex egg.

A lot of time and money was spent. An independent investigation was done by council to work out the best long-term outcome for the people of the Central Coast with their water authority. The improvements with cash flow enable more flexible use of the aforementioned surpluses regarding water and sewerage funds. An issue that has been highlighted, as the shadow Minister mentioned in her excellent contribution, is that of charges. It needs to be identified. The Opposition reminds the Government that IPART will no longer determine stormwater drainage charges beyond June 2026. The shadow Minister outlined the concerns and the potential impacts that will have on both the council and the residents of the Central Coast.

Council will need to adjust its rates to cover stormwater services. Currently, as the shadow Minister outlined, stormwater services contribute around \$23 million annually to council's finances. A change could potentially require a special rates variation [SRV] process. This needs to be avoided. The cost for council to implement an incredibly unpopular SRV could vary between half a million to a million dollars. The bill does not include measures for levying stormwater drainage charges without an SRV. So the Opposition says to the Government that it needs to look very carefully at this to ensure that it is taken care of in advance to avoid an SRV being levied on the people of the Central Coast for a fee which is already currently being redeemed by ratepayers. That \$23 million is already being paid at the moment. It is important that we avoid extra costs being pushed onto the ratepayers of the Central Coast.

In addition, removing the council's designation as the water supply authority under the Water Management Act is expected to deliver several benefits. As mentioned, it will reduce the regulatory cost and complexity of operation under the Water Management Act and the Local Government Act. Additionally, it will eliminate ambiguity, which has been a vexing issue associated with levying service charges under two inconsistent

legislative frameworks, as outlined by the shadow Minister, particularly regarding the restrictions under section 409 (3) of the Local Government Act. [*Extension of time*]

I thank members for their indulgence. Eliminating the ambiguity with service charge levies is a good outcome for the ratepayers of the Central Coast. It is also expected that IPART oversight has to continue. As we said before, it would be of deep concern to the Opposition and to the ratepayer of the Central Coast to remove that cop on the beat from oversight of a corporation of this size, especially given the former financial mismanagement of council. Should that occur again, without oversight by IPART, it would allow council to levy any fees they wish to for water and sewerage.

They could make up a screw-up, effectively, by slugging the ratepayer of the Central Coast through the water corporation which is solely owned by the Central Coast Council. This is important. The Opposition emphasises that IPART's oversight must continue, highlights the fact that the Government needs to look at the stormwater situation moving forward, and stresses that cut-off date of 1 July 2026. The Government needs to look very seriously at including provisions for stormwater drainage services. As the shadow Minister said, we will be following this very closely, because not dealing with this correctly could result in significant additional costs to the people of the Central Coast.

I take the opportunity to thank Minister Jackson. I also thank Minister Harris and his team for the time they spent with the shadow Minister and me. We have also engaged with the Minister for Local Government on this, as it crosses a number of portfolios. Minister Harris and I have been on a bit of a unity ticket on this particular issue, because we do not want to see the ratepayer of the Central Coast charged inordinate fees without oversight. We want to make sure that we deliver the best services and infrastructure for the people in our region. We have more than 355,000 people on the Central Coast. Those numbers are going to increase by another 40,000 by 2041. As the water and sewer authority on the Central Coast, council plays the largest part in delivering infrastructure in our region, updating old infrastructure, building new infrastructure for housing estates and delivering factories and investment into the Central Coast. The Central Coast Council has its hands on the levers to help continue that delivery of new housing across the Central Coast.

I was also proud to be part of a government that provided council with \$40 million worth of funding to help upgrade the water and sewer infrastructure in Gosford. This enabled the council to futureproof ageing infrastructure and ensure that the additional hundreds of apartments being built in commuter hubs like Gosford—which we are all very excited about—will also have water and sewerage infrastructure that is able to cope with that population growth. That \$40 million from the former Government was the right investment.

The former Government also made a record investment into water and sewer services. The Opposition wants that to continue. The council needs to be given the opportunity to continue good, smart, strategic investment in water and sewer infrastructure for the future of the people of the Central Coast. That is why this is a good piece of legislation, driven by the Central Coast Council as well as the people of the Central Coast, who want to make sure that their water and sewer infrastructure is the best in this nation. The council has a great opportunity with this good piece of legislation to do the right thing moving forward. I again thank Minister Jackson and Minister Harris for their time in putting this together. I also thank the team at council for the time spent with us talking about the complexities of the water and sewer authority on the Central Coast. I again commend the shadow Minister for all of her work. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:36): Today I speak on the Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill 2024. This is an importance piece of legislation because it will ensure that Central Coast water is an asset that remains in public hands and will not be privatised by future governments. The Central Coast community is familiar with the pain of forced amalgamation and the consequential poor performance of the Central Coast Council; it has faced a council under administration since 2020. A possible reason for that was the way the water and sewer fund has been designed—the regulatory complexity which will be resolved by the bill. The bill addresses a major contributing factor to the council's poor performance, namely the duplication, complexity and ambiguity of the regulatory framework which applies to the council's provision of water supply and sewerage services.

As the member for Terrigal mentioned, we have 345,000 people on the Central Coast, with considerable growth expected in the future, and an amazing complexity of three dams, with a pipeline between Mangrove Creek Dam and Mardi Dam and also a pipeline to the Hunter Connection. The bill will give incoming councillors a clear regulatory framework while reducing regulatory costs and ambiguity and improving service agility. Hopefully this will take some of the unnecessary politics out of water management that has involved Central Coast Council in the past. The council's unique position as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act 2000, with the water supply and sewerage services prices regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] while also regulated under the Local Government Act 1993, has created regulatory ambiguity and performance issues. The Central Coast people know the pain.

The bill will address that issue and remove the ambiguity created by the application of restrictions under section 409 of the Local Government Act around the use of money levied for the special purpose of council's water supply or sewerage services for other purposes. Central Coast Council is the third largest water utility in New South Wales after Sydney Water and Hunter Water, which are both subject to IPART, as is Central Coast Council. Central Coast Council is much larger than any other local council's water utility. It is the only council regulated by IPART. That is an important component, and it is essential that it stays part of our water legislation on the Central Coast.

Specifically, the bill will amend the Water Management Act 2000 and the Local Government Act 1993 to remove council as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act, clarifying the legislative framework in place. By removing red tape for the council—and I am sure this will be a significant relief for people in that section of the council—and removing regulatory double-up and complexity, the New South Wales Government is paving the way for better governance, freeing up councillors to focus on their core role of providing essential services without the burden of legislative red tape and compliance. The bill will retain IPART as the regulator of council's water supply and sewerage service prices, ensuring adequate oversight of council's pricing is maintained. While removing IPART price regulation would further reduce regulatory burden, it is proposed that, due to the council's considerable size compared to other water supply and sewerage service providers and its unique position between the State owned corporations of Sydney Water and Hunter Water, IPART price regulation is retained.

To improve regulatory clarity, the bill will repeal the Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006 and the Central Coast Water Corporation Regulation 2016. Finally, removing restrictions on the transfer of funds between council's sewerage services fund and its water supply services fund will facilitate more effective investments in water and sewerage infrastructure. That is important to the people of the Central Coast because at the moment there is not great satisfaction with the huge extent of our water and sewerage systems. Hopefully we will allow additional specific investment where it is needed on the coast for our water and sewerage systems. Alongside protections provided by IPART, the bill will ensure that customers will have additional security. Oversight will be provided by the Minister for Water under the Local Government Act to issue directions ensuring the safety, maintenance and operation of water and sewage treatment facilities, as well as in emergencies.

The bill is sorely needed. Over the years, the complex and confusing regulatory environment that manages the Central Coast Council water supply and sewerage services has resulted in duplication, uncertainty and unnecessary red tape. By providing clarity, the bill will strengthen council's governance and lead to a stronger Central Coast Council, which is much needed. It is important to note that the bill will protect those utilities as publicly owned and managed assets. Under the bill, council will retain control of services and infrastructure. Our Government is streamlining how Central Coast Council's water and sewerage services are regulated and administered to support good governance and sound decision-making.

On that note, I thank the Minister for Water for her work and leadership on this matter. I also thank the administrator for Central Coast Council, Rik Hart—and possibly farewell him—and the CEO of the council, David Farmer, for their work in moving towards creating a better outcome for the people of the Central Coast. I thank the Minister for the Central Coast for his leadership and passion. I also thank my colleagues from The Entrance and Swansea for our collaborative decision-making to create the best outcome for the people of the Central Coast. After years of administration, it is critical that we learn from the faults of the past and create a streamlined regulatory structure that assists council to get on with its core function of providing essential services to our community and keeping water on the Central Coast affordable, effective and reliable. Our water supply is a crucial part of life.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:43): I contribute to debate on the Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill 2024 to support the bill and to support my colleagues on the Central Coast. Aren't I nice?

Mr Stephen Kamper: It's so nice of you.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: That is very nice of me. The guts of it is that the bill will ensure that water and pricing and everything else is kept in public hands, that it is kept with the council and will not be part of the bigger corporatised model. Some members say that corporatisation is not privatisation. There are arguments both ways. But the bill will keep water and pricing where it needs to be. I will speak about that in more detail. The Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill 2024 will resolve issues that contributed to the Central Coast Council being placed in administration and provide incoming councillors with a clear regulatory framework for the council's provision of water supply and sewerage services.

This council is unique among the New South Wales councils that provide water supply and sewerage services. It is the only council that operates under the Local Government Act and is constituted as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act. It is also the only council whose prices for water and sewerage

services are regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]. This means that the council is subject to overlapping legislative regimes. This duplication and ambiguity in the legislative framework which applies to the council's provision of these services has over time led to uncertainty and poor financial performance, which has seen Central Coast Council in administration since October 2020.

Minister Harris, representing the Minister for Water in the other place, has mentioned that in reaching its position on improving the regulation of the council's water supply and sewerage activities, the New South Wales Government had come down to two shortlisted options: a local government model and a council-owned corporation model. The bill implements the local government model. The decision to implement the local government model was made based on broad consultation both inside and outside of government. External consultation included council itself and the two key sector peak bodies, the NSW Water Directorate and Local Government NSW. Government agencies consulted included the Office of Local Government, IPART, NSW Treasury and NSW Health.

The Government opted for the local government model because it would resolve regulatory complexity and ambiguity for the council by removing the council as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act. That would align the regulation of the council's water supply and sewerage services more closely with the regulation of all other councils that provide such services under the Local Government Act. We heard that it was this complexity and ambiguity that contributed to the poor financial performance that led to the council going into administration.

The model differs from other local water utilities because IPART is retained as the price regulator of the council's water supply and sewerage service charges. That is important in ensuring the adequate oversight of the council's pricing and that customers get safe and reliable services at affordable and fair prices. Central Coast Council is the third biggest water utility in New South Wales after Sydney Water and Hunter Water, providing water supply and sewerage services to a population of approximately 345,000 and approximately 140,000 homes and businesses. In terms of population, the council is 2.5 times as large as the next largest council local water utility in New South Wales, which is Shoalhaven City Council.

The council-owned corporation model includes establishing a council-owned corporation as a separate entity via an Act setting out the corporation's objectives, operating licence requirements, independent governance by a board of experts, regulation of performance against the operating licence, and continued price regulation by IPART. The Government does not support a council-owned corporation model for a number of reasons. Under a corporation model, the corporation, not council, would generally be the direct owner of any assets and would employ staff. Council's control would be limited to its powers as shareholder, including any express powers of direction by the shareholder under the Act constituting the corporation. Council would cease to be responsible for the provision of water supply and sewerage services under the Local Government Act—similar to councils in the areas of operation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

Importantly, the corporation model does not align with the findings and recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation, whose report was handed down on 28 March 2024. The committee's key recommendation is that New South Wales develop new legislation to protect council local water utilities from privatisation, forced amalgamations and sell-offs. The committee noted widespread support for maintaining local government ownership and control over local water utility assets, and recommended legislative measures to ensure continued public ownership. That is a good thing.

While corporatisation is certainly not privatisation, it could be perceived by some to be a step in that direction, and the Government wants to make perfectly clear that it has no intention to privatise or sell off any council local water utilities. That matter was the subject of much debate in this place. Further, the council-owned corporation model involves significant implementation challenges and risks. The model would require substantial legislative amendments, significant structural and operational changes in council, and the establishment and putting into operation of a new corporation. There are risks that stakeholders could withdraw their support during that period, including council. For example, during previous attempts to establish a council-owned corporation in the Central Coast area, Gosford city council and Wyong council ultimately withdrew their support.

Members will be aware that the Central Coast Water Corporation Act constituting the Central Coast Water Corporation commenced by proclamation published on the New South Wales legislation website on 25 February 2011. The transfer of functions to the Central Coast Water Corporation, which was to occur in phases, was put on hold in mid-2013 and ultimately abandoned. To make the Government's intention very plain, as well as to clean up the legislative framework, the bill will repeal the Central Coast Water Corporation Act. The New South Wales Government has thought long and hard over the bill and has consulted with key stakeholders. All the local members have had their input and say. The local government model is a logical and sensible way forward for council. There is a lot of cleaning up to do with water in the regions. I will give an example. In my area, there are

local councils and there is the Rous County Council. There are about three county councils in the State from memory.

Ms Steph Cooke: Four.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: The member for Cootamundra said four. I thank her. The one in my area was set up by proclamation. I have had a look at it. It has been reviewed at different times, but I am not sure that proclamation is still fit for purpose in this day and age. It is constituted for a couple of things. One is bulk water supply, but it has encroached into local water supply, particularly at Lismore City Council. Those are some of the issues. They are hangovers. It is no-one's fault and there is no-one to blame, but they are some of the issues that we have to look at when we are thinking about and dealing with water. With those comments, particularly those regarding my local area, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (16:53): In reply: I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Cootamundra and shadow Minister and thank her for her hospitality on the weekend at the eightieth anniversary of the Cowra breakout. It was an amazing event. I note the hard work of the member, who was at every event, even at 1.30 a.m. I thank the member for The Entrance, the member for Terrigal, the member for Gosford and the member for Lismore for their contributions as well. As members have heard, the Water Management Amendment (Central Coast Council) Bill 2024 provides Central Coast Council with a clearer, simpler and more sensible regulatory framework for council's provision of water supply and sewerage services.

Central Coast Council is unique among New South Wales councils that provide water supply and sewerage services. It is the third largest utility in New South Wales after Sydney Water and Hunter Water and is significantly larger than other councils' local water utilities. The Central Coast Council is the only council that, on the one hand, operates under the Local Government Act and, on the other, is constituted as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act. It is also the only council whose prices for water and sewerage services are regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales, IPART. That means that the council is subject to overlapping legislative regimes.

The duplication and ambiguity in the legislative framework that applies to the council's provision of those services have, over time, led to uncertainty and poor financial performance. Indeed, they were one of the factors that contributed to Central Coast Council being placed in administration in 2020. Inappropriate transfers of money out of the water supply and sewerage funds were a component of the poor performance that led to those outcomes. Those inappropriate transactions were partly caused by the regulatory complexity and ambiguity associated with the levying of charges for water supply and sewerage services under two legislative frameworks, in particular the application of restrictions under section 409 of the Local Government Act in relation to the movement and use for other purposes of money levied for the specific purpose of council's water supply or sewerage services.

While measures have been taken during the period of administration to restore the council's finances, regulatory changes to prevent the re-occurrence of the issue have not been implemented. The bill will close the gap by removing council as a water supply authority under the Water Management Act and align the regulation of council's water supply and sewerage services more closely with the regulation of all other councils that provide such services under the Local Government Act. The bill will also retain important IPART price regulation and improve council's ability to effectively manage cash flow and debt funding for the delivery of priority assets by exempting council from restrictions on using money levied for its water supply services for the purposes of providing sewerage services and vice versa.

I now turn to some of the specific issues raised by members in this place. The shadow Minister and member for Cootamundra raised concerns regarding issues relating to stormwater charges. I inform the House that until 2026 IPART will set a charge for the stormwater services of council and add that charge to the wastewater bill rather than council rates. In the last determination in 2022, IPART made it clear that council needs to transition to charging for stormwater services by the usual mechanisms that all other councils use. Council is already transitioning to cost recovery for the provision of stormwater services via council rates from 1 July 2026, consistent with the current IPART price determination. Under the Local Government Act, council has the option to recover stormwater drainage costs that benefit the entire community and are not generally part of New South Wales councils' water supply and sewerage operations via general rates and/or via annual charges for stormwater management services.

The transitional arrangements that are in the bill will allow the current stormwater charge to 2026 to continue to have legal effect even after council is removed from the Water Management Act. That is being done to ensure that council can transition to recover stormwater drainage costs under the Local Government Act as council was already planning to do as per its 2022-2026 IPART determination. The need to transition to recovering

stormwater drainage costs from 2026-27 is not as a result of the bill; it had already been flagged by IPART in its 2022-2026 determination, which was accepted by council. Essentially, the charge will come off water and move over to rates. No-one will pay more, but it will essentially move from one to another. Council is already preparing for that because it knew in 2022 that it would happen, so it should have already begun doing the work to transition to that system.

I thank the member for The Entrance for his considered contribution to this debate and his focus on supporting residents of the Central Coast in a cost-of-living crisis. I particularly note the member's emphasis on the importance of IPART regulation to ensure water rates stay fair for our residents. He noted also that it is important this continues to support families and businesses on the coast. The member noted in his remarks the difficulties faced by the amalgamation of Wyong and Gosford councils and said that the bill helps clarify the regulatory framework and arrangements for Central Coast Council.

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

Public Interest Debate

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:00): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that three in four people with a mobility impairment currently live in a home that does not meet their needs, including tens of thousands of older people and people with disability who have mobility limitations.
- (2) Recognises that any new housing supply in New South Wales must be not only affordable but also accessible to ensure everyone has a home that meets their needs and can age in place.
- (3) Notes that New South Wales is one of only two States that has yet to sign on to the Silver Livable Housing Design Standards in the National Construction Code.
- (4) Supports the implementation of the silver standard in New South Wales to ensure that all new homes built meet minimum accessibility standards.

I move this motion on behalf of the New South Wales Greens but also on behalf of the many tens of thousands of people in our community who currently suffer discrimination on a daily basis as a result of inaccessible housing in this State. In this place and beyond, housing remains a hot topic. I note that this week is Homelessness Week. The Greens welcome recent announcements by the New South Wales Labor Government that it is finally taking steps to strengthen renters' rights by ending no-grounds evictions. So far, though, much of the public debate around housing has centred on the idea of housing affordability—or unaffordability—the appalling shortfall of public and genuinely affordable housing, and the merits of new housing supply as a silver bullet to the housing crisis.

But, in all of this, one aspect is repeatedly overlooked, and that is the accessibility of our housing. In any discussion about housing injustice and how to address it, we must recognise that for those living with a mobility impairment—whether they are an older person or a person living with a disability—the worsening unaffordability crisis and record low rental vacancy rates are compounded by the fact that the majority of homes simply do not meet their physical needs. It is utterly shameful that three-quarters of people with mobility impairment issues currently live in a home that does not meet their basic standards. Since Australia's voluntary Livable Housing Design Guidelines were introduced nearly 15 years ago, only 5 per cent of new home builds meet those accessibility standards.

Voluntary codes do not work because voluntary codes allow people to get through loopholes, to sign beautiful glossy statements and then not actually do anything about those codes. In New South Wales, which has the dishonour of being one of the two States that has not signed on to the Silver Level Livable Housing Design Standards, there is no requirement for new homes that are built during this massive increase to supply to include at least one entrance without a step, a toilet on an entry level, or hallways that are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair. Let us be clear: That does not just impact the person who is going to be living in that house or who may want to rent, purchase or buy that house; it also impacts the ability for people with disabilities or mobility impairments to actually enter the houses of their friends and family. People cannot gather if the entrance has steps or if there is no toilet on the entry level.

To be clear, these features are the bare minimum to ensure that homes are accessible and people with impairments can live in safety and with dignity. Queensland, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania have all signed on to the silver standard to ensure that these basic needs are met. It is time the New South Wales Labor Government did the same. This cannot wait any longer. With the Government planning new key worker housing and a massive uplift around transit hubs through its

Transport Oriented Development Program, it is essential that we set the framework now to ensure that new homes delivered under these initiatives are fully accessible.

If we sign on to the silver standard in a year or at some other distant point in the future, it will be too late. It is not just about people who currently have mobility impairments who will benefit from this change; by 2036 an estimated one in five people in New South Wales will be aged 65 or over, and implementing basic accessibility standards will help them to age in place in safety and with dignity, if that is what they wish to do. I acknowledge the tireless work of disability advocates and organisations who have for years been calling for this commonsense and crucial change to get rid of the discrimination in our housing in New South Wales. I give a shout-out to the Building Better Homes campaign for the rally held outside the New South Wales Parliament yesterday. I was fortunate to attend with my Greens colleague in this place the member for Balmain and my Greens colleague in the other place Ms Abigail Boyd, along with the member for Sydney.

To all those pushing to dismantle the structural ableism that remains in all aspects of society, including housing, The Greens are with you. We will do all we can to end housing discrimination once and for all. It is critical that we recognise that the power of a national code—the power of every State and Territory signing up to the silver standard—means that the property industry and big developers cannot dictate whether it is financially feasible to deliver housing to a silver standard. The whole point of a national code is that, if all States sign up, the building industry and property investors cannot pick and choose which States they are going to invest in based on where they will get the maximum return.

By New South Wales dragging its heels on signing up to the silver standard, other States are now delaying the implementation of the silver standard because there is a risk that they will see those markets reducing and that interest and investment going to New South Wales. By refusing to sign up to and implement the silver standard, the Labor Government of New South Wales is having an impact on the accessibility of homes across the country. I urge the New South Wales Labor Government to do the right thing and sign up to the Silver Level Livable Housing Design Standards and support this motion so we can get going.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:07): I thank the member for Newtown for introducing this public interest debate. However, I seek to amend the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after paragraph (2) and inserting instead:

- (2) Acknowledges the New South Wales Government's \$5.1 billion investment for 8,400 new social housing properties across New South Wales, all of which will meet the silver standard—making this the largest investment in accessible housing in the State's history.
- (3) Notes that Building Commission NSW hosted a forum on accessible housing in September 2023 to discuss how to meet the needs of all occupants, regardless of mobility or age.
- (4) Commits to working with stakeholders across the disability community and construction sector to inform implementation of the silver standard in New South Wales.

The former Government made the decision not to adopt the Livable Housing Design Standards from the 2022 National Construction Code. Our Government remains committed to ensuring that we deliver quality and affordable homes to meet the State's housing needs, especially given the housing crisis in New South Wales. This will require ongoing consultation with our community as well as with the other States on their adoption, or non-adoption, of the National Construction Code to ensure that we achieve the right balance. In this year's budget there was an announcement of \$5.1 million—a record number—for houses that the Government is in control of, which includes 8,400 social housing properties. Every single one of them will be compliant with the National Construction Code. They will be compliant for us, people with disability, so that we can live in those homes.

That is the largest investment in accessible housing in this State's history. At least 30 per cent of all medium- to high-density dwellings developed by Landcom will meet or exceed the silver level accessibility standards. The New South Wales *Apartment Design Guide* encourages 20 per cent of apartments within the new residential buildings to achieve that minimum silver level as well. So good luck to all our Pattern Book Design Competition entrants in making sure that there is a high level of compliance in the apartments that will go up as part of transport oriented developments [TODs]. I also commend developers across New South Wales who are already adopting the silver standard or above, because they understand the importance of ageing in place for people across our communities and that creating a space for people with disabilities is important.

I have spoken at a number of forums where developers wanted to know from people with disabilities what their expectations are—not just the silver standard, but what we actually need on the ground. Last year the Building Commission organised a forum on accessible housing to discuss how to best meet the needs of all occupants, regardless of their mobility or age, as part of our Government's efforts to provide more social and affordable housing in New South Wales. I commend the Minister for Disability Inclusion for doing an incredible amount of work on our Government's response to the recommendations of the disability royal commission,

including that New South Wales adopt the National Construction Code's accessibility provisions. We regularly sit at the table with Minister Chanthivong, and there are also planning conversations with Minister Scully about how the New South Wales Government will move forward.

A Government response to the disability royal commission was released on 31 July 2024 and it commits to holding further stakeholder forums to consider the recommendations. We also remind the member for Newtown that this is record investment in delivering new accessible housing and that we have a huge program of future maintenance. We have changed the maintenance program for social housing across New South Wales, which allows conversations about how people can age in place. The maintenance team has gone from Sydney-centric and inefficient delivery service to local maintenance delivery for people living in social housing across New South Wales. Tenants are able to have those conversations as we turn on the maintenance tap to improve houses that are not accessible at the moment and make a lot of our existing stock accessible dwellings where people with disability can live or age in place. Who knows what that looks like because we all have different needs as we age.

The New South Wales Government is taking action. Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania have delayed the commencement of implementation. There is time for the data to come through and for lessons to be learnt. We are responding cautiously to make sure we get the best outcome through a realistic house delivery market framework. The TODs are coming regardless, with a lot of step-free entry around train stations. I commend the member for Newtown. This Government will continue to work towards including people with disability in our housing framework.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:12): In contributing to this debate, I give a big shout-out to the member for Newtown, The Greens housing spokesperson, for her work, including most recently on no-grounds evictions. It is important to note that the silver standard is the minimum—there is also a gold standard and a platinum standard. As The Greens NSW spokesperson for older people, I bring that particular lens to this debate. It is pleasing to hear that the Government has committed to a raft of planning reforms in this space. However, a national framework and setting a standard not just for social housing but for all housing is an absolute must. In the flood-ravaged communities in my electorate and others across the State—including Lismore, Tweed and Clarence—we are seeing huge house building goals but no standards to go along with them. On another day we would also be speaking stridently about climate preparation.

Currently, very few guidelines are mandated for developers. When I hear the Government is taking a cautious approach, I say that is not good enough. The statistics reveal that the cost to a home owner of including key liveable housing design features—in other words, silver level—is 22 times more efficient than retrofitting when an unplanned need arises. Additionally, one in five people in this country are living with a disability, and 320,000 of them are children. There is a 60 per cent chance that a house will be occupied by someone living with a disability. We also note that 46 per cent of Australians in the 55-to-64 age bracket cite accessibility as a key consideration in moving house. The key housing designs support young families who use prams and strollers and remove trip hazards for toddlers. These standards are universally recognised as the benchmark that we should be striving for.

My electorate, which has a big ageing population, needs a massive investment in housing. We believe the silver standard is an absolute minimum, and we desperately need the Government to mandate compliance with the National Construction Code's minimum accessibility standards in all new residential builds to meet Livable Housing Australia's silver standard. What does that look like? It matches every person's right to an adequate standard of living—a right to live in a home that is appropriate, affordable and accessible for their individual needs. This fundamental, basic human right has been denied to people living with disability and other people with mobility issues. In fact, one could argue that this is a blueprint for liveable homes, full stop. Our ageing population is continuing to grow. I particularly mention the council for older Australians and its incredible work in this space.

I also mention the high number of people aged over 60 who have falls in their home every year. Some 60 per cent of those injuries are due to trip hazards in the home. I give a shout-out to the Ballina and Lismore Rotary clubs. The member for Lismore and I were part of the seniors lighting initiative, which was about raising awareness of the problem and simply providing lights in the homes of older people. Imagine a world where this is the mandated minimum standard. It means that not only can anyone come and visit you and you can live safely at home and age in place, but also these designs are so much better for the future. We think that is an absolute minimum standard. I welcome this debate today. It will be a shame if the Government cannot get on board.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:17): I thank the member for Newtown for introducing this public interest debate and speak in support of the Government's amendment. I point out it was the former Government that made the decision not to adopt the liveable housing provisions in the 2022 National Construction Code in New South Wales. The Government remains committed to ensuring that we deliver quality and affordable homes to meet the State's housing needs, especially given the housing crisis in New South Wales. That will require ongoing consultation with the community to ensure we strike the right balance.

In the Camden electorate we are particularly passionate about this incredibly important issue. For 10 of the 12 years under the former Liberal-Nationals Government, 18,819 single dwellings were built but little of that was social housing. We had huge population growth in my electorate but absolutely no growth in the amount of social housing. Residents speak to me about this weekly and say that we are not doing our fair share of the lifting when it comes to social housing provision in this State. We are quite happy to do our fair share in development; I think we have made that quite clear to everyone in New South Wales. But we are also incredibly passionate about doing our fair share when it comes to the inclusion of social housing and housing that is accessible to all.

The Government is implementing a number of initiatives to increase and improve the supply of accessible private and public housing, and by far the biggest one was this year's record investment of \$5.1 billion to build 8,400 social housing properties across New South Wales. The most exciting thing about this for me is that some of these properties will be in Camden, on Menangle Road. People who do not know Camden as well as I do may not know that Menangle Road is a beautiful place on the hill, where we can see all over the beautiful flood plains. It is probably the driest place in Camden. But, more importantly, it is one of the only places in Camden close to public transport, health care and shops. Anyone can walk to all of the facilities from Menangle Road. It is an important part of town and much sought after.

I was incredibly proud to stand on that site with the Minister and say that it would be used for social housing for the people in our State. When we make people move out of their areas to get social housing, we are taking children out of schools and taking people away from the doctors and communities they know and love. All of these homes will comply with the National Construction Code's silver standard, making the investment the largest in accessible housing in the State's history. Having appropriate housing and accessible and inclusive communities is central to how people with disabilities live, work, socialise and contribute to their communities. We are funding maintenance of our current social housing with \$1 billion. Many members in this place bemoan that our current lot of social housing is incredibly aged, and the current social housing many people are in does not fit their needs.

Increasing accessibility by widening doorways and making stair-free entrances is important, especially in much of Camden because of the rain we get. Maintaining our current stock so that people can stay where they have made communities, where they are happy and where they are contributing is extremely important. I know this is important because, when I was talking in my office today about speaking in this debate, my office had no fewer than 50 examples of this being needed in my electorate. I especially give a shout out to a company from the Camden electorate called PNP Constructions. It is creating beautiful kitchens and bathrooms using only NDIS funding. It is transforming homes as we speak. The public interest debate today is incredibly important, and I support the amendments. I thank the member for Newtown for moving the motion. I was happy to contribute to it today.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (17:22): I speak for the Opposition in today's public interest debate. We recognise and respect the intent behind it, but we want to ensure that it is realistic and achievable for New South Wales at this time. I move:

That the original motion be amended by omitting paragraphs (3) and (4), and inserting instead:

- (3) Acknowledges that three in four people with a mobility impairment currently live in a home that does not meet their needs, including tens of thousands of older people and people with disability who have mobility limitations.
- (4) Recognises that any new housing supply in New South Wales must not only be affordable but also accessible to ensure everyone has a home that meets their needs and can age in place.

We certainly support paragraphs (1) and (2), but we cannot support paragraphs (3) and (4).

Ms Jenny Leong: All the bits about the silver standards.

Mr TIM JAMES: Yes, which are not being supported by members opposite. I was about to make that very point. Similarly, we will not support Labor's self-serving amendment. We note the Labor members' handy little dance in which they are saying nice things, but they are not committing to what our colleagues from The Greens are seeking. They are not committing to the standards and are not getting to where The Greens would like them to go. The Coalition acknowledges that three in four people with a mobility impairment currently live in homes that do not meet their needs. That includes tens of thousands of older individuals and people with disabilities who face daily struggles due to mobility limitations. It is all of our responsibility as a community to help address those issues. Our commitment to improving the lives of the 1.35 million people with disabilities in New South Wales is unwavering.

In government, the Liberals and The Nationals demonstrated our commitment to disability inclusion through so many initiatives, actions and legislative measures. I will mention just a few. We led the nation by establishing the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission to seek to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens. We introduced the Disability Inclusion Act, which laid the foundation for greater inclusion

and accessibility for people with disabilities across the State. Disability inclusion action plans were implemented to ensure that public sector organisations actively work towards including people with disabilities in all aspects of community life. We did a great deal. We support the development of accessible housing, but we must ensure that this is done in a way that is realistic and achievable, and does not impose unaffordable costs on the community, including the construction sector and home purchasers. That is particularly important at this time, when our economy is grappling with the cost of living and the growing costs of building, and the State is experiencing significant issues of housing affordability.

Implementing the silver standard for housing accessibility comes with real challenges. Recently we have heard reports. One was in *The Australian Financial Review* in July, in which Brad Ganim, the managing director of Ownit Homes in Queensland, said, "We have had people walk away from projects because they just can't afford it." That report made reference to the bathroom requirements adding thousands of dollars to the cost of a home. That is just one room. It also creates some confusion and logistical barriers. The industry, understandably, supports maintaining a voluntary and targeted pathway to inclusive, sustainable and affordable housing. One would think that anyone seeking to alter that would be acting in concert and consulting with the industry beforehand to ensure that practical implementation is achievable.

Local governments already have brought about voluntary provisions for liveable housing, which can serve as a foundation for broader accessibility measures. The challenges associated with the silver standard include, as I mentioned, increased construction costs, the risk of higher purchase prices and potential design constraints. Meeting accessibility standards may limit architectural creativity and the use of certain materials and techniques. Space requirements may reduce the usable living area or increase the building's footprint. As I have outlined, builders and developers have concerns. Retrofitting is challenging because upgrading existing homes can be expensive. There are broader questions of market demand and the potential for over-regulation, so it goes on.

There are a number of complex challenges here, which is why other jurisdictions, not only New South Wales, are in the same state we are in today and perhaps might explain why members opposite are not doing today what our friends The Greens would like them to do. We do need to provide incentives for developers and builders and others to retrofit houses, and to have robust public awareness campaigns to underscore the upside and benefits of accessible housing. The Liberals and The Nationals are committed to ensuring that accessibility standards enhance the quality of life for all residents while avoiding undue burdens on the housing market and construction sector at this significant time for our economy and community. I commend the Opposition's amendment to the House.

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:27): I thank my colleague the member for Newtown for introducing this important motion today. This is an important topic for debate on any day, but it seems particularly pertinent to be discussing liveable housing standards on Aged Care Employee Day. This discussion, in addition to accessibility for people with disabilities, is fundamentally about how we can make it easier for people to age in place, and the positive impacts this could have not only for older people in their homes but also for those who work to support them in the aged-care sector. The silver Livable Housing Standard aims to ensure that homes are accessible, safe and adaptable to the diverse needs of individuals and families throughout their lifetimes. It is built on several core principles that emphasise flexibility, accessibility and safety. It is simply not good enough that in 2024 New South Wales has not yet signed up to this standard.

Homes should be designed to be easily accessible to people with varying levels of mobility. This includes features like step-free entrances, wider doorways, and corridors that can accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Homes should be able to be adapted to the changing needs of their occupants over time. That might involve designing spaces that can be easily modified or reconfigured to meet different needs, such as converting a room into a bedroom for an elderly relative or adding grab rails and other safety features as needed. Homes should be safe for all occupants. Redesigning can include incorporating non-slip surfaces to prevent falls and ensuring that there are no sharp edges or hazardous materials.

Over many years, The Greens have advocated strongly for the adoption of the silver standard as a mandatory requirement in new housing developments. Adopting the standard is crucial to ensure that homes are accessible, adaptable and safe for all residents, including older people and people with a disability. Implementing the silver standard will, at a minimum, promote social inclusion and equity by creating places that meet diverse needs and allow people to age in place and maintain their independence. Any up-front investment in accessible design will lead to long-term savings by reducing the need for costly retrofits and minimising the burden on healthcare services. Adopting the standard will futureproof housing by making it more resilient and adaptable to demographic changes. There are many environmental benefits in designing homes that can be easily modified, including reducing waste associated with renovations and retrofits.

Adopting the silver standard is a vital step towards creating a fairer, more inclusive society where everyone can live in a home that meets their needs. Just yesterday, my colleagues Ms Abigail Boyd in the other place, the

member for Newtown and the member for Sydney and I met with disability advocates from Building Better Homes out the front of Parliament. After many years, they are still pushing to ensure new housing is built that enables people in wheelchairs and mobility devices to live comfortably. We watched it unravel as three people in wheelchairs attempted to enter the New South Wales Parliament to watch question time. I mention that incident to in no way criticise parliamentary security but point out that we still live in a society where accessibility is an afterthought.

We need to ensure that our public spaces and future homes are built to accommodate people who cannot get around in the same way as able-bodied folks, who do not give it a second thought. As we know, New South Wales has been holding out against adopting the silver standard. That is not surprising when the Government takes advice from the private developer lobbyists who argue that meeting silver standard requirements such as wider doorways, step-free entrances and adaptable interiors will increase housing costs. They say that rather than paying less for land up-front or reducing their own profit margins, they would simply pass on any new costs in more exorbitant rents or hire-purchase prices.

Of course, those are the same lobbyists who take credit for the Government's planning changes that will do away with local planning controls under the low- and mid-rise housing policy and for the Premier's new directive that public servants should return to work so commercial landlords in central business districts do not suffer ongoing rental losses. Perhaps they are the same groups that have advised the Government to abandon its promise to include up to 30 per cent social, affordable and universal housing on surplus government sites such as the former WestConnex dive site in Camperdown in my electorate of Balmain. We would expect the so-called "universal" component of the promise to be broadly in line with what is required under the silver standard. But instead of delivering on its promise, the Government has decided to privatise the Camperdown dive site. It has plans to sell it off for a limited number of private dwellings, with no requirement for the universal or adaptable housing our community needs or will genuinely be able to afford.

It stands to reason that if we are going to privatise 100 per cent of public land—rather than just 70 per cent, like the Government promised—and rely entirely on the private sector to build our way out of the housing crisis, we must introduce the silver standard at a minimum to ensure that all new homes built in New South Wales meet basic accessibility standards. It is simply not good enough, with the amount of building that the New South Wales Government wants to see over the coming years, for accessibility to continue to be an afterthought.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (17:32): I join with other members and thank the member for Newtown for introducing this public interest debate to the House. Most members will agree that there is probably no-one more vocal about social housing than the member for Newtown. All members will agree also that delivering good social housing should be a priority for all levels of government and all governments. In my local community, local government is really focused on supporting all tiers of government to provide affordable social housing. It is really important to work together to achieve that goal. I will provide some further background about the silver standard for accessible housing. The standard was developed by Livable Housing Australia, a not-for-profit partnership between community and consumer groups, government and industry. It was established to lead the development of safer homes that are easier to access for everyone.

Livable Housing was established in 2011. I commend all involved for their work. I thank the member for Willoughby for his contribution to this public interest debate. I support his amendments. The member for Balmain highlighted some of what the silver standard entails. It is really important to understand the requirements. There are seven core liveable housing design elements in the silver level, including—as the member for Balmain mentioned—one level, step-free entrance into a dwelling; internal doors and corridors that facilitate comfortable and unimpeded movement between spaces; a toilet on the ground or entry level that provides easy access; a bathroom that contains a hobless shower recess; reinforced walls around the toilet, shower and bath to support the safe installation of grabrails at a later date; and stairways that are designed to reduce the likelihood of injury and also enable future adaption.

As someone who has a brother with severe disabilities, I certainly understand, after being part of his care for many years, that those design elements are really important and can make a real difference to not only the life of the person with a disability but also people like me, who are carers. I draw to the attention of the House and make comment on the Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry into homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in New South Wales. I note that the Committee made approximately 40 recommendations. Recommendation 20 advised:

That the NSW Government work towards ensuring that all new social housing is fully accessible and addresses the needs of older people, including those with mobility issues or physical disabilities.

I note that the former Liberal-Nationals Government supported that recommendation in principle. In its response to the inquiry, the former Government stated:

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that new social housing stock is fully accessible and addresses the needs of older people, including those with mobility issues or physical disability.

- Overwhelmingly, new social housing dwellings in NSW meet minimum accessibility standards because they are built to at least Livable Housing Guideline Silver standard.

Whilst it was not mandated, it is a little bit misleading to suggest that the former Government did not work towards reaching the silver standard. The Government response went on to state:

- Similarly, Community Housing Providers construct new dwellings so they are accessible. This includes dwelling delivered under the Government's Social and Affordable Housing Fund where 96% of dwellings constructed are independently certified to, at least, the Silver (accessible) level under the Livable Housing Australia guidelines, and Community Housing Innovation Fund

It seems clear to me that it was an aspiration of the former Government to meet that silver standard. As I said, I support the amendments of the member for Willoughby.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:37): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to this debate on the need to implement the silver standard code in New South Wales. I thank the member for Gosford, the member for Ballina, the member for Camden, the member for Willoughby, the member for Balmain and the member for Port Macquarie for their contributions. I acknowledge that the member for Gosford moved amendments to the motion. Those amendments water down The Greens' desire for the New South Wales Government to immediately implement the silver standard in New South Wales to ensure that all new homes built meet minimum accessibility standards. However, I acknowledge that today there has been some progress in the wording. I hope that is an indication of the Government's willingness to stop New South Wales being one of two States that have not signed up to the code.

If the Government is committed to working with stakeholders across the disability community and the construction sector to inform the implementation of the silver standard in New South Wales, the first step is to sign up to the silver standard. If we are going to work with stakeholders to inform how we implement it, that is great, but we need to sign up to it first. The first step to implementation is signing on. That is the start of the implementation process. I welcome jumping ahead to implementation, but at this stage a sign-on would be amazing. Then we can work with other States on implementation. I hope that that is where we see movement on the commitment by the Government today.

I thank the member for Port Macquarie for acknowledging the work we do on public and social housing. But it is critical to remember that not all people with disabilities, people with mobility issues, people living with physical disabilities and older people live in social housing. In fact, right now a lot of those people would love to be living in public and social housing, but we have a waiting list of more than 50,000 applications and a situation where older people in this State are not eligible for priority public housing until they reach the age of 80.

Let us be clear: It is wonderful that we are delivering social housing properties that will meet the silver standard in this large investment into accessible housing, but 8,400 new social housing homes will not go anywhere near the 50,000 on the waiting list, and we are not dealing in any way with the fact that a lot of people living with a mobility impairment issue or who are ageing do not live in social housing. They would probably love to live in social housing, but they do not, and that is why we also need to deal with the private housing market.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich): I have received two amendments to the motion. Standing Order 162 requires me to deal first with the Government's amendment. Should the Government's amendment prevail, the Opposition's amendment will not be considered because it seeks to amend the original motion. If the Opposition had moved an amendment to the amendment, that could have been considered. If the Government's amendment does not prevail, we will consider the Opposition's amendment.

