

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday 13 August 2024**

**The Speaker (The Hon. Gregory Michael Piper)** took the chair at 12:00.

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

### *Members*

#### **MEMBER FOR BLUE MOUNTAINS**

**The SPEAKER:** Though she is absent from the Chamber today, I acknowledge the birthday of the member for Blue Mountains. I wish her a very happy birthday.

### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome our guests in the public galleries, all of which are full, to Australia's oldest and first Parliament. As we say, this Chamber is the beating heart of representative democracy in New South Wales. I extend a warm welcome to guests of the member for Wagga Wagga: Lara McGirr, the member's daughter, and her colleague Jade Brooks. I welcome a big group from Narrabeen Lakes Probus Club, who are guests of the member for Pittwater, and teachers and students from Koonawarra Public School, who are guests of the member for Shellharbour. I acknowledge students and staff of Fairfield Public School, who are guests of the member for Fairfield, and Deena Clemson, a work experience student and guest of the member for Port Stephens. I also welcome Matthew Hayes, a guest of the member for Balmain. I warmly welcome guests from the Morisset Ladies Probus Club in the electorate of Lake Macquarie. It is wonderful to have so many visitors from Probus clubs today. I welcome students from Wadalba Community School, who are visiting the Parliament today for study. Finally, I welcome guests of the member for Coffs Harbour: Perminder, Sarina and Rohan Thandi.

### *Announcements*

#### **PARLIAMENT HOUSE LIFTS**

**The SPEAKER (12:05):** I advise members that unfortunately at this point the building only has three lifts in operation.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Spend \$100 million and we've got bodgie lifts.

**The SPEAKER:** If we could spend \$100 million on lifts that would be really nice. Due to there being only three lifts in operation, I will extend the time for the division bell to five minutes. However, if the occupant of the chair perceives a problem, it will be subject to their discretion. Members will not be disadvantaged.

### *Members*

#### **ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF EPPING**

##### **Resignation**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House of the receipt of a letter on Monday 12 August 2024 from Dominic Francis Perrottet resigning his seat as member for the electoral district of Epping.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That in accordance with section 76 of the Electoral Act 2017 the seat of the member for Epping be declared vacant, by reason of the resignation of Dominic Francis Perrottet.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise members that it is my intention, if possible, to provide details of the decision on the by-election date and subsequent dates during tomorrow's sitting.

*Bills***STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2024****Assent**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Governor notifying Her Excellency's assent to the bill.

*Question Time***SYDNEY METRO CITY AND SOUTHWEST**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (12:08):** Mr Speaker—

*[Government members interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will come to order. I note that the Leader of the Opposition is not in attendance today and is being represented by the Leader of The Nationals. The member for Dubbo has the call.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Did Josh Murray fail to tell the Minister that the metro had to be signed off by the National Rail Safety Regulator before it opened?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:09):** I thank the member for Dubbo for his question. I appreciate that he is trying very hard. At least The Nationals supply us with some entertainment on the way through. As I have updated the House on multiple occasions, it was clear from not only the announcement I made about the target date but also all the way through about our ambitions, as I have said to the House on multiple occasions, that our number one priority is a safe and reliable railway. That applies not only to metro, and the part of metro that is functioning now on the north-west and future parts of the metro, but also our rail network, our bus network, our light rail network and our ferry network. They must be safe and reliable, no ifs, no buts. As I said, the opening of the metro is subject to final testing and regulatory approvals, and final confirmation of the opening date will be given in coming weeks when the successful operator—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: I take my point of order under Standing Order 129. The question is about the recognition of the National Rail Safety Regulator, which has been referred to in the media this morning. Did Josh Murray fail to tell the Minister that was required? That was the question.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The Minister will continue her answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** As I said, it was subject to final testing and regulatory approvals. If the Leader of The Nationals would like me to explain this really slowly and clearly for him, this applies on multiple levels. There are both internal testings and checks that need to occur, safety assurance that needs to occur, contractual obligations that need to occur, but also the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, an independent national regulator, needs to sign off.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: It is a fairly succinct question. My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. Did Josh Murray fail to tell the Minister that she needed to?