The member for Newtown has moved a motion, to which the member for Gosford has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Bills

WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL) BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

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) (17:43): Before being interrupted I was noting members' contributions to the debate. I thank the member for Terrigal for his contribution to the debate and for acknowledging the importance of public ownership of water for the people of the Central Coast. I note his comments on the need to upgrade infrastructure facilities. That is well underway in my area. I note his comments on the importance of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] as a monopoly regulator to this enormous water authority. It is indeed the third largest water authority in the State.

I echo the shadow Minister's comments regarding stormwater charges. As I explained, that is part of the previous IPART determination, and the council will need to address that by 2026. I agree with him that what we do not want to see is ratepayers paying extortionate fees. We know that the number of residents will increase. This is about securing the future of a publicly owned water asset on the Central Coast. On a personal note, I thank the member for Terrigal for his engagement on this issue. The community would be quite pleased to know that on important issues politics are put to the side and we try to make the best decisions we can for the benefit of the community. I recognise the commitment of the member for Terrigal on that point.

I thank the member for Gosford for her important contribution and note her strong representation on behalf of the people of Gosford and surrounds. The bill is about taking the politics out of water, as the member for Gosford noted. I note her comments about the challenges of the forced amalgamation that led to the Central Coast Council and the resultant issues relating to water. That is now firmly on the public record and hopefully the community understands that. I also note her comments about the bill addressing the current complexity and ambiguity surrounding the merger of the two councils. This is about streamlining the regulatory framework for our water assets on the Central Coast.

I thank the member for Lismore for her contribution to the debate. I note her comments about the importance of public ownership of water assets. That is a sentiment with which I think we all agree. I thank her for her strong advocacy in this area for her own community and for New South Wales. I note that she correctly emphasised that we have gone with the local government model versus the corporatised model. I think that is in the best interests of ratepayers and consumers on the Central Coast. I also note her comment about consultation with the local community and all of the local members. We wanted to ensure that we got this right, so I appreciate her comment.

In conclusion, the bill before us will, firstly, address key recommendations from the 2022 public inquiry into Central Coast Council to clarify the legislative framework for council's water supply and sewerage business. Secondly, it will reduce regulatory complexity and ambiguity for councils associated with being captured by and operating under both the Water Management Act and the Local Government Act, including restrictions under the Local Government Act on the use of money levied for council water supply or sewerage services for other purposes. Thirdly, it will align the regulation of the Central Coast Council's water supply and sewerage services more closely with the regulatory framework that applies to all other councils that provide such services.

The bill will retain IPART as the regulator of the council's water supply and sewerage service prices to ensure adequate oversight of council's pricing. I must say that that is a particularly important point because, with the cost-of-living crisis, we need to make sure that if council applies for additional charges it is done with the correct input and oversight of IPART. The bill will exempt the council from unnecessary and inefficient restrictions on the transfer of money between the water supply fund and the sewerage fund imposed under the Local Government Act to improve council's ability to effectively manage cash flow and debt funding.

Finally, just as importantly, the bill further commits to protect our water utility on the Central Coast from privatisation by repealing the Central Coast Water Corporation Act and Central Coast Water Corporation Regulation. That will ensure that Central Coast water remains in the hands of our local council and, more importantly, our local community. The bill is important. It resolves the regulatory complexity and ambiguity that contributed to council being placed in administration and it will provide incoming councillors, following the local government election on 14 September 2024, with a much clearer regulatory framework for Central Coast Council's water supply and sewerage services.

I acknowledge Minister Jackson and her competent staff for their wise counsel on this issue and for listening to us as we put forward the different issues. I also acknowledge, as other members have, Central Coast Council CEO David Farmer, administrator Rik Hart and Jamie Loader, Director of Water and Sewer Services, for their important input into this bill. Again, I thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate. 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

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (RURAL AND REMOTE COUNCILS) BILL 2024

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Ron Hoenig, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:50): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Local Government Amendment (Rural and Remote Councils) Bill 2024 to amend the Local Government Act 1993 and establish a new governance framework for local councils to be declared "rural and remote councils". The bill has come about to provide a pathway forward for Central Darling Shire Council, which for many years has struggled to provide sustainable services under a typical local government model. Since becoming Minister I have been working in consultation with the council and the member for Barwon—and representations he has received on behalf of the community—to return Central Darling Shire Council to democratically elected representation following over a decade of the council being in administration. I am pleased that through this bill we have the opportunity to achieve what we set out to do.

The bill sets out the Government's policy for ensuring stable representative democracy and sustainable delivery of local services and infrastructure for councils in rural and remote areas, such as Central Darling Shire Council, that run the risk of remaining in perpetual administration because the financial and governance risk to the community and the Government of returning a traditional elected council is simply too high. Communities in rural and remote areas of New South Wales need and deserve stable governance and democratic representation as well as access to sustainable local government services and infrastructure in order to thrive—as do all communities in this State. The Government's rural and remote council bill proposes a practical solution to address many of the challenges faced by rural and remote councils and communities like those in Central Darling shire.

It is not possible to overestimate the challenges Central Darling Shire Council faces on a daily basis due to its vast size. As the largest local government area in the State, Central Darling Shire Council covers an area as big as Tasmania but has the smallest population, with fewer than 1,800 people, of which approximately 1,100 are electors. An insufficient rate base, socio-economic disadvantage and environmental challenges add to the mix of issues facing this council. On top of this is the enormous cost of providing and maintaining essential local government services for each of the four dispersed and disparate main townships, things that many of us take for granted: drinking water, sewerage, waste collection, parks, pools, community halls, local roads and airstrips. Delivery of these services is further hindered by the huge distances between towns, connected by close to 2,500 kilometres of vulnerable road infrastructure, much of which is unsealed.

As many members would know, these challenges led to major financial and governance issues. Following multiple reviews, in late 2013 Central Darling Shire Council was placed in administration and a public inquiry followed. This was after decades of government review and intervention due to the shire's ongoing lack of financial sustainability. The shire has remained in administration for over a decade—which is far too long—because of the extreme risk of financial and governance failure if an elected council were to be returned in its current form. Many people of Central Darling shire want the prolonged period of administration to end—and I agree with them. Others want the administration to continue. However, local government is a vital democratic tier of government. It is my view that the prolonged period of administration should end.

On assuming office in 2023 the New South Wales Labor Government committed to restoring democracy to Central Darling Shire Council as soon as possible. However, the unique characteristics I have mentioned, along with the extended period that Central Darling Shire Council had been in administration, mean that it needs support before it can transition to a fully elected council. It will take some time before the governance and financial frameworks are operating sustainably. Since becoming Minister, I have taken the time necessary to consider all the options, reviews and feedback from members of the community, submitted on behalf of their local member, as well as from the council, the member for Barwon and others to determine a way forward for the Central Darling shire community.

Central Darling Shire Council is heavily dependent on funding from other levels of government. I am advised that in 2022-23 the council received over 90 per cent of its income from State and Federal government funding to supplement its own minimal revenue from rates, fees and charges. Because of this, the New South Wales Government has had a significant interest in ensuring that the council is being governed well and has the competence and financial capacity to plan and deliver services the local community needs in a sustainable way into the future.

The bill provides a practical and sensible solution to bring Central Darling Shire Council out of administration by transitioning to a new type of council model. At its core, the rural and remote council model set out in this bill provides for a governing body comprised of a mix of locally and democratically elected councillors and government-appointed councillors. This is the best way to ensure both democratic representation and stable, experienced governance. In the case of Central Darling, I am proposing that the council will be designated via proclamation a "rural and remote council", with a governing body comprising three locally elected councillors—one from each of the three existing wards—along with three government-appointed councillors, one of whom will be the chairperson. This will help lower governance costs while providing a similar councillor-to-resident ratio as the neighbouring council of Wentworth shire.

The government-appointed councillors will be selected based on specialist skills, expertise or attributes that they can bring to help the council, or because they bring diverse representation to the council. For example, this could include representation of Aboriginal people within the shire, or the pastoralist community. Like all councillors across the State, the elected and appointed councillors will be required to work together to make decisions in the best interests of the community as a whole, regardless of where they come from. The bill will be applied to Central Darling Shire Council following development of the supporting regulatory framework. To enable time for this to occur, I have extended the administration of the council until the framework is developed and elections for the community-elected councillors, which I anticipate will be held in early 2025.

While there are no current plans to declare any other councils rural and remote councils, it is intended that, if necessary, this model will be available to other rural and remote local government areas that meet the eligibility criteria to be set out by regulation, providing a safety net of sustainable representative democracy should they face similar challenges in the future. Interestingly enough, this afternoon when I met with Regional Cities NSW, the model was supported and suggested for other councils in New South Wales. But, as I said, this is specifically designed for Central Darling and, as the House will see from the bill, it applies to councils that are in administration.

The model will not change functions and staffing. A rural and remote council will maintain council status and continue to have all the same functions and powers of a local council, except to the extent provided in the bill or the regulations. The key difference is that a rural and remote council will have the added support of appointed councillors to assist in the long-term planning and delivery of services and infrastructure. All current assets and staff will remain with the council and the general manager will continue to implement council decisions and oversee operations and staff, consistent with existing processes. Critically, local employment will be secured, local jobs will remain local and council staff will not be impacted. They will continue to be employed under the existing New South Wales Local Government (State) Award conditions.

The model will return a democratic voice. It is important that people are given an opportunity to have a say on local issues and how their local council functions. Under the rural and remote council model before the House, at least half of the councillors must be elected by the community, one from each of the three wards. That guarantees that there will be fair representation for the community to ensure that their voice is directly heard at council meetings. The model will streamline costs. The rural and remote council model allows for the streamlining of costs so that the council can function more efficiently, effectively and sustainably in meeting the needs of the community.

While not changing the statutory minimum number of councillors, the bill allows that councillor numbers can be kept low while maintaining a suitable councillor-resident ratio. The number of council meetings held each year may be reduced to four per year, down from the current mandatory 10 meetings per year, in recognition that rural and remote councils tend to deal with fewer and less complex items of business than their regional and metropolitan counterparts. However, it will remain a matter for the council to determine if more meetings than the minimum four are needed.

The bill also provides a broad regulation-making power that will allow adjustments to be made to a range of regulatory requirements, including planning and reporting requirements, that apply to general purpose councils. This will help to make sure that rural and remote councils remain lean and effective. Importantly, any rural and remote council will still be eligible for government grants, including Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants. Finally, the council will be in a better position to develop and deliver on a more sustainable funding strategy with the additional expertise of appointed members. While there are similarities between councils in the Far West of

New South Wales, it is acknowledged that they are all different, and the designation of a council as a rural and remote council must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Importantly, the bill sets out a flexible framework that provides the ability to outline particular matters, such as councillor numbers, for each designation under a proclamation.

This is a medium-term solution and it is not permanent. The model provides a period of up to 10 years to enable the return of representative democracy, while ensuring stable governance. While successive Ministers may choose to extend the terms of the designation, it is not a permanent, one-directional change. The provision of a sunset date for the designation as a rural and regional council means that, should the community's circumstances change, a future Minister for Local Government may choose to return a council to the general-purpose model. In any event, the model will provide a pathway of upskilling local representatives so that, in time, the council will have the necessary skills and expertise to consider a traditional model of local government.

I now turn to the bill. The bill inserts new schedule 11 in the Local Government Act 1993, which applies to rural and remote councils. Clause 3 of schedule 11 sets out how councils can be designated as a rural and remote council. Regulations will set out criteria for eligibility and may include metrics to be met, such as population density and percentage of own-source revenue. These criteria may include a range of common characteristics of a council in the Far West of New South Wales, such as a low population, low population density, low percentage of own-source revenue, unsealed road length, distance to major service centres, disadvantage factors and the like.

It is not intended that the rural and remote council model be applied to metropolitan, coastal or large regional councils that do not face the unique challenges faced by councils in the Far West of New South Wales. A precondition to being designated as a rural and remote council will be that the council must be currently under administration. This aligns to the principle that the rural and remote council model is intended for councils unable to operate sustainably under a traditional council model. Each designation will be for a period of up to 10 years, with flexibility for extension for one or more further periods of up to 10 years by subsequent proclamations, should there be a need. Later in the schedule, clause 15 sets out what happens on the expiry of a designation, including that the council will continue to operate as if it were a rural and remote council until the next scheduled election.

Clause 4 of schedule 11 sets out provisions relating to wards in rural and remote councils. While the majority of existing ward provisions under the Act will continue to apply, provisions that require ward boundaries to be adjusted where the population in different wards differs by more than 10 per cent will not apply. This recognises that in rural and remote councils with very low population density, the 10 per cent variation rule could impact sensible ward boundaries set around communities of interest. The bill also recognises that abolishing or dividing an area into wards may impact the number of elected councillors, so a rural and remote council will require the concurrence of the Minister for Local Government to make any of those ward changes.

The next element of the model, the membership of the rural and remote council's governing body, is provided for under clause 5. The details of the designation, made by proclamation by the Governor, will be specific for each council. The proclamation will set out the number of elected and appointed councillors, of which at least one half must be elected councillors, and at least one councillor must be appointed. If the council is divided into wards, there must be at least one councillor per ward. There is no change to the required number of councillors, which must be between five and 15, consistent with existing provisions of the Act. A further designation could change the number of councillors on a rural and remote council, for example, if there were a change in ward numbers. This provides the necessary flexibility to set the appropriate composition of members of the governing body on a case by case basis.

Clauses 6, 7 and 8 deal with election provisions, many of which replicate existing provisions within the Act, with necessary modifications to reflect nuances of the rural and remote council model. In particular, provision has been made to address vacancies during the last 18 months of the term of office to save councils the cost of a by-election. Councils can request the Minister to approve leaving the office vacant, carrying out a countback, or proceeding to a by-election. After elections, the Minister is responsible for ensuring that the council collectively has membership that covers attributes in a number of areas to ensure the council is led effectively. These attributes can be seen at clause 9 of schedule 11. The Minister will appoint councillors with suitable skills and experience to fill any gaps. For example, appointed councillors could have governance, finance or local government administration skills, experience in emergency management or environmental management, or the ability to represent the interests of the local Aboriginal population. This could also extend to other community groups, such as the local pastoralist community.

I said when I visited Central Darling last month that appointed councillors will preferably be from the local government area and/or have a connection to the area. Applying the existing legislation, the term of office of elected councillors will be four years. Appointed councillors' terms will expire at the next general election to align with elected councillor counterparts. The remainder of clause 9 of schedule 11 deals with casual vacancies in appointed councillor positions and also confirms that any reference to councillor or term of office throughout the

Act includes appointed councillors. The next part of the bill, clause 10 of schedule 11, provides for a chairperson who will have the same functions as a mayor and have the casting vote. The chairperson will be a ministerial appointment from among the appointed councillors. The deputy chairperson, as set out in clause 11 of schedule 11, is to be chosen by the councillors from among all the councillors, consistent with existing processes. All provisions relating to the deputy mayor will be applicable to the deputy chairperson.

An elected councillor will be paid in accordance with the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal's determination under section 241 of the Act. Under clause 12 of schedule 11, the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal will be required to determine the minimum and maximum fees to be paid to appointed councillors and also the chairperson when a council is designated as a rural and remote council. This keeps the determination of fees for the appointed members at arm's length from the Minister. Consistent with existing New South Wales Government processes, an appointed councillor who is employed in the New South Wales public service will be entitled to be paid travelling and subsistence allowances only.

Moving on to meeting arrangements set out at clause 13 of schedule 11, the principle of reduced costs and red tape is supported by the minimum number of meetings of a rural and remote council, which has been reduced from 10 to four per year, each time in a different quarter. Additionally, a request for an extraordinary meeting to be called must be made by at least one elected and one appointed councillor. Under clause 14 of schedule 11, the same disciplinary processes apply to all councillors, but the person to whom they answer differs. Elected councillors answer to the departmental chief executive and appointed councillors will answer to the Minister for Local Government. Finally, clause 16 of schedule 11 provides that regulations may further deal with rural and remote councils, and in particular may modify or exempt them from certain planning and reporting obligations, consistent with the principle of supporting greater efficiencies and cutting red tape.

There is no doubt that this new council model presents a positive way forward for the people of the Central Darling shire, returning to them a democratic voice for the first time in over a decade. More importantly, this model will set up the shire's vulnerable rural and remote communities for a more sustainable and positive future by not only safeguarding them against the risks of governance and financial failure but also enabling an effective and stable council that can plan for, advocate for and deliver important local services into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2024

Second Reading Speech

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (18:13): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024 continues the Statute Law Revision Program. I note that amendments to the bill were made in the Committee stage in the other place, moved by the Animal Justice Party, The Greens and the Government in consultation with the Opposition. The Government amendments made in the other place omitted proposals to amend the Environmental Trust Act 1998 and the Geographical Names Act 1966. The Government moved amendments to omit these proposals following issues raised by the Opposition regarding the suitability of the proposals for inclusion in the bill.

The Animal Justice Party amendments made in the other place altered a proposal to amend the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989. The proposal related to the postponement of the repeal of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2012. This regulation is due to be repealed on 1 September 2024 and the bill originally proposed to postpone the repeal for 12 months to 1 September 2025. Following the Animal Justice Party amendments, which were supported by the Government, the regulation is now due to be repealed on 1 February 2025. It is intended that an updated regulation will be in place by that date.

The final amendment made in the other place was moved by The Greens. It omitted a proposal to amend section 30A of the Interpretation Act 1987, which allows provisions to be transferred from one Act or statutory rule to another without affecting the operation or meaning of the provision. The Greens held concerns with the proposal to extend the application of section 30A to instruments, such as environmental planning instruments, in the other place and an amendment was made to remove it. The Government supported that amendment in accordance with the longstanding practice that if any member objects to any proposal in the bill, the proposal is omitted from the bill. I am sure that members are familiar with the Statute Law Revision Program, which has been in place for 40 years. Statute law revision bills are an effective method for making minor policy changes and updating our State statute book. This bill does so by updating references arising from machinery of government changes, removing typographical errors, updating cross-references and repealing redundant provisions.

I now move to the schedules in the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill contains policy changes of a minor and non-controversial nature. It gives effect to proposals that are of such minor consequence that they do not warrant the introduction of a separate amending bill. Following amendments in the other place, the schedule now contains amendments to 26 Acts and regulations. I will briefly outline some of these amendments for the House. Schedule 1 includes an amendment to the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023 to clarify that the Net Zero Commission's annual reports must be tabled in both Houses of Parliament within 28 days from the day the relevant Minister receives the report from the commission.

Schedule 1 also amends the Food Act 2003 to clarify that authorised officers may make audio, audiovisual or other electronic recordings when making inquiries, investigating offences or requiring a person to provide information or answer questions for the purposes of that Act. Schedule 1 also amends the Marine Estate Management Act 2014 to clarify that the relevant Ministers administering the Act may, by order in the *New South Wales Government Gazette*, revoke a marine estate management strategy made under that Act. The revocation would take effect on the day the order is published, or a later date specified in the order.

The schedule makes minor and non-controversial amendments to the Interpretation Act 1987 proposed by the Parliamentary Counsel. Among these amendments are new definitions for the terms "business day" and "public holiday". This will remove the need for these to be separately defined in individual Acts and instruments while also ensuring consistency across our statute book. An amendment is also included to clarify that when a legislative Act, instrument or provision is repealed on a day, that Act, instrument or provision is repealed at the beginning of that day. The schedule also contains amendments that account for evolving technology and a consistent approach to the publication of information by departments and other public sector agencies. For example, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995 and the regulations made under that Act are amended to provide that certificates and other documents issued under the Act or regulations may include a copy of the registrar's signature or seal rather than requiring the registrar's actual signature and seal.

Other Acts, including the Biosecurity Act 2015 and the Fisheries Management Act 1994, are also being amended to allow certain documents to be made available on a New South Wales Government website used by the relevant departments. The schedule includes amendments to replace references to departments, and holders of offices within departments, which are outdated as a result of machinery of government changes affecting the operation of the relevant Acts. For example, both the Gas Supply Act 1996 and the Heritage Act 1977 are amended so that a reference to the "Department of Planning and Environment" is replaced with a reference to the "Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water".

I turn now to the amendments to the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989. The bill postpones the automatic repeal of a number of regulations, including the Boarding Houses Regulation 2013 and the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2014, which would otherwise occur on 1 September 2024. These regulations have been postponed on five or more previous occasions and cannot be further postponed by order. The amendments extend the repeal of the regulations to 1 September 2025 to ensure that further work can be undertaken in reviewing these important regulations. The exception is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation which, as I mentioned earlier, will be due to be repealed on 1 February 2025. An amendment is also included to exempt the Road Rules 2014 made under the Road Transport Act 2013 from automatic repeal. This is because the Road Rules 2014 are part of a national scheme of road rules that are regularly reviewed by road safety experts and updated as necessary. It is therefore not appropriate that they be subject to the automatic repeal process.

Schedule 2 to the bill deals with matters of pure statute law revision, consisting of minor technical changes to legislation that the Parliamentary Counsel considers to be appropriate for inclusion in the bill. This includes amendments to 13 Acts and instruments to fix typographical errors, correct provision numbering and omit redundant provisions. Schedule 3 to the bill contains general savings, transitional and other provisions that are standard to statute law revision bills. This includes a provision allowing for regulations to be made that are of a savings or transitional nature.

I hope that these examples of provisions contained in the bill, which are representative of provisions contained in the broader bill, demonstrate to members the uncontroversial nature of the bill. The bill is nonetheless important to give effect to minor policy changes that do not warrant bringing separate bills before the House and to otherwise make small amendments to a variety of Acts which will maintain the high quality of the New South Wales statute book. If an amendment contained in the bill causes concern to any member, or requires clarification, the member should bring these matters to the attention of the Government. If any particular concern cannot be resolved, the Government is prepared to withdraw the matter from the bill. I reiterate that I encourage members to bring any of their concerns forward. I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:20): I thank the Minister for her comprehensive contribution as to the effect of the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024. So uncontroversial and so minor are the amendments of the bill, particularly now in its amended form, that the Hon. Susan Carter was unable to give one of her usual learned treatises in her contribution in the other place. I have checked that the amendments that were made in the other place have been incorporated in the bill now before the House. The Opposition supports the bill.

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (18:21): I support the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024. The main purpose of the bill is to make a range of amendments to 26 Acts and regulations. The bill is a result of the Statute Law Revision Program, herein known as the SLR program, which involves regular and ongoing review of the New South Wales statute book to rectify any issues that are identified for amendment. SLR program bills are limited to minor amendments proposed by government agencies, minor amendments by way of pure statute law revision proposed by Parliamentary Counsel, repeals of obsolete or unnecessary Acts, and savings and transitional provisions.

Schedule 1 to the bill makes minor policy changes to 26 Acts and regulations as proposed by relevant Ministers. Schedule 2 covers matters of pure statute law revisions and schedule 3 contains general savings, transitional and other provisions. There is strong public interest in ensuring the accuracy, coherence and quality of New South Wales legislation, and this bill ensures changes are made to ensure the integrity of the New South Wales statute book. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (18:22): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate and the Opposition for its constructive engagement to progress this important bill.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms JO HAYLEN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

RICE MARKETING AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Speech

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (18:24): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024 is a historic bill, significant not only for the New South Wales rice industry but also for Australian agriculture. The bill will initiate a series of events that will change the way New South Wales rice is marketed to Australian consumers and international customers. Such legislative change is needed to reflect rice growers' evolving needs and to best position the industry to react and respond to challenges and exploit emerging opportunities. The passage of the bill will further develop a marketing system that supports innovation and offers opportunities to emerging industry supply chains.

Before I get into the details of the bill, I highlight that this is a major step. I had some involvement with the rice industry during my time as the CEO of the National Irrigators' Council and prior to coming back into the Parliament as a board member for Murrumbidgee Irrigation—Murrumbidgee being where much of our rice is grown. I was also, at one stage in the past, one of the agriculture Ministers who extended the rice marketing single desk at the time, which is what the industry wanted to do. The fact that the industry has now decided that it wants to take away the single desk is a significant decision, and one which is to the great credit of the industry and also to Minister Tara Moriarty for moving down this path.

Rice growing is a longstanding industry in New South Wales and is viewed as one of the State's flagship agricultural accomplishments. It contributes considerably to the broader New South Wales primary industry sector. Worth an estimated \$219 million at the farm gate in 2022-23, that farm output underpins further value-adding capability, which supports business and jobs in regional New South Wales as well as Australia's reputation as a global leader in agricultural produce and trade. It is well acknowledged that Australia's agricultural sector faces ongoing challenges and change. For the rice industry, this is even more acute. A combination of reduced water supplies and the advance of alternate crops has emphasised the need to ensure that the industry

remains as competitive as possible. However, unlike other broadacre grain croppers, rice farmers are limited with regard to who markets their crop and how, including being required to export through a single desk arrangement.

The bill amends the Rice Marketing Act 1983 to change the marketing of New South Wales grown rice. Under that Act, rice marketing is controlled by the Rice Marketing Board, which was established in 1928 to promote primary production by representing producers and consumers of rice. The Rice Marketing Board has sole responsibility for marketing the rice vested in it and appoints authorised buyers to buy and sell on its behalf. The Act also allows the board to issue a single export licence to one authorised buyer, giving that authorised buyer the exclusive right to export New South Wales grown rice.

The Rice Marketing Board has issued a sole and exclusive export licence—commonly called the SEEL—to Riceworkers Limited, better known under its trading name SunRice. Under the current legislative arrangements, so long as SunRice holds the SEEL, all other persons or companies are prohibited from exporting rice grown in New South Wales. Whilst regulated agriculture marketing structures were common in the past, these structures are now rare. In fact, the Rice Marketing Board was the first, and is currently the only remaining, statutory commodity marketing authority in Australia. All other agricultural markets have been gradually deregulated since the 1970s, and most were fully deregulated by the year 2000.

Firstly, I acknowledge the process that has brought us to this bill, which will bring about extremely important changes to the New South Wales rice industry. Rice vesting has been subject to regular statutory reviews which include assessment of whether the vesting and exclusive export marketing arrangements are in the community's best interests. To that end, the former New South Wales Government undertook a review of rice vesting in 2021. The review highlighted several issues and made findings which warranted further investigation.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences [ABARES] was then commissioned to prepare an independent report to consider the findings of the 2021 vesting review, conduct further consultation with stakeholders and provide recommendations to the Government on the most appropriate response to the 2021 review. The ABARES independent report largely reaffirmed the key findings of the 2021 review and provided eight recommendations for industry reform, including recommendations relating to the immediate removal of the Northern Rivers region and subsequent removal of the vesting arrangements entirely, and recommendations on governance and transparency for the Rice Marketing Board, and research and development.

Rice vesting has historically enjoyed strong support in the south of the State but is unanimously opposed by growers in the north. However, since the Government released its response to the ABARES independent report, industry has had the time to consider the ABARES independent report and its recommendations. Subsequent stakeholder consultation highlighted that, despite being long-term advocates of vesting, key stakeholders such as SunRice and Riceworkers no longer support the current arrangements, including vesting and the prohibition to export rice by anyone other than the Rice Marketing Board or the exclusive export rights holder. Taken together, it is evident that there is no longer a clear preference within the industry for the statutory marketing arrangements.

While southern rice is dominated by the SunRice supply chain, there are some rice growers who supply smaller supply chains and who historically have been and continue to be opposed to vesting. These smaller supply chains and their growers have welcomed the proposed changes to the Act and the cessation of the regulated marketing arrangements. Those views are shared by growers in the northern region, who have consistently requested exclusion of their rice from the vesting arrangements. The vesting arrangements have served the industry and the State of New South Wales well, but it is evident that the industry is now better served by an alternative model.

The rice and broader grains industry landscape has obviously changed dramatically since regulated marketing arrangements were first established in the 1920s. It is only reasonable that, as the nature and structure of industries change, the Government looks at the regulatory framework surrounding them to make sure they deliver the best outcomes for the State. The bill before the House today will amend the Rice Marketing Act 1983 to deregulate the New South Wales rice industry in line with recommendation 1 of the ABARES report and commensurate with the findings of the 2021 New South Wales Government review.

I now turn to the main provisions of the bill. Firstly, the bill will exclude rice grown in the Northern Rivers region from the operations of the Act, including vesting and the exclusive export arrangements. The Northern Rivers is a relatively new rice-growing region, with the first commercial crops grown in the area during the millennium drought. The industry is championed by a group of rice growers and is supported by several developing supply chains, the owners of which have invested in milling and storage infrastructure. Compared to other crops, rice is particularly suited to the Northern Rivers' seasonal weather conditions, which are typified by periods of high summer rainfall—perhaps too high sometimes—whilst the region is a small contributor to total rice production. It is unique in its management practices, as rice is grown under dryland conditions and is mostly

dependent on in-season summer rainfall. This feature also creates a point of differentiation from the southern rice growing region, which depends on irrigation for its production.

Rice growers, service providers and processors in the Northern Rivers region have long expressed a clear desire to grow and further develop their industry. The tyranny of distance from the Northern Rivers to SunRice's export receival facilities in southern New South Wales means these growers cannot currently viably sell rice into international markets through the exclusive export arrangements. The consistently clear message from the Northern Rivers growers is that vesting, which unnecessarily restricts rice grown in that region from being viably exported, is a key barrier to further industry investment, denying the industry the economies of scale that it needs to compete effectively in the domestic and export markets.

Northern Rivers growers assert that without access to export opportunities to diversify their customer base, the industry will be unable to reach its full potential. Therefore, to address the main barrier—as expressed by industry in the northern region—to industry growth and innovation, the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill will immediately establish an excluded area. That excluded area will consist of the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, the City of Lismore, Richmond Valley, and Tweed, capturing the areas in which rice is grown in the Northern Rivers.

To allow a clean separation between the current rice crop to which export restrictions apply and rice to which the new provisions will apply, rice harvested and grown in the excluded area before 1 September 2024 will remain vested rice. It is important for people to note those dates. The vesting arrangements and export restrictions imposed on the vested rice under the Act will not apply to rice cultivated and harvested in the Northern Rivers area after 1 September 2024. Practically, this will mean that the rice crop to be harvested in autumn 2025 is affected by that.

Rice is typically sown between October and December and harvested between March and May, so a September start date allows a clean separation between growing seasons. Secondly, in response to the recent feedback from key stakeholders within the southern rice region, the bill will end the vesting arrangements in the rest of New South Wales for all rice grown after 1 July 2025. This means that for rice grown after 1 July 2025 producers will no longer be restricted to a single export entity, nor will growers be required to sell rice grown after 1 July 2025 to an authorised buyer.

Practically, this means that the first rice that can be exported free of the vesting arrangements will be rice harvested in autumn 2026. This phase transition recognises that there is a clear need to delineate between rice that is vested and rice that is not vested, and allows for a managed transition under familiar settings for the upcoming rice season in the Riverina. This change is consistent with recent feedback from stakeholders. It is also consistent with the key recommendation of the ABARES report that vesting should cease and with findings from the 2021 New South Wales Government review, which estimated there would be economic benefits to ending vesting.

Economic analysis conducted as part of the 2021 rice vesting review indicated that removing rice vesting regulations would create net economic benefits through an increase in the value of domestic and export rice sales, delivering increases of between \$80 million and \$133 million over six years. Ceasing vesting will facilitate the pursuit of new export market opportunities which will in turn help to support further industry development in the Northern Rivers region and offer beneficial gains to new and expanded supply chains in the Riverina and Murray regions, both as export opportunities to be explored and, through this, further strengthening of domestic supply chains.

Further, as these new market opportunities emerge, so does the opportunity for innovation right through the supply chain. Consistent with the findings of modelling results of the 2021 review, the ABARES report recommended full deregulation based on the conclusion that there is no strong evidence that vesting is required for the premium prices achieved for Australian rice, and there is the possibility that vesting is holding back the industry from achieving higher grower returns. This report also noted that a clear cost of the current vesting arrangements is the restrictions they impose on the development of alternative rice export supply chains and alternative marketing options for growers.

Given the end of the vesting arrangements, the bill will also require the Rice Marketing Board to commence winding up its affairs from 1 July 2025 and take reasonable steps to finalise its affairs before 1 July 2026. Once winding up is completed, the board will be dissolved. When the board is dissolved, the assets, rights and liabilities of the board may be transferred to an appropriate New South Wales public authority. The Government will ensure that any residual funding from the winding up of the board is used for the benefit of the New South Wales rice industry. This will be a key area of consultation with stakeholders, which I will talk to shortly.

I also take this opportunity to thank the members of the Rice Marketing Board, present and past, for their dedicated service to the New South Wales rice industry and to this State. While the amendments in the bill will

be welcomed by most stakeholders, they also reflect a change to the marketing arrangements under which the industry has operated for nearly a century. I appreciate that these changes may foster an element of uncertainty as farmers learn to adapt to life in a more competitive selling market. The New South Wales Government appreciates that there will be a period of transition for the industry as it adjusts to the new arrangements, and we are committed to working with industry as they navigate and manage the transition.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will lead a Rice Transition Group, comprising members of its agriculture and biosecurity division and the Rice Marketing Board, for the purpose of assisting the board with the winding up of their affairs. The Rice Transition Group will also consult with a stakeholder reference group as the industry moves to a deregulated marketing structure. This group will be important to represent the views of industry on transitional requirements, including identifying research and development opportunities to support new markets and to address emerging crop disease issues, ensuring seed supply is maintained for all rice growers, investigating regional development opportunities to support the industry during the transition, and establishing appropriate mechanisms to deliver the Rice Marketing Board's residual funds for industry benefit after the board has been wound up. Both the Rice Transition Group and the stakeholder reference group will be time limited and cease on 1 July 2026 or when the Act is repealed.

In the time since this bill was debated in the other place, some questions about how this bill will function have been raised with the Government. On the Minister's behalf, I will take the time to provide some additional clarity on these questions. The bill operates differently in the Northern Rivers region and the southern region. After 1 September 2024, rice cultivated and harvested in the Northern Rivers excluded area will not be a commodity for the purposes of the Act. In practice, this means that when the Northern Rivers harvest their next crop in autumn 2025, this rice will not be subject to the export prohibition. They are in the clear to develop their export supply chains and market their next crop as they see fit. Importantly, any rice from the Northern Rivers autumn 2024 crop that has been recently harvested is still treated as vested rice, even if it is in storage beyond 1 September 2024.

Outside of that excluded area, rice vesting will end on 30 June 2025. The next crop, which will be harvested in autumn 2025, will remain vested and cannot be exported other than under the Sole and Exclusive Export License even if it is held in storage after 1 July 2025. The Rice Marketing Board can and will continue to monitor compliance with the vesting arrangements until the board is officially wound up by 1 July 2026. For southern growers, the crop harvested in autumn 2026 will be the first that can be exported without any restrictions or requirements imposed by the current vesting arrangements. Whilst the Rice Marketing Board will continue to oversee the exclusive export arrangements for vested rice, they will also continue to see that SunRice's obligations under the SEEL are adhered to for rice grown before 1 July 2025. This includes acting as the buyer of last resort and ensuring that all rice growers have access to seed on a non-discriminatory and equitable basis.

Beyond the end of vesting and the SEEL, SunRice has provided the Minister with assurances that it will continue to provide access to all New South Wales rice growers for varieties for which they have exclusive licence agreements in place, in line with the terms of their contracts with the New South Wales Government. SunRice has also provided assurances that it will fulfill any seed orders to public domain seed for the upcoming rice season. Beyond the end of vesting, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will work with industry to identify new options to conduct the supply of public domain seed, including temporary seed bulk-up operations by the department.

I acknowledge the efforts of the industry in working with the Government since the decision was announced to ensure an orderly transition to a deregulated environment. I acknowledge the efforts of SunRice and the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia—I know Graeme Kruger is watching because he has just texted me and it came through on my watch. I appreciate that the mechanics of this process are a little complex. Unwinding this legislation was always going to include complexities, nuances and details. There is no neat way to unpick nearly 100 years of regulatory arrangements. But the complexity is worth it in the end. The New South Wales Government is committed to maintaining a strong rice industry in the Riverina and to supporting the emerging Northern Rivers industry, and these legislative changes help to facilitate exactly that.

The Government's commitment to achieving this does not end after the consideration of this legislation. A Rice Transition Group has been established and, alongside its role in winding up the Rice Marketing Board, will be supported by a stakeholder reference group to act as a conduit between industry and Government on transitional issues. As I have mentioned, it will also ensure that any remaining assets under the control of the Rice Marketing Board are dealt with appropriately and for the benefit of the New South Wales industry. Most significantly, the bill implements what has been recommended to the Government and reflects the perspective of the industry itself. On behalf of the Government, I thank all industry stakeholders, and especially rice growers, for their time and valuable contribution to the process over the last few years.

On behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, I also thank the member for Murray for her contribution to discussions and acknowledge her advocacy for the industry that resides within her electorate. From my involvement with the industry over a number of years in the capacity as I mentioned earlier, I understand and acknowledge what a significant step this is. It is a brave one for the industry to take but one which, with their innovative approaches, they will be able to make the best of and grow this industry over time. I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:46): I start my contribution by saying that, whilst the Opposition will not oppose the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024, some things need to be said. I fully take on board what the member for Monaro spoke about but, given what has happened, it seems like the industry has not really had a choice. Although we do not oppose the bill, it does not necessarily mean that we believe it is the best outcome for industry. In fact, it is probably fair to say that growers have felt like there is actually no other choice at this point in time. As mentioned by the member for Monaro, 1 July 2025 is the line in the sand. That was a request from industry at the end of the day to try to make sure that they could move forward as quickly as possible, but it was not the preferred option in any way, shape or form. Given the pragmatic nature and reluctant acceptance from stakeholders, I am obviously not going to go against their wishes.

Over the past decade, New South Wales rice has been exported to around 60 different countries, including Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, parts of the Middle East, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, New Zealand and the Pacific. Ninety-nine per cent of the rice produced in Australia comes from New South Wales. In 2020-21 the rice industry had an approximate farmgate value of \$184 million. This decision, while mostly relevant to New South Wales, will also have ramifications for the nation when it comes to our standing in the export market. It will be interesting to see how that plays out over time. When the Government first outlined its intentions to introduce this bill, the president of the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia [RGA], Peter Herrmann, said:

While the RGAs policy is to retain the New South Wales rice vesting arrangements in their current form, the New South Wales Government's response to the ABARES report made it clear that maintaining the current arrangements was no longer an option.

That is a fairly clear indication that, at that point in time, the Ricegrowers' Association was actually looking for support for vesting but was also prepared to do what was necessary. That lines up directly with my experience when I was dealing with these arrangements when I was lucky enough to be the Minister for Agriculture. It was only roughly two years ago that I was out in a paddock with growers in Griffith who were adamant that we needed to continue the single desk approach for the benefit of the industry.

Between 97 per cent and 99 per cent of New South Wales' overall rice production occurs within the Riverina-Murray region. That is why I went there, and I am sure we will hear similar things from the member for Murray. I listened to the stakeholders. That was the path that we were heading down while the Coalition was in government. The Ricegrowers' Association of Australia has not changed the view it expressed to me when I was the Minister, but it has made it clear that it is trying to take a very diplomatic approach and find a way forward despite this decision. It has also said that it wants and needs better clarity around the transfer of the Rice Marketing Board's assets to ensure they will go back to growers and industry. With that, I foreshadow that I will move an amendment about the transfer of assets and rights and liabilities to a public authority and/or the Commonwealth rural research and development corporation for the purposes of research and development. I will provide further detail on that. The Ricegrowers' Association has been told that is the Government's intent, but strengthening the wording will add some security for those stakeholders. I will move that amendment on their behalf.

Overall, the lack of direct engagement with the Ricegrowers' Association, or in fact any rice-related stakeholder group, has been disappointing. It sends a clear message that this decision was not made by stakeholders from the rice-growing district; it was made by the Minns Labor Government from 52 Martin Place, and the industry is having to deal with it. That is not the best way of doing things. This decision should have been made working with and for industry. In most of the Government's media releases it tries to include comments from industry to back in its announcement. So it says a lot that the media release announcing this legislation contained quotes only from the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Industry and Trade. I guess it is hard to get positive comments from stakeholders who are not necessarily receiving the news in an overly positive way, despite what some may try to lead us to believe.

The Minister for Agriculture was quoted in that release as saying, "The New South Wales Government will support industry as it navigates and manages the transition." We also heard that from the Minister's representative here, moments ago. I truly hope that is the case. We need to see the Minister back in her words with actions. Hopefully, this time actions will speak louder than words. As I mentioned, the Ricegrowers' Association is trying to see the positives in the bill. It will be looking for new opportunities for the industry as a result of the legislation. I commend the association for doing that. But I also urge it to keep talking to the relevant people to

make sure that assistance does come and that the industry and the stakeholders are able to access those opportunities. I congratulate all the stakeholders who are being impacted by these changes—some quite reluctantly—on their positive approach and for trying to move forward. Let us hope we see some positive outcomes. I will move my amendment a little later.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:52): I speak in support of the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024. I thank Minister Moriarty, who is in the advisers area, for the interest she took in this issue and for meeting with all stakeholders. Minister Whan detailed the transitional arrangements in his second reading speech. They will be done with care and consideration. I will not repeat them, but I want to associate myself with Minister Whan's comments. I note the contribution of the member for Dubbo and some of the issues that he raised. Any change is challenging—particularly a change from a system that has been in place since the 1920s and has worked well for a lot of people. It has not worked well for the Northern Rivers rice growers, and that is the community I am here to represent. We need a system that works fairly for all.

Northern Rivers rice growers were disadvantaged; others were advantaged. Change is always difficult, but we have to make sure that everybody is advantaged. That is the way I read the bill, and that is the way I have engaged with the Minister, with her office and with rice growers. The Northern Rivers rice growers were shut out of the market. They were at a complete disadvantage economically and in terms of efficiency and their access to an export market. We cannot say that vesting was working well when a group of up to 40 rice growers were not advantaged. On 6 June I received a message from Tony Carusi, a Northern Rivers rice grower—many of you know Big Tony. I know the Minister has spoken with him. The message reads:

Hi Janelle. I saw the reading via internet of the bill regarding rice today by Tara in Parliament. Thought I'd be dead 50 years before this happened. I know it still has to pass before we are free but hope it will get across the board support. Thank you very much for the work and help you have given to me and the rice industry on the Northern Rivers. Great to see a Domestic Fair Trade for all NSW rice growers it's just simply being fair.

He talked about it being a miracle. I responded:

Miracles do happen Tony with what I call good political will to serve community need. I cannot wait until the bill comes over to the Legislative Assembly and I can speak in support. I always say good ideas never go away they find their time and the right people in place to tackle them.

I wanted to note those comments. Think about how hard it has been to change any monopoly in Australia. It has been difficult. I have seen it in agriculture over a long period. The Minister and I visited the Natural Rice Co at Kyogle. It has been doing fantastic work supporting the industry and providing many jobs. We have dryland rice growing in our area as well. It does not grow without water, of course; it is grown without irrigation. It has many benefits. We are lucky that we have a lot of water up our way—we have wet feet a lot of the time—and it is suitable for rice growing. Our growers want to be able to export as well and join the market. That is what growers do. That is what farmers do. That is what people in agriculture do. They want access to other markets. They want to export. The bill will really change the situation. It is not why the vesting is happening, but dryland rice growing uses a lot less water. Traditional rice growing uses a lot of water and emits a lot of methane.

The bill is not about that. I am just pointing out that this is how we promote ourselves in the Northern Rivers, and it is a great thing. I am not going to trail through the bill. We know what the bill is about. I thank Minister Moriarty. I note the findings of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences [ABARES] report. Based on that report, how can we not take action? I read it and wanted action for my rice growers in the Northern Rivers. I have been banging on about them for a few years. You could not read that report and not take action. It was very clear. All of the reasons given for keeping the vesting, ABARES ripped apart—that is my language. We hang onto a whole lot of reasons for a lot of years and it becomes a mantra. It becomes the commonsense understanding. But it simply did not stand up to any scrutiny. I commend the bill to the House. Go, Tony Carusi!

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (18:59): I lead for The Greens in debate on the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024. Our agriculture spokesperson, the Hon. Sue Higginson, MLC, in the other place is a dry rice farmer and she recused herself from leading on the bill in our party room—and rightly so, because she obviously has a vested interest. I also thank Minister Moriarty, who is in the gallery, and her staff for their deep and ongoing briefings with me and their hard work on this legislation. I was also pleased to hear from the Leader of The Nationals, the member for Lismore and, indeed, Minister Whan. It is not nothing. There has been a generosity of spirit from the rice-growing community across the State. I look forward to hearing from the member for Murray on this issue. It is a long tradition; the single desk has been in place since the 1920s. But there has been a generosity of spirit.

The bill directly benefits the rice growers in my electorate and in the Northern Rivers. I give a big shout-out to all our primary food producers across the State, including all the small to medium farmers, and all our rice growers. Of course, I am particularly fond of the dryland rice growers. I will explain why later. We cannot do

without our food-farming communities. They work bloody hard to provide us with the basics of life. I heard some people today asking, "Why do we care that much about biosecurity?" City slickers do not understand where their food comes from and they do not understand how hard it is for farmers today.

As the former Greens agriculture spokesperson, I am proud that we were the first political party to introduce regenerative agriculture as a formal policy. I know that a lot of farmers and others are fond of regenerative agriculture concepts. But it is kind of a secret. When we were at AgQuip years ago, people would sidle up to us. They did not want to be tarred with the same brush as The Greens for supporting regenerative agriculture, but now they are all doing it because we know that healthy soil and seeds, preparing for warmer and warmer climates, and economic viability and sustainability for farmers are essential to food growing. It is not rocket science.

I believe the bill contributes to those aims. It supports our local rice growers. As the member for Murray and I discussed the other day, there is a new generation of boutique farmers. That is incredibly exciting for my electorate, and the bill is in keeping with that. We are also very supportive of, and concerned about, making sure any money that is left over goes back to the rest of the rice-farming community and is used at their discretion. I believe this legislation does that. I flag that we will not support the Liberal-Nationals amendment. We trust that the Minister will negotiate directly with the farmers about whatever money is left over.

The formal review that the former Government undertook of rice vesting in 2021 before the previous rice vesting term expired on 30 June 2022 highlighted several issues and made findings that warranted further investigation. As such, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, known as ABARES—which the member for Lismore mentioned—was commissioned to prepare an independent report to consider the findings of the 2021 vesting review, conduct further consultation with stakeholders and provide recommendations to the Government on the most appropriate response to the review.

The ABARES independent report largely reaffirmed the key findings of the 2021 review and provided eight recommendations for industry reform, including recommendations relating to the immediate removal of the Northern Rivers region and the subsequent removal of the vesting arrangements entirely, improved governance and transparency, and research and development. The consistently clear message from our Northern Rivers growers is that vesting, which unnecessarily restricts rice grown in our region from being viably exported, is a key barrier to further industry investment, denying the industry the economies of scale it needs to compete effectively in both the domestic and export markets. That is an issue more broadly, but our farmers were explicit about it.

A finding of the report is that observed export price premiums are not the result of market power but a differentiated product approach that is based on a branding strategy, targeting niche markets and providing year-round product to customers. In a deregulated market there is little chance that the New South Wales rice industry would resort to a larger number of independent supply chains or a Californian-style industry, where there are three large corporate players. There is consistent evidence that there are significant opportunities for industry development and innovation, particularly on the small- to medium-size farms that are being constrained under the current regulatory framework. A key conclusion of the analysis is that, rather than a deregulated industry devolving into many competitive businesses, the existing supply chain is likely to largely continue as is due to its size and market positioning. So we do not believe the sky will fall as a result of the bill.

I put on record my shout-out to the dry rice farmers, because their system reduces greenhouse gas emissions by up to 85 per cent. Coming back to regenerative agriculture—and this is not a criticism; I believe it is something that we will look at—rice grown in the traditional paddy system has been found to be responsible for up to 18 per cent of the world's methane greenhouse gas emissions. The dry rice farmers are doing something really unique. It is an incredibly environmentally positive farming technique and is estimated to reduce water use by up to 65 per cent compared with traditional growing methods.

That is not the reason we are in the Chamber today. But it is certainly worth me putting on the *Hansard* record that that is a huge benefit of dry rice farming. Once the bill is passed, our Northern Rivers farmers can really go for it on the international stage, which is always exciting. We thank all of the stakeholders who have reached out to us. In terms of the end of rice vesting, we believe it is up to the rest of the rice-farming community to decide what happens to any moneys that are left over once the single desk is wound up. We support the bill and wish all of our rice growers and farmers well.

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:07): I speak in debate on the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024 to talk about the future of rice in our country. It must be remembered that 98 per cent of Australia's rice is grown in the Riverina region in the electorate of Murray. There is a very good reason rice is grown in the southern areas. We have large areas of flat land, suitable clay-based soils, available water—at times—big blue skies and long summer days, making it an ideal rice-growing area. It is the highest yielding rice area in the world. Rice has

a very bright future, thanks to Australia's incredibly talented and hardworking family farmers, who literally help feed this country and many other countries around the world, and have done so for a very long time.

To understand the future of rice in Australia, we need to acknowledge the past, and a big part of the story of rice in Australia relates to the company whose divestiture we are considering today. That company is SunRice. SunRice has been a fantastic organisation, which has helped get the best rice in the world from paddock to plate for many Australians. SunRice has also been an export success story, creating jobs in towns like Leeton and Deniliquin—lots of jobs. And I say "the best rice in the world" for a reason. The simple truth is that no other organisation in the world has done the extraordinary research and development work that SunRice has done in order to create world-beating rice in a country that traditionally never farmed rice.

SunRice has given Australian farmers access to markets, a great pricing structure and brilliant branding. Rice underpins a lot of our regional communities—mostly in my electorate. We should never forget the role that rural women have played in creating a strong rice-growing industry in this country. Many of the women in my area are actively involved. They are not just doing the books in the house; they are driving trucks and picking up bins and doing other work along with their partners. But the time has come to allow the divestiture of SunRice because the rice market has changed. It must be said that one of the main reasons the rice market has changed in Australia is, once again, water availability. It is a sad fact that rice growers have always had to battle the long-term mismanagement of water in this country. What we all want is better water management, water accountability and water transparency. This mismanagement has put unnecessary pressure on farming families and has played a significant role in where we find ourselves today. Perhaps if water in Australia had been managed properly we would not have found ourselves here.

Life on the land can be hard. It is hard work and financially risky. No-one's life should be made harder by the mismanagement of water by successive State and Federal governments. But that is what has happened, and this is where we are. We need to remember that farming families financially supported the industry. I have sought assurances from the Government that in the wind-up of the Rice Marketing Board the assets will go to the growers in the industry, given that it is their money that we have invested over the years. Government members have given me those assurances, and I will hold them to that. With those assurances, I am willing to provide my support for the Government's current actions in relation to SunRice. SunRice has played a huge role in the story of farming in Australia so far. As a rice grower, I am confident that rice has a very sunny future.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:11): I contribute to debate on the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024, which has significant implications for our rice industry and the many stakeholders involved. I acknowledge the member for Murray and concur with her words about SunRice, an organisation that has done significant work throughout the Riverina, and globally, to market a great Australian product. While we acknowledge the necessity for change and adaptation in our agricultural policies, the bill does present both challenges and opportunities that must be carefully considered. I welcome the opportunity to say a few words. I had the good fortune to represent the community of the southern Murrumbidgee Council—the former Jerilderie council—in the last term of Parliament. That council extends from north of Finley, around Logie Brae and Berrigan, up through Jerilderie and to the south of Coleambally. They are good, salt-of-the-earth people, living in a strong rural community.

I had the opportunity to visit Peter and Renee Burke, just west of Jerilderie, near Coree. They are emblematic of people from up there. They were Weekly Times Coles 2019 Farmer of the Year and 2019 SunRice Grower of the Year award winners. As you enter their property, Mayfield, there is a beautiful sign that has "Mayfield" etched into it, along with the Burke name, and then they list Tiarna, Cooper, Jasmine and Sienna. That is an intergenerational farming family that cares for stewardship of their country and wants to present a future in farming to the next generation. I had the opportunity—as the member for Murray has probably had as well—to visit the rice research property to see the innovations there. The member for Murray spoke about how the rice industry is driven by innovation to produce well, to produce efficiently and to do so with a sense of stewardship.

I witnessed the watering of wetlands that have not had water in decades, thanks to collaboration with the rice research property, the Ricegrowers' Association and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. I speak for those regional communities because, in debating the bill, we must consider the implications. I welcome the Minister in this House giving the assurance that the Government is committed to the rice industry in the Riverina. That is an important assurance as we go forward. As has been said, the rice industry in New South Wales is a critical component of our agriculture sector. Over the past decade, New South Wales rice has been exported to around 60 different countries. This global reach underscores the quality of and demand for our rice. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our rice growers.

As the member for Murray said, 99 per cent of the rice produced in Australia comes from New South Wales, and more than 97 per cent of that rice is produced in the Riverina-Murray region. In the 2022-23 fiscal year, the rice industry had an estimated farmgate value of \$219 million. These figures highlight the economic significance of the industry, particularly in the Riverina, and the need to ensure its continued success. As I look

at the bill and the path to the removal of vesting, I understand that the initial response from the New South Wales Government to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences [ABARES] review risked creating a range of unintended consequences. It confirmed that the removal of vesting arrangements in future years was inevitable. However, according to stakeholders, the manner in which this was communicated and handled left much to be desired.

The Ricegrowers' Association of Australia [RGA] and SunRice, representing the interests of rice growers and industry stakeholders, worked constructively with the Minister for Agriculture to advocate for what is now being proposed in the bill. Their proactive engagement was commendable and demonstrates their commitment to the industry's future. There have been challenges around consultation. There was a feeling from stakeholders that they should have been engaged much earlier for their interpretations of the ABARES review, and that that should have been discussed openly and collaboratively. Graeme Kruger from the RGA tells me that although this legislation is not entirely in keeping with the current policy position, the RGA believes that the proposed legislation and the planned removal of vesting arrangements can provide new opportunities for the industry and rice growers as they navigate economic and water reform challenges.

The critical element for the success of the transition will be ongoing consultation with industry stakeholders, which, to date, has had its challenges. I turn now to the bill. The Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024 seeks to amend the Rice Marketing Act 1983 to deregulate the New South Wales rice industry by 30 June 2025. This significant shift in policy is aimed at modernising the industry and opening new avenues for growth and competition. The Rice Marketing Board [RMB] is constituted under the Rice Marketing Act 1983 and has statutory functions under the Act. All rice grown in New South Wales is absolutely vested in and becomes the property of the RMB. All rice produced in New South Wales must be delivered to the RMB or an authorised buyer or agent appointed by the RMB.

Authorised buyers are permitted to buy and sell rice grown in New South Wales in the domestic market. The Act also allows the RMB to issue a single export licence to one authorised buyer. Currently, the RMB has entered into a sole and exclusive export licence with Ricegrowers Limited, trading as SunRice. No other authorised buyers are currently permitted to export New South Wales rice. One of the key provisions of the bill is the establishment of an exclusion area that will remove rice cultivated and harvested in the Northern Rivers rice-growing region from the operation of the Act, including the vesting arrangements and export restrictions that apply to vested rice. The excluded area consists of the local government areas of Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, the city of Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed. From assent, the RMB will no longer regulate rice marketing in the excluded area, and rice grown in the excluded area after 1 September 2024 will be excluded from the operation of the Act.

The transition date is after the 2024 Northern Rivers rice harvest is completed and ensures a clean separation between rice that is vested and rice that is not vested under the Act. The current vesting arrangements and the export restrictions will be retained for all rice grown in New South Wales except for rice grown in the excluded area. Specific concerns have been raised by stakeholders, and we believe that those concerns need to be addressed to improve the proposed legislation. A significant area of concern is the lack of clarity around the transfer of the Rice Marketing Board's assets. I welcome the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Dubbo to add further security for rice growers. Industry stakeholders, including the Northern Rivers and Honestly Riverina, believe there should be greater clarity regarding the transfer.

The rice industry has faced numerous challenges over the years, from droughts to fluctuating market conditions. Despite those challenges, our rice growers have continued to produce high-quality rice that is in demand around the world. That resilience and dedication should be supported by legislation that recognises their contributions and provides a clear and fair framework for the future. The RGA and SunRice's willingness to see the positives in this situation and look for new opportunities is commendable. However, for those opportunities to be fully realised, there needs to be a genuine partnership between the Government and industry stakeholders. That means not only consulting with stakeholders but actively involving them in the decision-making process.

While the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024 presents challenges, it also offers opportunities for growth and adaptation. Again, I encourage the Government to engage meaningfully with all stakeholders to ensure that the transition is smooth and that the industry's interests are safeguarded. I reiterate that it will be a significant change for our rice industry. I leave the final words to Rob Massina, a rice grower in Finley. He said:

We look forward to a consultative approach by the department as we shift from structures that have been created over 70 years. The rice industry has created towns and communities over this time and it is important that the government and the department recognise this, ensuring a future that will be different and successful.

I support the bill.

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) (19:21): I speak in support of the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the Minister for introducing the bill to this place. I also acknowledge the Minister for Agriculture, who is in the vicinity of the Chamber. The bill recognises the value of evidence-based policy—an evidence base developed through detailed stakeholder engagement and robust economic analysis. Economic analysis conducted as part of the 2021 Rice Vesting Review indicated that removing rice vesting regulations would create net economic benefits through an increase in value of domestic and export rice sales, delivering increases of between \$80 million to \$133 million over six years.

Ceasing vesting will facilitate the pursuit of new export market opportunities, which will in turn support industry development in the Northern Rivers region. It will create export opportunities for new and expanded supply chains in the Riverina and Murray regions, which will further strengthen domestic supply chains. Further, as new market opportunities emerge, so will the opportunity for innovation throughout the supply chain. Consistent with the findings and modelling results in the 2021 review, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences independent report recommended full deregulation, based on the conclusion that there is no strong evidence that vesting is required for the premium prices achieved for Australian rice and that there is the possibility that vesting is holding back the industry from achieving higher grower returns.

The report also noted that a clear cost of the current vesting arrangements is the restrictions they impose on the development of alternative rice export supply chains and alternative marketing options for growers. However, vesting is a complex arrangement, and this economic evidence alone was not sufficient to inform bold legislative change. Stakeholder consultations have been an integral component of the review process and a key source of input and feedback. That stakeholder feedback has been a pivotal aspect of the process that has taken place over the past few years and has been fundamental to our multifaceted understanding of rice vesting and its impact on industry. In developing advice for government, both the 2021 review and the independent report emphasised consultation. The stakeholder voice has largely informed the amendments that are currently before the House.

The bill excludes the Northern Rivers rice growing region from the vesting arrangements and the export restrictions that apply to vested rice, from 1 September 2024. To be clear, this means that the Northern Rivers rice crop that is harvested in autumn 2025 is the first crop that will no longer be vested and can be exported overseas by Northern Rivers supply chains. We heard loud and clear from stakeholders in that region about the need for change and the importance of change to the future development of the rice industry in the Northern Rivers. The bill ensures that the Northern Rivers rice community has the same opportunities to market its rice to international customers as that of other New South Wales rice growers in the Riverina. The economics of working with the southern export supply chain under the vesting arrangements simply do not stack up for Northern Rivers growers, meaning the Northern Rivers is currently functionally unable to access rice export market opportunities.

Allowing the Northern Rivers rice growing region to market and export rice as soon as possible will allow growers to freely pursue market opportunities on their own terms. It has unanimous support from the growers in the region. In developing the bill, it has become evident that support for vesting within the southern growing region is fading and key stakeholders, including SunRice and the Ricegrowers' Association, which represent the views of the majority of rice growers in southern New South Wales, now support a swift end to the legislative marketing arrangement, despite their long-held and publicly stated position of support in the past. In response, the bill will remove vesting for rice grown in all of New South Wales from 1 July 2025. Practically, this means that the Riverina rice grown and harvested in autumn 2026 will be the first crop that is no longer vested and can be freely marketed domestically and overseas.

The bill will also provide for the winding up of the Rice Marketing Board [RMB] and the repeal of the Act once the transition is complete. To facilitate the winding up of the Rice Marketing Board, the New South Wales Government has established a Rice Transition Group, which will consult with a stakeholder reference group on a range of related transitional issues, including the appropriate mechanisms to deliver the RMB's residual funds for industry benefit after the RMB has been wound up. The two main pillars of the bill—creating an excluded area for the Northern Rivers region to enable it to explore development of export markets as soon as possible for rice grown in the region after 1 September 2024, and ending the vesting arrangements in the rest of New South Wales for all rice grown after 1 July 2025—take on board the feedback provided to the Government from across the industry and community.

The Government has actively responded to that stakeholder voice. We have listened to the feedback and are delivering a regionally tailored response, which is evident in the bill before the House today. As the Minister indicated, the New South Wales rice industry's operating environment has changed significantly from when the Act was first established. The marketing arrangements must reflect that evolution and change within the rice

industry. The bill responds to evidence—an evidence base that has been developed through detailed and extensive stakeholder engagement with industry and supported by economic analysis. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (19:28): In reply: I start by thanking the member for Lismore, the member for Dubbo, the member for Ballina, the member for Albury, the member for Murray and the member for Wyong for their contributions to debate on the Rice Marketing Amendment Bill 2024. It is a historic day for the rice industry in Australia. As I said in the second reading speech, the proposed change came as a surprise to me, knowing some of the history of the industry. The industry has been involved in this significant step, which is important. The simple premise of the bill, which is perhaps more complex in the implementation, is a transition of the New South Wales rice marketing arrangements away from vesting to allow the industry the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities. Vesting has had historical benefits, but it is time to move on. As I said, and as many of the speakers have noted, the Northern Rivers region is to be excluded from vesting for rice grown in the region after 1 September 2024. From 1 July 2025, rice vesting is ending entirely.

It has been an interesting process to come to this position. I noted some of the comments made by members. Firstly, the Leader of The Nationals and member for Dubbo raised the issue of stakeholder consultation and the evidence on which this decision is based. I just cannot agree with his over-the-top comment about the decision being made by the Government from 52 Martin Place. I will tell the House why that is completely wrong. When I heard the announcement of this decision, I rang Minister Moriarty and said, "This is amazing. What happened?" She told me that the industry had come to her and said that, given the announcement the Government had made about excising the northern region and its consideration of the report from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, it supported ending the single desk arrangement for southern New South Wales.

This decision came about because the industry came back to Minister Moriarty and she immediately moved with it and in consultation with it to implement what had been said. I commend her for that because it is a big decision to make for an industry for which Ministers—including, I assume, the member for Dubbo when he was a Minister, and me when I was the Minister—continued the arrangement because that is what the industry at the time told us was wanted. So it is quite wrong for the member for Dubbo to say that the Government made this decision without consultation. That is simply not true. After I as Minister decided, way back when, to continue it, I got one phone call from a prominent Riverina irrigator to say we should not have done that. But it was pretty unanimous at the time, and it is very clear that things have changed quite significantly since then.

Stakeholder consultations have been an integral component of this review process and a key source of input and feedback. The process over the past few years has been fundamental to the understanding of rice vesting and its impact on industry. In developing advice for the Government, the 2021 review started by the previous Government and the independent report did place specific emphasis on consultation. The stakeholder voices have informed the amendments currently before the House. Obviously, it has been a reasonably rapid process from the announcement of vesting arrangements ending altogether to now. Clearly, that means that there has been some intense consultation as we have gone on since then.

The member for Dubbo also raised the issue of exports. Rice vesting has been supported primarily on the basis of the ability to extract price premiums through the single desk. I note that the 2021 review, later supported by the bureau's independent report, found that though SunRice did achieve price premiums in some of its export markets, they were not dependent on vesting and would remain under more competitive market arrangements. Similarly, both the 2021 review and the independent report found that freight scale advantage is not dependent on vesting and that the ability of SunRice to negotiate freight discounts would remain in the absence of vesting. These reports show that the impacts on export markets are minimal and immaterial. However, new supply chains will be able to explore export markets on their own.

I thank the member for Murray for her commentary on this bill and for her engagement in the process. I absolutely endorse her comments about the amazing job SunRice has done and, I am sure, will continue to do. In my experience, and in talking to rice growers and to SunRice during my involvement, SunRice strikes me as a company always looking to the future. It knew there were threats to production and supply, and so it invested in Vietnamese rice to ensure alternative supply markets. SunRice continues to innovate its product. As consumers in Australia, we have all seen new products SunRice has put out over the years, such as the microwavable rice. That shows its continuing commitment to innovation. I do not doubt that SunRice will continue to be the main supplier, particularly for those of us who seek to purchase products with the Australian label. I have confidence that SunRice will do that. I absolutely support the comments of the member for Murray on SunRice.

The efficiency of the rice industry in New South Wales is important to acknowledge. In southern New South Wales it is an irrigated industry. I was fond of saying that in fact nearly 100 per cent of rice that Australians consume is irrigated. But Australian rice uses far less water than rice produced in almost all of the rest

of the world, because of the R&D done by the industry and supported by the Government in the exactly 100 years we have been growing rice in New South Wales. I note that growing rice in many of the irrigation areas, particularly along the Murrumbidgee, has been something successive Labor governments early in the last century were promoting and helping to develop and fund. I am confident that the money the Minister has assured us will be going into benefitting the rice industry will go exactly there, because Labor governments over the 100-year history of the rice industry in New South Wales have made sure that money does go into research and that we have people assisting rice growers on the ground and so on.

I thank the member for Albury for his commentary on the history of innovation in the rice industry and the industry in the global economy. It is quite a historic day and is really important. I acknowledge the members from northern New South Wales for their support of their area's growing industry and recognise that that industry has probably challenged what we thought was the norm for the rice industry in Australia. It is fair enough for them to do that, as we see farmers diversify and look for alternative crops. It is exciting to see. The Riverina, though, I am sure, will remain the centre of rice production for Australia for many years to come, and it will do it in a way that continues to be efficient and innovative and ensures that it is always looking at its environmental impact and its use of water. I am absolutely confident about that.

In wrapping up, I congratulate my friend the Minister for Agriculture on her work in this area. She has taken an excellent course in this process and has achieved something quite historic for this industry. I know she will continue to work with the industry to make sure that it can move through this transition. I recognise that transition is difficult. Obviously, the member for Murray has been dealing with transition on the ground in agriculture for quite some time. Through my involvement I have seen examples of how to transition and how not to transition. I am sure that, in this case, we will work closely with the industry to make sure we are in the "how to transition" category when it comes to an agricultural transition. We will be working with the industries. I would be happy to share my views on what an unsuccessful transition looks like in some other areas if I have an hour or two someday. But, in this case, I am confident the Minister and her team will be taking us through a process that will ultimately benefit rice growers in New South Wales and ensure that their industry continues to prosper for years to come. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Dugald Saunders.

Consideration in Detail

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

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:39): I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-127A:

No. 1 Transfer of assets rights and liabilities

Page 4, Schedule 1[3], line 23. Omit all words on the line. Insert instead—

to either or both of the following—

- (i) a public authority,
- (ii) a research and development corporation of the Commonwealth for the purposes of research and development.

This amendment ensures that the wording of the bill provides absolute clarity on where the assets of the Rice Marketing Board will go. At the moment, it is clear that the assets would go to a public authority and that is it. By adding the words that I have included in the amendment, the intention is for the money to go back to growers and the industry. Why would the Government not want that specifically included in the bill to give that reassurance? In very simple terms, the amendment provides for the transfer of the assets, rights and liabilities of the board to a public authority and/or a Commonwealth research development corporation for the purposes of research and development.

Before I finish, I respond to the comments made by the Minister who has carriage of the bill. He took me to task on the comments I made earlier. I want to very clearly reiterate what was put forward by the Riceworkers' Association president. The reason the RGA accepted this and went along for the journey is that the Government outlined its intentions in response to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences report. It made it clear that maintaining the current arrangements was no longer an option. After the Government responded to that report, the RGA felt like it had no other option. In collaborating with the Minister—and I am glad they have been able to collaborate—the RGA has asked for a speedier time frame to give everyone clarity.

This process was started by the Government's response to a report. That is what has brought this issue forward. I commend the amendment and hope for the support of the House.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (19:41): The Government opposes the amendment for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the bill already provides that the money will go to a public authority. I acknowledge that the intent of the amendment is to ensure that grower money is returned to growers. However, the Government has given those assurances. It has clearly communicated to key stakeholders, including authorised buyers, that any moneys left over after the Rice Marketing Board is wound up will be used for the rice industry's benefit. That could include research and development. The Act has always allowed for a marketing board to be wound up by the Governor in certain circumstances. If the marketing board was wound up by the Government using existing provisions, the money and assets would become the property of the State. The bill gives similar provisions to the Minister.

Expenditure by public authorities is subject to oversight under government finance and auditing regimes. Transferring the funds to a public authority allows appropriate governance arrangements to be established. I note that AgriFutures is one of the bodies that was mentioned by the Opposition as one of the research and development corporations established and governed by Commonwealth legislation. As I understand it, AgriFutures reports to the Commonwealth agriculture Minister. The State could not direct how it would use the money. We could not ensure that the money went to the New South Wales rice industry, which is the intention of the Minister. We want to ensure that the money goes to the New South Wales rice industry.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Pinky promise?

Mr STEVE WHAN: The commitment has been made. If it does not happen, the Leader of The Nationals can come back to the House and say we broke our promise. I have absolute confidence that the Minister will direct whatever money is left when the organisation is wound up to the benefit of the rice industry. As I mentioned in my speech in reply, there is a long history of Labor governments supporting the development of the rice industry, both in research and infrastructure. Labor has implemented a range of measures to benefit the industry. Obviously, the industry has funded a lot of research itself. But as someone who has been around for a while, I have absolutely no doubt that Labor's support for this industry under this Government and Minister will continue.

We also oppose limiting the way the funds can be used, as suggested by the amendment. The Government has committed to the Rice Transition Group, which will consult with stakeholders on how to best use the funds. That will allow industry stakeholders to have a say on how the money can be used for the industry's benefit. The bill does not prevent the money being provided to a public authority or a research and development corporation if that is the preferred choice of the industry. But, as I mentioned earlier, the Government wants to ensure that the money goes to New South Wales rice growers. On that basis, the Government opposes the amendment.

In response to the comments of the Leader of The Nationals, the Government's initial position was that the Northern Rivers area would be excluded, and the vesting arrangements would be left in place for the southern rivers. The industry said to the Minister, "Let's think about another approach." That is what prompted us to get to where we are today. I understand that it is a communications challenge when a change is going through relatively quickly. I absolutely respect Graeme and the point of view the Ricegrowers' Association put forward. But we would not be here today if the industry had not said to the Minister that it wanted to move further than excluding only the Northern Rivers from the vesting arrangements.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The question is that Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-127A be agreed to.

Amendment negatived.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr STEVE WHAN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT (TRANSPARENCY AND FIT AND PROPER PERSONS) BILL 2024**Second Reading Speech**

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (19:48): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Transparency and Fit and Proper Persons) Bill 2024 increases the transparency of the approved charitable organisations [ACOs] that enforce the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979—currently, the RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW. The bill also strengthens animal welfare protections by expanding the fit and proper person regime under the legislation. The main points of the bill are that it subjects the ACOs to the provisions of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and the remit of the NSW Ombudsman, and enhances the information required in their annual reports to the Minister for Agriculture. Those reports will also be required to be made public. The bill also addresses a current gap in the legislation in relation to persons who have been convicted of multiple or repeat animal cruelty offences. The bill imposes a new requirement that a court must make a disqualification order, disqualifying repeat or multiple offenders from being involved with animals, unless satisfied that special circumstances exist.

As members may be aware, the bill was passed in the other place last night with amendments. The amendments made a minor update regarding the Ombudsman proposal by placing the new provision directly into the Ombudsman Act instead of the Ombudsman Regulation. That was necessary because the Ombudsman Regulation may soon be repealed by another bill currently before the Parliament. The amendment does not change the effect of the proposal, which is to make the approved charitable organisations [ACOs] subject to the remit of the NSW Ombudsman in relation to their enforcement activities. The second amendment to the bill involved extending the current provisions in section 31 of the Act regarding disqualification and disposal orders to allow those to be made upon a finding of guilt or where a person has been dealt with under the provisions of the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020 rather than on conviction. That will allow the courts greater flexibility to make appropriate orders to protect animals from cruelty.

The final amendment was a minor amendment to the proposal involving disqualification orders for repeat offenders in section 31 to make the language consistent with the "finding of guilt" terminology in the rest of the section. The RSPCA has raised the issue that most convictions follow a plea of guilty. A plea of guilty is ordinarily followed by a corresponding court finding. The amendments made to section 31 capture that scenario and allow a court to make a disposal and disqualification order in those circumstances. The amendments do not change the overall intent of the bill, which is to improve animal welfare outcomes and animal welfare enforcement transparency in New South Wales, and to deliver the Government's fit and proper person election commitment in the process. I am presenting the bill in this place on behalf of Minister Moriarty, who has been working very hard in consultation on this. I also, interestingly, received a message today from former shadow Minister Veitch expressing his support for the amendments. It is great to see teamwork going on.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech of the Minister for Agriculture incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Transparency and Fit and Proper Persons) Bill 2024 will increase the transparency of the animal welfare enforcement activities of approved charitable organisations [ACOs] and will strengthen animal welfare protections by expanding the fit and proper person regime under the legislation. The New South Wales Government is committed to safeguarding animal welfare and providing the strongest possible regulatory framework to prevent cruelty and promote responsible animal ownership and care in New South Wales. We know there are strong community views and public interest in ensuring New South Wales has strong and appropriate animal welfare laws. There has also been substantial parliamentary interest in animal welfare, with numerous inquiries in recent years.

Before I explain the bill before the House, I will talk about the animal welfare framework in New South Wales and the vital role that ACOs play in the enforcement of that framework. The animal welfare framework in New South Wales is underpinned by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979, or POCTAA. This framework not only provides legal protections to animals against cruelty and neglect but also sets the standards for their care and wellbeing across various settings, including farms, households and businesses. This framework is fundamental for upholding public trust in the management and care of animals, particularly as it pertains to the enforcement actions conducted by ACOs.

Two charities are approved to undertake compliance and enforcement action under POCTAA: RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW, or AWL. These ACOs operate under their own constitutions and governance structures and are independent of government. They are entrusted with the significant responsibility of protecting animals from cruelty and neglect, making their work central to maintaining high standards of animal welfare across the State. We acknowledge the critical work of the RSPCA and AWL in undertaking enforcement functions under POCTAA and their long history of supporting and protecting animal welfare in New South Wales. At the same time, we also recognise the importance of appropriate transparency requirements for enforcement agencies, particularly those that are independent of government.

We are committed to the highest standards of accountability and transparency, and that is why the bill includes proposals to subject the ACOs to the oversight of the NSW Ombudsman, clarify applicable Government Information (Public Access) Act requirements, table the ACO annual legislated reports, and include terms of appointment and identification requirements for ACO officers and inspectors. These amendments respond to calls for greater transparency into ACO operations made by stakeholders via feedback and at previous parliamentary inquiries into animal welfare, including at the recent 26 April and 26 May 2024 hearings for the current inquiry into ACO operations. The ACO transparency proposals in the bill have been informed by a review of animal welfare reform work and stakeholder consultation undertaken between 2019 to 2022, which included around 6,000 responses from the New South Wales community, received over two rounds of public consultation.

The proposed amendments have also been informed by stakeholder evidence provided to multiple animal welfare parliamentary inquiries in recent years. The specific proposals in the bill have also been subject to recent targeted consultation conducted with key stakeholders. There is strong stakeholder support for increased ACO transparency, and the bill delivers that. These changes also bring the transparency arrangements for ACOs into line with other regulatory bodies and jurisdictions across Australia. For example, in Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia, equivalent ACO inspectors are subject to their respective State's Ombudsman and freedom of information laws. We are also delivering the Government's fit and proper person regime commitment through the bill. The Government committed to introducing a fit and proper person regime that will prevent people convicted of certain offences from being involved in the keeping and breeding of companion animals.

The legislation currently provides for certain prohibitions and disqualifications, but there are improvements that can be made to strengthen the regime. The bill achieves this by extending the circumstances where a court must make a disqualification order to include where persons have been convicted of repeat animal cruelty offences or multiple animal cruelty offences arising from separate events, unless the court is satisfied that special circumstances apply. Under POCTAA, there is currently a requirement that a court must make a disqualification order for persons convicted of specified serious animal cruelty offences, being offences for aggravated cruelty, poisoning, animal baiting/fighting or live baiting, as well as the serious animal cruelty offences under the Crimes Act.

The only exemption to the requirement to make this order is when the court is satisfied that special circumstances apply. However, there is currently no requirement that a court must make a disqualification order if the person has been convicted of multiple or repeat animal cruelty offences where an offence does not meet the threshold of certain serious animal cruelty offences such as aggravated cruelty. The bill closes this gap and by doing so the Government is setting a clear and unambiguous standard that repeat cruelty is unequivocally unacceptable and should disqualify an individual from having the privilege of animal ownership or care. We are also amending the definition of a disqualification order to create consistency in how these orders apply. We acknowledge that the community expects strong and appropriate animal welfare protections, and that is why we are strengthening the current requirements.

Alongside the delivery of our fit and proper person regime, the bill will introduce improvements to the administration and enforcement of POCTAA through new information sharing provisions between relevant agencies and new delegation powers for the Minister administering the Act. Currently POCTAA does not contain information sharing provisions—in other words, it provides no guidance amongst enforcement agencies regarding the sharing of convicted person information and of POCTAA administration generally. During previous animal welfare reform work, stakeholders raised that enforcement agencies and relevant New South Wales Government agencies need to be better equipped to share information related to investigations and the administration of POCTAA.

The bill allows relevant agencies to collect, use and disclose information where it is reasonably necessary for the purposes of administering and enforcing POCTAA. It addresses the current gap by providing for the sharing of information between relevant agencies to deliver stronger compliance and enforcement outcomes that meet the community expectations for animal welfare across New South Wales. Similar to the current lack of provisions regarding information sharing, POCTAA does not currently allow the functions of the Minister to be delegated, limiting the ability of the Department of Regional NSW to obtain information from the enforcement agencies relevant to the administration of the Act. To improve this and to streamline the administration of POCTAA, the bill includes new delegation provisions for the Minister.

With that in mind, I will now turn to the details of the bill. I will first address the provisions that deliver increased transparency of ACO enforcement operations. The bill before the House subjects the ACOs to an external complaints mechanism via the NSW Ombudsman. Through amendments to the Ombudsman Regulation 2016, ACOs will fall within the remit of the NSW Ombudsman, which means that members of the public will be able to make a complaint to the NSW Ombudsman about the conduct of an ACO as an organisation, as well as about an individual ACO inspector. Importantly, the scope of this complaints mechanism is only in relation to conduct that relates to the exercise of an ACO's functions under POCTAA. Complaints made relating to the conduct of an ACO that does not fall within the scope of the exercise of their functions under POCTAA will remain subject to the remit of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, or the ACNC, as the national regulator of charities.

The bill further clarifies that ACOs are subject to the requirements of the Government Information (Public Access) Act, or GIPA Act, with respect to their functions under POCTAA. The bill amends the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 to declare the ACOs as a public authority so that they are subject to the GIPA Act. This will mean that members of the public are provided with clarity and a framework for accessing information from the ACOs related to the enforcement of POCTAA. I note that the bill provides that the ACOs will not be required to comply with the GIPA Act provisions relating to the proactive release of information, referred to as "open access information", as these provisions are heavily related to government operations. As such, subjecting ACOs to the same proactive release of information requirements as government departments would impose an unnecessary duplicative administrative burden on the ACOs.

The bill will also require the Minister administering POCTAA to table the ACO annual legislated reports received under section 34B of the Act in each House of Parliament. To ensure the privacy of any sensitive personal information, the Minister will be able to redact any information in the report that the Minister considers should not be made public. The important transparency measures in relation to the GIPA Act and the tabling of the annual reports are also consistent with recommendations of the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales, at recommendation 11, and the 2021 inquiry into the ACOs under POCTAA, at recommendation 4.

The bill also updates the content of the ACO annual reports as prescribed in clause 34 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2012 to include the number of requests under the GIPA Act, including a breakdown of what the requests related to; NSW Ombudsman activity in relation to ACO activities, in addition to the existing provision which requires the ACOs to provide details of complaints they have received directly; and a list of current memorandums of understanding, or equivalent, for example, service level agreements currently active between the ACO and other enforcement or Government agencies.

I now turn to the provisions in the bill regarding terms of appointment and identification requirements for ACO officers and inspectors. The bill establishes provisions under POCTAA relating to the appointment by the Minister of ACO employees and public service employees as officers and inspectors, which will create appropriate controls and oversight of appointments. This includes providing that a specified period may apply to the appointment, including that conditions may apply to the appointment, providing for the revocation or amendment of an appointment at any time by written instrument.

The bill also establishes standard identification requirements for persons who have been appointed by the Minister as an officer or inspector under POCTAA, including ACO officers and inspectors. These officers and inspectors will be given evidence of their authority that they must show if asked to do so while carrying out their enforcement functions. These officers and inspectors can be directed by the Minister to return the identity card once they cease to be an officer or inspector. Failing to comply with this direction will be an offence under POCTAA, with a maximum penalty of 25 penalty units. It will also be a penalty notice offence with a maximum \$500 penalty for an individual.

I note that these appointment and identification requirement provisions that I have just identified will only apply to a person who has been appointed by the Minister as an officer or inspector under POCTAA, including ACO officers and inspectors. The requirement for ACO officers and inspectors to show evidence of appointment represents a standard, commonsense accountability measure that brings POCTAA into line with other New South Wales regulatory authorities such as authorised officers under the Food Act 2003 and fisheries officers under the Fisheries Management Act 1994.

Having detailed the portions of the bill that relate to ACO transparency, I will now address the provisions that deliver on the fit and proper person regime. I will turn firstly to the expansion of the current requirements for a court to make a disqualification order to include repeat animal cruelty offenders. These amendments deliver the Government's fit and proper persons commitment to prevent certain convicted persons from being involved with animals. Under the current legislation, disqualification orders can be made by a court following a conviction, which prevent the convicted person from owning or caring for animals. There is currently a requirement in section 31 (1AA) of POCTAA that a court must make a disqualification order—unless satisfied that special circumstances exist—for persons convicted of certain serious animal cruelty offences.

These offences are aggravated cruelty, poisoning, animal baiting or fighting, or live baiting under POCTAA, and specific animal welfare offences under the Crimes Act 1900. However, this automatic requirement does not currently apply to a person who has been convicted of multiple or repeat animal cruelty offences. This is a critical gap, because it means that there is currently no presumption that a court will apply a disqualification order to people who have demonstrated a pattern of animal cruelty.

The bill addresses this gap by requiring a court to make a disqualification order when it has found a person guilty of a section 5 cruelty offence if the person has previously been convicted of an offence against the same section. The court will also be required to make a disqualification order when it convicts someone of multiple section 5 offences arising from separate events. I note that it is not intended that the requirement to make a disqualification order will apply in situations where a single event has given rise to multiple section 5 convictions. For example, it will apply where a person has been convicted of more than one section 5 offence and the offences arise out of different actions over a period of time. It will not apply, for example, when a single event has given rise to multiple charges under section 5. It is important to note that the court will maintain appropriate discretion not to make the disqualification order if it is satisfied that special circumstances exist that justify not making the order. This currently exists for other offences with presumed disqualification orders. These provisions provide the court with guidance as to the expected application of a disqualification order without removing the discretion of the court entirely.

In addition to broadening the circumstances in relation to disqualification orders, the bill also clarifies the definition of disqualification order to include all the activities under section 26 of POCTAA. Currently, under the existing definition, a disqualification order made by a court may mean that the convicted person must not do one or more of a series of activities listed in section 26 (a) to (d) of the Act. For example, such activities include but are not limited to purchasing, acquiring or taking possession of an animal; keeping or participating in keeping an animal; or caring for an animal owned by another person. The current definition leads to variation and inconsistency regarding the scope of these orders. The bill amends the definition of disqualification order, which in effect would mean that those orders will provide that a person must not do any of the specified activities set out in section 26 (a) to (d), instead of just one or more. This is an important clarification that further strengthens the existing fit and proper person regime and will ensure the disqualification orders apply in a consistent way to convicted persons.

To support the enforcement of the fit and proper person regime under the legislation, the bill will also include provisions which allow for relevant agencies to collect, use or disclose information, including personal information, where it is reasonably necessary for the purposes of administering and enforcing the Act or the regulations. The bill outlines that information may be shared between relevant agencies for the purposes of issuing a direction notice or order under POCTAA; exercising enforcement and compliance functions under the Act; and conducting legal proceedings for offences under the Act, if in the relevant agency's opinion it is appropriate to give the information to another relevant agency for significant safety reasons.