**The SPEAKER:** I have ruled on the point of order. I did not uphold it earlier and I do not uphold it now.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** On that basis, I will continue to explain for the National Party how this really works. Let us move on. I update the House that the exercises that we made clear needed to occur have been finalised. All of the agencies that are involved, the multiple agencies, have finalised their work. They have submitted their paperwork to the national office of the regulator. I thank everyone involved in that complicated work. We anticipate that we will have final sign-off from that regulator very soon. Of course, as soon as we have sign-off, we will open that line as quickly and as safely as possible.

**STATE BUDGET**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (12:12):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier please update the House on the unprecedented debt handed to the current Government, including the largest forecasted debt in the State's history of \$188 billion—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I need to hear the member's question.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** Would you like me to start again?

**The SPEAKER:** Yes, I would. The member for Coffs Harbour will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** Will the Premier please update the House on the unprecedented debt handed to the current Government, including the largest forecasted debt in the State's history of \$188 billion, a \$7 billion

budget black hole of unfunded programs and the delivery of the two largest budget deficits in the State's history by the former Liberal-Nationals Government?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:13):** That is an unexpected but important question. The member is right: The previous Government, under its terms of office, was projecting \$188 billion worth of gross debt by 2026. It brought down the two biggest deficits the State has ever seen, \$15 billion in 2021 and \$10 billion in 2022. Crucially, and this is really important, in the nine months to March 2023, the former Treasurer, who I saw in the newspaper just got a new job, added \$27 billion of new policy measures in nine months. That is the largest spending spree ever by any government, by any Treasurer, in the history of New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** To put this in perspective, the debt handed to the current Government is the largest amount as an overall figure or as a percentage of gross State product in the history of the State of New South Wales.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** You've just handed down the largest taxing budget ever.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I heard the member for Wahoonga say something about taxes. This may not be known by members opposite, but the previous Government instituted \$34 billion of revenue measures during its time in government—supposedly a low-taxing government. There is hope in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government has, under Labor's time in office, reduced the amount of debt expected to be accommodated by the New South Wales Government by June 2026 by \$9.3 billion. Our expenses growth is 1.7 per cent; that is expenses year on year as per the forward estimates. To put that in perspective, the previous Government had expenses growth of 6.3 per cent, and that includes the COVID years. We acknowledge there was unprecedented spending during COVID. If the COVID years are taken out, it was 5.1 per cent. What was inflation during that period? It was 2 to 3 per cent.

Under Labor, for every dollar collected in new revenue, 51 per cent will be spent and the rest will be saved to try and pay down some of the extraordinary debt accumulated under the previous—a member of the Opposition is shaking their head. This is all true, my friend. I would love to say it is not, but it is all true. I would love to see what alternative facts the Opposition has. I note that the spending has not stopped. Since the Liberals and The Nationals have moved to the Opposition benches, the Leader of the Opposition has proposed that they would have the first home buyer concessions and Labor's tax cuts for first home buyers; that costs \$660 million. Dungowan Dam costs \$1.3 billion; Wyangala Dam costs \$4.6 billion; the Great Western Highway tunnel costs \$11 billion; the northern Beaches Link costs \$10 billion— [*Extension of time*]

Even the regional seniors travel card—the Opposition has been arguing about that—is an additional \$308 million. The Active Kids voucher over four years will cost \$648 million.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The Commonwealth Games will cost \$4 billion. We should not let it be forgotten that there were a whole bunch of measures that the previous Government would extend into the future that had no basis in the budget. They were not funded. For \$7 billion worth of measures they said, "We're going to keep them. We haven't made any provision for it, but don't worry about it, they're safe." They were projecting \$180 billion, which is the largest deficit in Australia's history. They wanted to tax the hell out of the New South Wales economy and have an additional \$7 billion worth of zombie programs, which were apparently going to go ahead but had no funding attached to them. Is it any wonder when one looks at the Leader of The Nationals? He said on 19 June, "The mismanagement allegations of Labor just don't stack up." He is saying that Labor's criticisms of the previous Government just do not stack up. "We were able to walk and chew gum," he said. "So we'll keep talking about and prosecuting the case to keep spending money." These are supposedly the political parties of strong economic management.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** But these are the worst set of economic figures and the worst budget handed from one government to another in the history of the State of New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There will be, from time to time, requests from the Opposition for the Government to spend money, to look at the provision of the New South Wales budget and say, "This is where it needs to be spent."