For clarity, the bill defines relevant agencies to cover New South Wales Government sector agencies, Animal Care Officers, other persons exercising POCTAA functions and other entities that may be prescribed by the regulations. Importantly, relevant agencies will be able to collect, use and disclose information so long as it is reasonably necessary for the purposes of administration and enforcement of the legislation. This limitation represents an appropriate privacy measure and these commonsense amendments will improve information sharing and collaboration.

Finally, to further streamline and improve the administration of POCTAA, the bill adds provisions to allow the Minister administering POCTAA to delegate to a person employed in the Department of Regional New South Wales or a person or class of persons prescribed by the regulations. The bill before the House today demonstrates how this Government is focused on delivering improved animal welfare outcomes within New South Wales. We understand that animal welfare is a highly emotive and complex space. This will not be all I have to say on the animal welfare framework and there is still more work to be done. We are delivering real change in a staged approach that will modernise and improve the framework that safeguards animal welfare in New South Wales.

I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:52): I speak briefly to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Transparency and Fit and Proper Persons) Bill 2024. As we all know, animal welfare is a topic that

generates strong community views and public interest in New South Wales. There has also been substantial interest at a parliamentary level, with numerous inquiries held in the past few years. I indicate to the House that we on this side will not be opposing the amendments presented by the Government and those mentioned by the Minister that were carried through the other place last night. We agree that there needs to be an increase in transparency around animal welfare enforcement operations. We also agree that strengthening animal welfare protections is important. The bill seeks to do that by expanding the current fit and proper person regime to address a gap in the legislation.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act [POCTAA] currently provides that a court can make a disqualification order following a conviction, which prevents the convicted person from owning or caring for animals. This can be tailored to particular time frames—for example, not allowing the offender to own an animal for six months. There is also a presumption that a court must make a disqualification order for persons convicted of serious animal cruelty offences. The gap relates to persons who have been convicted of either repeat animal cruelty offences or multiple animal cruelty offences arising from separate events. The bill is designed to close that gap and allow the courts to apply disqualification orders to prevent those offenders from being in any way involved in keeping or breeding companion animals, unless special circumstances exist.

Whilst we agree that people need to be held responsible for multiple animal cruelty offences, it is also important to recognise that sometimes special circumstances do exist. There needs to be a realisation that having a pet, or several pets, is a bit different from having a couple of thousand head of sheep or a thousand head of cattle, for example. Farmers who are predominantly dealing with animals as part of their enterprise can come under immense mental health pressure during circumstances like severe drought. We believe that needs to be taken into account in some way, shape or form as the legislation and the courts determine their lives. Approved charitable organisations [ACOs] play a big role in this space, and the transparency proposals for ACOs in the bill certainly help to ensure that that happens. Key stakeholders have been consulted to make sure that their views are well understood. It should be noted that there is strong stakeholder support for increased ACO transparency in relation to their enforcement operations under POCTAA.

The bill is looking to increase transparency by clarifying that ACOs are subject to the requirements of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009; providing that ACOs are subject to oversight by the NSW Ombudsman; enhancing the information required to be provided by ACOs to the Minister in their annual reports, and requiring those reports to be tabled in Parliament; and making changes to the appointment process for officers and inspectors to streamline appointment provisions, including terms of appointment, and requiring officer and inspector identification to show evidence of appointment. That will form part of the review of funding provided to those organisations for the future. All in all, The Nationals support the amendments, and I hope the bill goes a long way to improving animal protection laws in this State.

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (19:56): I support the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Transparency and Fit and Proper Persons) Bill 2024. The New South Wales Government is focused on delivering improved animal welfare outcomes in New South Wales. That is why we have committed to creating a fit-for-purpose framework that safeguards animal welfare in our State. Animal welfare is an important issue in our society. The community rightly expects that the laws in place to protect animals are appropriate and effective. Prevention of cruelty to animals in rural regions, such as the electorate of Bega, is crucial for several reasons. Governments have an ethical responsibility to ensure that all animals will be treated with respect. Animals must not be subjected to unnecessary pain and suffering. Maltreated animals may result in economic and public health issues, such as vectors for human zoonotic and other animal species infections.

In a community with a broad base of agriculture, such as the Bega electorate, including the famous Bega Group, which celebrates its 125th anniversary this year, the economic cost on production and increased veterinary care is threatened by such mismanagement. Our local farmers maintain animal welfare close to their hearts, as exemplified by the Bega Beef Co-op's installation of soft flooring in the Bega saleyards and advocacy for the installation of sun and rain protection for the animals. As a consequence of the mistreatment of animals, our biodiversity and environmental health could be impacted by the decline of biosecurity affecting native flora and fauna species and local ecosystems.

We know that local biosecurity threats also become our neighbours' threat. Like all rural communities, many people have family animals, such as horses, which are an important part of rural life for companionship, sport and recreation. Those animals are treated with empathy and social responsibility, which nurtures a broader cohesion of societal values as well as respect and humane behaviour to all living creatures. Unfortunately, the Bega electorate has witnessed several disturbing incidents of neglect and deliberate harmful cruelty to both domestic and native animals.

The bill will demonstrate to the people of New South Wales the importance of animal welfare and raise awareness of the prevention of cruelty to animals. The Government is delivering real change that will modernise

and improve the animal welfare framework. It is achieving this, commencing with the bill before the House today. The bill delivers increased transparency of approved charitable organisations' animal welfare enforcement activities and will strengthen animal welfare protections by expanding the fit and proper person regime under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979, known as POCTAA.

Let us talk about how this bill has come before the House today. The Government has committed to introducing a new animal welfare framework because we have heard time and again from stakeholders and the community about how important it is to make improvements to animal welfare in New South Wales. In 2022 there was an attempt by the previous Government to repeal POCTAA altogether and combine it with two other Acts. This specific approach was not supported by the Standing Committee on State Development in its inquiry into animal welfare in New South Wales. However, we have listened to the important feedback provided as part of that process and are determined to achieve change in this space.

In recognition that this legislation encompasses highly complex policy issues, we are undertaking delivering this in a staged approach, with amendments focused on the key issues. This approach allows us the opportunity to focus on effective engagement with stakeholders on key issues to improve the framework that safeguards animal welfare in New South Wales. This bill has also been informed by various parliamentary inquiries over the years that have considered animal welfare, as well as targeted consultation recently performed by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development with key stakeholders, including the POCTAA enforcement agencies. We have listened and we are delivering. Today members debate this bill as part of our Government's commitment to introduce a new animal welfare framework in New South Wales.

I summarise the broad merits of the bill before the House today. To ensure there is appropriate accountability and transparency of approved charitable organisation [ACO] enforcement operations, this bill establishes an external complaints mechanism via the NSW Ombudsman related to the enforcement activities of the ACOs. It subjects ACOs to the requirements of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 with respect to their statutory enforcement activities. It enhances the information required to be provided by the ACOs to the Minister in their annual reports and requires those reports to be tabled in Parliament. It makes changes to the appointment process for the ACO officers and inspectors, and requires those persons to produce identification showing evidence of their appointment if asked to do so.

These transparency amendments are not the only improvements that the bill seeks to make. The bill also delivers the Government's fit and proper person regime commitment. Under POCTAA there is currently a requirement that a court must make a disqualification order for persons convicted of specified serious animal cruelty offences unless the court is satisfied that special circumstances apply. The bill improves the existing regime by extending the circumstances where a court must make a disqualification order to include persons convicted of repeat or multiple animal cruelty offences. Importantly, the court will maintain appropriate discretion not to make a disqualification order if it is satisfied that special circumstances exist that justify not making the order. The bill also amends the definition of "disqualification order", providing an important clarification to ensure a consistent approach to how disqualification orders are applied to convicted persons.

To support the enforcement of the fit and proper person regime, the bill also inserts standard modern information collection, use and disclosure provisions into POCTAA to allow for appropriate sharing between the relevant agencies. The bill also introduces delegation provisions for the Minister to streamline and improve the administration and execution of POCTAA. These amendments will provide increased transparency around the operations of ACOs, appropriate disqualification of repeat and multiple offenders, and administrative improvements to the overall legislation.

This bill is not all that this Government will bring to the table on animal welfare. The bill represents the first step in the Government's commitment to reviewing the animal welfare framework. There is more to be done, and we are committed to getting that work done. The animal welfare framework will be informed by previous consultation processes and inquiries to ensure that any amendments put forward are clear, fit for purpose and reflective of community expectations. As a country Labor representative, I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales, the Hon. Tara Moriarty in the other place, for her hard work for rural and regional New South Wales, her visits to the electorate of Bega and her work on this important bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (20:04): In reply: I thank the member for Dubbo and the member for Bega for their contributions to debate on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Transparency and Fit and Proper Persons) Bill 2024. The New South Wales community needs to be confident that the enforcement of animal cruelty laws is being undertaken transparently and that persons convicted of repeat or multiple animal cruelty offences are disqualified from owning or caring for animals. The bill achieves this. I will highlight a couple of provisions contained in the bill. I make it abundantly

clear that the Government is not seeking to impact the procedural fairness provided to a person convicted of multiple or repeat cruelty offences under section 5 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 [POCTAA].

Further, a court will still maintain an element of appropriate discretion in determining whether special circumstances exist when making a disqualification order where a person has been convicted of multiple or repeat offences for animal cruelty. If a court is satisfied that special circumstances exist, it is entitled not to make the order. The Government maintains that it is appropriate to send a clear message that unless special circumstances exist, a person who has demonstrated a clear and proven pattern of animal cruelty should not be involved with animals. This is what the bill does. It does not limit the courts in handing down sentences that are fit for purpose for each individual case.

I also emphasise that the information-sharing provisions in the bill strike a necessary and fair balance between privacy and effective enforcement. The bill does this by allowing agencies to access and share crucial information to enhance the administration and enforcement of POCTAA, and improve animal welfare outcomes. Importantly, the bill does not provide carte blanche approval to share information. It clearly articulates that relevant agencies may only collect, use or disclose information when it is reasonably necessary for the purposes of administering or enforcing POCTAA or the regulations. It does not permit relevant agencies to collect, use or disclose information in circumstances where that threshold is not met.

The powers of delegation set out in the bill are necessary to ensure the effective administration and enforcement of POCTAA and are consistent with other standard modern drafting practices, such as those found in the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. In relation to the absolute liability offence of failing to return identification documents of an appointed inspector or appointed officer, while the proposed offence is an absolute liability offence, these types of offences are not uncommon in regulatory frameworks as a means of encouraging compliance. The member for Dubbo highlighted the importance that special circumstances do exist when a court is considering making disqualification orders. The Government agrees, which is why we have made sure this is included in the bill.

The bill delivers what stakeholders have long been calling for around the transparency of our animal welfare framework. It represents a significant step forward in modernising our animal welfare framework, which this Government is committed to delivering for the people and animals of New South Wales. I thank Minister Moriarty for her hard work on this bill. Particularly, I thank her office for getting around and doing all the legwork to make sure that everyone concerned understood what this bill consisted of, and for working through the amendments in the other place. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr STEVE WHAN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Community Recognition Statements

MILTON ULLADULLA CANCER SUPPORT FOUNDATION

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (20:08): I recognise the Cancer Support Foundation of Milton Ulladulla, which is a volunteer-based charity committed to fundraising and advocating for the enhancement and provision of cancer-related clinical and support services. In 2003 the Cancer Outpatients Appeal was established to build a centre in Milton where patients could receive treatment without travelling to larger regional centres. With financial and in-kind support from the local community, the Community Cancer Services Centre was built. It contributed to the establishment of the two-bed palliative care unit at Milton Ulladulla Hospital. So far the hospital has received over \$3,000,000 from community funds for building works and much-needed support services and equipment. The power of volunteer-led initiatives never ceases to amaze me and the impact on the local community is hard to measure. I congratulate all involved in the Cancer Support Foundation and the wider community on their ongoing efforts.

AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIANS

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (20:09): Aussie pride is shining bright. I congratulate our local inner west Olympians and residents of the Drummoyne electorate who are currently representing Australia at the 2024 Paris Olympics, including Harriet Hudson in rowing, Se-Bom Lee in swimming,

Christopher Ius in athletics, and Blake Edwards and Jacob Mercep in water polo. Being selected for the Olympics is an incredible achievement. It is a testament to an athlete's skill, discipline and determination that they have been able to make the team. It is their strong dedication, perseverance and passion for their sport that has led them to this moment. I wish all our athletes the very best of luck in their events. I know many of them have already competed or are still competing and are in good stead for a medal. I wish them all the very best. Our community, State and country are so proud of them. We are honoured to call them our own local athletes, and it makes watching the Olympic Games even more special. Go the Aussies.

THE MEN'S TABLE

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:10): The Men's Table is a fast-growing, community-building, and men's mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention initiative with positive ripples into families and communities. At each Men's Table, a group of local men meet once a month over a meal in a private room to listen, talk and share about the highs and lows of their lives and how they are really feeling. Tables are established upon a simple structure and sustained through the commitment of each man to show up each month to serve themselves and to serve the other men. Each man agrees to working with the guiding principles designed to encourage a conversation that goes beyond banter, practising the ethos of sharing from the heart, listening and not fixing. I recognise the work that this incredible organisation undertakes to destigmatise mental health and promote healthy masculinities in men. I acknowledge Michael Collins, the regional host for New South Wales south, for his work in supporting tables in southern New South Wales.

ANN PORTER

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (20:11): A local hero from Forbes River, New South Wales, has taken out the Paul Lockyer Memorial Scholarship at this year's NSW Farmers conference. Ann Porter has a strong commitment to agriculture and rural communities. Growing up on a beef grazing property, she has been involved in the dairy, equine and beef industries. Ann is a fourth-year student at Charles Sturt University, pursuing a bachelor's degree in veterinary science with a focus on large animals to serve rural communities. She engages in cattle breeding, show teams and camp draft events as a volunteer. Her dream is to work as a reliable veterinarian in remote places, offering help and care for animals in need, where she would teach hobby farmers and landowners how to improve the productivity and health of their livestock. With the help of this scholarship, Ann will be able to finish her clinical placements and fulfil her ambition to enhance veterinary care in rural areas. Ann's skill and dedication is inspiring and uplifting to the locals of our small communities. I congratulate Ann on her accomplishment and wish her well as she pursues her profession further.

ROYSTON D'ABRERA

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:12): Royston D'Abrera has been a cornerstone of the Fairfield Phoenix Baseball Club since its formation in 1975. As the longest-standing member, Royston's unwavering dedication and passion have played an instrumental role in the club's enduring success. He has served as groundsman, non-executive director, president, treasurer and secretary. Currently serving as the groundskeeper, Royston continues to ensure that the facilities available to the players are second to none, while also persistently securing funding for the improvement of the club's infrastructure. Beyond his official roles, Royston is known for generously sharing his wealth of knowledge, helping to nurture and guide new generations of players. Royston's dedication and spirit embody the very essence of our community. I am profoundly grateful for his enduring service and commitment. Royston is a first-rate human being. I thank him for all of his service.

NELL DULY

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:13): I recognise Nell Duly, Murrumbidgee Regional High School history teacher and volunteer RFS Hanwood deputy captain. Joining the MIA RFS in 2021, she has spent recent years preparing for the role of an arduous firefighter. In July, Nell was deployed to Canada after requests were made for arduous firefighters. Her training ensures she is up to the rigours of wildland firefighting without the support of a water truck. Being part of the RFS has a great influence on her work as a teacher. The RFS has an ageing member base, and Nell is encouraging the next generation of firefighters, recently leading five students through a three-day firefighting program. Nell is to be commended as a great example of what can be achieved as a volunteer with the RFS.

ANGEEZ TAKEAWAY

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (20:14): I speak on a matter of great importance: an Australian staple, hot chips. I pay tribute to the craftsmanship that goes into hand cutting potatoes, slicing scallops, battering fresh fish, frying burgers, crumbing schnitzels and tossing salads, all of which are skills that the Sotiropoulos family have been perfecting in Raymond Terrace since the 1980s at their iconic takeaway, Angeez. The hardworking Sotiropoulos

family were always serving food fresh and fast, with warm smiles even at the peak hours of Friday lunchtime and Saturday night, all of which my electorate staff can attest to and often depended on. But, as life happens, the family of Chris, Andrew, Angie and Leo have turned off the fryers and handed the keys over to another Raymond Terrace family. On behalf of the residents of Raymond Terrace and beyond, I thank Chris and his entire family whilst we bid Angeez a fond, salty farewell. I wish Amanda Roach the very best in opening Dolly's and look forward to the delicious hot chip legacy continuing in Raymond Terrace.

MAUREEN HARTRIDGE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:15): I celebrate the remarkable contributions of Maureen Hartridge, whose dedicated community contribution will be recognised at the upcoming Jean Arnot Recognition Awards at Parliament House. Maureen's community involvement began in earnest when she and husband Frank created a home in Dee Why for their young family. Maureen became a member of the Catholic Women's League and the Cubby House Toy Library, before joining the P&C Association at Dee Why Public School, where she served as president. Upon retiring, having initially started her career in nursing, raising a family and transitioning to a career in finance at Revlon, Maureen joined the Seaforth VIEW Club. It was there that she advocated for women's issues and supported the Smith Family's Learning for Life program. Moving to Kincumber on the Central Coast, Maureen continued her active involvement in the Catholic Women's League, the National Breast Cancer Foundation's speakers bureau and the East Gosford Probus Club. Her leadership contribution has been exemplary. She also served as president of the Kincumber VIEW Club, zone counsellor and eventually national president. I congratulate Maureen on this very well-deserved accolade and recognition of her lifelong dedication to community advocacy and service.

CHESTER HILL NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (20:16): I congratulate Chester Hill North Public School, which this week was awarded the Secretary's School Achievement Award. This is a prestigious award presented by the Public Education Foundation to New South Wales public schools demonstrating achievements in teaching and learning outcomes, leadership, supporting the students and/or creating a sustainable learning environment. Chester Hill North has distinguished its school through the remarkable implementation of widely important goals, driving significant improvements in literacy and numeracy. The school's leadership embarked on a transformative journey to enhance teaching and learning. In response to a comprehensive review of school data, Chester Hill North developed a collaborative practice program that was intricately linked to the school's strategic directions of student growth and attainment, and high impact professional learning. Through those concerted efforts, Chester Hill North Public School achieved a remarkable shift in its school excellence framework, moving from a state of delivering to a state of sustaining and growing within a twelve-month period. That accomplishment reflects the dedication of Chester Hill North.

BRENDAN GUINEY

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (20:17): I recognise Brendan Guiney, who was awarded Patrol Captain of the Year at the Surf Life Saving Lower North Coast Awards of Excellence. Brendan has been a patrolling member at Cape Hawke since 1988 and has served as patrol captain for 22 consecutive years. He holds numerous awards, including the five-year rescue watercraft certificate, 20-year National Patrol Service Award, 30-year long service award and the national medal. Brendan has obtained 68 Surf Life Saving awards, such as Provide First Aid, inflatable rescue boat driver and crew, silver medallion in aquatic rescue, age manager and foundation coach. Over his 36 years of service, Brendan has achieved 100 per cent attendance for his patrol, amassing a total of 944 patrol hours. He is known for his willingness to share his extensive knowledge with new patrollers and his exceptional leadership. Brendan's mentoring skills and positive support ensure that all juniors on his patrol earn their bronze medallion. His expertise in uncrewed aerial vehicle and rescue watercraft operations provides valuable insights to youth members and encourages their further participation in lifesaving services. I congratulate Brendan on his well-deserved recognition.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp): I also congratulate Brendan and thank him for his service over such a long period. A patrol rate of 100 per cent is amazing.

JINO DANIEL

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:19): I congratulate Jino Daniel from Stargazer Pole Studio operating in Blacktown on winning the gold in Australia's first ever men's division of the Ultra Pole Competition. Ultra pole is described as a fast-paced and exciting knockout event where competitors show off their best moves and tricks. Performers on the day were judged by the same and only scoring system recognised by the International Olympic Committee. Maybe pole dancing could one day become the next recognised Olympic sport. After all, pole sport requires rigorous training, immense strength and grace, all performed in competition to pumping music

under the watchful eyes of judges. The event is organised by the Australian Pole Sports Federation and was this year held at Penrith. I encourage Blacktown City Council to consider hosting the next championships. Penrith shouldn't have all the fun! Again I congratulate Jino Daniel and the Stargazer Pole Studio on this amazing Australian first.

MANLY WARRINGAH PIPE BAND

Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (20:20): I commend the Manly Warringah Pipe Band, which had the great honour of performing in July at the Basel Tattoo 2024 in Switzerland. The Basel Tattoo attracts an audience of up to 8,000 people, with over 1,000 performers, making it the second largest tattoo event in the world. The band was one of the few Australian groups selected to participate, with both the Australian Army Band and the NSW Police Pipe Band also performing. Manly Warringah Pipe Band has been playing since 1949 and accepts members of all levels of experience and age, with its youngest being just nine years old. In the past decade the band has racked up dozens of performances across the Basel Tattoo and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Scotland. It brings a huge smile not only to my face but to the face of anyone who has a chance to hear the pipe band play around the northern beaches, whether it is faintly in the distance or right in front of you, when it is very loud indeed. I am so proud that the band has taken its talents to the international stage and offer a big congratulations on this remarkable achievement.

SPRINGWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:21): In Public Education Week I acknowledge the incredible work of our public school teachers, school staff and P&Cs. As a former teacher and a proud member of the NSW Teachers Federation, I have long admired the dedicated people who work to give all students the best educational opportunities New South Wales has to offer. I certainly am proud to belong within this great institution of public education. It is within public education that an incredible community works together to support all students. It is a system that helps students build strong connections and achieve success. I particularly acknowledge the amazing work of Springwood Public School in the Blue Mountains on Dharug and Gundungurra land, where the dedicated staff recently launched a new cultural centre. Here the school is providing Dharug language lessons to students from K-6. This incredible offering provides experiences to all students to engage in meaningful ways with Aboriginal culture. This is a safe space, created to promote belonging and knowledge sharing. I congratulate Springwood Public School.

RICHMOND LIONS CLUB

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:22): I acknowledge the Richmond Lions Club, which held its first Hawkesbury Winter Sleep Out on Saturday 27 July 2024. I recognise past club president Scott Hinks and club member Warren Doyle, who planned and delivered the event in just five weeks, gaining traction through articles in local newspapers and guest appearances on Hawkesbury radio stations. Thirty people braved the winter chill at Richmond Oval, with a further 25 people turning up to show their support. The sleep-out included a hearty soup dinner supplied by the local Country Women's Association, a discussion about trauma experiences led by the founder of Hope4U Foundation, Diane Russell, and a classic Lions Club barbecue breakfast. The Richmond Lions Club raised \$8,980. The proceeds will go towards the Hope4U Foundation's Jarron Project, an initiative geared towards providing access to professional mental health services. I congratulate members of the Richmond Lions Club on their effort in organising the sleep-out, which raised awareness for mental health and suicide prevention.

AUSTRAL SOCCER CLUB

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (20:23): I acknowledge and applaud the courageous efforts of volunteers from the Austral Soccer Club. On Saturday 27 July there was a high impact car accident opposite the Austral's home ground, where a ute collided with a bus. The bus made two full 360-degree turns in the middle of one of the busier intersections in my area. While one woman was taken to hospital as a precaution, thankfully nobody was seriously injured, with everyone involved very lucky to come out of this horrific accident unscathed. Committee members from the club immediately called emergency services and rushed to the scene. They provided first aid to both drivers, and passengers on the bus, as well as initiating a road clean-up before emergency services arrived. Their quick response and selfless actions undoubtedly made a significant difference in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of those involved in the incident and the wider community. Austral Soccer Club and all those who assisted should be incredibly proud of their actions. The Leppington community is extremely proud of you.

MACLEAN BOWLING CLUB

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:24): I acknowledge the management, directors and members of the Maclean Bowling Club. As we all know, clubs in New South Wales are community spaces and huge supporters of community groups, and the Maclean Bowling Club is no different. Recently the club named

one of its bowling greens, bowling green No. 1, in honour of local icon Alan "Fatty" Ford. Fatty has been a long-term member and supporter of the club. His dedication started when he was a young boy. It was his job to remove the bindi-eyes and weeds from the bowling greens after floods of the mighty Clarence River. Fatty has been a volunteer, a bowler, and the occasional drink and raffle winner at the club. I thank secretary manager Mark Williams, president John Nilon and the entire board for dedicating the green space in honour of one of the club stalwarts. I congratulate Fatty. May he keep up the good work on the bowling green.

CARTWRIGHT PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:25): Recently, Cartwright Public School put together its first ever boccia team to participate in the NSW Inclusive Schools Boccia Tournament. The competition saw over 511 teams participate across 470 schools, with an estimated 3,400 competitors, which is just extraordinary. Boccia is an official Paralympic sport, combining elements of bocce, bowls and petanque. What sets boccia apart is its inclusivity, offering opportunities for individuals of all abilities to engage in the competition and sportsmanship. Boccia training at Cartwright has seen students take to the sport with enthusiasm and forge strong connections between teammates. I am informed that, despite being newcomers to the sport, they demonstrated remarkable skill and teamwork, and earned the admiration of their fellow competitors and spectators. Cartwright Public School consistently emphasises the importance of providing opportunities for their students to thrive. I congratulate the members of the boccia team on their dedication to this new sport. I look forward to seeing them refine their skills over the years to come.

JULIE ORGAN

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (20:26): I pay tribute to Mrs Julie Organ, the principal at Manly West Public School in the Manly electorate. Mrs Organ has been presented with a Meritorious Award for her services in the NSW Primary Principals' Association [NSW PPA]. This is a very prestigious award as it is nominated by Mrs Organ's principal peers. The award recognises the enormous contribution Mrs Organ has made over many years within the NSW PPA, representing students, teachers and leaders across the State. Julie has represented the NSW PPA on the New South Wales curriculum reference group and the Multicultural Education Advisory Group. These areas in New South Wales Education have undergone significant changes resulting from Julie's work, which has now been recognised. Since elected as the member for Manly, I have witnessed Julie's diligence, commitment and tireless work for her students and families at Manly West Public School. I know that this award is well deserved. I congratulate Julie. As a principal, she is a great role model to her peers and students alike. Well done!

MATTHEW HUNT

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (20:27): I am delighted to acknowledge and congratulate all of the recipients of the recent joint Rotary Clubs of Macarthur Police Officer of the Year awards. I particularly acknowledge Senior Constable Matthew Hunt, who was named 2024 Macarthur Police Officer of the Year. Senior Constable Hunt is an outstanding individual. He was involved in 420 arrests in 2023, and this performance has had a dramatic impact on property theft crime in our local area. Whilst not in my electorate, I also acknowledge some of the other recipients: Probationary Constable Nicholas Franolic of Camden Police for general duties; Esmarelda Reyes Vega of Camden Police; unsworn officers Christine Van Hilst of Campbelltown Police and Melanie Thompson of Camden Police; Detective Troy Burchell of Campbelltown Police; and Highway Patrol Leading Constable Trent Skellern. I thank them all and congratulate them.

JAN SHARMAN, OAM

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (20:28): I recognise the many achievements of the late Jan Sharman of Glenn Innes who, sadly, passed away recently. Mrs Sharman devoted much time and energy to make her beloved Glen Innes better for all. She was immensely respected by her peers and the wider community. Mrs Sharman was a volunteer in her community for over 50 years, including with the Glen Innes Hospital Auxiliary, the Holy Trinity Anglican Church's parish council, and also as an elected councillor to the former Glen Innes council. My predecessors in this role enjoyed a close connection with Mrs Sharman, who spent a couple of decades lobbying—successfully—for a new hospital in Glen Innes. I am told she was tenacious and had an iron fist in a velvet glove. Her passing will leave Glen Innes a much poorer place without her energy and devotion. Her family are mourning her loss, and I extend to them sincere condolences on behalf of our community.

RED BUS SERVICE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:29): I recognise The Entrance Red Bus Service, owned by the Sloman/Shore family for the past 84 years, for helping to keep the Central Coast community moving. On Saturday 6 July at 12.23 a.m., the last bus to be named the Red Bus Service travelled route 21 to The Entrance North via Long Jetty. For decades the bold and eye-catching red-and-cream livery of The Entrance Red Bus Service has been unmissable on the coast, on main roads and back streets of The Entrance, Long Jetty and other coastal

suburbs. For decades The Entrance Red Bus Service has deftly picked up and dropped off many thousands of passengers, with children, grandparents, families, friends, locals and holidaymakers taken to and from suburban shops, schools, homes and holiday homes. I acknowledge the Sloman/Shore family for their many decades of dedication and service to the Central Coast community. Under the new owners, ComfortDelGro Corporation, the bus company is now known as Red Bus CDC. I thank the drivers and everybody involved in keeping the Red Bus on the coast.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL PEARSON

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:30): I pay my respects to the late Mr Michael Pearson, a man whose dedication and service have left an enduring mark on the Goulburn community. Mr Pearson worked for many years on the railways, ultimately serving as the production manager of the railway workshop. His leadership and expertise were instrumental in the success of many projects within the industry. Beyond his professional achievements, Mick Pearson was a pillar of the Goulburn community. Joining the Rotary club in 2015, he served as its president, where his natural ability to engage and motivate others led to numerous projects that significantly benefited our community. Mr Pearson also volunteered at the Goulburn Multicultural Centre, where he supported migrants with English lessons, driving lessons and school holiday programs. He is remembered as an outstanding individual whose efforts helped many new residents find their footing in our community. Today we reflect on Mr Pearson's remarkable contributions to Goulburn. His legacy of service and kindness will always be remembered.

MILPERRA COLTS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:31): I congratulate the Milperra Colts Junior Rugby League Football Club, which will receive new sports shelters thanks to the Government's Local Sport Grant Program. The \$20,000 will go towards portable shelters, helping to keep players and officials out of the cold and rain in the winter months at Killara Reserve. The Milperra Colts have been running since 1970, operating out of a clubhouse at Killara Reserve in Panania. This year the club has 14 teams, from under-6s to adult teams, including an under-18s women's team. It is a great family club, where everyone is welcomed and looked after. All money raised by the club goes back to supporting the kids and operating the club. It is great to see funding from the State Government helping to provide this amenity. I congratulate the committee members and all the players at the club. I look forward to visiting to watch some games and checking out the new shelters. I wish the teams competing in the upcoming semifinal series all the best.

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (20:32): I acknowledge and commend Georges River Life Care, a remarkable local organisation dedicated to providing essential support to our community. This charitable organisation has specialised in offering family violence support, emergency relief and programs for vulnerable children, families and adults with disabilities. Over the years it has positively impacted the lives of thousands. Considering the increasing demand for family and domestic violence support, the team at Georges River Life Care continues to go above and beyond for their clients, demonstrating unwavering commitment and compassion. Without their dedicated efforts, many individuals facing tough times would not receive the vital support they need. I highlight the recent initiative, the Sleeping Rough fundraiser, held last month at Club Rivers. This event raised crucial funds and heightened awareness of the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the chairman, Andrew Scipione, AO; the CEO and operations manager, Karen Power; and the entire executive team and staff. I look forward to continuing our collaboration with Georges River Life Care and supporting its invaluable work in our community.

NSW AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:33): Recently I had the pleasure of welcoming the Minister for Health to Penrith Lakes to launch eight NSW Ambulance inflatable rescue boats [IRBs]. Flood-affected communities across New South Wales—and, indeed, Penrith—are set to benefit from this \$400,000 investment. This specialised enhancement to NSW Ambulance's flood rescue capability will free up other State emergency resources to respond in crisis situations, especially on the Nepean River. On a chilly winter morning we saw firsthand an on-water demonstration of the IRBs in action by a special operations team. They will ensure that specialised paramedics can deliver the very best outcomes for patients. NSW Ambulance has also invested in the equipment to transport the IRBs across the State as needed. Our focus as a government is caring for New South Wales by ensuring that we have the essential services that our residents in Penrith rely on and providing health workers with the gear that they need to keep our communities safe.

SUTHERLAND 2 SURF FUN RUN

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (20:34): I congratulate Wanda Surf Life Saving Club on another successful Sutherland 2 Surf. The forty-second Sutherland 2 Surf saw its largest turnout in a decade, with a whopping 7,629 people participating in the 11-kilometre fun run from Sutherland to Cronulla, just a few hundred short of the record for the greatest number of participants ever. I congratulate Oyster Bay resident Thomas Do Canto on being the first to cross the finish line of our cherished fun run in an impressive 32 minutes and 23 seconds. The event could not have happened without the tireless work of the amazing volunteers from Wanda. I acknowledge Sutherland 2 Surf convenors Mick Brannock, OAM; Anne Caterson, OAM; Sue Brannock; and Ric Smith. I also recognise Wanda's 2024-25 board of management, namely president Fiona Sutton, Grant Sandstrom, David Gumley, Mark Sargeant, Denny Rowlands, Glenn Bell, Lachlan Black, Greg Pierce, Natalie Buckley, Lisa Zammit, Brett Thatcher, Dean Slater and Kaylene Walker. I thank Wanda Surf Living Saving Club for again facilitating this incredible local event for our local community.

BATTLE OF THE BUSINESSES

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (20:35): Last Saturday night a group of amateur boxers from businesses throughout the Illawarra took to the ring to raise money as part of Battle of the Businesses Round 2. After raising more than \$135,000 earlier in the year from round one, Karlie and Adrian from Tiny Tins for the best skip bins, Orlane from Wollongong Crane Trucks and Aimee and James from Grechys Boxing and Fitness hosted a mix of exhibition, scored and professional exhibition bouts to raise money for the Illawarra Convoy. Each participating company nominated a member of their team to go through a rigorous 10-week training program, followed by a few rounds in the ring. The convoy is in its twentieth year, having raised millions of dollars for Illawarra families who are facing life-threatening or life-limiting illness. The convoy would not be the success that it has been and will continue to be without the involvement of dedicated fundraisers who put together events like Battle of the Businesses and convince people to get in the ring in the name of charity. It is a unique event hosted by a unique group of people who recognise that the true value of a business is not measured in their own profits alone but also by the contribution they make to their community.

PITTWATER ELECTORATE PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (20:36): I pay tribute to all school principals at Pittwater's public schools: Cindy Gardiner of Bilgola Plateau Public, Brett Blaker of Barrenjoey High School, Heidi Currie of Narrabeen Sports High School, Rob Zappia of Narrabeen Lakes Public School, Adam Hughes of Narrabeen North Public School, Lisa Phillips of Elanora Heights Public School, Shannan Griffith of Mona Vale Public School, Andy Rankin of Avalon Public School, Alison Gambino of Pittwater High School, Natalie Baldi of Newport Public School, and Adrienne Bruce of Terrey Hills Public School. Those women and men sacrifice so much to serve our communities and lead their schools. Their passion and commitment to furthering young people's education is inspiring. Whilst their work is often underappreciated, their impact echoes through the ages. Their students are future mums, dads, nurses, teachers, police officers, executives, community service workers and, yes, even politicians. Many of us have a story about a teacher who inspired us. Although some days may be tough, I thank our school principals and their staff. Their work matters and we owe them a great debt.

JAKE RYAN MEMORIAL CUP

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (20:37): It was an honour to attend the inaugural Jake Ryan Memorial Cup match, a special event that brought together the Quakers Hill Destroyers Junior Rugby League Club to celebrate the life and legacy of a cherished former teammate. This match is more than just a game; it is a tribute to Jake Ryan, whose time in the Destroyers is celebrated by his teammates. Through this annual event, the Destroyers aim to honour Jake's memory by celebrating the sense of community, sportsmanship and love for the sport that he championed. I congratulate Christian Spryn on being the first recipient of the Jake Ryan Memorial Cup. This award is a testament to Christian's exceptional sportsmanship and commitment, qualities that Jake embodied throughout his time with the team. The match also succeeded in raising \$4,800 for R U OK?, a cause close to our hearts, emphasising the importance of mental health awareness and support. It was especially poignant to witness the club rally behind Jake's family. Thanks to the Destroyers, Jake's legacy will be remembered and will inspire us for many years to come.

Private Members' Statements

ROYCE SIMMONS FOUNDATION

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:38): I acknowledge the Royce Simmons Foundation. Founded by Penrith Panthers league legend Royce Simmons, the foundation remains steadfast in its mission to elevate awareness and fund crucial research initiatives for Dementia Australia. In 2021 the now 65-year-old premiership winner was diagnosed with dementia and immediately set about exploring not only what he needed to do to slow

the dreaded condition's progress but also how he could assist others who were affected by the disease—and not just sufferers but their families too.

The diagnosis sent shock waves through the rugby league and broader community. However, in true Royce style, he wasted no time at all, throwing himself behind Royce's Big Walk. In 2022 Simmons led the first walk from his hometown in Gooloogong to Penrith, raising more than \$1 million over 300 kilometres. He backed up in 2023 with another big walk, kicking off in Dubbo. He travelled through Parkes and arrived in Bathurst, where the Panthers and Wests Tigers were playing for the Royce Simmons Cup. Throughout those journeys Royce called upon fellow footy sporting legends to join him on his walk through regional towns, including Parkes and Eugowra. Part of Royce's initiative is for the junior footy clubs in the towns they pass through to utilise the opportunity to raise funds of their own in addition to helping Royce raise money for Dementia Australia.

In 2023 Royce was named Penrith's Citizen of the Year. Royce's walks have inspired many and his humble nature means he will stop for a chat with everyone. It is no wonder he is so loved by our locals. Royce is a one-club man, having played for Penrith Panthers between 1980 and 1991. He also represented New South Wales and Australia. His extraordinary sporting achievements are matched by the service he has given to our community. Although Royce originally hails from the small town of Gooloogong in central New South Wales, it is safe to say that Penrith has claimed him as its own.

Spurred on following the huge 2022 and 2023 successes of his big walk, Royce is backing up again and walking 300 kilometres this year. The tough-as-nails former Panthers skipper is tackling his Alzheimer's diagnosis just as he would an opponent on the footy field—head on and with the benefit of his "team" and their supporters as his major priority. Royce has already gathered a huge amount of support from the rugby league community that he was part of for decades and has many supporters on board sponsoring the walks. Kicking off yesterday, Royce's Big Walk will once again bring together communities, supporters and advocates in a collective effort to raise awareness and vital funds for groundbreaking research initiatives. Along the way there will be several sports dinners, lunches and coaching clinics to help raise funds for local rugby league.

Speaking with the media before his walk, the former player turned coach said living with dementia has been a rollercoaster ride. He freely spoke about his own battle with the insidious disease. "I'm going pretty good," he said, "but I can feel a few little dips here and there, but I'm going okay." He then quipped, "Don't worry about me. I'll get the 300 kilometres out!" This year Royce's Big Walk begins at the Royce in Penrith. Then, trekking across Sydney and making stops at eight NRL clubs along the way, he will also take in some iconic locations, including Manly Beach, Bondi, Taronga Zoo, Watsons Bay, Sydney Olympic Park and Oran Park. It will all culminate in a special finish on 15 August at Penrith Stadium ahead of the Panthers' round 24 match against the Melbourne Storm. Royce is upbeat, saying he is looking forward to the walk and has been training for it. The aim is to raise awareness and understanding about the disease. He said:

Every day we'll visit a new NRL club, there will be reporters there to cover it, and out goes my story again. We're a long way from a cure, that's why we need more awareness.

Panthers super coach Ivan Cleary said Royce has been an inspiration to the proud club with the way he has turned his diagnosis into something positive. Cleary said:

Royce is a club legend here ... Apart from what he's doing for dementia and helping provide awareness, it actually inspires us that he's using something that's quite damaging and fearful for him, but he's turning it into a positive.

Well said. I urge everyone, if they see Royce walking through their community, to stop and have a chat or give him a wave. They can support Royce's mission, junior rugby league and the families who have or will go through what Royce himself is confronting by donating or attending some of the functions. Their generous support will enable Dementia Australia to sustain its efforts, providing hope and invaluable resources to countless individuals.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (20:43): Providing support to victims of domestic violence is a cause close to the hearts of many in this Parliament. It has been spoken about many times in this Chamber by many past and current members and certainly by me. All members in this place are on a unity ticket to support government initiatives to prevent family and domestic violence, to appropriately deal with offenders and abusers, and to help victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. The Northern Beaches Women's Shelter opened its doors in November 2010. Since then over 500 homeless women have benefited from the service as it has helped support their transition from crisis accommodation to transitional accommodation and back into the everyday community. Those services continue.

Later this month the shelter is playing a key role in the inaugural Northern Beaches Domestic Violence Network Conference. Narelle Hand, CEO of the shelter, is chair of the network. The network links 32 domestic violence services on the Northern Beaches. The conference will run yearly to provide support services and

information, especially to those too scared to seek help; showcase the skill sets and services available across the Northern Beaches; and help improve coordination and collaboration amongst local services. Whilst members of Parliament advocate for change, reform laws, deliver funding and often do our bit on the ground, scores of individuals and organisations do the work on the ground day in, day out.

Many service providers that are not located in the Pittwater community support residents of the Pittwater community. But there are also those that operate directly within Pittwater. I pay tribute to those services, particularly the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter. Recently Pittwater has had some massive news in relation to providing for victim-survivors. There is always a lot of talk about providing more transitional and low-cost accommodation for victim-survivors. But in Pittwater we get on with it. We do not just talk.

I am pleased to report to Parliament that 90 rooms are available at Narrabeen House for women most in need, which all happened without a dollar of government support. "How?", members might ask. Some time ago, I had a chat with Beth Lawsen, co-chair of the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter, about how the shelter might use unoccupied properties to provide accommodation for women leaving domestic violence situations—referred to as "meanwhile use". Those properties include retirement villages, homes awaiting development and others. I promised to keep a look out for opportunities.

Then, a couple of months back, after helping a couple of residents relocate from a closing retirement village in Narrabeen and liaising with those residents and Sally Taylor of Retirement by Moran, it occurred to me that the 90 empty studio and one-bedroom apartment rooms might be put to use by the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter and women in need. Beth Lawsen and I spoke about how their "meanwhile use" worked. Right away I got on the phone to Sally Taylor and let her know that we had a local women's shelter that could make use of the building while they planned for the future use of the site. Without missing a beat or a second, Sally Taylor immediately committed. She was all in.

Unbeknownst to both of us, Beth Lawsen had been trying to contact the former village operator, Wesley Mission, to make the property available but had been unable. We put Sally and Beth in touch. In only a matter of weeks the site is open for use and will home up to 90 women at any one time. Over the two-year period that the property will likely be available, it will literally save and help the lives of hundreds of the most vulnerable women in our communities. Thanks to the generous support of Retirement by Moran, especially Shane Moran and Sally Taylor, the former Wesley Taylor Village has been repurposed to support women in need of transitional housing.

That is the power of community. I am truly humbled to have played a small part. I cannot speak highly enough of the contribution made by Shane, Retirement by Moran and, in particular, Sally Taylor. Her heart for this cause is bigger than you can imagine. I also acknowledge Zonta Club for its kitchen packages; Rotary medi-health for taking away old beds and equipment; Andrew and Aimee from Woodbine Bakery; Blissful Beginnings for its boxes of self-care items; Narelle Hand, Northern Beaches Women's Shelter CEO; Kim Baesanu; Narrabeen House manager Estelle; co-chairs Rosy Sullivan and Beth Lawsen; all of the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter staff; and too many more generous donors to mention. It is a privilege to have played a small role in the outcome. What an amazing achievement by all involved. Well done.

HOUSING STABILITY

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (20:48): I am so pleased about the milestone for renters in my electorate arising from the Government's decision aimed at improving housing stability. Last week I joined the Premier, the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, and the Minister for Housing in Zetland to announce that the New South Wales Labor Government will be banning no-grounds evictions for more than 2.2 million in our State who rely on rental housing. As a father of two adult sons, I understand the profound importance of stable housing for young people and families. It is not just about having a roof over one's head; it is about having a stable community and a place that one can call home, a foundation upon which to build one's life. In my electorate, 57.6 per cent of residents are renters. That is one of the highest proportion of renters in the State.

Imagine how daunting and demoralising it is for renters to not only face soaring prices and competition for a home but also shoulder the mental and emotional burden associated with it. That is not what my generation wants for our kids, and it is not what I want for my constituents. I will tell the House a story about a man called Sean and his wife, Erin, who were residents of Tempe. Sean and his wife initially lived in Alexandria but, when they had a young baby, they rented a semi-detached residence in Tempe. Sean was a physiotherapist and his wife was a human rights lawyer. The owner gave Sean and Erin notice that he wanted the premises back three months before the end of their lease. They spent those three months trying to find rental accommodation so they could stay in the community. Day in, day out, and week in, week out, they made applications to become renters at other premises within the region but not in my electorate. They were unable to do so.

It is not only people from low socio-economic communities who cannot afford a rental. Even professionals from the middle class with a young baby—they would be the ideal tenants—were not able to secure any form of rental, let alone compete and pay increased rental prices. That indicates the extent of the crisis. For far too long renters have lived with the constant anxiety of sudden or unjust evictions. Under these new laws proposed by the Government, home owners will need a valid reason to end a tenancy. Simply wanting to raise the rent is not one of them. By banning no-grounds evictions, the Government is protecting renters from abrupt evictions, allowing them to build their lives on more solid ground. The Government has worked hard to make sure that we strike the right balance on this issue without inadvertently adding to rising rent prices.

Our reforms are the result of extensive consultations. We received over 16,000 submissions and held numerous round tables, bringing together renters, owners, agents and advocates. I am really pleased with the Government's achievement. While no-grounds evictions may not have protected Sean and Erin, a policy like this certainly would have changed the rental market and not locked them out. The couple went to live at Erin's parents in the Central Coast because they could not find suitable accommodation. That really is a tragedy. With so much in my electorate having changed so dramatically during my time as the local member, and with so many young, new faces moving into my electorate, I want nothing more than to ensure that our community is one where everybody can find peace, security and a place to truly call home. Put simply, Sean and Erin's experience of being evicted in their circumstances and their subsequent stress and financial burden should never have to happen again.

REX AIRLINES

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:53): The announcement that Rex Airlines had entered voluntary administration is a stark reminder of the precarious position of regional airlines in the modern aviation landscape. Since its formation in August 2002, Rex has connected rural, remote and regional areas to major cities, providing crucial links beyond mere convenience. Some may think of this as another business casualty in a competitive industry facing strong post-pandemic headwinds against a much-reported cost-of-living crisis. However, for people who live and work in rural Australia, like those in the Cootamundra electorate, the potential loss of Rex Airlines is far more profound. It poses significant risks to their access to essential services and cost-effective, time-efficient and convenient transport options.

While Rex has assured us that regional routes will be maintained, all efforts must be made to keep our regional airlines operational, ensuring these vital links continue. I applaud the efforts of the Federal member for Riverina, the Hon. Michael McCormack, who has spoken with and written to the Prime Minister and the aviation Minister to discuss this crucial issue on behalf of the communities we jointly represent. The importance of regional air services cannot be overstated. We rely heavily on medical specialists who fly in and out. Patients cannot receive timely and consistent care locally without reliable regional air services. This not only exacerbates their health issues but also places additional pressure on their families. The availability of regular flights ensures that medical appointments are kept, treatments are administered on schedule and health outcomes are improved.

For other regional residents and their loved ones, Rex is essential to accessing specialised healthcare services in the city. Treating some complex health conditions is tricky for those who live in rural communities, necessitating travel to larger urban centres for appointments, treatments and procedures. The air routes to Narrandera and Wagga Wagga are essential for the constituents of the Cootamundra electorate. Beyond health care, these airports are critical gateways for residents to access education, business opportunities and personal travel. The Narrandera Leeton Airport and the Wagga Wagga Airport are vital regional hubs, providing direct links to Sydney and other major cities.

This connectivity is crucial for welcoming business travellers and tourists to our growing towns. Our local economies are boosted, and small businesses can more easily maintain connections with larger markets. The airports are also pivotal for local industries. They create direct and indirect employment opportunities for airport staff and maintenance crews as well as local service providers such as hotels and restaurants that benefit from the flow of travellers. The economic ripple effect of losing a carrier such as Rex would devastate regional communities, leading to job losses and reduced economic activity. Historically, the importance of regional air services has been recognised, as evidenced by previous support for regional carriers.

Now, more than ever, the New South Wales and Australian governments must take decisive action to save Rex Airlines and ensure a sustainable future for smaller carriers. Financial aid, competition and regulatory reforms, and strategic partnerships should be part of a comprehensive strategy to secure Rex's survival and continued operation. It also highlights broader issues in regional transport policy. While road and rail networks have improved in recent years, they cannot substitute the speed and efficiency of air travel for many remote areas. A long-term solution must consider a holistic approach to regional connectivity, where air travel, supported by robust policies and investments, remains a key component.

The future of Rex Airlines is an urgent national concern. The implications for rural health care access, economic stability and connectivity are profound. It is crucial that stakeholders—including government, industry partners and the public—recognise the importance of preserving regional airlines like Rex. By doing so, we ensure that rural Australians are included in the essential services and opportunities that their urban counterparts take for granted. Saving Rex Airlines is not just about keeping a company; it is about preserving a vital lifeline for the many communities that depend on it.

FAIRFIELD CITY LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:58): Businesses play a strong role in propelling a better society. They employ our families, provide critical goods and services, and are the building blocks of our economic success. Each year in Fairfield, local businesses are recognised and celebrated via the Fairfield City Local Business Awards. These awards pay tribute to and reward our best businesses, and develop and strengthen the bonds between business and the community.

The 2024 business awards winners were presented in June. I congratulate the following winners: Heritage Window Specialists for Outstanding Service and Trade as well as Business of the Year, ABS Doors and Timber for Outstanding Specialised Business, Alpha Unity Martial Arts for Outstanding New Business, Century 21 South West Fairfield for Outstanding Real Estate Agency, Chemistworks at Stockland Wetherill Park for Outstanding Pharmacy, Clever Cubs Early Learning Centre for Outstanding Early Childhood Centre, Dolci Cakes for Outstanding Bakery/Cafe Business, Epiphany Dance and Co for Outstanding Dance Studio, and Fairmont Legal for Outstanding Professional Services.

I also acknowledge and congratulate Gato's Pastizzi on Outstanding Most Inclusive Employer, Glorious Flowers on Outstanding Wedding Services, Grano Restaurant on Outstanding Restaurant, Hair Extensions By Sal on Outstanding Hairdresser, Industrial Cafe on Outstanding Fast Food/Takeaway, Innovate Education Australia on Outstanding Education Service, Invincible HQ on Outstanding Fitness Services, Joe Papandrea Quality Meats at Greenway Wetherill Park on Outstanding Butcher, and Joe's Fruit World on Outstanding Fruit and Vegetable Shop.

Finally, I acknowledge and congratulate John Street Mechanical Repairs on Outstanding Automotive Services, JQ Physiotherapy and Sports Rehabilitation at Stockland Wetherill Park on Outstanding Health Improvement Services, Lorna Jane Stockland Wetherill Park on Outstanding Fashion, Nhi Phan Nursery on Outstanding Specialised Retail Business, Prouds the Jewellers at Stockland Wetherill Park on Outstanding Jewellery Store, The Woods Pantry on Outstanding Cafe, and Youth Skin Clinic on Outstanding Beauty Services. I thank all entrants, finalists and winners for all the hard work and dedication that they bring each day, contributing to the life and diversity within our community.

HOMES FOR OLDER WOMEN PROGRAM

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (21:01): Tonight I acknowledge Homes for Older Women [HOW] in the Blue Mountains. It is a not-for-profit program run by the Older Women's Network NSW in the Blue Mountains. The program connects women aged 55 years and older in the Blue Mountains with compassionate home owners who are offering accommodation at an affordable price. That includes granny flats, houses, units or spare bedrooms, and the accommodation can be furnished or unfurnished. Why HOW? It is well established that older women are finding it increasingly difficult to access affordable housing in the Blue Mountains, particularly in the private rental market. An extra layer of hardship has been added with the cost-of-living and rental affordability crises. As women often have significantly lower superannuation and lower savings than men, they are at greater risk of falling into poverty when they age. Older women also have a higher likelihood of housing insecurity and homelessness due to factors including relationship separation, death of a partner and retirement.

The Older Women's Network in the Blue Mountains decided to come up with a local solution to deal with the problem of housing insecurity. It is a group of supportive older women committed to improving the wellbeing of their members and the wider community. Volunteers designed the Homes for Older Women program as an innovative local solution to the complex national housing crisis. HOW is made possible by the generous contribution of individuals, local businesses, organisations and donors. I encourage everyone to have a look at this innovative program. The harsh reality is that some older women, including those on full-time incomes, are forced to move out of rental accommodation when rents increase or cost-of-living pressure becomes too much. Others are couch surfing with family and friends or living in precarious situations.

In May this year I was fortunate to attend the launch of this fantastic program in Wentworth Falls. I acknowledge the people behind this fabulous project who are doing fantastic things on a practical level: Bronwen Johnston; Maree Cairns, who is the chair of the Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre; Sue Wildman, who came along to talk about her own lived experience of homelessness; and Julie Nance, who is the

HOW program manager in the Blue Mountains. We also heard from Debi, who shared some of her personal experiences of securing accommodation through the HOW program. With Yumi Lee of the Older Women's Network and the HOW program organisers, I look forward to introducing them to the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness, the Hon. Rose Jackson, to talk about how we might roll out a similar project, with government support, into other communities.

I take my hat off to these women who recognised that governments are not always the solution and that they cannot always find all the answers to this problem and decided that they would reach out to our community themselves. They have posters all over the Blue Mountains. They meet with a range of organisations and our local councillors, as well as my Federal colleague Susan Templeman, the member for Macquarie, and me to ask us to assist in the process of educating the community and encouraging people to stop and think about how they can help, whether they have a granny flat or a room in their homes to offer, or whether they are prepared to work with council and set up a tiny home, or invest in housing and offer that up as a solution. I was proud to be there and talk about what our Government is doing in this space to deal with the housing crisis. I congratulate the Older Women's Network and the HOW program initiative.

REGIONAL EDUCATION

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (21:06): Before I start, I acknowledge the member for the Blue Mountains for speaking about what is an issue across the State. They were points well made. In 2020 I delivered a private member's statement talking about the shared responsibility of society to make sure our children have educational opportunities, medical services and employment or business opportunities to allow them to have a good, long and healthy life. I said that some of the responsibility for that good, long and healthy life falls to the Government, some to the parents and some to the individuals themselves, particularly when they leave school and leave home. I mentioned my children—Abygael, Gabe and Aniyah—and how I hoped for the best for them. At the time two of them were still in school. They have all since left school, so now their future is mostly in their hands.

However, thousands of school-age children are still dependent on us as a society to provide opportunities they need to thrive in the future. In 2020 I said that, given the metrics of the performance of the health and education systems as well as the economic metrics, indications were that many children across regional New South Wales were not getting the best start in life. Four years later, while a lot has changed for my children, not enough seems to have changed in Barwon. Then the median wage in Barwon was generally lower, which is still the case. According to the latest census, the median household income in Barwon was \$1,236, and the State average was \$2,484.

Four years ago, I talked about the importance of access to medical services. Since then, an inquiry into the regional health system has revealed a lack of access to quality medical care in regional areas. Another select committee was established into regional health, chaired by my good friend the member for Wagga Wagga, dedicated to monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of that inquiry. Hopefully, that will improve health care in Barwon and reverse an alarming statistic—that people in the west of New South Wales have a much shorter life expectancy than those in the city. Those improvements in the regional health system will impact on regional education.

Many children have a poor start in education because they are hampered by health problems due to a lack of access to medical services. For example, around one in 10 children from lower socio-economic backgrounds suffer levels of hearing loss, affecting their ability to keep up in class. The figures are higher for Indigenous children, around 20 per cent to 30 per cent. That causes behavioural and other problems in the classroom. Existing testing programs are underfunded and can reach only so many students. More funding for hearing tests in rural, regional and remote areas would mean better outcomes for our hearing-impaired children. In 2020 I said that educational results attained in the Barwon electorate are generally lower than in the remainder of New South Wales, with attendance rates much lower in some remote parts of the State. We have seen no substantial change in that status.

Recently the NSW Parliamentary Research Service released the NAPLAN data for 2023, showing that Barwon rated lowest for spelling, reading, writing, numeracy and grammar across years 3, 5, 7 and 9. We have to look only at a sample of the figures to get an idea of how far behind the rest of the State and the country Barwon is. The national average for year 3 spelling is a score of 404, but Barwon scored an average of 358, compared with the highest average in the State of 479 for the electorate of Epping. The national average for year 3 numeracy is 407. In Barwon it is only 369, compared with Epping, which has the highest score, 479. In year 5 writing, the Australian average is 483. In Barwon it is 435, and Epping, again the highest, is 546. Year 9 grammar sees a national average of 557. Barwon's average is 501, while the highest in the State is the Sydney electorate score of 655.

In the same report is the Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage [ICSEA], looking at data relating to parents' occupation and levels of education as well as geographic remoteness and Indigenous students' level of enrolment. The Australian average is 1,000. The highest score in New South Wales is 1,172, for the North Shore electorate, while Barwon's is only 862. The ICSEA is designed so that comparisons can be made between areas of similar disadvantage, but it also shows that Barwon is the most disadvantaged, which significantly impacts education. Some of the poor NAPLAN performance comes down to the available educational services and availability of staff members. That will always be a challenge in regional and remote areas. But there are also many other factors, like whether a child can reliably access the internet, which has not sufficiently improved in the past four years, and whether a child has reliable transport to school, which has been improving with several new bus services but has a way to go.

As I said in 2020, I do not say these things to be negative about western New South Wales. I say them to continue to shine a light on the inequity that persists in regional New South Wales. As members of Parliament, we all have a responsibility to give the children of New South Wales the best education we can, but that also means giving all children across the State, in the city or the country, the same opportunities.

CROWDY HEAD SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (21:11): I recognise the incredible efforts and longstanding commitment of many local heroes who selflessly volunteer their time in the Crowdy Head Surf Life Saving Club [SLSC]. For those who do not know, Crowdy Head was once a thriving fishing village. It lies just five minutes north of Harrington, between Forster and Port Macquarie. In the 2016 census, the population of Harrington stood at just 77 people. Now it is a popular tourism destination, particularly in the summer holidays. That fact makes it even more remarkable that a vast number of individuals volunteer their time, energy and skills to deliver vital aquatic rescue and safety services to protect and save lives along this pristine stretch of the coastline. We applaud their tireless efforts.

In June of this year, the dynamic Crowdy Head Surf Life Saving Club was successful in being named the Lower North Coast Branch club of the year for 2023-24. This is an absolutely amazing result for a small club. It is an honour that recognises the invaluable contributions made by members and their hard work, commitment and ongoing passion for surf lifesaving. Later in the month, award winners were individually honoured at the annual presentation awards held on Saturday 29 June 2024. Crowdy youth volunteer and Youth Lifesaver of the Year for 15 to 21-year-olds was Ms Gemma Eady-Muxlow. The Volunteer of the Year and most valuable person—the Bill Eady memorial award—was Mr Darren Bourke. And Crowdy Lifesaver of the Year was Mr Brendan Pieschel. The Guy Dumbleton Patrol Captain of the Year award went to Mr Des Augey.

There were many 100 per cent patrollers: Rodney Croker, Adam Eady, Finlay Elmer, Neolie Eady, Liliana Somers, Bronte Eady, Gemma Eady-Muxlow, Imogen Goodhand, Brendan Pieschel, Ashley Stewart, Stephen Watkins, Daniel Carey, Calista Elmer, Oliver Somers, Kerrie Carey, Allan Davis, Brian Carstairs and Andy Marshall. I applaud the determined and committed efforts of each and every one of the abovementioned individuals, and I wholeheartedly thank them for giving their time, energy and skills to protect and save lives in their local community. This vibrant club also attracts members from nearby Harrington and even Taree, which is a testament to its welcoming, inclusive and active environment.

Club members were recognised for their longstanding, sustained contribution to surf lifesaving, receiving recognition for 25 years or more of membership to Surf Life Saving Australia. I particularly recognise Mr Fred Atkins, who received his medal for 60 years of service, together with Mr John Ward, who had previously received his service medal when at Collaroy SLSC. Of further note, multiple service award recipients are Mr Frank Elmer, Mr Walter Horsburgh and Mr Brian Drury, who all received multiple service awards for 25, 30, 40 or 50 years. I also acknowledge Ms Rhonda Elmer, who previously received her 50-year service award for her service at Cronulla SLSC as part of the women's auxiliary. Additional 40-year service awards were earned by Mr Scott Lavery, Ms Neolie Eady, Mr Rodney Chapman and Mr Edward Godwin.

In addition to these numerous long service awards, multiple club members were awarded the National Patrol Service awards for five-year, 10-year and 15-year innings. These awards are available to members who have completed 100 per cent patrol service relevant to their membership category. In this section there are just too many names for me to mention them all individually, but I express my gratitude and extreme pride in the important work these lifesavers do on our beaches. For as long as we Aussies flock to the golden sands and sparkling waves of our beaches each year, our safety and rescue in times of emergency is completely and ably in the hands of these wonderful surf lifesavers. They are absolutely crucial, and I sincerely thank them all for their work and the service they provide to our local communities.

PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE ROAD SAFETY

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (21:16): It is safe to say that when we farewell our loved ones when they set off in a car or catch a bus, we all want to see them return home safely. Tragically, we have seen far too many people not returning home, both locally, in Port Stephens, and across the State. The New South Wales Government takes seriously our responsibility to make travel safer in our communities, especially on regional roads. Before our Government was elected, I committed to our community that a Minns Labor Government would inject \$10 million so that Port Stephens Council could fix local roads. As promised, that \$10 million has been delivered to the council through the Regional Road Fund.

Thanks to this investment, works are completed, underway or in planning at Fairlands Road in Medowie, Rookes Road in Salt Ash, Swan Bay Road, Tomaree Road in Shoal Bay, Beach Road and Trevally Road in Nelson Bay, East Seaham Road and Italia Road in East Seaham, and Short Street in Fingal Bay. And, if members have not seen the complete transformation that has happened at Avenue of the Allies in Tanilba, I encourage them to. Finally that beautiful town has the impressive entrance it deserves. But that is not all. An additional \$1.8 million has been delivered to Port Stephens Council through the Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund so that it can get on with the job of fixing potholes and undertaking urgent road repairs. That funding will help repair 28 roads across Port Stephens, from Woodville and Wallalong to Marsh Road in Bobs Farm, all the way out to Shoal Bay and many other towns between. I know that potholes are still a pain across our community but, without this funding and the hard work of Port Stephens Council, they would be so much worse.

When it comes to our main roads, we are getting on with the job, done in partnership with the Commonwealth Government. A whopping \$1.4 billion is powering the construction of the M1 extension to Raymond Terrace, which, as locals can see with their own eyes, is going gangbusters. And \$275 million is in the budget to progress the Nelson Bay Road duplication between Bobs Farm and Williamstown. We are currently catching up on the planning work to get this project started, which simply was not done by the former Government. Bridges too are being fixed, with \$4.5 million to preserve the structural integrity and reduce future maintenance costs of the iconic Old Karuah Bridge, ensuring it continues to serve locals and visitors now and into the future. We are also installing signage on the Pacific Highway to give motorists a nudge to visit the terrific town of Karuah, providing a much-needed boost to local businesses.

The Government is making bus travel safer and more accessible in Port Stephens. The New South Wales Government has delivered more than \$80,000 for Port Stephens Council to roll out accessibility upgrades across 12 bus stops in Port Stephens and two new bus shelters in Medowie and Williamstown. The Government is also improving access to public transport for people with hidden disabilities by partnering with bus operators to expand the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program. Proudly, Port Stephens Coaches is one of the first bus operators in the State whose drivers have been trained to recognise the sunflower lanyard and provide appropriate support to those who need it. The safety of kids on our local school buses has been a longstanding concern for families in Port Stephens. After more than a decade of community agitation and a change of government, school buses in Port Stephens finally have seatbelts so our kids will be safer. We have also had issues around not knowing whether buses would even turn up, so on-time tracking has just been switched on so families will know exactly when and where their child's school bus is.

Wearing seatbelts in our cars is critical. In fact, not wearing a seatbelt doubles the chance of death for anyone involved in a crash. Unbelievably, a lot of people are now choosing to not click, clack, front and back. The Government has switched on seatbelt cameras to increase the compliance and safety of all road users. Despite it being five decades since it became law to wear a seatbelt, the first 21 days of camera enforcement of seatbelt usage resulted in the issuing of more than 11,000 penalties across the State. Anyone caught not wearing a seatbelt will be fined \$410 and lose three demerit points. Importantly, every dollar raised by seatbelt cameras will go back into road safety.

Speaking of points, the Government wants to reward our safe road users. Through the New South Wales Government's demerit point return trial, drivers saw a demerit point wiped from their licence for maintaining a spotless driving record for 12 months. In Port Stephens, 13,656 good drivers benefited from this scheme, which has now been extended for another year. After just 15 months in office, the Labor Minns Government has invested millions in making the community safer for the people of Port Stephens.

NSW SOMMELIER'S WINE LIST AWARDS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (21:21): Last night my NSW Parliamentary Friends of Grape Growing co-chairs, the member for Cessnock and the member for Orange, and I hosted an event to create closer ties between the wine industry and government—what a night! The NSW Sommelier's Wine List Awards are dedicated to the restaurants, wine bars, pubs, clubs and hotels in Sydney and regional New South Wales that are

doing the heavy lifting to support New South Wales wine. They offer their customers a great wine experience and a range of delicious local wines that showcase the quality and diversity of the wines being produced in this State. The venues that entered the awards were assessed on their wine list content—of course, they have to have New South Wales wine—presentation, educational content, selection, food and wine matching, service and New South Wales wine representation. We thank all the venues that entered and that back our New South Wales wines by adding them to their wine lists.

Providing New South Wales wine creates a rounded experience for tourists. It is the best marketing in the world when a visitor enjoys New South Wales wines with New South Wales food. We had a great roll-up. A number of Hunter Valley representatives attended, along with many others. The event was attended by Mark Bourne, President of NSW Wine; Chris Tyrell of Tyrell's Wines; Geoff Krieger of Brokenwood Wines; Andrew Margan of Margan Wines; and Emma White of Latitude 32, along with many others. I will share the list of great winners. The award for best large regional venue was won by Bills Fishhouse and Bar in Port Macquarie and the award for best small regional venue was won by Blaq at the Kyah Hotel in the Blue Mountains.

The award for the best small Sydney venue was won by The Blue Door in Surry Hills and the award for the best large Sydney venue was won by Me-Gal at Taronga Zoo. The award for the best functions venue was won by ICC Sydney in Darling Harbour. The 2024 NSW Sommelier's Wine List of the Year Award was won by Blaq at the Kyah Hotel in the Blue Mountains. I congratulate that team. And finally, the 2024 NSW Wine President's Award for Outstanding Support of the NSW Wine Industry went to—drumroll please—our very own Strangers' Restaurant at Parliament House. I congratulate Lee and Andrew, who were there to collect the gong.

There is a serious intent behind the awards and our work. It is all about continuing to advocate for buy NSW, a government procurement policy. It was really positive to hear the Minister for Jobs and Tourism, the Hon. John Graham, speak about his department's increasing focus on local procurement, low food miles and getting better at telling local stories. At a time when Hunter Valley accommodation night stays are down 50 per cent, the industry is doing it tough. We need to make sure that New South Wales is doing everything it can to support its own products. It is a big industry—there is no doubt about that. It is a \$14 billion industry in New South Wales. The annual volume of wine produced is 492 million bottles. The annual value of New South Wales wine exports is \$500 million and growing. The New South Wales wine industry employs 53,000 people and uses 34,000 hectares of land for vineyards.

There is absolutely no reason that large government venues should not be backing our wine. On the night it was noted that in South Australia the average percentage of local wines on wine lists was up to 86 per cent. In New South Wales the average is 12 per cent. We need to do a lot better. We need to reach out to those mega caterers with big government contracts. We need people such as Justin Hemmes to get on board to sell more New South Wales wine. We need to make sure they are backing New South Wales wine and this great industry. This Friday I am unfortunately going to miss a major event, the PFK Hunter Valley Wine Show. The event has been running since 1847. There is a great relationship between the event and the local Lone Pine Barracks. The event is a great day, celebrating great wine in the Hunter Valley. It is a shame I cannot be there, but I need to do my job here at Parliament.

ENDURING GUARDIANSHIPS

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (21:26): If only the previous Coalition Government had thought about buying local when it came to trains and ferries. In the Auburn electorate, 65 per cent of residents were born overseas. This is the largest overseas-born population in Australia. As part of the diverse and unique character of the Auburn community, it is considered a particular honour to look after elderly family members. However, as our population ages, it is important for everyone in the community to plan for the future and the future of their family. Today I will talk about an important aspect of that planning that every family should sit down and discuss: the role of an enduring guardian. When we are younger it does not occur to us that at some point, we will not be able to make important decisions about our lives. But just as we plan careers, vacations and financial investments, planning for future health and lifestyle decisions is equally crucial. That is where the concept of an enduring guardian comes into play.

An enduring guardian is a person legally appointed to make decisions about another person's health and lifestyle if they become unable to make decisions themselves. This could be due to a temporary or permanent loss of decision-making ability arising from illness, injury or disability. An enduring guardian is a measure of security that ensures a person's wishes and best interests are honoured even when they cannot voice them themselves. To appoint an enduring guardian, a person must be over 18 and have the capacity to make this choice on their own. It is essential for people to carefully consider whom they trust with such a significant responsibility. The person they choose should be someone they trust implicitly, such as a spouse, family member or close friend. This individual should be willing to take on the role and be capable of making decisions in difficult and emotional circumstances.

The enduring guardian should understand the person's needs, wishes, values and beliefs. Once appointed, an enduring guardian will only start making decisions when a person is unable to do so. This ensures that individuals retain control over their lives for as long as possible. If there is any uncertainty about when an enduring guardian should begin making decisions, a doctor or specialist can be consulted. The role of an enduring guardian can be extensive, depending on the areas specified. They might decide where a person lives; what health care, medical and dental treatment they receive; and what services they might need.

However, it is important to note the limitations of an enduring guardian's authority. They cannot make decisions about your finances, voting, marriage or any actions that are against the law. They also cannot make or change your will or advance care directive. For financial decisions you need to appoint someone under an enduring power of attorney. That can be the same person as the enduring guardian if you choose. To ensure your enduring guardian knows how to use their authority, you can provide them with specific instructions. For example, you might direct them to seek advice from your doctors or medical specialists before making certain decisions.

If you do not appoint an enduring guardian and decisions need to be made on your behalf, a court or tribunal may need to appoint someone for you. This can add stress and uncertainty during already challenging times, making it all the more critical for you to appoint someone you trust in advance. You can appoint one person as your enduring guardian, but it is wise to have a backup in case your primary choice is unable to fulfil the role. You can do that by appointing multiple enduring guardians or a substitute enduring guardian. Multiple enduring guardians share the responsibility, which can be beneficial if you want more than one perspective.

A lawyer is able to draw up an enduring guardian document on your behalf, or you can apply to the NSW Trustee and Guardian to draw one up for you. The NSW Trustee and Guardian also has interpreter and translation services, which are essential in my electorate. The good news is that for those receiving a full Centrelink age pension the fee can be waived; otherwise, the cost for the NSW Trustee and Guardian is \$231. Appointing an enduring guardian is a vital step in ensuring that you have someone on your side. It provides peace of mind, knowing that your wishes will be respected and your best interests safeguarded. Establishing enduring guardianship well in advance is crucial for you and your family. I encourage everyone to have a conversation with their loved ones about this important decision. While it may not seem urgent now, there may come a time when you will be grateful that you planned ahead. If you need assistance with an enduring guardianship and do not know who to call, give my office a call and we will point you in the right direction.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (21:31): I wish to speak to the Connectivity Expert Panel's final report, which was presented to the Minister for Water, the Hon. Rose Jackson, on 8 July 2024. In the city, far too many people treat water as an afterthought. If they want water, they just turn on a tap or buy a bottle. In the rural areas of our State like the electorate of Murray, water is at the centre of everything. Our livelihood—our entire way of life and our health—depends on water. That is why the water in the Murray-Darling Basin needs to be managed correctly. Crucially, management of the Murray-Darling Basin needs to be equitable. It needs to be fair.

It seems like forever that I have been saying our rivers are run appallingly. There is simply no connectivity. We have all heard of the Wild West. In New South Wales we have the wild north, where water is barely metered and a handful of powerful families act as if they are a law unto themselves. When water is abused in the north, areas in the southern basin, in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, suffer terribly. The final report paints a picture of the northern basin needing to be brought under control and made better connected and accountable to the entire Murray-Darling Basin system. That means metering water use properly and getting rid of ridiculous loopholes like the widespread abuse of unregulated water sources.

The report urges the Government to see the entire Murray-Darling Basin system as being like a sponge which should never be allowed to dry out. It takes a lot less water to keep a wet sponge wet than it does to make a dry sponge wet. The panel recommended that the triggers which are needed to make that happen must kick in a lot earlier than they currently do. I, for one, think that that is long overdue. The panel also recommended restrictions on floodplain harvesting, with the outcomes monitored to determine if even more restrictions will be necessary in the future.

Another key recommendation by the panel relates to data and modelling. For a long time, self-interested parties in the northern basin have resisted reform by claiming that there is not adequate data or modelling to justify the reforms. The expert panel has blown that little trick out of the water by stating that, from now on, the Government should implement reforms based on the considerable data and modelling that is currently available. We have known for some time that many people in the northern basin have never really wanted perfect data. There has always been an excuse to oppose the sensible and necessary reforms that will improve the health of the Murray-Darling Basin.

In essence, in its final report, the expert panel states what people in my electorate have been saying forever. That is that the New South Wales Government should take a holistic and adaptive management approach to water across the entire basin. A great way for the Government to demonstrate that it understands the need for a holistic approach to the basin would be for it to embrace the Menindee solution. The Menindee solution, which I have come up with after consulting widely with stakeholders and expert lawyers, is designed to provide more secure water to New South Wales and Victoria, while ensuring that the Menindee Lakes have all the water needed to keep them full. I ask the Minister for Water and Premier Chris Minns to actively advocate for this solution. It is a big win-win for everyone.

LALOR PARK HOUSE FIRE

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (19:35): It is through some of the most tragic events that we observe the human capacity for kindness, compassion and support. The Lalor Park and broader Blacktown community recently came together to support a grieving family following the tragic loss of life of three precious young children. At 1.00 a.m. on Sunday 7 July, emergency services were called to Lalor Park after reports of a house fire. As a result of the fire, the lives of a family have been tragically altered forever. Three beautiful children who had so much to offer passed away. They were Jaxson, aged six, Dean, aged two, and Willow, who was just shy of five months old. Words cannot express the sorrow we all felt for this young family.

Obviously, I cannot go into the circumstances or details of the tragic event, as police are continuing their investigation. I wish to focus on the quick response from neighbours and emergency workers who prevented this tragedy from being even worse. Mum, Stacey, supported by her dad, Mick, the four surviving children and their extended family, together with the Lalor Park community, wish to express gratitude to the first responders—the firefighters, police officers and paramedics—as well as doctors and nurses who supported the family at the hospital and everyone who placed themselves in the line of danger to prevent further loss of life. Neighbour Jarrod Hawkins provided assistance on the night of the fire by entering the house in an attempt to rescue family members. I thank Jarrod for his display of heroism and the care shown for his neighbours.

The pain suffered by the family is something that cannot be quantified. Lalor Park has been rocked by previous devastating domestic violence deaths, and what happened on that night has triggered much pain and trauma for people who have previously suffered. The All Nations Christian Fellowship and Episcopal Church of Australia hold a community night every fortnight in Chifley Park and graciously agreed to a community gathering commemorating the tragedy coinciding with their night. We came together as a community with hundreds of local residents, various support organisations, Deputy Premier Prue Car and housing Minister Rose Jackson, local MPs Warren Kirby and Edmond Atalla, and the Mayor of Blacktown, Brad Bunting.

Stacey and her family also attended the community gathering. I hope she felt the love and compassion emanating from the gathering. Other church groups, including Pathways Community Church, Citywest Church, Blacktown East Presbyterian Church and St Clement's Anglican Church, supported the gathering. I thank the many community groups, mental health support workers and representatives from Homes NSW who provided valuable support at the gathering. Most of the coordination was undertaken by local people, including Danielle RG of Stitches Collection and Natalie Willgress of Common Groundz cafe. Signature Foundation kindly donated funds to provide food for the gathering as the aim was to support one another and share a meal. Local cafe Common Groundz also organised a donation drive for the family for clothes, toys, books and any items people wished to provide to the family in the aftermath of its loss.

Last Friday 2 August the family held a funeral aimed at celebrating the joy that Jaxson, Dean and Willow brought to everyone who was part of their lives. Along with a host of community members, we were joined by Premier Chris Minns and Deputy Premier Prue Car, who offered their profound condolences to a family grieving an immeasurable loss. Leading the service at the request of the family was former Detective Chief Inspector Gary Raymond, who is a patron of homicide victims support group Grace's Place and a member of the Salvation Army. His message focused on the joy that young Jaxson, Dean and Willow brought to all who had the pleasure of knowing them. Deanne Taylor, Principal of Lalor Park Public School, gave a beautiful account of Jaxson's time at the school and how he will be sadly missed, as did family members and community representatives. Our love, thoughts and support are with the family at this tragic, traumatic time. Despite the most tragic of circumstances, the local community has shown its heart as well as its unrelenting capacity for compassion and resilience.

LIFE AFTER FIGHTING FILM

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (21:40): I congratulate St Clair local and internationally renowned actor, director and film producer Mr Bren Foster on the release of his new blockbuster film, *Life After Fighting*. The film tells the story of a martial arts instructor who is confronted with the disappearance of two of his students, leading him into a direct confrontation with a group of international child traffickers. It has been shown in cinemas in the United States of America [USA] and Australia and on rental and purchase digital

platforms in Canada and the United Kingdom. Alongside Mr Foster, the film features Cassie Howarth, Luke Ford and Ethan Browne, among other well-known actors. I commend Mr Foster for raising awareness of the issue of child trafficking through the film. Raising this awareness was the motivating factor for Mr Foster to create this film. With the great success of the film thus far, he has definitely had a strong impact in bringing the issue to light.

Mr Foster and I discussed the great benefit of the film to the local community of Western Sydney as we toured the car park of the Erskine Park Shopping Centre, a location in which a number of scenes were filmed. I was pleased to learn that the film was shot with an all-Australian cast entirely in Western Sydney, with locals taking part in the film as extras. I am so proud that our community is home to such a successful actor, producer and director, with this latest film in Mr Foster's long list of achievements showcasing Western Sydney to the world. It is also a proud moment for our community to be highlighted in such a phenomenal way.

Mr Foster's film has attracted global attention. It is a testament to what the people of Western Sydney can achieve when we come together and lift each other up. I was pleased to be advised by Mr Foster of the extraordinary support he received from the following local individuals and businesses. I commend and congratulate them on their role in the film's success. They include Chelsea Foster; Jaylan Foster; Jimmy Foster; Nick Harding; Arielle Foster; Jordan Petersen; Matthew Murgola; the students and families of Elite Martial Arts; Kebab Space Erskine Park; Matt Austin; Krusty Burgers; Navid Bahadori; Product of Italy restaurant; The Actor's Pulse; Paul Zadro; and ISKA Martial Arts Organisation.

Further to Mr Foster's success with *Life After Fighting*, I congratulate him on his overall and continuing success throughout his life. He has starred in critically acclaimed, award-winning films both in Australia and abroad, including in the USA, such as *Cedar Boys*, *Terminus*, *Days of our Lives* and *War Flowers*. Away from the screen, Mr Foster is a martial arts instructor who holds an impressive seventh dan in taekwondo. He also holds a black belt in Brazilian jujitsu, first dan black belt in hapkido and first dan black belt in hwa rang do. He has accumulated an astonishing collection of over 150 first-place medals. He has been inducted into *Blitz* magazine's hall of fame as the Taekwondo Instructor of the Year.

Having seen the preview to *Life After Fighting*, it is clear that Mr Foster puts his martial arts skills to exceptional use. Bren Foster and his wife Chelsea, along with their two children, operate Elite Martial Arts and Fitness in Minchinbury. I thank Mr Foster for his contribution to Western Sydney and for taking the community on this challenging and remarkable journey with him. I commend his family for its role in his success. I look forward to watching the film and thank Mr Foster for his commitment to and belief in Western Sydney. I congratulate him on the success of this film and his martial arts career. The film will be available on demand in Australia from 21 August 2024. I encourage all members and people of New South Wales to watch it. Not only does it highlight amazing talent and the wonderful community of Western Sydney but also the important topic of child trafficking, which we all need to work together to stop.

WESTERN SYDNEY WOMEN'S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:45): This year has seen the release of two reports that addressed critical social and economic issues impacting women in Western Sydney: *Unlocking Women's Potential: Labour force participation in Western Sydney*, a report produced by Western Sydney University [WSU], and the universal early childhood education and care draft report by the Productivity Commission. These reports reveal connections between women's workforce participation and the availability of early childhood education and services, shedding light on barriers and potential solutions.

The WSU report highlights several barriers to women's workforce participation in Western Sydney, including the spatial pay gap and labour market variation. Women in Western Sydney earn significantly less than their counterparts in other parts of Sydney, with areas like Liverpool and Fairfield exhibiting lower earnings, at an average of over \$20,000, when compared with more affluent areas in Western Sydney such as the Hills. Despite gains in educational attainment, women's participation in the workforce remains lower than the national average, with many employed in lower paid, traditionally feminised sectors such as health care, social assistance, education and retail. There is a clear mismatch between educational qualifications and available employment opportunities, compounded by the burden of unpaid care responsibilities, particularly child care.

The Productivity Commission's draft report emphasises the importance of affordable, accessible and high-quality childcare services to boost workforce participation, especially for women. Lower-income families, which often include women from disadvantaged backgrounds, face significant barriers in accessing these services due to cost. Workforce challenges within the childcare sector itself, including a shortage of qualified staff, limit the availability of services. There is also a need for more flexible services to accommodate the varied needs of families, particularly solo mothers and women with dependent children. The report stresses the necessity of inclusive services that cater to children with disabilities and those from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Examining these reports together reveals interconnected issues such as geographic disparities, economic participation, affordability of childcare and the impact on women's economic participation. Geographic location significantly determines economic opportunities for women, with spatial pay gaps and labour market variations highlighting income disparities. Similarly, the availability and quality of these services are geographically uneven, with remote and disadvantaged areas having fewer and lower-quality services.

Policies supporting flexible work arrangements and affordable child care can help women balance work and family commitments, addressing the sectoral employment challenges and the mismatch between educational attainment and employment opportunities. To address these interconnected challenges, it is essential to enhance childcare services in disadvantaged areas, improve affordability and access, support workforce participation and address systemic barriers.

Implementing targeted strategies to improve the availability and quality of childcare services in lower-income and remote areas of Western Sydney is crucial. Policies that encourage flexible work arrangements and support women in balancing paid work and family commitments are necessary. Addressing systemic barriers that prevent women from entering and advancing in the workforce, such as cultural norms and structural constraints, is vital. Finally, adopting community-driven approaches and implementing policies informed by robust data tailored to the unique challenges of different local government areas will ensure that the actual needs and circumstances of women in the region are addressed. Addressing geographic and socio-economic disparities is essential to unlocking the full potential of women in Western Sydney. A collective effort from government, the private sector, educational institutions and community organisations is required to create equitable and sustainable employment opportunities for women.

Over the past year, the Minns Government has already made significant progress on those issues. We abolished the public sector wages cap, providing historic pay rises to public sector employees—two-thirds of whom are women. We developed new resources on perimenopause and menopause symptoms, boosted funding for women's health centres and breast care nurses, and improved access to medicines through a pharmacist trial. We have also established a standalone Women's Safety Commissioner to address domestic, family and sexual violence, and we have established the NSW Women's Advisory Council to advance gender equity. There is certainly much more to do, but by reducing barriers and supporting the diverse needs of women, significant social and economic progress for the community can be achieved.

CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (21:50): I speak about an important matter of concern to the residents of the Castle Hill electorate, which is the Government's failure to provide a new school for the growing Castle Hill electorate. The Castle Hill electorate is one of the most sought-after places to live in our State. We have wonderful commercial centres, rural parks and gardens. What we do not have is a new school for our community. The former Liberal Government had the vision to plan for the growth of our city. The Sydney Metro North West has two stations in my electorate, Castle Hill and Hills Showground. We realised that metro stations will mean more housing. The former Government tasked the Department of Planning to consult with the community during the early stages of development of the metro. The feedback included the need for a new school.