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I would say humbly that no member of this Parliament should take any of that advice seriously from the Opposition when it has left this State with books that can only be described as derelict.

#### TRANSPORT FOR NSW EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (12:18):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Yesterday it was reported that a Transport for NSW train guard earning \$80 an hour was acting unprofessionally while on duty. What action is the Minister taking to ensure this sort of behaviour is a one-off occurrence?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Terrigal to order for the first time. Members will come to order. I am struggling a little with my vocalisation today so it will be easier for me to remove recalcitrant members from the Chamber.

**Mrs Wendy Tuckerman:** Make sure you do it to that side too.

**The SPEAKER:** I will, but the interjections of Opposition members are more detrimental to the flow of question time. I call the Minister.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:19):** Those opposite are detrimental to a range of things. I thank the member for her question. It is absolutely critical and goes without saying that we expect Sydney Trains employees to be focused on their job when they are at work because we rely on them. Every day 10,000 Sydney Trains workers move over one million people on our rail network across our State. They need to be focused on the job to make sure that train system is safe and reliable. Last night I saw some of the footage of the Sydney Trains guard and it is unacceptable in every single way. The behaviour I witnessed on the video is concerning. It is not in line with the standards at Sydney Trains or across the transport network or the public sector.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** The staff member has been identified and suspended from duty. They have been stood down while Sydney Trains conducts an investigation.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Those opposite might want to interject, but a serious question was asked and I am giving a serious answer. We treat the safety and welfare of passengers across the transport network with utmost seriousness. The incident will be managed by Sydney Trains in accordance with its code of conduct and operational safety procedures. I emphasise, however, that the vast majority of the 10,000 staff who run our rail network take a great deal of pride in what they do. They bring a great deal of professionalism to their job every day, but the kind of conduct that the member—

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129.

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

**Ms Robyn Preston:** The question I asked was about what action the Minister is taking to ensure this behaviour does not occur again.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has been relevant to the question. She just has not used the words that the member wants to hear. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** As I was saying, this kind of conduct is not acceptable in any way. It is also unacceptable to the many other colleagues of that guard across Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW. I recognise those frontline workers today. I accept the member's question and I have answered it. I also thank members of the media who have engaged constructively about these issues. Fundamentally, I would have thought that every single member in this House is concerned with the safety of the travelling public. No ifs, no buts.

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (12:22):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning and Minister for Western Sydney. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to deliver full and fair funding to New South Wales public schools?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (12:23):** I thank the member for Auburn. There is nothing more important to this Government than delivering full and fair funding to our public schools. On day one of coming to office our Government got to work in rebuilding public education. In answering this question, I will give a shout out to quite a few people. In the gallery we have students from Wadalba and Fairfield, and the kids from Koonawarra Public School who I met just before question time. I say to those students, and to the teachers who brought them here

today, that the answering of this question is all about you. Everything we are doing in public education is for you and it is all about your future.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I am proud to be this Government's education Minister because we are spending more on public education than has ever been spent. This is record funding. Those opposite interject. They do not like hearing about this Government's record investment into public education. We are building the schools that growing suburbs need. We lifted the wages cap for teachers and gave our expert teachers the biggest pay rise in a generation. We have made permanent more than 20,000 teachers and support staff. Importantly, we have lifted our share of the Gonski funding for public schools from 72 per cent to 75 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard [SRS] two years earlier than those opposite would have delivered. That means that in 2025 we will have lifted funding for our public schools—the public schools that the amazing kids in the gallery go to and all the public schools that have lessons happening right now as we debate this—by \$481 million. We are engaged in a robust debate at the moment with the Commonwealth Government about lifting its share of public funding to ensure that we reach 100 per cent of the SRS.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That means that we need the Commonwealth Government to use its ability to raise revenue—it has much bigger pockets than the State Government—to make sure that it contributes as part of this funding arrangement. During the life of the agreement that we are hoping to sign with the Commonwealth Government, we are lifting funding by at least \$4.8 billion over the next 10 years. [*Extension of time*]

That means the Minns Labor Government has got New South Wales closer to full and fair funding than any government before it. We are asking the Commonwealth to come good on its commitment and realise the once-in-a-generation opportunity to join with us and meet 100 per cent of the SRS. In fact, in 2016 now Prime Minister Albanese promised to deliver \$37 billion to make that gap up. Unfortunately, the offer that has been made to New South Wales is less than half of that. So we are saying to the Prime Minister and to the Commonwealth that they have an opportunity to join with us to fully fund our public schools. All our kids deserve to be funded, in every classroom, in every public school, to realise their full potential.

We will be saying a lot over the next three days about our success, for instance, at the Olympics. The success of New South Wales athletes at the Olympics is like a roll call of excellence from the State's public schools. Members just need to look at the Fox sisters from Blaxland High School and Jessica Hull who went to Albion Park High School. In our public schools we are providing both the pursuit of equity for our kids as well as excellence. We need the Commonwealth Government to come to the table with a better offer. Those opposite trashed public education.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** They hate hearing about this, but this Government will invest for our kids. We invite the Albanese Government to join with us and do the same.

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

#### TREATY COMMISSIONERS

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:28):** My question is directed to the Premier. In April this year the Minns Government announced that the recruitment for treaty commissioners had commenced. Four months later some Aboriginal communities in New South Wales have informed us that they have not yet heard an update or news about this, despite NSW Labor's election promise that it would involve and include these communities in the process. What involvement has there been by Aboriginal communities in the treaty or agreement-making processes to date, and what is planned in the coming months?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:28):** I thank the member for Newtown her question. It is true that the Government is committed to a treaty process—it took that commitment to the election campaign. It is also true that the process of making a treaty must be done in consultation with Indigenous communities in New South Wales. The Government has not been inconsistent with its election pledge or the process in which it is rolling out its election pledge. My understanding is that in April the Minister and Cabinet opened applications for three commissioners for the treaty process. That application process closed in May this year. The applicants are going through probity checks at the moment and will be presented to Cabinet in the not too distant future. Once they have gone to Cabinet, we will announce them. No doubt they are eminent Indigenous Australians that are committed to the idea of treaty.

In recognition of the member's question, I inform the House that it is not easy an easy process; it is extremely complex and difficult. The process involves complex negotiations around land use, laws and our obligations as part of the Closing the Gap agreement with the Commonwealth Government. Each nation in New South Wales has different perspectives on how policy should be rolled out or even in what sequence government spending and decision-making should take place. Over 30 nations represent Indigenous people in this State and the treaty process has to encompass all of them, otherwise, to the member's point, some would be left out. We cannot appoint 30 commissioners; we can appoint only three. It is challenging to have three commissioners represent a diverse, widespread and important constituency in New South Wales.

We will get the balance right, but it is a long process. I cannot promise an end date. It will largely be held in the context of the Government's negotiations with First Nations people. To put it into perspective, the Victorian Government began treaty negotiations seven years ago and still has not completed it. We want this process to fully involve consultation with First Nations people in New South Wales and we would love to have an outcome as soon as possible. I do not mean to disappoint the member or anyone interested in this issue, but it is complex public policy and we want to get it right.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (12:31):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plan to deliver better health care for the communities in Sydney's north-west?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:31):** I thank the hardworking member for Parramatta. There is a big hospital at Westmead in her local area and I know that she spends a lot of time there, engaging with staff. I thank her on behalf of those staff and that community. It is pleasing for me to inform the House that yesterday the Premier and I turned the sod on the beginning of the construction process for the redevelopment of Ryde Hospital. That redevelopment comes after an investment of over half a billion dollars, and it is needed in that community.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** If we look at the planning data, that area is projected to increase to around 180,000 people by 2041, which is an increase of around 30 per cent. We know there has been significant infill development in and around that area, and we need to make sure that we are delivering the health services that the community needs and deserves. Half a billion dollars is a significant investment. In fact, the original commitment was not going to be enough. Pleasingly, the Treasurer advanced an additional \$50 million to make sure that that community gets the hospital it needs and deserves.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Members on this side of the Chamber have a novel practice of making sure our hospitals have emergency departments. Rouse Hill Hospital may or may not have had an emergency department attached to it. Ryde Hospital will have an expanded emergency department, a brand-new and expanded intensive care unit, new paediatric services and new imaging services. Importantly—and I know this will be important to the member for Ryde—I have saved a small sliver of land to enable him to have a cat park. I know that is important to the member for Ryde and, on this occasion, I think we can do it. We have tweaked the budget and I reckon we can deliver it. Importantly, this investment builds on the other hospitals that we are upgrading in and around Western Sydney. We are upgrading Fairfield Hospital. We are upgrading Canterbury Hospital. [*Extension of time*]