The showground precinct was rezoned in 2017. The former Government, unlike the Minns Government, knew that infrastructure was required. A cap was placed on new dwellings until infrastructure was in place. The finalisation report, dated December 2017, recorded that following consultation with the community a new provision was introduced into the Hills Local Environmental Plan to ensure that no more than 5,000 new dwellings could be delivered in the precinct. Further, it stated that the Department of Education advised that the possibility of locating a high school in the corridor was being considered, including the option of co-locating a facility with public open space and/or community facilities to benefit the community. Following the finalisation report, the Hills Shire Council published a series of questions and answers on its website. The council stated:

Based on the development standards which apply to the Precinct, the overall yield is likely to be slightly over 9,000 dwellings. However the NSW Government has recognised that there are some outstanding infrastructure issues which have not been finalised, including schools.

On 30 May 2022 the former Government through Property NSW published a request for registration of interest for tender. School Infrastructure NSW invited suitable parties to tender to deliver the land and/or school infrastructure to meet the service demand for a new school in the Hills Showground, Norwest or combined areas, with operation to commence in term 1 of 2026. Under the former Government, the identification of land was well underway at the State election. The incoming Labor Government seems to have stalled the process of identification and purchase of that land, which is of concern to my community. Landcom also agrees that a new school is a priority for the precinct. As Landcom states on its website:

School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) has confirmed that a new primary school is required to meet future demand generated within the wider Hills Showground area.

Notwithstanding that everyone—Landcom, the Hills Shire Council and everyone who looks at it—can see that a new school is required, in September last year the Government removed the dwelling cap. The removal will allow a total of 9,500 new dwellings within the precinct. This means 9,500 more school-age children in the precinct. There is no school for those kids to go; all schools in the precinct are already bursting at the seams. The Mayor of the Hills, Dr Peter Gangemi, asked the Minister for Education and Early Learning to visit the council area to view the need for new schools. Council resolved in March this year that:

Council write to the NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Prue Car MP to take a tour of Box Hill with the Mayor Dr Peter Gangemi and General Manager Michael Edgar and to visit local schools in The Hills Shire.

Has the Minister responded to the council's letter? No. Has the Minister visited the Hills shire to visit local schools? No. Has the Minister given an explanation for ignoring the call to attend and visit local schools? No. Members of the Hills community have asked for a new school. An e-petition was lodged on 9 July 2024. Earlier today the e-petition had 3,256 signatures, and growing. As Kay, a local community member, said recently, "New South Wales public schools need to keep up with the additional housing being built into the Hills district." We all know that.

The Liberal-Nationals Coalition will continue to hold the Government to account. We will continue to demand that the Government provide funding for infrastructure, schools, police stations, hospitals and roads. To be clear, the people of New South Wales deserve better. The Castle Hill community deserves to have new schools designed and built to meet the growing needs of our community. I call upon the Government to continue with the purchase of land identified in the Hills Showground precinct for a new primary school, and further I call on the Government to identify land and build a new high school to meet the needs of our community for our children.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (21:55): I welcome the strong advocacy of the member for Castle Hill. Sometimes we have really robust discussions about school infrastructure issues. As a Labor government, education is a high priority for us. Unlike the previous Government, this Government has already identified Box Hill as a school site. We can tick that one off the list of the member for Castle Hill. I have spoken to the member previously about how one of the biggest growth areas in Australia is the State electorate of Riverstone and across the south-west. Every year 10,000 people move to Riverstone, but there was no provision for any additional schools in that electorate. The Government is trying to address the issue and is happy to work with the Coalition to ensure that every member in the Parliament sees services delivered for a growing population.

PRESENTATION SISTERS SESQUICENTENARY

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (21:57): I recently had the privilege of attending the sesquicentenary celebrations of the Presentation Sisters Wagga Wagga at Domremy College in Five Dock. The event gathered all Presentation schools in metropolitan Sydney in honour of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Presentation Sisters in our State as well as the service of 250 Presentation Sisters over those years. The event was an outstanding opportunity to reflect on the history of our local community through the lens of faith, education and service.

The Presentation Sisters were founded in Ireland in 1775 with the purpose to provide education to poor Irish Catholics of Cork through the example of Nano Nagle carrying her lantern, helping the poor, vulnerable and sick and ensuring they had access to food, medicine and housing. The Presentation Sisters have embodied the legacy of Nano Nagle in Australia, and have a long and important history. In 1873, Bishop Lanigan asked Reverend Dr McAlroy to go to Ireland and find some teaching nuns to open schools in his diocese. The Presentation Sisters of Kildare responded to the invitation and five sisters travelled by ship to Melbourne, arriving in mid-May 1874. From there, the sisters travelled to Albury and Mangoplah, arriving in Wagga Wagga on 29 May 1874.

We celebrate 31 May as the foundation day of the Presentation Sisters in Wagga Wagga. The sisters lived in temporary accommodation in the vacant presbytery and opened their school in the stables the next day. During the 2½ years that the Mount Erin Convent was being built by the Catholic community, the sisters taught children and adults, and were available to people living in poverty around them to provide whatever support they could offer. The primary and secondary schools were housed in the convent. In 1890, the Mount Erin Boarding School was added to provide more isolated rural students the opportunity to receive a Catholic education. Over the following years, the sisters responded to invitations to go to parishes across New South Wales for the purpose of providing primary and secondary education.

In 1911, the Presentation Sisters of Wagga Wagga founded Domremy College in Five Dock, named after the birthplace of St Joan of Arc. At the time, the school consisted of only 12 students. However, it quickly grew into a K-12 co-educational school before finally becoming an all-girls secondary school, which to this day has a

strong reputation for the education of young women. I am privileged to have attended Domremy College as a student and can personally testify to the quality of education, founded in the spirit of strong women like Nano Nagle and St Joan of Arc. Through the guidance and example of these women and the Presentation Sisters, Domremy instils in their students a passion not only for learning but also for service above self and for social justice.

In 1948, the Presentation Sisters opened St Mark's Catholic Primary School in Drummoyne. They also opened All Hallows Catholic Primary School in Five Dock and St Joan of Arc Catholic Primary School in Haberfield—another two wonderful schools in our inner west community. The Presentation Sisters perfectly sum up their service in their vision statement, which states, "As we listen to the heartbeat of our world at this time, we are called to be a force for active hope in our varied ministries and ordinary happenings of our daily life." The congregation was founded on this principle that anyone can serve, educate and give back to their community.

Today, the Presentation Sisters continue to support causes across the State. The congregation now works to serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, homeless men and women, people in rural and regional areas, and women and families experiencing domestic violence, through both direct support and advocacy for change. I sincerely thank congregation leader Sister Margaret Barclay, sesquicentenary committee chair Sister Susan Miller and all congregation members for their warm invitation to attend the anniversary celebrations. It was an honour to be in attendance for this special milestone. I also acknowledge and thank Antoinette McGahan, principal of Domremy College, for opening the school to the dozen Presentation schools across metropolitan Sydney to celebrate this proud milestone together.

The sesquicentenary celebrations have been a wonderful time to reflect on the courage, generosity and compassion of pioneering women. They have left a tremendous legacy. Migrating to Australia with a purpose to educate, the early sisters and brothers had very few material resources, yet their commitment has made a large impact on our society over many generations. I sincerely thank the congregation for helping shape our community through education and service. Once again, I sincerely congratulate the Presentation Sisters on their sesquicentenary celebrations.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 22:02 until
Thursday 8 August 2024 at 10:00.**

Written Community Recognition Statements

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

SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS - KAYNE TELFER

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate GyMEA Bay's Kayne Telfer on winning the Youth Award at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. The Youth Award is open to young people aged 25 and under to inspire further greatness within their careers. Kayne is in the final year of his carpentry apprenticeship with GyMEA Bay based company Acorn Building Solutions. After completing his TAFE carpentry course last year, Kayne is in the process of being signed off as a qualified tradesman while studying for a qualification in building and construction. Acorn says Kayne is a team player and that his personality and skills have had a positive impact on both its staff and clients. The award nomination submitted by Acorn says: "Kayne's dedication, natural ability, initiative and willingness to understand the client's end goal partnered with his good communication skills have seen us receive positive feedback from clients on multiple occasions, specifically referring to his on site management and communication." I join with Acorn Building Solutions in congratulating Kayne on winning the Youth Award and wish him every success in his career in the building industry.

**SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS – BLISS DAY SPA AND JOSELYN BANC'S
HAIR**

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate Bliss Day Spa of Caringbah on winning the Outstanding Beauty Services category at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Bliss specialises in a wide variety of facial and body treatments, offering bespoke solutions to client using the latest technology and most up to date beauty advancements. This is the third time Bliss has won the Beauty Services category. Director Daniela Boerma won the Business Person of the Year category in 2022. Daniela and the team have also been recognised with numerous industry awards. I congratulate Joselyn Bancs Hair on being named the Outstanding Hairdresser at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. The business has been operating for around 15 years, including three years at its current Woollooware location, and boasts staff with more than 30 years' experience in the industry. The senior stylists at Joselyn Bancs are known for their top tier extension services, colour expertise and bio-straightening treatments, delivered with a personable approach. Owner and lead stylist Joselyn Fonseca says staff work tirelessly to deliver the best results and the win is a symbol of their hard work.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS – UNEARTH-ED AND THE PROPERTY CO. GROUP

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate Caringbah based Uearth-Ed on winning the Outstanding Education Service Award at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Uearth-Ed is an educational tour specialist with more than 30 years' experience in the education tourism industry. It takes pride in delivering a seamless and memorable experience for schools. Uearth-Ed is an industry leader in creating custom tour packages for school excursions to Canberra, Sydney, Blue Mountains, the snowfields, Ballarat, Sovereign Hill, New Zealand and Japan. Uearth-Ed is part of a local family-owned company, Alura Coaches, formerly Crowthers, that has almost 100 years' experience in coach transport. I congratulate The Property Co. Group on winning the Outstanding Real Estate Agency Award at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Established in 2017 by Shire locals Christopher Igoe and John Daewoud, it has been a finalist in the awards four times before. The company specialises in sales, property management and project marketing from its sales office in Cronulla. The Property Co. says the award it is a true testament to its teams' hard work, dedication, and commitment to continuously providing the highest quality and unwavering service to clients.

KERRY FOSTER

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Half a century with one employer is an amazing milestone Mr Speaker and I would like to congratulate Orange's Kerry Foster on going beyond that mark. Kerry, who works for Coles in Orange, has a jaw-dropping 55 years of service to her credit, making her the company's longest-serving employee in our state and placing her in the top five nationally. Starting on June 13, 1969, the year of the moon landing, Kerry has carved out a reputation as the familiar and helpful face at the supermarket's front end but spent the first 40 or so years slicing and dicing in the meat room. Thriving on her interaction with customers, Kerry enjoys getting involved in fundraising when called on and credits her incredible loyalty and work ethic to her dad, a policeman and her mum, who was also a Coles employee. Mr Speaker, any career comes with ups-and-downs but Kerry has enjoyed the ride to become known as the friendly face of Coles' customer service. I congratulate Kerry on her amazing 55 years at Coles and wish her well for the future.

84TH AUSTRALIAN BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to congratulate members of the Orange Bridge Club who worked with the Australian Bridge Federation and Bridge NSW to bring the game's Australian National Championships to Orange during July. This is a significant moment for our bridge club and its parent body, as this was the first time a national championship was staged outside a capital city. To reiterate, it's taken 84 years for a region to be chosen to host this event and it was great that Orange, with its great food and wine culture, was given the nod. During the two weeks of bridge played at Orange Ex-Services Club, more than 700 players squared off with up to 400 competing on any single day. It was a major task for a small regional club to organise a national event but with the leadership of Robert Ward and assistance from NSW Bridge and the Australian board, it was able to ensure the Orange tournament will be remembered. I congratulate Orange Bridge Club on doing its bit to advance bridge's popularity and for showing we can match the capital cities when it comes to hosting a great tournament.

GLENISS LAWRENCE

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Mr Speaker, volunteers with the technical expertise to officiate at elite-level sport are rare and I wish to applaud Gleniss Lawrence for being selected to officiate at the Paris Olympics. It's also noteworthy that this is her third consecutive Olympic Games duty after Tokyo and Rio. From Canowindra, Gleniss is one of three International Technical Officials chosen by the International Shooting Sport Federation to control its events at France's National Shooting Centre in Chateauroux. Gleniss's qualifications for this role are impeccable. She is an ISSF referee and judge instructor and as such, has been charged with upholding ISSF rules and ensuring competition is fair and honest. Conflict resolution is also part of the job - no easy task considering the world is watching! Appointed to the Board of Shooting Australia in 2023, Gleniss is a former shotgun competitor, Australian team manager and coach and therefore has a strong understanding of what is expected from officials at the Olympics. While shooting is a large part of her life, Gleniss is also a businessperson and is involved with community organisations. I salute Gleniss for her commitment to her sport and community.

BAULKHAM HILLS GIRL GUIDES AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—On 28 July 2024 I attended the Baulkham Hills Girl Guides Awards Ceremony. The Ceremony brought together families who have supported each girl through their own journey of empowerment as future leaders of our society. Katya Schwalbe received two Queen's Guide Award; a certificate for completion of the Gold Endeavour Challenge; and a certificate for completion of Outdoor Adventure Focus. Eleanor Thorton received two Queen's Guide Award; a certificate for completion of the Gold Endeavour

Challenge; and a certificate for completion of Arts Focus. Merindah Thorton was awarded the Boronia for Good Service given to Guiding in the Baulkham Hills District and Northern Sydney Region. Shelly Agrawal received a certificate for Leader Qualification, Unit Leader, as well as a certificate in recognition of 5 years providing valuable contribution. A Thanks Certificate was awarded to Jaqueline Anderson-Turner for God Service given to Guiding in the Baulkham Hills District since 2013. Brenda Taake Tekaute received certificate in congratulation on being awarded a Boronia. Finally, Roxy Hunter and Amelia Aventurado each received a Junior BP Award and a certificate for completion of the Bronze Endeavour Challenge. Thank you to all Girl Guides and your supportive families.

SWISS NATIONAL DAY PICNIC CELEBRATION, CASTLE HILL, 2024

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—Each year the Swiss Yodlers of Sydney and The Swiss Folk Dance Company Alpegruess host the Swiss National Day Celebration the Castle Hill Showground. This year's fantastic celebration was held on 04 August 2024. The present-day Federal Constitution of Switzerland is the Constitution of 12 September 1848. Each year a celebration occurs to celebrate the Constitution with this year celebrating the 176th anniversary of the Swiss Federal Constitution. Switzerland and Australia are united with common shared values. We are committed to universal human rights; We stand for open and inclusive societies; And we promote the rules-based international order. I was pleased to be accompanied by The Honourable Susan Carter MLC to celebrate Swiss National Day. There were stalls offering Swiss delicacies, barbeques, Swiss Chocolates, Raffles and Silent Auctions, and games for the children. I recognise and thank the outgoing President of the Swiss Yodlers of Sydney Alios Krez, who was the President for 17 years. I also express my appreciation and gratitude to the new President, Daniel Hofmann. I recognise and thank Daniel everyone involved for the hard work to make this year's Swiss National Day Celebration a wonderful and memorable occasion.

CASTLE HILL PLAYERS, 70TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—I inform Members of the fantastic achievements of the Castle Hill Players. The Castle Hill Players was an idea of a few creative and motived people in 1954. Castle Hill Players has developed to become one of the most respected Community Theatre groups in Sydney. The Players produce six plays each year with each play adding to vibrancy, culture, and arts of our community. The Players this year also produced a wonderful coffee table book titled, 'Going Off Script'. The book celebrates the Players rich history over the seventy years. I recognise members and volunteers involved in the production of the book: Leigh Scanlon, Lyn Jones, Mark Dennis, Jennifer Leslie, Debra Lewis, Holky Bramble, Annette Snars, Penny Johnson, Linda Klopff, and the Players Archivist Maureen Cartledge. I recognise major contributors including Helen Everingham, Meredith Jacobs; Dave Went, Carol Wimmer, Paul Sztelma and Chris Lundie. Lastly, I recognise and commend the President of the Castle Hill Players, Denise Winters, and the entire management committee for continuing the wonderful tradition of producing great artistic plays for the enjoyment of our entire community. We look forward to another seventy years of the Castle Hill Players producing great plays.

ITALIAN REPUBLIC DAY 2024

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—On the 26th May 2024, I had the honour of partaking in the vibrant festivities commemorating Italian Republic Day, hosted at Club Marconi. Among the guests present was the Premier of New South Wales Hon Chris Minns, alongside my local parliamentary colleagues, Hugh McDermott MP and David Saliba MP. Italian Republic Day, commonly celebrated on June 2nd, marks the anniversary of the birth of the Italian Republic in 1946, following the referendum that abolished the monarchy. It is a day of national pride and patriotism, commemorated with parades, cultural events, and ceremonies across Italy and among Italian communities worldwide. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Morris Licata, President of Club Marconi, and all its Directors for extending their gracious invitation, which afforded me the opportunity to partake in this joyful occasion. Their meticulous organization ensured the event's resounding success, contributing to the celebration's vibrancy and spirit. In reflection, the friendship shared amidst the festivities underscored the enduring bonds between our communities, reaffirming the significance of cultural exchange and mutual appreciation. Such gatherings not only foster goodwill but also serve as a testament to the enduring strength of multiculturalism within our society.

LOCAL EXPO - CULTURAL FUSION

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—On 8 June 2024 had the pleasure of attending the Local Expo "Cultural Fusion" at Freedom Plaza Cabramatta, a vibrant event organized by City Project in collaboration with numerous local businesses and nonprofit organizations. This Expo was a remarkable showcase of community spirit and collaboration, bringing together a diverse array of services, products, and resources that benefit our local area. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mickey Ngo and Kenny Ngo for their initiative in organizing such a successful event. Their dedication to fostering community engagement and supporting local enterprises was evident throughout the Expo. It was inspiring to see so many businesses and nonprofits Associations come

together to highlight their work and connect with the community. The Expo not only provided valuable information and opportunities for attendees but also reinforced the importance of supporting and celebrating local initiatives. I am grateful for the kind invitation to participate in this event and am impressed by the commitment shown by everyone involved. The collaborative effort put forth by Mickey Ngo, Kenny Ngo, and all the participating organizations is a testament to the strength and unity of our local community.

RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY FOR SYNTHETIC SOCCER FIELDS AT CLUB MARCONI 2024

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—On Thursday 26th April 2024, I had the privilege of attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly inaugurated synthetic fields at Club Marconi. Among the distinguished guests was the Italian legendary soccer player Francesco Totti which added the extra layer of excitement to the event. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as attendees gathered to witness the official opening of the synthetic fields. It was a momentous occasion that marked a significant milestone for the local community. I extend my sincere gratitude to Mr Morris Licata and the board of directors for extending their gracious invitation to me. Their dedication to enhancing recreational facilities and promoting active lifestyles is truly commendable and deserving of recognition. The presence of Francesco Totti added a touch of star power to the proceedings, captivating the audience with his charisma and passion for the game. His participation underscored the universal appeal and importance of sports in fostering unity. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a momentous occasion. It was a celebration of progress, community spirit, and the enduring and universal power of sport.

SONNY SPURGIN HITS THE TRACK

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Achieving a fourth-place ranking globally within his age group represents an exceptional accomplishment, now a reality for Sonny Spurgin. As a rising talent in the realm of speedway racing, Sonny has recently experienced a significant milestone by securing fourth place in the SGP4 (FIM Speedway Youth World Cup) held in Sweden. The SGP4 represents an emerging division in speedway, serving as an entry-level platform for aspiring future champions of the sport. In connection with the international championships, Sonny visited the SGP4 academy in Prague. He had the opportunity to engage with prominent figures in the sport, including Greg Hancock and Tony Rickardsson, both multiple-time speedway world champions, and participated in two days of intensive training. For Spurgin, this experience is a memorable and cherished milestone. Sonny who began his speedway career at the age of seven, has already achieved remarkable successes at a young age. Tim Spurgin, Sonny's father, described the 12-year-old's participation in the 11–13 age group as both a challenging and rewarding endeavour. Congratulations to Sonny Spurgin on his impressive achievements. I wish him the best of luck as he moves forward.

SHAYLAH THOMPSON SELECTED FOR INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE TOUR

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Congratulations to Shaylah Thompson on her selection to the international rugby league touring squad for Wanderers Australia! This prestigious honour highlights her exceptional skill, dedication, and hard work, marking a significant milestone in her rugby career. Being chosen to represent Australia on a tour of the United Kingdom and France in 2025 is a testament to her outstanding performance and unwavering commitment to the sport. Shaylah's selection is not only a personal achievement but also a source of pride for her community, coaches, and supporters who have played a crucial role in her journey. As she prepares to embark on this international adventure, she will have the opportunity to compete against some of the world's best and showcase her talents on a global stage. This tour will undoubtedly bring new challenges and experiences, enriching her career and contributing to her growth as an athlete. I am excited to see Shaylah's continued success with confidence that she will make a significant impact on the tour. Once again, congratulations to Shaylah- this is a well-deserved recognition of her remarkable achievements and dedication to rugby league.

AL SHAMI RESTAURANT

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I am delighted that Merrylands in my electorate is being recognised as one of NSW's culinary gems. On 17 May 2024 Good Weekend magazine, in an article entitled "Sure, this is a terrific place to wrap grilled meat in bread, but there's much more to" recognised Merrylands' Syrian restaurant, Al Shami. From a hearty breakfast spread to rich, flavourful mains, Al Shami impresses. Their fried kibbeh is a standout, with crispy exteriors and flavourful fillings. The restaurant's warm atmosphere, reminiscent of a Syrian home, adds to the dining experience. It's a place where you can savour traditional dishes like fattah and mansaf, and experience the genuine hospitality of Syrian culture. As the article notes, "It's also one of the very few Sydney restaurants I know that promotes itself as a Syrian-food specialist.... There's almost always a family spanning four generations at one of the long tables, usually swapping stories over a spread of vine leaves, skewers and kibbeh." Whether you're a breakfast lover or a meat enthusiast, Al Shami is a must-visit for those seeking an authentic and delicious Middle Eastern culinary journey. I am delighted Ali Snoubar and his restaurant were recognised for their magnificent food.

BLACK HEAD BAZAAR COMMITTEE

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to recognise Black Head Bazaar Committee – Norman Shapro, Alana Parkins, Jenny Dayment, Lindsay Gething and Julie Slavin for the successful organisation of their inaugural Focal Point Photography Prize. Throughout July, 53 high-quality photographic images from 37 finalists were proudly displayed at Hallidays Point Library, showcasing talent from across NSW and the ACT. The opening night was on the 5th of July, where three winners were announced, each receiving a \$1,000 prize. A special congratulations to Alex Lewers from Red Head, who was a local winner for his photograph 'Elli.' I thank the Black Head Bazaar Committee for enriching the Hallidays Point area with art and culture through this wonderful initiative. I look forward to the next Focal Point Photography Prize.

DR MUNEEF AL-JAWABREH

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to recognise Dr Muneef Al-Jawabreh for his contributions to our community through the establishment of Hope Skin Cancer & GP Clinic in Tuncurry. After moving to the area and briefly working in Taree, Dr Muneef identified a need for specialised medical services that were not available in the local or surrounding areas. Dr Muneef's practice provides comprehensive general medical care as well as specialised skin cancer services. His qualifications in 'scalpel-free vasectomy' and Photo Dynamic Therapy for severe acne, actinic keratosis, and superficial skin cancers add invaluable services to our community. Additionally, he offers injectable muscle relaxants for conditions such as teeth grinding and excessive underarm sweating. In just 18 months at Tuncurry, Dr. Muneef has made a tremendous impact by diagnosing 200 melanomas, saving many lives. His dedication and expertise have significantly enhanced the healthcare options available to our community, and we are immensely grateful for his contributions.

FRIENDS OF BROWNS CREEK

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to recognise the Friends of Browns Creek, a hardworking volunteer group in Taree, for their outstanding efforts in maintaining Browns Creek and its surroundings for the past 13 years. Nancy Dixon, Kimber Smithfiddler, John Elcoate, Col Butcher, Bill Baulman, Bill Dennis, Richard Johnson, Jigh Turner and Jacki Stewart have been instrumental in developing a beautiful boardwalk alongside Browns Creek, a fabulous way to visit and appreciate a previously inaccessible wonder in the heart of Taree. The boardwalk runs through natural wetlands in an area that holds significant historic and Indigenous value. The group shared with me their ideas to incorporate QR codes along the walk to highlight the history of the area. Additionally, they have proposed exciting developments for Kanangra Reserve, which I am eager to support and be involved in. I thank the Friends of Browns Creek for their hard work and commitment to preserving the history and beauty of Browns Creek. Their contributions make our community a better place.

FREE - ESCAPE BAGS - THANKS TO GUNDAGAI CWA

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I congratulate and commend the Gundagai Country Women's Association [CWA] who have recently become a supplier of "Escabags", providing Escape Bags that a survivor of abuse and their children may need when escaping a dangerous or abusive situation. These escape bags contain necessities such as toiletries and other personal items. They may also include important documents like identification, financial information, and legal resources, which are critical for starting anew. Gundagai CWA President Kim Powell was at the 2024 annual conference in Coffs Harbour in May, where a motion of urgency was passed on the need for more action due to the high rates of domestic violence. Escabags was founded by Stacy Jane in 2021, a survivor of domestic violence, and although she dreams of a day where they are not needed, she hopes to have escape bags in every suburb and town around Australia. The provision of these bags serves multiple purposes. Firstly, they offer immediate relief and a sense of security to those fleeing dangerous environments. Secondly, they help reduce the barriers to leaving an abusive situation by ensuring that the person has some basic resources to rely on.

A MAGICAL TIME HAD BY ALL AT THE BOOROWA ROTARY CHANGEOVER

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I was delighted to attend the annual Rotary Club of Boorowa, changing of the guard on Sunday 7 June 2024 with its Rotary International theme of "The Magic of Rotary" Held at the Boorowa Ex-Services Club, the changeover saw the induction of new President Chris Carter and his new executive team. Local Rotarian Greta Campbell was awarded a Paul Harris Fellow, the highest award given by Rotary and acknowledges those in the community whose service exemplifies the spirit of Rotary International. The event was attended by over 50 people, including Mayor of Hilltops, Margaret Roles, The Mayor of Yass Valley, Allan McGrath and Rotary dignitaries, including past District Governor Andrea Grovesnor. The Boorowa Rotary Changeover is a significant annual event that celebrates the transition of leadership within the Rotary Club, as outgoing officers' hand over their responsibilities to the incoming team. The pinnacle of the event is the

induction of the new president and the board of directors. This symbolic act ensures continuity in leadership and renews the club's commitment to serving the community. Congratulations to Chris and his new board.

LUCAS BORG

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Lucas Borg, a student in Year 12 at Corpus Christi High School, for being selected in the NSWCCC Under 18's Boys Rugby League team. Lucas was the only student from the Southern Country area to be selected in the team. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Lucas and wish him well in his future sporting endeavours.

JORDYN PRESTON

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to acknowledge the wonderful achievement of Jordyn Preston, from the Stingrays of Shellharbour, who has been selected to play for the Illawarra Steelers in the Harvey Norman NSW Women's Rugby League Premiership 2024 season. The Steelers' campaign started on Saturday 6 July 2024 with Jordyn scoring tries in the opening two games of the competition. The 11-round competition will run concurrently with the NRLW and act as a development league with players able to shift between the competitions. On behalf of the Shellharbour community, I congratulate Jordyn and wish her well in all her future sporting endeavours.

GASTON PEDROZA

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Mr Gaston Pedroza for his amazing work and for being awarded the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies Rookie Award. It is fantastic to see new members of the community take on new roles in the community service industry. This award was for a new community services worker who commenced working in the sector from 2020 onwards, who has displayed exceptional levels of competency and compassion. On behalf of the Shellharbour community, I would like to congratulate Gaston for his amazing work and compassion for his role in the community services.

ARMIDALE ATHLETICS CLUB

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of Walcha Athletics Club members who represented Armidale at the NSW Athletics State Junior Championships held in Sydney recently. I congratulate each of the athletes selected to represent the Armidale club, which included Stephanie Blake, Brooke Newberry, Mia Croker, Amelia Mazzei and Lawson Fittler. Those that went on to compete at the championships excelled with the following results: Stephanie achieved 5th in heat 1 of the U16s 400m and 17th overall; Brooke gained 7th place in U17s 5000m walk; Amelia placed 6th in 400m Para, 8th in the 200m Para finals and 8th overall; Lawson competed in the Men's 800m and gained 4th in the semi-finals. The competitors were rewarded for the experience, with each achieving personal best times over the competition. I commend each of the athletes on the time, effort and the practice put into their training and the commitment shown to Athletics. A special thank you to club President Angela Goodare, along with other club members and their families, for their ongoing support, assisting each of the competitors to accomplish and excel in Athletics at this elite level.

VALE JAN SHARMAN OAM – GLEN INNES

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the many achievements of the late Jan Sharman of Glen Innes who, sadly, passed away recently. Mrs Sharman devoted much time and energy to make her beloved Glen Innes better for all. She was immensely respected by her peers and the wider community. Mrs Sharman was a volunteer in her community for more than 50 years, including with the Glen Innes Hospital Auxiliary, the Holy Trinity Anglican Church Parish Council, as an elected councillor to the former Glen Innes Council and supporter of many other causes too numerous to list. My predecessors in this role enjoyed a close connection with Mrs Sharman who spent a couple of decades lobbying for new Hospital in Glen Innes and was, I am told, tenacious. An iron fist in a velvet glove. Her passing will leave Glen Innes a poorer place without her energy and devotion. Her family are mourning her loss, and I extend to them sincere condolences on behalf of the community.

MUNGINDI COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of Barbara Woodham and Virginia Grey of Mungindi for raising funds to enable Years 5 and 6 students from St Joseph's Primary School, to attend an excursion to Sydney later in the year. I congratulate Barbara and Virginia on their initiative and can-do attitude to organise a Fashion Parade and accompanying activities to raise the vital funds. Fashion wear was supplied by Virginia's of Mungindi and other activities on the day included a Chocolate Wheel, raffle, lucky door prize and a luncheon, which was provided by Temple and Tom Hutt, of the Jolly Swagman Hotel. Such was the local community backing, the Mungindi Quick Shear also threw in their support the worthy cause. I commend all

involved in the fundraising, including Barbara and Virginia's large band of volunteers, those providing gifts and donations, the Jolly Swagman for providing the venue and to the people of Mungindi and district, for their wonderful generosity and community spirit.

RETIREMENT OF GERARD O'BRIEN - RSM AUSTRALIA

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate Gerard O'Brien, a Business Advisory consultant at RSM Australia in Albury, on his retirement after an illustrious 30-year career. Since joining RSM in 1991, Gerard has played a pivotal role in developing the Albury office into a leading advisory practice. He has helped many clients achieve their financial goals, serving communities of Albury, Wagga Wagga, and Temora. As a local resident with extensive farming experience, Gerard has built a robust client base and leading the way in agribusiness advice. Gerard's advocacy for rural and regional clients, particularly in promoting rural mental health, has left an indelible mark on our community. Thank you, Gerard, for your outstanding service and dedication, you have played a vital role in supporting the growth and sustainability of our rural businesses in the Murray-Riverina area.

HART AND SOUL: PRINCIPAL BEDE HART RETIRES AFTER FOUR DECADES

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to acknowledge Mr Bede Hart Principal of St Anne's Primary School Albury, who has decided to retire after a 45-year career in education. Mr Hart's remarkable teaching journey began at St Michael's Primary in Deniliquin, before taking on an early leadership role at St Thomas Aquinas in Tarcutta and continued through impactful tenures at St Patrick's in Albury and St Peter's in Port Macquarie. In 2009, he returned to Albury appointed Principal of St Anne's Primary School. Over the past 15 years he also served as an education consultant with the Catholic Education Diocese, further enriching our educational community. As a leader and educator Mr Hart urged his students to remember they were always supported and should "embrace life and embrace change" and find their unique paths. Thank you Bede for your invaluable contributions and the positive influence you have had on the thousands of children and families you have connected with. After dedicating 45 years to shaping young minds, it's time to tee-off into a well-deserved retirement, travel and spend quality time with your cherished family.

IVAN BENNIE – HALL OF FAME

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate Ivan Bennie, the esteemed 1977 premiership coach of the Howlong Spiders Football & Netball Club, on his induction into the Hume League Hall of Fame in July 2024. Ivan's remarkable career includes playing for Lavington, North Albury, and coaching at Rand and Jindera, alongside his impactful tenure with the Spiders from 1975 to 1977. With over 200 Hume League matches and a total of more than 300 senior matches, Ivan's legacy is etched in the annals of the sport. Notably, he represented the Howlong Football League six times, was the equal runner-up for the Azzi Medal in 1974, and runner-up in Howlong's best and fairest in 1976. Congratulations, Ivan! This well-deserved honour reflects your outstanding contributions and like the Howlong community, I am proud to call you a Spider.

TRIBAL WARRIOR ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—On behalf of the Newtown Electorate, I would like to recognise and congratulate the Tribal Warrior Aboriginal Corporation, which this year celebrates 25 years of service to our community. Since 1998, when the organisation began as a provider of maritime training, Tribal Warrior has expanded into a vibrant social enterprise and an integral part of the fabric of the Redfern and inner city community. They now provide essential services and training, health and wellbeing programs, community and family mentoring, and enriching cultural tours and experiences. Countless constituents and community members have engaged in Tribal Warrior's programs over these 25 years, benefiting from employment pathway opportunities, community-building and family support, greater economic participation, and the continued sharing and practicing of culture. I've had the privilege to work with the team at Tribal Warrior during my time as the Member for Newtown, including working together to support the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence [NCIE] in 2022, when it faced the risk of closure. I commend and congratulate the team at Tribal Warrior for their unwavering vision and commitment to empowering our local community through connection to culture.

CAMDENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C ASSOCIATION

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate the Camdenville Public School P&C Association for their successful 2023 Community Building Partnership grant. This grant will be used for the design of an outdoor space at Camdenville Public School; the installation of seating, a sensory garden, ropes course, and climbing frame; the removal of the existing ground covering and installation of soft-fall surfacing; as well as upgrading the sandpit. The passionate and hard-working members of Camdenville Public School P&C Association do such important work for the school community and our Newtown electorate.

I want to acknowledge and thank the parents, carers and school community of Camdenville for their contributions to our children's education.

NEWTOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre for their inspiring and hugely successful "Heart & Bowl" event held last month. This event saw talented potters across the Inner West come together to support the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre by creating artisan bowls for each guest on the night. I was so pleased to attend "Heart & Bowl" and to hear from frontline staff and volunteers about the impact of their vital work on those in our community who need housing, cost of living, and other supports. A shoutout to those who supported the event including Two Good Inc. who provided the soup, Parliament on King for the delicious starters, Tokyo Lamington for the scrumptious dessert, and Young Henry's for the beer. A special thank you also to acknowledge and thank Elaine, Tyler, Narelle, Tim, and all the staff and volunteers at the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre for this wonderful event and their ongoing service to our community.

JD MAHER

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge JD Maher for his extraordinary bravery in rescuing a group of men in the unfortunate Swansea boating accident. Alongside Billy Ware and Chris Totten, JD was among the first to arrive at the scene of the devastating incident. With remarkable courage and swift action, the group successfully pulled two young men from the water and ensured the third had safely reached land. In moments of crisis, the true strength and character of a community are revealed. JD's actions, along with those of Billy and Chris exemplify the selflessness and bravery that make our community exceptional. Thank you, JD. You are not only a hero but also a shining example of what it means to be a dedicated and courageous member of our community. Your actions have made us all proud, and you are truly a credit to us all.

CHRIS TOTTEN

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Chris Totten for his extraordinary bravery in rescuing a group of men in the unfortunate Swansea boating accident. Alongside Billy Ware and JD Maher, Chris was among the first to arrive at the scene of the devastating incident. With remarkable courage and swift action, the group successfully pulled two young men from the water and ensured the third had safely reached land. In moments of crisis, the true strength and character of a community are revealed. Chris' actions, along with those of Billy and JD exemplify the selflessness and bravery that make our community exceptional. Thank you, Chris. You are not only a hero but also a shining example of what it means to be a dedicated and courageous member of our community. Your actions have made us all proud, and you are truly a credit to us all.

BILLY WARE

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Billy Ware for his extraordinary bravery in rescuing a group of men in the unfortunate Swansea boating accident. Alongside JD Maher and Chris Totten, Billy was among the first to arrive at the scene of the devastating incident. With remarkable courage and swift action, the group successfully pulled two young men from the water and ensured the third had safely reached land. In moments of crisis, the true strength and character of a community are revealed. Billy's actions, along with those of JD and Chris exemplify the selflessness and bravery that make our community exceptional. Thank you, Billy. You are not only a hero but also a shining example of what it means to be a dedicated and courageous member of our community. Your actions have made us all proud, and you are truly a credit to us all.

ANGELA LAMBROS

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—Congratulations to Angela Lambros on receiving Penrith Council's "Making a Difference Community Service Award," which honors individuals for their exceptional dedication through volunteering and leadership. Angela's empathy and resilience shine through her life story. She learned the strength of kindness from her mother, who remained caring despite facing numerous challenges. These early experiences highlighted the importance of support systems, especially during health crises. Angela pursued a career in the mental health sector, offering professional support to those in need. Her journey led her to the Penrith Men's Walk and Talk, where she sought a similar initiative for women. Discovering none existed, Angela took the initiative to create one herself. Nearly four years ago, with support from volunteers of the men's group, Angela founded the Penrith Women's Walk and Talk. This weekly event provides a safe, social space for women of all ages to connect and support each other. In 2023, the group expanded its impact by offering accredited Mental Health First Aid Training to its members. Balancing her role as a mother and her passion for photography, Angela

continues to build the Penrith Women's Walk and Talk and always seeks to foster social connections in her community.

BAILEY HAND

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—Congratulations to Bailey Hand on receiving Penrith Council's "Making a Difference – Community Service Award," recognizing his exceptional dedication through volunteering, charitable work, and leadership. At just 20, Bailey has an impressive history of volunteer work. His passion for helping others began early, supporting community causes like bushfire relief and park run. After losing his mother, Bailey took on significant responsibilities, caring for his younger siblings. Bailey found a second family at Mama Lana's Community Foundation, a non-profit aiding those facing homelessness. Embracing their motto, "Kindness with no strings," he volunteers up to three shifts a week, preparing and serving meals, and organizing donations. Now a team leader, he runs a weekly night service. Bailey's ability to make every patron at Mama Lana's feel at ease, from toddlers to grandmothers, with his friendly and compassionate approach made him a standout candidate. Balancing his job at the Log Cabin while studying at Western Sydney University, Bailey is majoring in physics with a keen interest in astrophysics, which he hopes to research or teach. His passion for teaching is evident in his work instructing kids in music. Bailey embodies the values of mateship, self-sacrifice, and a willingness to help others.

FOX SISTERS ARE PENRITH LEGEND'S AT THE PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC GAMES

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—Penrith residents Jessica and Noemie Fox have left green and gold all over Penrith's history books after winning gold medals at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Born to Olympian and multiple world champion paddle parents, Jessica and Noemie Fox have certainly lived up to the Fox name. Jess, who carried the Olympic Torch and was honoured as Australia's female flag bearer at the Opening Ceremony, has carried on a stellar Olympic performance, taking home gold in both the C1 and K1 events. Having competed in her fourth Olympic games, Jessica Fox is the most successful canoeist in World Championship history. Debuting her Olympic journey in Paris, Noemie quickly showed the world her strength and power in the Kayak Cross finals, taking home the gold with a full 5-second lead. The pair's exemplary sportsmanship, dedication, and all-round pride in representing not only Australia but also Penrith. They stand as a testament to our young sports stars out in Penrith and indeed across the globe. Penrith is proud to have the Fox sisters as locals and our sporting heroes. You did it, girls! You both deserve your fairy tale ending.

OPENING OF GLENMORE VILLAGE SHOPPING CENTRE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I was proud to join Mickey Beaini, Director of Beaini Projects, retailers and the local community to celebrate the opening of the Glenmore Village Shopping Centre. Located at 90 Glenmore Ridge Drive, Glenmore Park, the Village offers more shopping and retail options for Glenmore Park families. Having turned the sod on this development over two years ago, I'm thrilled that this project has come to fruition for the benefit of our local community and economy. I toured the shopping centre, which includes a Woolworths Metro and 43 specialty retailers, a lot of whom are local to the area and family run businesses. Additional services such as a medical centre, pharmacy, physiotherapy clinic, Australia Post, gyms and a swim centre all deliver convenience for the locals. This shopping centre is a welcome addition to our local area and I look forward to the community and visitors alike enjoying all it has to offer.

BANKS PUBLIC SCHOOL FETE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—Last month I had the pleasure of taking our son Harry with me to another successful Banks Public School mini fete! It was 10 years ago that I took our daughter Laura to the same fete. It's amazing how time flies! The fete was very enjoyable and there was plenty of sugar to be eaten. A massive thank you to everyone involved in organising and hosting the event. I especially want to highlight the phenomenal Deputy Principal Mrs Trish Clifford who has been instrumental over the years in organising this fete (amongst everything else she does for the school community). I look forward to next year's fete!

CHELSEA NOWLAND

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I congratulate and commend young junior rugby league player Chelsea Nowland for the remarkable achievement of becoming the first female player in the rich 40-year history of the St Clair Comets Junior Rugby League Club to reach 100 games. Chelsea has represented the club in both mixed rugby league, as well as all-girls rugby league. She currently plays for the Under 12 Girls team. This milestone has been mirrored with extraordinary results by Chelsea and her teammates. They recently had a for and against record for this season of 414 points scored to 16 points conceded, reflecting their outstanding performances against their opponents. In addition to her sporting prowess as a dummy half, Chelsea is also known for being a respectful young lady. I congratulate Chelsea, her teammates, the coaching staff. Club volunteers and parents on Chelsea's and the Club's achievements. I wish all involved the very best with their matches ahead.