We are upgrading the Nepean Hospital.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for North Shore to remove herself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the end of question time.

[*Pursuant to standing order, the member for North Shore left the Chamber at 12:35.*]

**Mr RYAN PARK:** We have provided significant investment into the new Bankstown Hospital. There is well over \$1 billion going into that community to make sure they get the health services they need and deserve. Importantly—and I am sure those in the gallery agree—whilst the bricks and mortar of a hospital are important, adequate and additional staff are critically important. Yesterday Dr Paul spoke about that and I have also had a number of chats with people at Ryde about the importance of the new hospital. That is why this Government is investing record amounts to make sure that we have the workforce now and into the future.

We are making sure that we are rolling out the right ratios across our hospitals, which is already underway. We are delivering 500 additional paramedics targeted for regional, rural and remote New South Wales. We are introducing study subsidies for students undertaking medical training to make sure that they have a pathway and

not a HECS debt once they complete their degrees. We are investing right across New South Wales. Pleasingly, for the people of Ryde, at the end of 2027 we are hoping that they will have a hospital that they are proud of, that they can utilise, that keeps up with the growth and demand of their services, and that delivers health services that they need and truly deserve.

### **SYDNEY METRO CITY AND SOUTHWEST**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (12:37):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister oppose forcing non-union members to pay a levy to the Rail, Tram and Bus Union?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:37):** I thank the member for her question. I will address it in detail when it comes to industrial relations. It is interesting that members opposite want to ask questions about it, but I will absolutely address it in detail. I briefly add to the question earlier from the member for Dubbo. It is interesting. I fear that he perhaps was handed a question by the Leader of the Opposition without being well informed. He asked about whether the Premier and others said that we needed the regulator to sign off. In fact, on 27 May at Waterloo station the Premier said—

**Mrs Tanya Davies:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The Minister is not answering the question that I asked; it is completely different. I believe there is an opportunity for the Minister to give an explanation after question time.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister's answer is prima facie a breach of Standing Order 129. The Minister will be mindful of that when answering the question.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** The directly relevant answer is that we are not doing bargaining fees. In relation to the member for Dubbo, on 27 May at Waterloo station the Premier said, "We still expect it to open in the middle of the year. We can't give you an exact date, but that's primarily because the independent safety auditor has to inspect the line."

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. I will hear the point of order from the member for Wahroonga. I believe the Minister has answered the question, but I do not have a copy of it in front of me.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The question was, "Will the Minister oppose forcing non-union members to pay a levy to the Rail, Tram and Bus Union?" The Minister did not say that; she talked about bargaining or something. It was not an answer to the question. The Minister needs to be directly relevant in her answer.

**The SPEAKER:** If the member for Wahroonga is not satisfied by the answer, I am sure that the Minister will be directly relevant. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I have answered the question. The Premier clearly said, "That's primarily because the independent safety auditor has to inspect the line. It has to be run with people on it first so they can simulate not just the operation of the metro but also things like medical emergencies."

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I am answering your question.

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My original question was about whether Josh Murray failed to tell the Minister. However, the Minister is talking about the Premier.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will resume his seat. Has the Minister completed her answer?

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** If I am asked another question, I will complete the quote for members opposite.

### **ESSENTIAL WORKERS**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (12:40):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's commitment to reinvest in our essential workers in New South Wales to improve their pay and conditions?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:40):** I thank the member for her question. She is an exceptional, strong advocate for the people of Granville and for the essential workers in her electorate and across Greater Western Sydney.

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** Unlike members opposite, the Minns Government remains committed to our essential public sector workers. We are the party of the workers; we are the party of the essential workers. If today's commentary in the media from those opposite is anything to go by, they have not learnt anything. Like their Federal counterparts, they continue to fall into this trap. They continue to go back to their ideology, and they continue to bait themselves. They do not care about workplace safety. They do not care about the new Industrial Court. They do not care about essential workers. They do not care about safety at work. When we came to government 15 months ago, what did we find? The SafeWork regulator did not appear anywhere; it was hidden in five layers of bureaucracy. Now it will be a standalone safety regulator.

The Minns Government will not be put off or distracted by those opposite and their commentary. We went to the last election with a commitment to abolish the Liberal-Nationals Government wages cap to make sure that essential workers get the pay rises they deserve. That was our mandate. That was what we were elected to do, and we have given our public sector workers a big pay rise. When those opposite were in government, what did they say during the pandemic? They talked about how amazing the pandemic heroes were. What did they give the pandemic heroes? Zero. They gave nothing to the pandemic heroes, and the essential workers had to go to the commission and beg to get 0.3 per cent. Those opposite did not care about our essential workers and gave them bits of per cents. Our pandemic heroes absolutely deserve every offer that we have made and everything that we have provided to them.

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** We are sitting down and negotiating. We scrapped the wages cap in less than 18 months. We have brought in the Industrial Court. We have established a cooperative way of bargaining, talking and listening to essential workers, while those opposite did nothing for 12 years with award reform. [*Extension of time*]

Importantly, we toughened criminal penalties for assaulting retail workers. That should have been done ages ago. We were elected to ensure that that was done. We tackled the scourge of silicosis by leading a national ban on engineered stone, which came into effect on 1 July. We have a lot of work to do to make sure that people get screened and diagnosed and to support their pathway towards having quality of life. We have established a silica worker register and increased penalties for serious work health and safety breaches. We have closed the loopholes that allowed businesses to insure against fines and penalties, which is what those opposite allowed. We passed laws to ensure that both business and union representatives are on icare, and we created an industrial manslaughter offence.

We also announced two fantastic policies a couple of weeks ago. Our Premier is the champion of gig workers. At the State Labor Party conference, he announced reforms to make sure that gig workers have their rights and entitlements protected, and have access to workers compensation; and to increase opportunities for apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships in local government. The Minns Labor Government is particularly supporting workers in rural and regional communities so their skills can be transferred into other industries. But we are doing more. Those opposite love nothing more than the opportunity to blame workers. They continue to blame essential workers and point fingers at workers across the State. We have done a lot more in the past 14 months than those opposite did in 12 years.

#### PARLIAMENTARY SITTING DAYS

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (12:45):** My question is directed to my friend the Minister for Local Government. Did the Minister tell a recent Local Government Professionals conference, "The only reason we are sitting on Friday is to punish the National Party"?

[*Members interjected.*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! All members, including the Premier, will come to order. We are all hanging on the words that are about to come from the Minister for Local Government, and friend of the member for Oxley. The Minister has the call.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:46):** I spoke at the Local Government Professionals conference for some 40 minutes. I actually do not recall what I said to them. But let me say to the member—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order and allow the Minister to complete his answer.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** It is no secret that I have communicated to some members of the National Party that if the Opposition continues with its outrageous, ridiculous attitude to pair requests from the Government, then they will be sitting all day Fridays. Sitting on Fridays is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, members of



the crossbench had requested additional sitting times. Secondly, the extent of the Government's legislative program, which for the first year is probably—

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Zero.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** —double that of the Opposition's when it was in government.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The member for Coffs Harbour is making some ridiculous assertions across the Chamber, but I suggest that he counts the number of bills in the first 12 months of the last parliamentary term and then count ours and see what the difference is.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** One of the difficulties that we have in terms of the volume of legislation is that we are not sitting this Friday, and the Government is actually considering doing so if it cannot get through its volume of legislation in this House.

**Mr Michael Kemp:** Point of order: The Minister should answer the question. Did he state that the only reason we are sitting on Friday is to punish the National Party?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Oxley will resume his seat. The Minister could not have been clearer in his initial comments. Members will come to order.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I say to the member for Oxley that we can sit this Friday too if he likes. I would be happy to move the motion.