PORT MACQUARIE BASE HOSPITAL PINK LADIES

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I recognise a special group of volunteers who add a smile and make an incredibly valuable contribution to the patient experience at the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. Not only by deed, but also in raising much appreciated funds, the Pink Ladies primarily serve to care for others. I applaud the unanimous re-election of Gabby Gregory as President at the AGM held in July. I also take this opportunity to thank Dot Green for her longstanding commitment as Secretary as she resigns and hands over to Sonia Currie. Thanks also to Chris Tait who was re-elected as Treasurer. I also applaud Robyn Crosariol for her 15 years of dedicated service and Jenny Dawson, as she receives her 10-year service badge. I thank these ladies for their continued hard work and commitment to serving others. This year the Pink Ladies donated \$5,406.47 in patient comfort items and equipment to the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. These items included a vital signs monitor for the Maternity Unit and a wheelchair for the Acute Geriatric Evaluation Management Unit. I sincerely thank the Pink Ladies for their countless hours volunteering in the Hospital, their fund-raising efforts and their kindness.

PORT MACQUARIE FOOTBALL CLUB CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Congratulations to the Port Macquarie Football Club on reaching a 50-year milestone in training and competition which began in 1974. The Port Macquarie Football Club pride themselves as being a regional, grassroots club, open to all ages and abilities. The growth of their Club is largely attributed to their focus on a family friendly and supportive environment with a strong focus on its junior players. Catherine Cornish is a stalwart volunteer for over 15 years, serving in the capacity of player, coach and committee member. She has won the prestigious Club Person of the Year award four times, more than any other member since 1983. The Club's success reflects the dedication of its members who have set a firm foundation through training and development, fundraising, ground maintenance and facility upgrades with the ongoing support of their generous sponsors. The Club honours include; 2023 Mens B Grade Grand Finalists, 2022 U12A Grand-finalists, 2019 Mens 3rd Grade Premiers, Mens 3rd Grade Grand Final Champions, U16 Premiers and Grand Finalists and U16 Champion of Champion Grand Finalists. Congratulations to the Port Macquarie Football Club on celebrating 50 years of football on the Mid North Coast.

MARINE RESCUE PORT MACQUARIE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I recognise eight volunteers of Marine Rescue Port Macquarie who received the Commissioner's Citation on 3rd July 2024. Commissioner Barrell presented the citations to the crew of Port Macquarie 30 Skipper Leonard Smart, Leading Crew Rob Britten and crew members David Withers, Warren Gowing, Bruce Lee, Michael Ranson-Smith as well as Duty Watch Officer Ian Pascoe and Radio Operator Brooke Mason. In October 2023, Port Macquarie Marine Rescue responded to a MAYDAY call from a yacht with two people onboard. The vessel was disabled with a broken boom, followed by engine breakdown and communications failure. The vessel was approximately nine kilometres off Port Macquarie. The rescue mission in the Port Macquarie 30 took five and half hours in dark, windy and rough conditions. Commissioner Barrell cited the "courage and selfless dedication" of the volunteers involved in this challenging but thankfully successful rescue mission which was deserving of a Commissioner's Citation. I also congratulate Keith Reichenbach and Trish Hallett who each received a Commissioner's Citation for service. Trish and Keith have a combined 28 years of service with the Port Macquarie Marine Rescue Unit and continually go above and beyond to support our boating community.

HENDERSON FAMILY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge the Henderson Family on their recent outstanding achievements at the Ranch Sorting World Championships in the United States. The American sport is a horse and cattle event featuring two fifteen metre round pens, where eleven head of cattle are sorted in numerical order over a sixty second time frame. It is not an event for the faint hearted, as it requires managing horse, cattle, and human minds all at once! The youngest of the Henderson's, Clancy aged thirteen, recently earned the title of World Champion in her age class. Fifteen-year-old Lily came home as the High Point champion for her rookie division that is open to young riders as well as adults. Seventeen-year-old Mia, finished fifth in her class, competing with an American friend. Clancy, Lily and Mia were all competing in fields of up to four hundred riders. It wasn't just the Henderson children that excelled, Mum and Dad, Lonnie & Cindy, also achieved live time goals during the trip. With Ranch sorting growing in Australia, and an event happening in Dubbo in August, I look forward to seeing what this talented family achieve next!

DEBBIE DAWSON

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to congratulate Debbie Dawson on her recent retirement from Coles Supermarket after forty-four years. Debbie started with Coles on 19 November 1979 in the

fruit and vegetable department. Over the years she learned and worked in other departments but always loved working in fruit and veg. Eventually becoming part of the Customer Service team, an area that Debbie also loved and thrived in. Her dedication and positive attitude earned her the Daily Liberal Service with A Smile Award for Dubbo's Favourite Employee in 2012. Going to work at Coles was more than just a job for Debbie though, it provided opportunities to contribute to the community through fundraisers for important organisations like Redkite. Debbie experienced numerous changes over the years in how things were done in the supermarket and how customers' needs were met. However, one thing that never changed was her commitment to her customers and the high levels of customer service she provided. Congratulations on your illustrious career Debbie, all the best for your well-earned retirement!

TIM MCDougALL

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to congratulate Tim McDougall of Narromine who was recently awarded the Swimming Pool and Spa Association (SPASA) In Field Service Technician of the Year. The SPASA Awards of Excellence are the swimming pool and spa industry's most prestigious awards attracting entries from Australia and New Zealand. The In Field Service Technician award is presented to a person that exemplifies all that is best in their technical and service dealings with customers. Tim is employed by Poolwerx Dubbo, where he started in 2019 and has been an integral part of the team ever since. As a Field Service Technician who prides himself on his commitment to excellence and service, Tim is a role model for others in the industry. Tim is highly respected in the Poolwerx Dubbo team, the industry, as well as the wider community through not only his work as a Field Service Technician but also through his commitment to local rugby league as a referee. Congratulations Tim on the great work you do and this accolade, keep up the excellent work!

A TOUCH OF EUROPE BAKEHOUSE

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to shine a spotlight on one business in particular which embodies the true 'village' spirit of Manly. A Touch of Europe Bakehouse on Darley Road has been serving locals and visitors of Manly quality-made baked goods for 21 years. Throughout this time, Emilee, Lee, their parents and the whole team have worked tirelessly to cater for the local community. From birthday cakes and freshly-baked bread, to delicious sandwiches and boxes of cookies for the Manly Village students to devour after school, a Touch of Europe Bakehouse has become a routine pit-stop for Manly residents through rain, hail or shine. During Covid, they traded during the day and worked long into the night to ensure that residents were still able to purchase fresh bread or a sweet treat to brighten up what was a dark time for many. Today, the constant stream of patrons piling in and out of the store is a testament to the love shared by many for this iconic Manly business. If you're ever visiting the area, I encourage you to pop into a Touch of Europe Bakehouse and experience it for yourself.

BARE BEAUTY HOUSE

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, I wish to recognise and congratulate Bare Beauty House in my electorate of Manly who were recently selected as a winner of the Northern Beaches Local Business Awards for Outstanding Beauty Services. With the help of a team of welcoming and dedicated specialists, Bare Beauty House has continued to deliver personalised, professional and top-tier services ranging from precision haircutting, skincare, nailcare and other luxury and wellness treatments. Founded by Naomi on the principles of purity, wellness and efficiency, this award is a testament to Bare Beauty House's proud and proven track record of providing top level beauty treatments using toxic-free products and environmentally conscious methods. If you're ever visiting Manly and in need of some rejuvenation, look no further than Naomi and the team at Bare Beauty House. Congratulations once again on such a well-deserved achievement!

DEE WHY SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB 111TH AGM

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—I wish to pay tribute to Dee Why Surf Life Saving Club who hosted their 111th Annual General Meeting on the 28 July 2024. This is a fantastic milestone for a Club with a proud history of more than a century of surf lifesaving, stretching back to 1912. Today, Dee Why SLSC has a diverse membership base of close to a thousand people, hailing from all different ages and background. The Club has built a reputation for promoting the improvement of the local area and offers services that extend well beyond patrolling the beach. From maximising community engagement through maintaining strong ties with local government and organisations, to expanding its outreach to regional and rural NSW through its Bush Nippers program, Dee Why SLSC has established itself as one of the most progressive Surf Clubs in Australia. It was wonderful to participate in this year's AGM, hear about the achievements of numerous volunteers and witness firsthand the passion and energy on display by all those in attendance. Mr Speaker, I congratulate Dee Why SLSC on all the fantastic work they continue to do for our local community.

MAREE STOKES

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—With great honour, I would like to recognise Maree Stokes for her commitment to supporting and advocating for people who are living with asbestos related diseases as well as their family members, carers, and friends. Maree has been the Coordinator of the Central Coast Support Group for the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia [ADFA] for almost two decades. This Group meets monthly and offers support, help and friendship to those suffering with asbestos related diseases. On top of that, Maree is always willing to speak with those who are looking for support about their recent diagnosis and continues to check up on them to see how they are travelling along. Maree's tireless efforts are much appreciated by ADFA and those she assists. Maree's dedication, passion and hard work raising awareness has been a great pride and inspiration for her friends and family. I applaud Maree for her marvellous contributions to our Central Coast community and beyond.

TEZ DOWER

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—One of the special features of the Gosford electorate is the surprising number of talented artists who call our electorate home. I'm excited to acknowledge Tez Dower, an amazing artist and social media creator who is well known for his fabulous outdoor paintings. Tez takes outdoor painting to the next level, and he has mastered stunning oil paintings from gorgeous areas such as the Woy Woy Bay, Koolewong's oyster farm and Patonga beach. Tez's love for art and nature have been carefully crafted into interesting videos where we can see the beauty of our environment through Tez's visions. On top of that, Tez's talent was recognised at the 5 Lands Walk's Art in the Open Awards, and he brought home a well-deserved first prize. Well done, Tez! Besides being a gifted artist, Tez always looks to give back to our community, recently donating some of his larger paintings to charities to allow them to raise money for important causes! It is artists like Tez, who give our Central Coast such distinctive cultural character and I wish Tez all the best for the future endeavours.

AL-ANON CENTRAL COAST

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—In my line of work, I have the privilege to observe different community groups that go above and beyond to support their fellow Australians. For this very reason, I would love to acknowledge Al-Anon Central Coast for their commitment to better our society, one meeting at a time. Al-Anon supports individuals effected by alcoholism, providing a supportive peer-support environment. On the Central Coast, Al-Anon holds meeting across different suburbs as well as online so that more community members can join in and share their stories while helping others to overcome their own experience. Meetings are designed with different topics such as Awareness, Reaching for Personal Freedom, Paths to Recovery, Acceptance, encourage members to join in and create a necessary space that allows people to be their authentic selves. I can't thank everyone involved enough for all the wonderful work you do, and I am grateful to have organisation such as Al-Anon Central Coast in our community.

EMMA MCKEON

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces)—It's official. Emma McKeon is our most decorated Australian in Olympic history – 14 medals – including 6 gold - the most by an Australian ever. She is the GOAT – the Greatest Of All Time. It would be remiss of me to not mention that she's a Wollongong local who grew up in Mount Kembla. Emma comes from a rich swimming lineage - one on three children born into a competitive swimming family. Her parents were competitive swimmers. Her father Ron swam at the Olympics in 1980 and 1984, whilst her mother Susie, participated in the 1982 Commonwealth Games. Emma's brother David is also dual Olympian who won silver at the Rio Olympics. Emma recently announced her retirement from competitive swimming. The 2024 Paris Olympics is sadly her last. She has nonetheless been triumphant at these games, winning 3 medals, including one gold, to add to Australia's medal tally. I congratulate Emma on her successful career and wish her the very best for the future. She has done our country and our region proud and will have a lasting impact as she has no doubt inspired future Australian swimmers to try and match or exceed her success in the pool.

RAISING THE BAR FOUNDATION

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces)—Raising the Bar Foundation, a locally grown mental health charity born out of Wollongong, has received \$250,000 from the NSW Government to design and deliver The Barstool Project, a custom mental health training package for employees in the hospitality and tourism industry in NSW. This program aims to train 10,000 employees in hospitality and tourism venues across NSW, by providing them with the skills they need to identify and address mental health and wellbeing issues. The Barstool Project aims to teach valuable skills in identifying signs and symptoms of mental health; provide tools to communicate effectively when talking about mental health and create safer work environments in hospitality venues for employers, employees, and customers. This program has been developed

after years of dedicated work by the Foundation Board, The Barstool Brothers and the team at His Boy Elroy, and will make a real difference to so many lives. Well done to Lachlan Stevens, Daniel Chin, and their team.

CEREBRAL PALSY ALLIANCE IN ST IVES

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Thursday 25 July 2024, I visited the Cerebral Palsy Alliance in St Ives to share good news that they successfully received a grant from the NSW Government's Community Building Program. It was great to meet many of the clients, including Barry, who gave me a tour of the centre at St Ives. I saw firsthand how the grant will assist them in helping renovate their hall. Cerebral palsy is a physical disability that affects movement and posture. In most cases, it's caused by an injury to the developing brain either during pregnancy or shortly after birth. I am proud to recognise the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. They are a ground-breaking, global centre of expertise for cerebral palsy services and support, research, technology and innovation, and advocacy. They help bring our community together, supporting those with cerebral palsy, their families and carers. I encourage everyone to support the Cerebral Palsy Alliance's fundraising efforts by attending their upcoming performance, "The World on Wheels" at the Sydney Opera House on 19 November 2024.

ARARAT CULTURAL CENTRE IN FRENCHS FOREST

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Wednesday 10 July 2024, I attended the official opening of the renovated Ararat Cultural Centre. It is now officially reopened to the public! Located in a quiet, pleasant setting overlooking a park and sports ground in Frenchs Forest, for decades the centre has hosted enriching events and vibrant cultural experiences. The renovated centre is now open for cultural, social, family activities, conferences and seminars to all members of the community. The centre is appropriately named after Mount Ararat, a national symbol of Armenia, that I was pleased to witness with my own eyes in 2023 when I visited Armenia. I recognise the Diocesan Council of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia and New Zealand for organising the official opening of the renovated centre. Thank you to His Eminence Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian who presided over a blessing, as well as Dr Stepan Kerkyasharian AO, Hilda Kerkyasharian, Sarkis Der Bedrossian, Silva Hacadurian and many others for all their work in making the evening very memorable. I am proud to represent a vibrant Australian Armenian community in the Parliament of NSW, and I thank the community for inviting me to join them at this celebration.

NORTHERN SYDNEY DISTRICT PARENTS & CITIZENS COUNCIL

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Monday 1 July 2024, I attended the Northern Sydney District Parents & Citizens Council meeting at North Sydney Public School. The Council proudly represents public school parents and citizen associations in the Northern Sydney area. I was joined by the Member for Willoughby, Tim James MP. It was good to meet with familiar faces from the Davidson electorate who serve on our local P&Cs – and importantly – listen to what is taking place in our local schools and education in NSW. P&Cs are so important in serving our local school communities. They help bring everyone together, from principals and teachers to parents and students. I am proud to support the work they do, most of it, behind the scenes. I recognise Council President David Hope and Secretary Jason Wong for all the work they do in advocating for our P&Cs and wider school communities. I also recognise the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW Gemma Quinn and Policy and Advocacy Adviser Liam Bowden for their support of the Council. I look forward to working and supporting our local P&Cs now and well into the future.

MACARTHUR BULLS MEDAL NIGHT

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)—Macarthur Bulls is an A-League professional soccer club based in South-Western Sydney. The club was established in 2017 and played its inaugural season in 2020-2021. As Bulls Member 108, I had the pleasure of attending their 2023/24 season Medal Night on 1 May. Celebrating the achievements of the talented athletes alongside the club community and passionate fans made it a night to remember. With a season that saw 25 appearances and five goals, Jake Hollman, took out the prestigious Macarthur Medal. Valere Germain took home the Golden Boot while Academy Player of the Year was awarded to Trudy Simmons. Off the field, Liam Piel was awarded Club Person of the Season, Nathan Hill Volunteer of the Season, while Academy Volunteer of the Year was Gabrielle Jones. The evening was not only a tribute to the Club's outstanding performance but also a reflection of the strong support for sports in South-Western Sydney. Macarthur FC is known for its strong community ties across the broader Macarthur and South West area. I look forward to future successes both on and off the field for the mighty Bulls.

AMITY COLLEGE

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)—On May 29, I had the pleasure of touring the new Campus of Amity College in Leppington, right in the heart of my electorate. The new Amity College campus in Leppington is presently a Kindergarten to Grade 3 school, progressively becoming a K-12 school. It boasts state-of-the-art facilities designed to enhance the educational experience for students. This modern campus features spacious

classrooms equipped with the latest technology, including interactive whiteboards and advanced audio-visual systems. The campus also includes dedicated science laboratories, a well-stocked library, and specialised rooms for art, music, and drama. Outdoor facilities include sports fields, a multipurpose hall for various activities, and landscaped areas for recreation and relaxation. With a strong focus on creating an engaging and supportive learning environment, the Amity College Leppington campus is set to become a cornerstone of the local educational landscape. Congratulations to all involved and I look forward to many more visits in the future.

JAMES ELAZZI

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)—I wish to recognise James Elazzi, an acclaimed playwright, screenwriter, and director who was born and raised in Kearns, a suburb in South-Western Sydney and my electorate. James' personal background and experiences have significantly influenced his storytelling, often delving into the intricacies of Lebanese-Australian identity and the struggles of reconciling cultural heritage with contemporary Australian life. James has been nominated three times for the NSW Premier's Literary Award. His work is celebrated for its humour, tenderness, and deep exploration of complex family dynamics. In addition to his theatrical work, James has directed and produced short films which have been featured in numerous international film festivals. James' new play, 'Karim', will premiere at Riverside Theatres Parramatta from July 25 to August 3. His commitment to telling untold stories and bringing overlooked communities to the forefront is evident in all his works, including 'Karim', which continues his exploration of familial and cultural themes. I encourage everyone to go out and see 'Karim'.

CORELLA'S SQUAD SELECTIONS

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to congratulate two Grafton Redmen players who have been selected in the NSW Country Corella's team after impressive performances for Mid North Coast at the NSW Country Championships in Tamworth recently. Natalie Blackadder and Yuri Fuller have been instrumental in the Grafton team in this year's Mid North Coast Women's 10's games. As much as both players have shown their skills and capability in the local team this season the players had no idea if they did enough to gain selection in the Country squad trials, however a phone call from the Corellas' coach confirmed what they had both hoped to hear. The improvement of the Grafton Redmen Women's side and the quality of women's rugby throughout the Mid North Coast have certainly assisted in the level of game play and the selection in the Corella's of both Yuri, a prolific try-scorer, and Natalie, a powerful backrower. I congratulate both players and wish them all the best in the upcoming representative games.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARDS

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I offer my congratulations to Clarence Valley Council, as they have been recognised at the Local Government Professionals Award dinner in Sydney recently. Clarence Valley Council were finalists in five categories including Special Project Initiative, Innovative Leadership, Partnership and Collaboration, People Workplace Wellbeing categories as well as the Emerging Leaders category. Council's Planning Portal Integration project, which highlights their commitment to enhancing customer experience while focusing on simplifying online application processes, received the Judges Award in the Special Project Initiative category. Mr Nick Harvey, Council's Financial Accountant earned a finalist position in the Emerging Leader category. The tireless efforts of staff in restoring civil infrastructure in the wake of eight consecutive natural disasters have also earned recognition in the Innovative Leadership category for their achievements in completing multiple years works in just one year, despite enduring multiple floods and fires. Council was also recognised with their Rediscover Grafton project, being a finalist in the Partnerships and Collaboration category. As a result, Grafton's Central Business District has been revitalised enhancing the appeal of the main street. Council's 'Grow Your Own' trainee and apprentice program also earned recognition as a finalist in the People Workplace Wellbeing category. Well done!

SAMUEL WILLIAM FRANCIS DARKE

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I was honoured to present Mr Samuel Darke with a prestigious Nuclear Test Medal for his role testing nuclear weapons for the Allies in the South Australian desert. At only 19 Sam was ordered on the 1953 top-secret 'Operation Totem' mission. Sam told me it was quite the experience, given safety instructions not to look at the flash, turn their head and cover their eyes tightly. On detonation, he and other personnel were standing in the open and were knocked off their feet by the atomic bomb. Sam explained that when the blast occurred, he felt heat and a flash from the top of his head to his feet. After only seconds, the Sergeant said it was ok to turn around, when they did, they saw an orange fireball rising. They could see dust and mulga trees moving, then the blast hit. No warning. Sam's job was then to transport scientists around the detonation site, measuring radioactive levels, wearing no protective gear. He was given the option to volunteer for the second atomic detonation but declined saying: "Once is enough". I was extremely grateful to be part of this significant day in the nation's history.

ROCKDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)—I would like to congratulate Rockdale Public School, as they celebrated NAIDOC week last month. Rockdale Public School collaborated with Djaljala Education to deliver a day celebrating Indigenous culture. There was an opening ceremony at the start of the day, including a paint up of Indigenous students and parents and a personalised Acknowledgement of Country delivered by the Indigenous students. Each class then had a chance to participate in a workshop, learning about our local area and the original First Nations people who lived in and around the Rockdale area. The classes also learned a few Dharug language words, participated in a collaborative school artwork and then performed a Dadirri or guided listening experience. At the end of the day, the collaborative artwork was unveiled to the school by the Djaljala educators. I applaud Rockdale Public School for their efforts in spreading the message of understanding and support for Indigenous Australians and their communities.

AUSTRALIAN ROLLERSKI CHAMPIONS

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)—On a weekend in mid-April, Mt Stromlo in Canberra hosted the National Rollerski Championships, a sport with which I imagine many members of this house may be unfamiliar. The reason I mention this is because Monaro locals have come out on top, taking the gold. I'd like to congratulate Bentley Walker-Broose of Cooma for winning the freestyle criterium 10km event, and Jindabyne's Satara Moon for winning both the women's open freestyle sprint, and the open women's criterium. It's August now and I assume Bentley and Satara are now enjoying the fantastic snow in the mountains at the moment but congratulations for the great effort on wheels!

CORDONY HAIR NARRABEEN

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—Congratulations to Cordony Hair Narrabeen on winning Best Hairdresser at the 2024 Northern Beaches Business Awards. Established in 1928, Cordony Hair is the longest running family-owned hairdressing business in Australia. Founded by brothers, John, Louis and Maurice, the salon is now owned by John's granddaughters, Lara and Claudine. Under Lara and Claudine, Cordony has maintained its welcoming atmosphere, where stylists and clients feel like one big extended family. Cordony is a trusted brand across the Northern Beaches community, receiving high praise across hundreds of google reviews. Reviewers commend Cordony stylists for being friendly, helpful and always ensuring clients are satisfied. Based on all this positive feedback, it's no wonder Cordony Hair Narrabeen was awarded the Best Hairdresser on the Northern Beaches. Congratulations to Lara, Claudine, Glenda, Lou Lou, Amy, Alana, Natasha, Justin and the whole team on this amazing achievement, and thank you for taking such good care of locals' hair! I am pleased that acknowledgement of Cordony Hair Narrabeen is now preserved for all time in the records of the oldest parliament in our nation.

BINDOOK COTTAGE – TERREY HILLS

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—Congratulations to Bindook Cottage Terrey Hills on being a finalist in the Early Childhood Centre category at the 2024 Northern Beaches Local Business Awards, and congratulations to educator, Ella Totino on winning the 2024 Youth of the Year Award. Established in 2001, Bindook Cottage is a family-owned and operated long day care service in the beautiful suburb of Terrey Hills. Bindook offers a 'home away from home' environment, with smaller numbers that allow for more personalised care. Bindook Cottage employs dedicated long-term educators that are passionate about early childhood education, preparing children for school and the learning opportunities they can offer children and their families. Congrats to the whole team at Bindook on this amazing achievement: Owner - Rita Totino, Director – Cassandra Green, Jess Mawhinney, Jessica Watkins, Ella Totino, Natalina Caruso and Rebecca Hunter. Thank you for your wonderful care and service of local children and families. I am pleased that acknowledgement of Bindook Cottage is now preserved for all time in the records of the oldest parliament in our nation.

THE GYM FACTORY - WARRIEWOOD

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—Congratulations to the Gym Factory Warriewood on winning Best Fitness Service at the 2024 Northern Beaches Business Awards. A family-owned centre, the Gym Factory has been a place where individuals can work towards becoming their healthiest, happiest selves for over a decade. Led by Mike and Josh since 2022, the Gym Factory offers a vibrant space with enthusiastic expert health and fitness professionals dedicated to guiding individuals of all fitness levels. The facility features a crèche, kids' classes, and comprehensive adult programs, all within a state-of-the-art environment. Above all, it fosters an inclusive community where big and small achievements and progress are celebrated and support abounds. Congratulations to Mike, Lee, Josh, Ash and the whole team on this amazing achievement. Thank you for all you

do to help keep our community happy and healthy. I am pleased that acknowledgement of the Gym Factory is now preserved for all time in the records of the oldest parliament in our nation.

RODWELL LOGGING ALL TERRAIN FIRE UNITS

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)—I was in Bombala recently, and I had the pleasure of being invited to Rodwell Logging to see their amazing new all-terrain fire fighting tankers designed by local brothers Peter and Mark Rodwell. These machines were made possible through the families' personal investment and a \$1.4 million disaster resilience grant from the federal government, and their genius lies in the fact that these tankers can be hitched up to an existing all-terrain logging vehicles such as tractors. Additionally, they can be controlled remotely, and are made of heavy-duty industrial steel making them incredibly safe for operators. I love ingenuity like this. You've got a couple of local who have seen a problem and come up with a brilliant solution. They did the work, they asked the government for assistance, and the Federal Government through our great local Member Kristy McBain delivered. These tankers may very well be a world-first and I would urge our forestry and firefighting agencies to get down and have a look at these units.

FAMILY INTERFAITH FESTIVAL - RIVERWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—On Friday 19 July, Riverwood Community Centre hosted the Family Interfaith Festival that brought together individuals and families from diverse backgrounds to celebrate unity, understanding and respect among different faiths. More than 3000 people from the local multicultural community attended the festival that featured vibrant cultural performances, multicultural food stalls, a petting zoo and children's entertainment. The festival created a day of unity, joy, diversity, where families and friends as well as the multifaith community came together to learn about and celebrate the diversity in our community, appreciating the rich tapestry of the local community's faiths and traditions. I would like to acknowledge the incredible Riverwood Community Centre staff and volunteers for their dedication and hard work to ensure that everything ran smoothly. The Family Interfaith Festival was a resounding success that exemplified what can be achieved when communities come together with open hearts and minds. It has served as a reminder that despite our differences in belief systems, we share common values such as love, kindness, and respect for one another. Let us carry forward this event's spirit by continuing interfaith dialogue and fostering connections within our diverse community.

MRS SAISANAS – BANKSTOWN GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—Today I would like to honour Mrs. Saisanas for her remarkable 40-year dedication to public education. For four decades, you have been a guiding light in our community, shaping the minds and futures of countless students with unwavering passion and commitment. Your innovative teaching methods and compassionate approach have not only imparted knowledge but have also inspired a lifelong love for learning in your students. Beyond the classroom, your mentorship and advocacy for educational excellence have strengthened our entire educational community. Mrs. Saisanas, your impact is immeasurable. Your dedication has fostered a culture of curiosity, integrity, and perseverance, setting a high standard for all who follow you. Your students' achievements and peer respect stand as a testament to your extraordinary contributions. As the Bankstown community celebrates this significant milestone, I extend my deepest gratitude for your exceptional service and the countless lives you have touched. Your legacy is that of excellence, and we are honoured to recognise and celebrate you. Congratulations, Mrs. Saisanas, and thank you for your incredible 40 years of dedication to our public schooling. You are someone we all as a community need to look up to.

BOYS BRUSH UP WAY TO BEAUTIFY – PUNCHBOWL BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—Rolling up their sleeves for a worthy cause, Punchbowl Boys High School students have assisted artist, Amanda Newman in completing her mural on the Thurlow Hub building at Riverwood Community Centre. Amanda's mural depicts two large, interacting portraits, symbolising knowledge, sharing and empowerment which perfectly embodies the spirit of the hub in celebrating diversity, inclusivity and inspiring the younger generation to give back. This collaboration not only highlights the importance of community engagement but also showcases the talent that can flourish when educational institutes come together with local artists. Students from Punchbowl Boys High had the unique opportunity to collaborate with Amanda during the mural's creation process allowing them to learn valuable skills in art techniques, teamwork and project management while contributing meaningfully to their community. The mural will leave a lasting impact on Riverwood Community Centre, serving as a source of pride for the school and residents. It stands as an example of how art can bridge gaps between generations and foster a sense of belonging. We look forward

to seeing more collaborative efforts like this one that enrich our neighbourhoods through creativity and artistic expression.

GRAE MORRIS PARIS OLYMPICS

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse)—I would like to congratulate local constituent Grae Morris on his performance for Australia at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Grae became the first Australian since Atlanta 1996 to win an Olympic windsurfing medal – a silver. Grae competed in the IQFOiL - a form of windsurfing using a board with a wing-like device instead of a fin to lift it out of the water. He has been windsurfing for most of his life – his dad Brett was a national champion – and made the transition to the foil as a 14-year-old. It is a testament to his skill, discipline, and determination that he was the first Australian male to be selected to compete in windsurfing since Athens 2004. Congratulations Grae. Our community, state and country are so proud of you.

OLIVIA PRICE PARIS OLYMPICS

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse)—I would like to congratulate local constituent Olivia Price on her selection and achievements for Australia at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Getting selected for a single Olympics is an incredible milestone. This was Olivia's second and there has been 12 years in between appearances. Olivia, now 32, was just 19 and on her Olympic debut when she skippered her crew of Lucinda Whitty and Nina Curtis to a silver medal at the 2012 Games. It is a testament to her skill, discipline, and determination that she has been able to return to the Australian Olympic Sailing Team. In Marseille for the Olympics, Olivia paired with Evie Haseldine and finished 9th in the world in the 49erFX class. Congratulations Olivia. Our community, state and country are so proud of you.

ROHAN BROWNING PARIS OLYMPICS

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse)—I would like to congratulate local constituent Rohan Browning on his selection and achievements for Australia at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Getting selected for a single Olympics is an incredible milestone. This is Rohan's second after an impressive performance in Tokyo where he made the semi-final. It is a testament to his skill, discipline, and determination that he has been able to remain a stalwart in our Men's Track team. Rohan ran a season best 10.29 in the men's 100m heat inside the Stade de France. Congratulations Rohan. Our community, state and country are so proud of you.

NAIDOC AWARDS

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—"Let's keep the fire burning, Blak, Loud and Proud" was the inspiring theme for this year's NAIDOC Ball and Awards night in Wagga Wagga – and the hundreds present showed that the fire burns with passion for the city's First Nations community. Awards celebrating indigenous excellence and culture were presented to five worthy winners. The winner of the Blak, Loud and Proud! Award was Melissa Mary O'Neill for her tireless work in raising funds for Wagga Takes 2; RAAF Indigenous Liaison Officer James Evans received the Caring for Culture Award in recognition of his support of First Nations people; the Dindima Aboriginal Football Club won the Community Person of the Year Award which helps Aboriginal people on and off the football field; volunteer and advocate Maxine Honeysett received the People's Choice Award, and respected elder Auntie Gail Manderson was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award for her decades of work to support children and revive the Wiradjuri language. Finally, thank you to NAIDOC Committee chair Ashleigh Pengelly for doing so much to make the year a success. All are volunteers, all were nominated by their community and all deserve our thanks and congratulations. Well done to everyone!

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—Congratulations to Wagga Wagga's Brian and Dianne Roy who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Hailing from Ganmain and Matong respectively, the couple met at school and married at Ganmain in 1974. Brian became a shopfitter and joiner in Wagga, a career he followed for many years before becoming head trade teacher at TAFE. Dianne worked until her retirement in the school system in administrative and support roles and throughout it all, the couple devoted countless hours to volunteering for their community. That service continues in retirement, with Brian continuing to lend a hand at Lilier Lodge and Dianne volunteering for the Salvation Army's Doorways program which provides food relief to those in need. Brian continues a long association with South Wagga Rotary, where he has served as president, secretary, cook, driver, fundraiser and handyman, among other roles. In 2023, he was honoured for his community service, when he was named Senior Volunteer of the Year and Riverina Volunteer of the Year. They have three sons, Anthony, Brad and Joel, and eight grandchildren. Thank you, Brian and Dianne, for your dedication to community and family, and congratulations on a remarkable life built together over half a century.

LASTING LEGACY

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—I would like to say congratulations, thank you and good luck to two women who have helped to define the past, present and future of disability support services in Wagga Wagga. Cathie Smith and Jane Pottie retired from service provider Kurrajong last month after decades of dedicated service that has improved thousands of lives. Cathie's association with Kurrajong started 49 years ago as a mother of a child with a disability and she has since progressed from volunteer to board member and community engagement manager. Together, Cathie and Jane have raised millions of dollars for disability services, playing a key role in establishing and growing Kurrajong's amazing Hildasid Farm. Jane has been connected to Kurrajong for more than 30 years and has given 26 years' service as a staff member, assisting Cathy. CEO Ray Carroll says they have been tireless champions of people with disability and their families, and without them, Kurrajong today would not be the same. Their departure ends an era, but their passion and devotion will not be lost as both will return as volunteers. Thank you, Cathie and Jane, for doing so much for so many for so long.

41ST BATTALION RECIEVES FREEDOM OF ENTRY TO LISMORE CITY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—In a time-honoured tradition dating back to medieval times, Lismore proudly hosted a Freedom of Entry Parade by the East Lismore-based 41st Battalion on Saturday, June 22. The last and only other time this ceremonial parade took place was in 1972. Up to 200 soldiers from the Northern Rivers, supported by the Australian Defence Force marching band, entered the heart of Lismore in full regalia. It was the joint duty of Richmond Police District Commander Superintendent Scott Tanner APM and Lismore City Mayor Cr Steve Krieg to halt the Battalion and formally challenge its advance. This spectacle was a prelude to Lismore's 30th annual Lantern Parade that night, where the military men and women joined in the festivities. 41st Battalion's Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Danial Healy was presented with a scroll authorising the granting of Freedom of Entry. Soldiers from 41st Battalion were heavily involved in the first response to the 2022 floods. The infantry battalion was raised in 1965 but can trace its lineage back to battles on the Western Front in the Great War and to Scottish Rifles units formed in Byron Bay and Maclean in the late 1800s.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATES THE REOPENING OF FEDERAL DRIVE

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I Joined community members last Saturday afternoon to celebrate the reopening of their Federal Drive, which was totally decimated by a major landslip during the 2022 floods. For two years and four months locals have had to take long daily detours and have shown patience, forbearance, understanding and grace. The \$23-million project to reconstruct Federal Drive was jointly funded by the Australian and NSW governments through Disaster Recovery Arrangements. Following an intensive investigation, design and contractor procurement process, work began in April 2023 on repairing the landslip and road surface. It was a very complex project involving reconstruction of the road; drainage work, including the replacement of four culverts; repairing and resealing the road pavement; stabilisation of the landslip (soil nailing, tree removal, earthworks); revegetation of the slip face and installation of guardrails. I'd like to commend Byron Shire Council staff and contractors GRC Civil for working tirelessly through multiple challenges. The community celebration centred on Federal Park and included an Acknowledgement of Country by Uncle Gilbert Laurie, a drum procession, bush dance, marked stalls and food trucks. I also caught up with Byron Shire Deputy Mayor Cr Sarah Ndiaye during the festivities.

TENTERFIELD, LISTON - 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF LAST COBB AND CO COACH RUN

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Tenterfield and Liston turned out in droves last weekend to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the last official Cobb & Co Coaches run in Australia. Tenterfield Shire Council hired two Drayhorse Shires Cobb & Co coaches for ticketed rides for the public from Tenterfield Railway Station Markets and Shirley Park last Saturday and at Liston last Sunday. Special guest at both events was John Osborne OAM, of Toowoomba, who with the Bolton family established the Toowoomba Cobb & Co Museum, which showcases over 30 horse-drawn vehicles. Liston, of course, has its very own Cobb & Co Museum with a replica coach constructed by local John Burton. The two Johns, along with Mr Burton's daughter, historian Hazel Johnson, were on hand to relate Cobb & Co's rich history of transporting passengers and mail to regional and remote areas of Australia. Tenterfield was marked on the Queensland Cobb & Co route maps. Tenterfield Shire Council plans to make more of this connection with signage at changing stations. The Royal Australian Mint has issued a new \$1 collector coin commemorating Cobb & Co's last journey from Surat to Yuleba in Queensland.

PHILLIP SHEILS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to take this opportunity to commend Phillip Sheils from the Gosford SES unit, who is as one of the two NSW State Emergency Service volunteers recently deployed to Canada on July 19 for a five-week deployment. Phillip joined an elite 16-strong contingent of emergency services personnel from NSW SES, NSW Rural Fire Service, Forestry NSW, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service,

demonstrating an extraordinary international effort to combat the devastating wildfires sweeping across Canada. As the Deputy Rescue Officer at the SES Gosford unit, Phillip embodies the spirit of selflessness and dedication. His commitment to aiding our international emergency services partners during their time of dire need is deeply commendable. This deployment is also an invaluable learning opportunity to work alongside highly skilled and capable individuals from various emergency service agencies. The ongoing requests for assistance from our SES members underscore the high regard for NSW SES's operational skills in international settings. Our SES volunteers' diverse capabilities extend well beyond floods, storms, and tsunamis, proving their adaptability in any emergency. Thank you Phillip, for your ongoing contribution as an SES volunteer and your unwavering commitment to making a difference on a global scale.

STELLA WILSON

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I am delighted to take this opportunity to congratulate my constituent Stella Wilson of Terrigal, who was recently awarded Life Membership at the Terrigal 50+ Leisure & Learning Centre during a special presentation in May. Stella joined the Centre in 2004 and has been the longest-serving member on the Management Committee since 2008. When she first joined, there were just six ladies playing Mahjong. Noticing some inconsistencies, Stella volunteered to teach them the game. Under her guidance and leadership, the number of players grew to 40 members each week. Stella not only teaches and supervises Mahjong but also actively plays and has introduced a new card game, Bolivia, to the Centre. Currently serving as the Junior Vice President, Stella assists in numerous ways, especially on concert days and during celebrations. She is always there to lend a hand with setup and pack away, selling raffle tickets, and serving morning tea. With 20 years of association with the club, Stella's valuable contributions and dedicated service are truly commendable. Stella, your unwavering commitment, contribution, and passion have left an indelible mark on the Centre. Thank you for your extraordinary dedication and congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

GOSFORD LIFEBLOOD

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the great team at the Gosford Donor Centre of Lifeblood, including the Blood bus here on the Central Coast. We know Lifeblood plays a vital role in providing life-giving blood, plasma, transplantation, and biological products, serving over 25 million people across Australia. The team here on the Coast make donating a pleasant and rewarding experience. Over 1.5 million individual donations were made last year, highlighting the life-saving impact of blood donations. From developing plasma treatments like Privigen® AU to donated breast milk for premature babies, Lifeblood is at the forefront of healthcare innovation. Lifeblood's commitment to clinical excellence, education, and research ensures the delivery of safe, high-quality products time and time again to those most in need, young and old in our communities. As a regular blood donor on the Central Coast, with a blood type is O Positive and Rh Positive, it is very rewarding to know my blood donations are being used to protect newborns against Rh disease. Thank you to the fantastic Lifeblood team here on the Central Coast and to all our incredible donors for your invaluable contribution and commitment to saving lives.

OLIVER CASEY

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to acknowledge and celebrate Oliver Casey, a remarkable young man from Yass who, has already made a significant impact on his community. Oliver has made a name for himself by generously offering to mow lawns and tidy up yards for local residents, all without expecting any form of payment. His willingness to lend a hand and complete tasks for others speaks volumes about his character and dedication to helping those around him. I congratulate Oliver on his selfless attitude to help others in a variety of ways, such as raising funds for the Fragile X Association of Australia and undertaking work at St Clements Church. Oliver, you are truly an inspiration, and your actions serve as a shining example for others. Congratulations on your outstanding contributions to your community.

GOULBURN ARGYLE GARDEN CLUB

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise the Goulburn Argyle Garden Club as they celebrate their 40th anniversary. The club held its first meeting on the 22nd of May in 1984 and has been a vibrant part of the Goulburn community ever since. As a member of the nationwide network - Garden Clubs Australia Inc., the Goulburn Argyle Garden Club has provided a platform for gardening enthusiasts to come together, share their passion, learn from guest speakers, and enjoy visits to beautiful gardens across the region. The club meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month, featuring activities such as a plant trading table, a flower of the month, and a raffle for a small plant prize. Their seasonal newsletter keeps members informed about club activities, including participation in the Hobbies Expo, the Goulburn Show, and events with guest presenters. Beyond gardening, the club promotes physical and mental well-being among its members, offering a perfect gateway in gardening practice and knowledge. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Club President Lynne

Howe, the committee members, Duty Officers, and all the members for their dedication in maintaining the longevity of the club and for the benefits it provides to our community.

LANE COVE GIRL GUIDES

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr Speaker I would like to acknowledge the fantastic work of Girl Guides NSW in Lane Cove. Thanks to the Community Building Partnership Grant program, Girl Guides NSW will receive \$8,921 to upgrade the bathroom and refurbish facilities at their Blackman Park Hall. I'd like to thank Girl Guides NSW for their application and their role fostering leadership skills and confidence in young women within the Electorate of Lane Cove.

CONCORD AND RYDE SAILING CLUB

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr Speaker I would like to acknowledge the fantastic work of the Concord & Ryde Sailing Club. The Club is a worthy recipient of a Community Building Partnership Grant, which will go towards a new motor that will assist the many volunteers who run extensive training programs including learn to sail. I'd like to thank the Concord & Ryde Sailing Club for their application and their advocacy for physical and social activity within the Electorate of Lane Cove.

HUNTERS HILL LAWN TENNIS CLUB

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr Speaker I would like to acknowledge the fantastic work of the Hunters Hill Lawn Tennis Club. The club has an incredibly rich and proud history dating back to 1888 and is the oldest lawn tennis club in Australia. Thanks to the Community Building Partnership Grant program, the club will receive \$15,000 to complete much needed refurbishment works at its clubhouse. I'd like to thank the Hunters Hill Lawn Tennis Club for their application and their advocacy for physical and social activity within the Electorate of Lane Cove.

SIMS PROJECT RESTORE

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker I want to acknowledge the Sydney Institute of Marine Science and their latest fieldwork season for Project Restore. This ambitious project seeks to restore the degraded seascapes and biodiversity at up to 11 locations within Sydney Harbour. It aims to enhance and regenerate urban marine habitats by recovering lost seagrass meadows, enhancing kelp forests, installing living seawall panels, and deploying artificial fish habitats within the harbour. The latest fieldwork season has seen 141 monitoring trips completed, amounting to 1,128 hours in the field, and has yielded over 1,200 hours of underwater footage. The fieldwork team has completed the initial phase of fish biodiversity monitoring and has now transitioned to sediment and epifauna sampling, collecting 75 sediment samples from three sites so far. I congratulate the hardworking team at SIMS for all the time, energy, and resources they have poured into Project Restore for the betterment of our beloved harbour. Sydney Harbour is truly the crown jewel of Sydney and our community is so grateful to have such a talented team working to preserve its beauty.

SECONDARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker I want to acknowledge the Secondary Student Leadership Program that took place earlier this month. Engaging the younger generations with politics is so important, and I always love meeting the inspirational student leaders from the schools in my community. The program is designed to recognise the leadership role of the invited students and present them with the opportunity to meet their elected Members. It was a pleasure to speak to student leaders from Cammeraygal High School, North Sydney Boys High School, Wenona School, Monte Sant Angelo Mercy College and Loreto Kirribilli. Thank you, Yuta, Isaac, Minh-Tam, Jerry, Rose, Olivia, Angelica, Jorja, Alice and Emma, for representing your schools and your community so well. I am always blown away by how accomplished the leaders of north shore schools are.

NORTH SYDNEY COUNCIL WINS NSW EXCELLENCE AWARD

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Speaker I want to congratulate North Sydney Council for winning the Community Partnerships category at the NSW Local Government Excellence Awards for their Building Bridges to Boorowa project. The NSW Local Government Excellence Awards celebrate and promote innovation and continuous improvement within Local Government. The Building Bridges to Boorowa project aims to rehabilitate degraded farmland with native plants. It started 25 years ago, with a group of North Sydney Council Bushcare volunteers, staff and councillors making a yearly pilgrimage to the small town of Boorowa. The project has revived the habitat of threatened species, the superb parrot, and planted more than 73 884 native trees, shrubs and groundcovers. I also congratulate long-time Bushcare volunteer Sissi Stewart, who jointly won the Living Legend Award at the North Sydney Community Awards for her dedication to the project. Congratulations and thank you to all those involved for all the hard work you have done over the past two and a half decades.

LIVERPOOL SENIORS CONCERT

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—The annual Liverpool Seniors Concert is more than just an event, it is a sign of our commitment to cherishing and uplifting our local seniors. It was an honour to attend this year's Seniors Concert, proudly sponsored and hosted by the Liverpool Catholic Club. This two-day celebration welcomed over 600 seniors, with performances, refreshments, and a tailored exhibition highlighting valuable local services. By offering a space for connection and camaraderie, we not only celebrate the vitality and contributions of our seniors, but also foster a sense of unity and belonging. The opportunity for our elders to engage with one another and with key organisations dedicated to enhancing their quality of life is invaluable. The concert featured heartwarming performances by students from Liverpool Public School, which brought joy to everyone present. Such moments of intergenerational interaction don't happen often enough! Well done to the staff of Liverpool Council and Liverpool Catholic Club for their exceptional efforts in bringing everyone together for this highly anticipated event. It is through initiatives like this that we reinforce the importance of valuing and celebrating our senior community, ensuring that they feel loved, respected, and appreciated.

LEE KRISTOFFERSON

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—I have previously spoken in this place about my belief that the Liverpool community deserves more spaces where art can be accessed, and opportunities where local artists can share their work. Which is why I am proud to share with the House the latest update on my ongoing partnership with Liverpool Art Society, where I host a rotating exhibition in the foyer of my electorate office. This month, the foyer has been refreshed to display five pieces by Lee Kristofferson. Lee has been a member of the Liverpool Art Society for 3 years, regularly participating in the watercolour group at Chipping Norton Community Centre each Wednesday. She uses painting as a way to relax, make friends and satisfy the creative side of life. Lee specialises in watercolours, but has recently tried her hand at acrylics as well. The pieces in the Liverpool electorate office depict seascapes, rivers and landscapes. I want to express my appreciation to Lee for allowing me to showcase her work, and the Liverpool Art Society for their continuing partnership and dedication to the creatives of our community.

JP - MAN XIONG LAI

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Man Xiong Lai 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 Man Xiong 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.

JP - SARAH BONAZZA

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Sarah Bonazza 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 Sarah 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.

JP - JANEEN FERRER

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Janeen Ferrer 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 Janeen 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.

HOPE WHITE NATIONAL NETBALL SELECTION

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to All Saints College student Hope White on her selection in the Australian U/21 netball squad. Hope is in Year 12 at St. Mary's and will be touring Fiji in August to take part in the Rising Stars Tour. The tour will feature representative netball teams from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Singapore. The five-day tournament will provide valuable competition experience for the U21s teams ahead of the 2025 Netball World Youth Cup. This is not the first time Hope has been selected to a representative team for Australia. White was also selected in the U17's team when she was just 15. The mid-courter is regarded as one of the country's most promising young players. Hope is part of the Giants Netball Academy which focuses on providing a high-performance environment for the athletes to continue their development. Congratulations Hope on your selection and good luck in Fiji.

JACK EDWARDS, DANIEL LANGBRIDGE, SOPHIE CROUCH AND JACQUIE SIMPSON

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to four Maitland touch footballers who were members of Australian Emu teams who competed at the Touch Football World Cup in Nottingham in July. Jack Edwards, who also plays with the Maitland Mustangs, was selected for the Emu's Men's Open Touch Football Team. The team faced tough opposition from rivals New Zealand but won the final 9-6 to take home the gold medal. Daniel Langbridge was selected in the Emu's Mixed Open Team. Once again, their opponents in the gold medal match was New Zealand and the scores were locked up at full time. Tough defence and a try won the gold 8-7 for the Emu's. Daniel was born into touch football, with his mother playing for the Australian women's 30s and 35s and father playing in masters NSW teams. Sophie Crouch and Jacquie Simpson were both selected in the Emu's Women's 35 Team. The team were comfortable winners against England and took out the final 10-2. Australia dominated the World Cup winning 12 gold and 1 silver from the 13 division. Congratulations Jack, Daniel, Sophie and Jacquie.

SIENNA NEWTON

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to All Saint's College Maitland student and aspiring actor Sienna Newton on her success in auditioning for the National Institute of Dramatic Arts Young Actors Studio program. Sienna was one of 60 who auditioned and won one of the 16 places offered in NIDA's Young Performers program. The program, which takes place on weekends in Sydney, has a different focus each term. Modules include: ensemble building, movement and voice work, classical texts and contemporary scenes and audition techniques and devising works. Sienna attends the Young People's Theatre in Hamilton for musical theatre and singing lessons, and also attends dance lessons in Maitland. Sienna recently performed in the Catholic School office ASPIRE production. Sienna is hoping at the end of next year to audition for a degree program at NIDA, and possibly enter WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts). Congratulations Sienna on following your acting and performance dreams.

NETBALL NSW - VAILO INNOVATION OF THE YEAR AWARD

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—Netball NSW calls the Parramatta Electorate home, so I was very proud to hear they recently won the Vailo Innovation of the Year award at the 2024 NSW Community Sports Volunteer Awards as well as being a finalist in other award categories. Netball NSW has implemented the Cultural Competency and Reflective E-Learning Program, or CARE, which promotes a better understanding of Indigenous culture through storytelling. The online tool seeks to educate the netball community on the importance of Indigenous culture. Education is at the centre of this journey of reconciliation and imperative in improving the recognition of the importance of Indigenous people to the land on which we live. The 2024 NSW Community Sports Volunteer Awards seek to acknowledge the efforts of their dedicated volunteers, because without them community sport in New South Wales would not exist. More than 500,000 people volunteer their time each year in New South Wales, demonstrating the people of this state's dedication to and love of sporting clubs and organisations. Congratulations Mardi Aplin and Netball NSW for your efforts and to all other award recipients.

STUDENTS SHINE AT ARTHUR PHILLIP HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS NIGHT

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—Arthur Phillip High School in Parramatta hosted their Performing Arts Night at Riverside Theatre on the 4th of July 2024, to display the talents of their students to an audience of family and friends. It's refreshing to see the pursuit of excellence and "fun" through the performing arts and creative expression at Arthur Phillip High School and we are so fortunate that Parramatta's Riverside Theatre provides performance spaces for educational purposes such as this. A local resident told me about how his son in Year 7 enjoyed participating in the performing arts night. He is a drummer, and it was his first performance with the school. He was one of the younger performers, but the older kids welcomed him warmly and immediately. The dedication and defiance of stage fright that these students displayed was heartwarming, and the sheer talent and soul was moving. Congratulations to Creative and Performing Arts Head Teacher Mitchell Staines, and teacher

Alison Lim from Arthur Phillip High School on a great performing arts night. I am sure the students will remember it fondly for years to come.

WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL STAFF RECOGNITION

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—On 1 July 2024, I attended Wollondilly Shire Council's presentation of 92 current and former Council staff with the National Emergency Medal. The National Emergency Medal, which was established in 2011 as part of the Australian Honours System, is awarded to people who rendered sustained or significant service during nationally significant emergencies in Australia. These medals were presented in recognition of the service of these staff members during the NSW bushfires in 2019 and 2020. The collective determination and solidarity in the face of challenging and dangerous situations, such as the Green Wattle Creek bushfire emergency, was symbolised by the medal presentation. Every one of these 92 presentations was a reminder of our strong community determination and spirit. The Council staff helped impacted families, livestock, pets, and properties, coordinated relief efforts in every way and simply lent a caring and helping hand that was felt throughout the Wollondilly electorate. On behalf of the electorate, I place on record my congratulations to everyone on receiving this well-deserved recognition for their vital hard work in protecting the community during emergencies. These people are selfless members of our community, who are dedicated to protecting it and its people.

MOB AT THE MUSEUM WITH KAZAN BROWN

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—I am very excited to inform the House that Kazan Brown, a Traditional Owner from Gundungurra Country, has been partnered with the Australian Museum for its inaugural Mob at the Museum: Cultural Residency Program. Mob at the Museum is an initiative in which one First Nations Elder or Knowledge Holder joins the Museum to work on a series of projects to build relationships between the Museum and First Nations communities, and to provide opportunities for the public to learn from First Nations leaders, artists, creators, and community pillars. Kazan is a staunch advocate for her Country and Culture. She has Ancestral ties to the Burrigong and Warragamba Valleys, is a descendant of Dundowra, and has maintained those ties and continues them by passing on her Valley's dreaming stories on to her children. Kazan has used the knowledge passed down to her by her Elders to fight for the health and protection of her Country and she was a powerful opponent to the raising of the Warragamba dam. I wish Kazan all the very best with this program and I encourage all interested people to look at the program on the Australian Museum website.

TINA MEYER

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—I am delighted to inform the House that on 11 July, I was able to present Tina Meyer with her certificate for the 2023 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll. Tina was added to the Roll for her voluntary work with the Blue Butterfly Institute and she has joined over 1200 women who have been honoured over the last 14 years for their valuable contributions to regional and rural communities in this State. The Blue Butterfly Institute is a not-for-profit organisation in Picton that advocates for change, inspires awareness of trauma impact and empowers survivors and their families to navigate life after sexual abuse and assault. My staff and I enjoyed hosting Tina in my office for the presentation and she was, in her own words, 'chuffed' to be recognised in this way. Volunteers like Tina are the backbone of our community. They care about the community and its people, and their goal is to help people. When people like Tina receive well-deserved recognition, they are surprised and humbled by it. The Roll is a way to acknowledge women like Tina for their contribution. I encourage everyone to nominate deserving women for recognition via the Hidden Treasures Honour Roll website.

NORTHERN DISTRICTS CRICKET CLUB – BEST COMMUNITY CRICKET CLUB

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)—I want to acknowledge how proud I am of the Northern Districts Butchers Club for winning Cricket Australia's Community Cricket Club of the Year Award. Their unwavering devotion and impactful initiatives have created a welcoming environment that fosters participation from all members of our community, particularly inspiring the younger generation. Through their supportive spirit and inclusive approach, they have paved the way for both senior male and female teams, nurturing talent, and passion alike. Moreover, the Butchers Club has not only promoted the sport of cricket but has also cultivated genuine connections and friendships among its members, fostering a love for the game and a shared enjoyment of physical activity. This club culture serves as a role model and displays the values of the Keira Community of opportunity, mateship, and inclusivity.

OPENING OF PARABOL PLAYGROUND WILLOUGHBY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—On the Saturday afternoon of 29 June, I was honoured to be a guest at the opening of the Parabol Playground at Nine by Mirvac in Willoughby. NINE by Mirvac is committed to creating welcoming places that bring the community together, delivering 6,500sqm of public open space including a

network of gardens, parks, landscaped walkways and a playground. With the Parabol Playground featuring a tube slide, fire pole, climbing nets, ladders and a high play deck, NINE by Mirvac's latest open space in Willoughby will be a real boon for my community. The playground's opening is also a testament to people power where three local children, Harry, Max and Indie, had written to the Senior Development Manager on the project. At the opening ceremony, I was honoured to meet many locals who observed the TV tower coming down and now some of it in the playground equipment. At the opening of the playground, I remarked that 'it is wonderful to welcome this park in what used to be private property. I hope that this park provides much joy to the families and children across our great community'.

TAIWANESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GALA DINNER

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—Taiwan is Australia's ninth largest trading partner. In 2023 alone, our trade was worth \$34 billion. With not only strong trading ties but shared liberal democratic values, the relationship between Australia and Taiwan is a special one. To celebrate these ties, it was a pleasure for me to join and address the 25th Annual Gala Dinner of the Taiwan Chambers of Commerce in Oceania [TCCO] on Saturday night, 29 June. The TCCO was established in September 1994 to encourage cooperation among Taiwanese businesses within Oceania to expand markets internationally. This has naturally benefitted Australia and NSW, making our State all the richer. I would like to thank the outgoing President of the TCCO, Erica Liu, for all her great leadership, dedication and service. My community of Willoughby is home to a sizeable Taiwanese Australian population, and I appreciate, firsthand, the contribution they make to the business, professional, educational, and community life of Willoughby. I would like to thank everyone, including the two talented musical stars, who made the TCCO Gala Dinner a special and memorable night.

NORTHERN DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING OF JOINT P AND CS

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—Parents & Citizens Associations [P&Cs] do so much precious work organising, volunteering and supporting local schools and school communities. On Monday night 1 July, it was a pleasure to join the Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations for their Term Two General Meeting at the North Sydney Demonstration School. I pay tribute to the immensely important work the Northern Sydney District Council has done with and for local schools over a long period of time. It makes a material difference to the quality of education in our community. I give my sincere thanks to President David Hope and his team, all the local P&C leaders, the NSW Education officials, Gemma Quinn and her team from P&C NSW. I acknowledge my colleague, Matt Cross MP, and give special thanks to the Principal of North Sydney Demonstration School, Ashley Grimmond, and his team for hosting us and giving us an impressive tour. To everyone who makes the work of our P&Cs a success in Northern Sydney, and beyond, you are deeply appreciated.

TALLAN HOOKER

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—I'd like to acknowledge young Windale local Tallan Hooker, who has recently graduated TAFE NSW with a Certificate III in Community Services. One of the 46 per cent of Hunter young people who leave high school before year 12, Tallan left school in year 10 and undertook vocational training so he could give back to his local community. Tallan wants to become a community leader and a changemaker, helping to be a positive influence on young people like him. His passion for connecting with and supporting young people at their level and in their own spaces, including the skate park and the gym through activities like go-karting and paint balling, will no doubt be valuable for him in his future career. He's aiming to go into the community, youth and disability service industry—a career path which will see him provide on-the-ground support to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. It is always fantastic to see young people from my electorate work to achieve their goals and strive to give back to our wonderful community, whichever path that journey takes. I am so proud of young people like Tallan, and I wish him all the best.

NATHAN POWER

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—As the world has been watching the 2024 Olympics in Paris, those of us from the Charlestown Electorate will keep a careful eye on one athlete in particular. Thirty-one year old Nathan Power has already had a storied water polo career, and Paris 2024 marks his second Olympics appearance for the Aussie Sharks. Born and raised in Newcastle, Nathan began competing for the Hunter Hurricanes before shifting to the UNSW Wests Magpies squad, making his first appearance for the Sharks in 2013. Nathan is a three-time Australian Waterpolo League Champion, on the winning team in 2014, 2015 and again in 2022. In 2018, he was a silver medallist at the International Swimming Federation's World League Intercontinental Cup and the World Cup. That same year, he again won silver as part of the Australian side which went head to head against Romania, Hungary and the United States at the BENU Cup in Budapest. After his

Olympic debut at the delayed 2020 Tokyo Olympics, he captained the Sharks at the World Championships in 2022. Now the right-handed, two-metre-tall centre back has taken to the pool in Paris. Good on you, Nathan!

STEVE DOLEY

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—Newcastle ferry passengers said a sad farewell to Charlestown electorate local Steve Doley. "Captain Steve", as he is affectionately known, was Newcastle Transport's longest-serving Ferry Master. When he was eighteen, three years after he joined his father and brother in the maritime industry as a deckhand, Steve became the youngest person to helm the iconic Newcastle ferry. Over his forty-five years as a Ferry Master, Steve has been witness to—and be part of—local history. In May 1988, he saw Queen Elizabeth II open Queens Wharf in Newcastle as part of Australia's bicentennial celebrations. In June 2007, he was on the harbour battling blistering winds the day the Pasha Bulker paid an unwelcome visit to Nobbys Beach. Over the course of his career, he's also dived into the harbour to rescue people who have had the misfortune of falling in—and a few who missed the last ferry home from Newcastle to Stockton after a night at the pub and decided to chance a swim across the channel. Steve's last day aboard the ferry Shortland was Friday, 12 July. My thanks to Steve for his work, and I wish him all the best for his well-earned retirement.

NORAH HEAD SPORTIES

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)—Norah Head Sporties hosted Coasties Sleep Out where local organisations and businesses came together to sleep out on the coldest, longest night of the year on the bowling greens. The night supported in raising awareness, much-needed supplies, and funds for homelessness, with 100% of donations going towards local not-for-profit organisations. The 6 teams who participated in the sleep out were Coast Hands, The Bikers Hands, Orange Sky Australia, Iris Foundation, Woman Hood Central Coast, Norah Head Sporties and supported by Because We Care Boutique and Star 104.5. It was great to be a part of this initiative to open the night and reconnect with the organisations who braved it out on this very cold night. Activities included a clothing layering challenge, a cooking challenge using emergency hampers as well as sleeping. The night raised around \$5,000 for much needed supplies such as clothes, perishables and most importantly raised awareness for the current cost of living crisis and homelessness.

SPOTTED FROG KINDERGARTEN

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 Spotted Frog Kindergarten from Lake Haven being recognized for the Excellence in Early STEM Education for their project The Mighty Mathematicians - How math became our superpower! co-developed with their children aged 3-6 years. The Early STEM Education Awards are the only awards in Australia to celebrate an outstanding commitment to early STEM education amongst early childhood educators and early primary teachers. Little Scientists is a national not-for-profit supported by the Australian Government Department of Education and champions STEM education for children aged 0-8 years. The project was sparked by the children's concern that fruit kept disappearing from their play shop, so they embarked on a four-month STEM project to experiment with maths strategies to solve their problem. For example, the children engaged in collecting, sorting, and classifying their toys and resources, as well as experimenting with inventories, stock takes, and tally systems. They even tallied their emotions! The project is a wonderful example of high-quality, age-appropriate STEM learning and the highest-quality early STEM education in NSW is taking place on the Central Coast. Well done to the Spotted Frog Kindergarten children and educators involved on this great achievement.

LIONS CLUB OF TOUKLEY

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 Lions Club of Toukley and Northlakes Leos for raising more than \$50,000 for community causes and programs. Throughout 2024 Toukley Lions Club initiated activities which enabled members to offer genuine community support. Even during these times of economic hardship, the generosity of Central Coast locals had been overwhelming, enabling the club to achieve its goals in offering help to those in need. The total donations for 2024 exceeded \$53,000 allowing the club to make generous donations to the Lions Foundation for causes such as Lions Health, Lions Spinal Research, Lions Diabetes and Children's Mobility. Most of the club's activities has been the care and support of locals including Toukley Neighbourhood Centre, World's Big BBQ for Kids Cancer, and its newest project Elsie's Retreat for Palliative Care at Wyong Hospital. Special mention goes to the Leo Club, a project of Gorokan-Kanwal Lions, where their junior members at Northlakes High School who with the help of

their amazing teachers raised more than \$15,000 and donated to more than 30 recipients. Well done to each member involved for an outstanding year to help make a difference.

MARCUS WYTHES

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Marcus Wythes has been named Grand Champion School Parader at the 2024 Royal Queensland Show. After five hours of competition and months of training leading up to the competition, Mr Wythes has outshone over 250 competitors in the 16 – 18 years category to take out the top spot. Mr Wythes is no stranger to the show ring having competed multiple times at royal shows over the past five years. He is a proud member of the Scots All Saints College Cattle Team in which he also attends as a student. Mr Wythes determination and 'can do' attitude is a credit to the young man's success. His persistence and passion have led him on a road of new experiences and opportunities through cattle showing. Congratulations to Mr Wythes, you have a bright future ahead of you in the agricultural industry.

MILLTHORPE CWA BRANCH

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Congratulations to all members of the Millthorpe CWA Branch who have been making a positive contribution to the Blayney region for 100 years this year. The CWA is the lifeblood of some many regional and rural communities in NSW and Millthorpe is no different. The Millthorpe CWA Branch do more than bake scones, the members are huge supporters of our community providing a safe and welcoming space for community members to come and learn new skills or make new friends. They go to those in need as a friend to lean on or to provide the basics like a warm blanket or a home cooked meal. In a recent Vice Regal visit, Millthorpe CWA Branch who recently catered morning tea for the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Maragret Beazley, Mr Dennis Wilson, Blayney Shire Council and volunteers from all NSW emergency services. It was a fantastic occasion that showed the comradery and passion of people living in the Blayney region. Thank you, Millthorpe CWA Branch, for your hard work in preparing this event, and your ongoing commitment to your local community. You have all made your community proud.

JASON WHITNEY

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—This statement is to recognise the achievements of Jason Whitney from Portland, NSW in the sport of touch football. Mr Whitney has been involved in the sport of touch football since he was a child. At age 14, he began refereeing at his local club in Portland and has gone on to achieve great things in his decade-long career. Now, Mr Whitney has done his family and hometown proud representing Australia refereeing at the Touch World Cup. The Touch World Cup was held between July 15 and 21 2024 in Nottingham, England and is the world's biggest tournament for touch football. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity that Mr Whitney has worked very hard to achieve, he has strived to become a level six referee and was selected to go to England. Congratulations to Mr Whitney on this momentous achievement, the Portland and wider community are very proud of you.

GOLDIE'S DULWICH HILL

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—Dulwich Hill welcomed an exciting new restaurant in Goldie's this February! Opened by Sarah McWilliam, Dulwich Hill local and former head chef at Bloodwood, and her co-owner Nicole Matak, Goldie's is a slice of Palm Springs in the heart of Dulwich Hill. Named after the famous Hollywood actress Goldie Hawn, this pink paradise boasts a cuisine formed by the fusion of Californian-Mexican, Japanese, and Australian, with a focus on fresh food and generous portion sizes. With everything from a plain cheese quesadilla or Cali burrito bowl to a Baja fish taco or chilli scrambled egg, Goldie's has the all-day menu of anyone's dreams and has quickly become a firm favourite with locals. And there is plenty of room for your pram, so mums and dads don't need to worry about having enough space to relax and enjoy their meal. I encourage everyone to head on over to Dulwich Hill and immerse themselves in Goldie's exciting new pink-tiled eating experience!

OLYMPIAN EVIE HASELDINE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I wish to congratulate Ashfield local Evie Haseldine, on her recent success sailing for Australia at the Paris Olympics. Evie was just a wide-eyed youngster the day Olympic sailor Olivia Price turned up at Drummoyne Sailing Club to show the juniors her 2012 London Olympic Games Silver Medal. It ignited an Olympic dream in young Evie. In 2018 Evie competed in the Youth Olympics, taking the 16th rung in the world rankings. Now, in 2024, she has taken to the world stage again, partnered with her mentor and longtime friend Olivia Price, to fulfil her Olympic sailing dreams in the 49er FX Skiff Category. Sailing together in the 2023 World Championships in The Netherlands in August, the pair won a bronze medal and secured Australia a quota spot in the 49erFX class in Paris. It was Australia's best result in the 49erFX class. Sailing last week at the Olympics Evie and Olivia have made us all so proud reaching the Olympic final and coming 9th overall in the competition. Congratulations Evie and Olivia!

MARRICKVILLE SPIRIT BASKETBALL

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—Congratulations to the players, coaches and supporters of Marrickville Spirit Basketball on your recent successes in the Waratah Metro Junior League Titles. Marrickville Spirit is a vibrant local basketball association whose mission is to foster a positive, supportive and secure environment that nurtures the passion for basketball among players of all ages and skill levels. Marrickville Spirit are dedicated to enhancing the lives of local children by fostering a sense of community and providing opportunities for growth and achievement. This year their representative teams have performed the outstanding feat of making the Grand Final for each of the U12 Boys and Girls, U14 Girls, U16 Boys and U18 Boys. The U12 Girls team were successful in their Grand Final, winning 45-20 against the Penrith Basketball Association. The U14 Girls team also ran out winners in a tight contest 49-42 against the Inner West Bulls. No sporting club is successful without the many dedicated hours put in by volunteers, parents and carers and supporters so a big thank you to all of those who helped make this season so great for the Spirit. Congratulations to all involved with Marrickville Spirit Basketball on such amazing results!

ALBERT AND ANTHONY BERTONI

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today I want to acknowledge Albert and Anthony Bertoni who last week celebrated 20 years since opening their first Bertoni Café in Balmain. They have achieved great success, opening another seven cafes and a catering kitchen in the meantime. The Balmain cafe remains their flagship. This significant milestone comes despite the many challenges faced by small and growing businesses throughout that time – the covid 19 pandemic that shut down our main streets for a time, the global financial crisis of 2008, the rise of smartphones, online ordering and gig-economy delivery services. There has been so much more in between. Bertoni has been named Sydney's best Café by the Sydney Morning Herald's Good Food Guide and Delicious Magazine, and their recipes have featured many times in these and other leading publications. They have employed hundreds of people and been admirably supported by the community they serve. They are an institution in Balmain, we hope they stick around for another 20 years and more. Congratulations Albert and Anthony on the success of your wonderful business and for being such an important part of our community.

ARCHER LEADERS

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today I draw to the attention of the House the work of an excellent international non-government organisation whose headquarters are in Balmain - the Kokoda Track Foundation – and their annual Archer Leaders program. Each year, as part of the Archer Leaders program, the foundation brings a group of final year university students from Papua New Guinea to Australia for a leadership exchange program. During their trip these students meet with local leaders, undertake work experience placements, and are exposed to innovative organisations tackling complex social challenges. During the winter recess I was pleased to host this years' Archer Leaders group and give them a tour of NSW Parliament House. I was so impressed with their passion and dedication, and I really enjoyed the occasion. Many of us swapped contact information and I'll be following along closely as they finish up their studies and go on to become great leaders in their own local communities. I look forward to seeing all that they achieve from here.

ADDI ROAD COMMUNITY COOK-UP

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today I'd like to acknowledge the excellent and important work of Addi Road Community Centre. Addi Rd is a charity based on Addison Road in Marrickville. They have a food relief outreach service in Camperdown, in the electorate of Balmain. Addi Rd Community Centre works to elevate human rights, arts & culture and sustainability. They provide food relief to over 8,000 people every week. They manage a 3.6ha heritage site and provide space for artists and NGOs. They are an impressive operation. It was so nice to join their team at the Camperdown Food Pantry in July for their monthly community cook-up. They do such amazing work helping locals in need, countering inequality and doing what they can to make sure people are fed during this cost of living crisis. I want to thank the team for having me along to lend a hand. It really is an amazing operation run by a small group of passionate people.

RELOVE

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government)—I recognise the remarkable work of ReLove, a local charity founded by Renuka 'Ren' Fernando and Ben Stammer in 2019. ReLove rethinks support for vulnerable individuals, many of whom live in my electorate of Heffron, by partnering with local volunteers and businesses to reclaim pre-loved or surplus furniture and homewares. These items, saved from landfill, are given to those in need to rebuild their lives through the ReLove Free Store. Their 'store' offers a safe space for people in crisis to furnish their new homes, empowering them to choose how they live according to their needs and tastes. Having the agency to choose their furniture gives those in need a sense of dignity and is crucial in helping them feel like they are truly starting their own new chapter in life. I congratulate ReLove on securing their

new site in Alexandria and thank Ren, Ben and their team for the incredible work they, which makes such a significant impact in our community.

MINNAMURRA PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the advocacy and contributions of the Minnamurra Progress Association, a community organisation and a fine example of how residents work effectively with state and local governments to protect the village and environment of Minnamurra. I acknowledge co-chairs Graeme Collinson-Smith Cliff Mason. I acknowledge Secretary Iain Scott, Treasurer and Public Officer, Aapo Skorulis, Auditor, Douglas Luckman, and the Committee comprising of John Haseltine, John Bunce, Mercy Kibbey, Andrew Wilson, and Robert Westly. I understand the Association had a very successful meeting last night, hosting organisers of the upcoming triathlon in October. No doubt swimming up the Minnamurra River will be a lot more enjoyable than the Sein! Whether it's working with stakeholders on sporting events, raising local environmental concerns, protecting the Minnamurra River with water testing and monitoring and shoring up its riverbanks, or having a say on sensible planning for the village and our region, the Minnamurra Progress Association is a wonderful local advocacy body and I encourage Minnamurra locals to join. The Association welcomes all residents to their meetings and will meet again on Tuesday 3 September.

KIAMA NETBALL CHAMPIONS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises The Kiama Netball community who recently competed at Baulkham Hills for the HART Netball NSW Junior State Titles. A huge congratulations to Kiama Under Thirteens, winners of the Netball Junior NSW State Titles! After a massive three days of Netball and 19 games in total, all teams are to be commended, having played in all kinds of weather over the weekend. Sore and exhausted, they pushed through to fight till the end to finish top of the ladder to take home the trophy as winners, with only one loss and one draw over the tournament. I also congratulate Kiama Under Twelves, runners up, in the Netball Junior NSW State Titles. A gruelling weekend of netball, both teams showed true grit, playing smart and hard, and with pride and true sportsmanship - they sure did Kiama proud! I acknowledge U13 coaches, Dave Whitchurch, Abbey Whitchurch and Manager Lisa Pickens, and U12 coach Michael Wilkins and Manager, Anne-Marie Esler, and president Michelle Gregory. I thank all of the parents and support crew for a very successful weekend – Kiama for the win!

SCOTT HUNTER

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise Scott Hunter for his distinguished service and dedication to the NSW Police Force. Scott began his career at the Goulburn Police Academy at the age of eighteen. Upon completing his training, he was first deployed to Campbelltown Police Station before transferring to Camden after eighteen months. In 1992, Scott and his family relocated to Dubbo, and he later returned to Campbelltown Police Station, serving there for eleven years. In 2006, he took on a new challenge in moving to Crookwell. Promoted to Sector Supervisor in 2008, Scott managed operations across Crookwell, Bigga, Tuena, and Taralga. Scott's work naturally saw him become involved within the community however he also enjoyed participating in local sports such as soccer both as player and coach and cricket. Scott has been a well-recognised and respected member of the Crookwell community and the NSW Police Force and now after thirty-five years of service he has retired to spend with family. I take this time to recognise Scott's service to NSW and his overall commitment to the well-being and safety of the community over many years. Thank you, Scott, and may you enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)—I congratulate the exceptional student leadership team of Holsworthy High School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the student leadership team for 2024, namely Captains Nikini De Fonseka and Daniel McMahon, and Prefects Vrinda Dhar, Andrew Dixon, Ella Fitzgerald, Phoenix Freitag, Sebika Ghimire, Tarra Hine, Hunter Kayess, Caitlin Khamsing, Mitchell Knott, Tenaeya Lopes-Kristen, Gisela Lopez, Angela Maatouk, Amelia McGrath, Avani Nandika, Kaden Napa'a, Santi Ripoll, Tahlia Stonehill, Maddison Szymanski, Trisha Tamhankar, Osharn Tupaea, and Aliyah Von. With the guidance of their incredible Principal Mark Watkins, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Holsworthy High School.

BONNET BAY PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge Bonnet Bay Public School Parents and Citizens Association for receiving a funding boost of \$12,225 from the 2023 Community Building Partnership Program for a revamp of their school hall and outdoor space. Bonnet Bay Public School is a friendly and vibrant community that offers high quality education in a supportive environment. These funds will provide replacement stage curtains in the school hall as well as provide a brand-new barbecue. The new barbecue space will be used for fundraising activities by the Parents and Citizens Association and will be available for use by other local community organisations through the Share Our Space program. This would not have been achieved without the hard work of the Bonnet Bay Public School Parents and Citizens Association. I recognise Matt Wegrzyn, Danielle Arthur, Janice Dipayan-Chen, Mark Faulkner, Danielle Marsh, Joanne Notley and Renae Klause, as well as the leadership of Principal Elizabeth Rudder. I thank Bonnet Bay Public School Parents and Citizens Association for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it delivers in our community.

TAREN POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge the Taren Point Public School Parents and Citizens Association for receiving a funding boost of \$22,120 from the 2023 Community Building Partnership Program for a new shelter and buddy benches. Taren Point Public School is an inclusive community that is committed to students becoming successful and creative lifelong learners. This funding will provide new buddy benches and shelter that will also provide better accessibility for students with disabilities. This much needed project can also be used as a teaching area for students to learn outside in their school's beautiful green surroundings. None of this would be possible without the dedication and of Taren Point Public School's Parents and Citizens Association. I recognise the executive committee members, namely President Sara Jordan, Vice Presidents Natalie Fenton and Jason Ribar, Treasurer Carol Dobson-Stone and Secretary Lacey Johnston for their efforts. I also acknowledge Business Manager Anyes McLean, as well as the leadership of Principal James Nobbs. I thank the Taren Point Public School Parents and Citizens Association for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and I look forward to seeing the positive impact this makes for our local students.

CLASSIC BUTCHERY

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I would like to recognise the opening of a new business in our local community. Classic Butchery has recently opened its doors providing an authentic Italian butchery in Five Dock. I would like to congratulate Lenny and Marisa on a successful launch. Starting a new venture takes courage, determination and hard work, and we recognise and acknowledge your vision coming to life. It was wonderful to see so many members of our community and supporters visit this new business on their opening. The success of this grand opening event is a testament to the quality service Lenny and Marisa provide to our local community. Congratulations Lenny and Marisa, I have no doubt Classic Butchery will grow in success. I wish you all the very best in the future.

OUR FUTURE SHOALHAVEN

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—I would like to recognise an active and passionate support network and advocacy group for the South Coast, Our Future Shoalhaven. I was grateful to meet several the members of Our Future Shoalhaven in my office recently and was inspired by their commitment, collective wisdom and expertise and effectiveness in their efforts to Keep Jervis Bay Unspoilt. The values of Our Future Shoalhaven resonate with so many across the South Coast electorate. The natural beauty of the Shoalhaven, particularly Jervis Bay, attract so many visitors to our area no matter the season, and protecting this precious part of the world is important to all who live, love and work on the lands of the South Coast electorate. Our Future Shoalhaven approach is focused on sustainability without compromising the existing values, assets and liveability and uniting to protect and restore the natural environment. I admire their commitment to maintaining the character of villages and quality of life for all residents.

MICHAEL DAVEY

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Michael Davey of Nowra who has just completed his fourth ride around Australia to raise funds for charity. On this ride, Michael is supporting the not-for-profit - Soldier On, supports Australian Defence personnel and Veterans injured physically or psychologically in the line of duty. Michael and his team have raised \$137,417 at the time of writing proudly exceeding his goal of \$100,000 by the end of the ride. A natural consequence of serving in a war zone is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. Alarming, Defence personnel and Veterans, have one of the highest suicide rates of any occupation. Michael continues to inspire PTSD sufferers to have a conversation with a friend about their depression or anxiety and seek professional help. Michael suffered PTSD for obtained years from his service

in the Navy, and things only improved when Michael found professional help. I admire Michael and his ongoing commitment to raising money for our veterans and their families, and I thank him for his advocacy in mental health.

ST GEORGE AND SUTHERLAND MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to acknowledge and thank the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation for the life-changing work they do in medical research. The Foundation primarily funds and facilitates the transformative work of the medical researchers at St George and Sutherland hospitals. The Foundation recently launched a new dementia research campaign to raise awareness and funds for the prevention and treatment of neuro-degenerative conditions. While there is no cure for neuro-degenerative conditions, research funded by the Foundation's grants are working tirelessly to better understand these diseases. Dementia represents one of humanity's most daunting health challenges, with a rapidly growing number of Australians impacted each year. We are so fortunate to have organisations like the St George Medical Research Foundation, who are working hard to create scientific discoveries that could unlock new hope for millions of patients and their families. I encourage everyone who can to donate to this wonderful foundation. On behalf of the Kogarah electorate, I thank the St George Medical Research Foundation and express my deepest appreciation for the incredible work they do to improve health outcomes in our local community.

PRINCESS DELANY

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I wish to congratulate and recognise Bexley North resident, Ms Princess Delany who represented the Kogarah electorate in the NSW Youth Parliament program. The Youth Parliament initiative offers high school students in years 10 to 12 a platform to voice their concerns and propose solutions on issues affecting their local communities. As a Sierra Leonean woman, Princess has always shown an unwavering commitment and passion to inclusivity and representation. Since an early age, Princess has been raising awareness of the inextricable connection between land and First Nations students, as well as the importance of supporting their wellbeing. It is truly an inspiration to see someone at such a young age fighting to make a positive difference in our local community. I wish Princess all the best for the future and have no doubt that she will continue to represent the best interests of our local community.

DR KAM YOUNG

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to commend and acknowledge Kogarah resident, Dr Kam Young for his distinguished service to the people of St George over the past forty years. Dr Young graduated in medicine at the University of Sydney in 1963 and spent two years at Liverpool Hospital. Not long after, he opened his own medical practice on Montgomery Street, Kogarah. Now after 40 years of treating the people of Kogarah, Dr Young plans to retire and spend more time with his family. The Young Medical practice is well-known among local residents as a homely practice, one that is said to feel like walking into your own home. Although he has stepped down, his wife Winnie and daughter Megan plan to keep the practice running. On behalf of the St George community, I want to thank Dr Young and express my deepest appreciation for the work he has done in looking after our community for forty years.

SE-BOM LEE

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I rise to congratulate a local resident of Concord, Se-Bom Lee who has represented Australia in swimming at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Se-Bom swam for Australia in the Men's 200m Backstroke event where he finished first in his heat with a time of 1:58.30, becoming the 18th fastest man in the world in the 200m Backstroke. Se-Bom also represented Australia in his Olympic debut at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics where he competed in the Men's 400m Individual Medley. Competing in the Olympics is a remarkable achievement, and Se-Bom's selection is a testament to his hard-work, dedication, and perseverance throughout his sporting career. As Australians, we love watching the swimming at the Olympics and cheering on our athletes. We love to see the camaraderie and thrilling action of the pool. I know that Se-Bom's achievement will inspire a generation of budding swimmers who dream about going to the Olympics. On behalf of our community, I sincerely congratulate Se-Bom. You have made us immensely proud, and I wish you all the very best in the future.

HARRIET HUDSON

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I rise to congratulate local resident Harriet Hudson who has represented Australia in rowing at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Harriet competed in the Women's Double Sculls rowing event alongside teammate Amanda Bateman. The pair competed across three races and secured 7th place with a finals time of 6:47.66. Harriet has also previously represented Australia at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics where she won Bronze in the Women's Quadruple Sculls. Harriet's selection to the Australian Olympic rowing team is a testament to her hard-work, dedication, and perseverance in all aspects of her sporting career. Representing

Australia at the Olympics is a great honour, and she has embodied that spirit with camaraderie, teamwork, and passion. Her achievement is very inspiring, particularly for young women in rowing. On behalf of our community, I sincerely congratulate Harriet. We are immensely proud of your achievement, and I wish you all the very best in the future.

MILTON-ULLADULLA ROTARY

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the Rotary Club of Milton-Ulladulla who recently held their annual changeover dinner. Rotarians and their guests gathered to enjoy dinner and to witness outgoing president Bernard Jones pass on the president's "collar" to incoming president Ed Zonneveldt. The evening also saw several Rotarians honoured with awards. Area Governor Haseena Twiddle presented Bernard Smith with the 'District 9705 Area 6 'Rotarian of the Year' award and Louise Garrett was presented with the clubs 'Rotarian of the Year' award, while Leonie Smith was honoured with the prestigious Max Bayliss award. The Max Bayliss award was created in honour of the late Max Bayliss who was a generous and well-loved man that always offered his time freely to the community. Like Max, Leonie works tirelessly for her community and is very deserving of this accolade. President Ed also introduced his new board - Geoff Johns, Wayne Fry, Yvonne Young, Craig Saunders, Bernard Jones, Craig Cameron, Issa Shalhoub and Tim Trescowthick. I wish President Ed and his team all the best for the coming year, and I thank you all for your ongoing commitment to make our community a special place to live.

80TH ANNIVERSARY POW

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I was honoured to join Federal Member for Riverina Michael McCormack MP and Cowra Council Mayor, Councillors, and Youth in welcoming Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Governor of New South Wales Margaret Beazley, and Japanese Ambassador Kazuhiro Suzuki to Cowra for a special ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the Cowra Breakout. Marking one of the most dramatic events of World War II in Australia, where on August 5, 1944, at 1:30 am, Japanese Prisoners broke out from the Cowra Prisoner of War Camp (POW). 1,100 Japanese prisoners attacked the perimeter fence, resulting in the death of 234 prisoners, hundreds of prisoner escapes, and 3 Australian guards and an officer killed. Commemorations began on Friday, July 26, when I attended the opening of Intertwined, a story written and composed by Lusi Austin. On Sunday, August 4, I attended a luncheon followed by the Peace Bell Ceremony and Torch Run, a Lantern Parade, a community event, and dinner. Commemorations continued Monday, August 5, at 1:30 am, where a gathering of solemn reflections occurred. Later that same day, I attended the official ceremony and wreath laying. The anniversary commemorations provided an opportunity to reflect, remember, and reconcile this historic event.