**Mr Michael Kemp:** I seek an extension of time for additional information.

**The SPEAKER:** I decline to grant an extension.

#### HOUSING SUPPLY AND PLANNING

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (12:50):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plan to deliver more housing across New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:50):** I thank the member for his question. I know he is keen to make sure that we have plenty of housing for young people right across not only Sydney but also New South Wales. Over the past few weeks, New South Wales has been transfixed by the achievements of our Olympians in Paris—from our greatest Olympian of all time, Emma McKeon, a Mount Kembla girl who grew up just up the road from me, to the likes of Raygun, who got out there and did it for her country. Our rankings have been a central topic of daily conversations. We compared our rankings on the world stage and we came in fourth—a fantastic achievement. We hope to rank that high or even higher in the Paralympics in a few weeks time.

But there is one world ranking that Sydney has that we are not proud of, nor should we be. That is our ranking as the second least affordable city on the planet when it comes to housing. We are only beaten by Hong Kong. Members opposite have reason to be proud because that is the appalling ranking that they left after 12 years of lack of effort. Their lack of action to address housing affordability left us in the top three least affordable cities on the planet during their entire time in office. The housing crisis is not only affecting Sydney; it is now also affecting the whole of the State.

To address that, the Minns Government has embarked on the biggest planning reforms in a generation to support building more homes close to transport, jobs and amenities. We have undertaken an audit of government land to identify surplus land that could be used for housing. We have committed more than \$6 billion—the biggest investment in the State's history—to build new social homes and repair others so that they can house people again. We are reforming rental rules to make renting in this State fairer, ending no-grounds evictions to provide housing certainty. We are doing that to stem the flow of young people from New South Wales. Recently I received an email from a 25-year-old professional who works in Sydney's CBD. That person said the hot topic of conversation at the office and among his friends was the cost of housing in Sydney. After expressing his extreme disappointment that the likes of Ku-ring-gai Council are so fiercely resistant to moderate increases in housing supply, he said:

Personally, I do not see myself settling in Sydney since the cost of housing is so high and plan to move to another state, once I am ready to start a family.

That is the record of those opposite. That is the record of every single one of them.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** As the Productivity and Equality Commissioner warned, unless we address housing supply, Sydney will become a city without grandkids. It is why businesses worry about the future of their workforce. [*Extension of time*]

It is why we are reforming planning to deliver more homes. Our reforms will deliver more homes in New South Wales over the next five, 10 and 15 years and beyond. That will allow more supply in more places, build more homes in more communities and restore housing choice so that housing types like dual occupancies and semi-detached dwellings are allowed to be built again after years of not being allowed. Our reforms support better design through an international pattern book design competition. We are providing councils with additional financial support to attract more planners. We introduced a new TAFE course on planning and introduced artificial intelligence into the planning system. We are getting Landcom, the Government's property developer, back into the housing market, making sure it is delivering homes. We are setting ambitious but realistic targets for not just councils in Sydney but also every council throughout New South Wales.

Infrastructure contributions have been reformed—a job that members opposite could not manage to do and actually voted against when they had the opportunity. Funds will flow to make sure that communities have the infrastructure they need. We have added transparency to the planning system by introducing league tables so that everyone can assess performance. What is the response from members opposite? In a performance that has them on track to take out the gold medal for nimbyism, members opposite have introduced a bill to overturn housing reforms and deliver less housing. They were so confident of their position that, when they first raised it, almost every credible stakeholder and commentator condemned it.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Now they will not even list it for debate. Members opposite know they are anti housing. The best thing they could do is end the uncertainty they are creating and withdraw their bill. The housing crisis should not be treated as a sport by the Opposition; it should receive bipartisan support and not pit people in different parts of Sydney against one another.

#### REGIONAL TRANSPORT SUBSIDIES

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (12:55):** My question is directed to the Minister for Seniors. Last week, regarding the regional bus subsidies being removed, the Minister said, "We are going through it methodically and making hard decisions." The decision is now reversed. What does that say about her relevance as a Minister?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:56):** I thank the member for Cootamundra for her question. It is really good to see that The Nationals have a few questions today.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Getting their quota.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, it is important that they pull their quota up a bit. I am very pleased with the response that this Government has made and the conversations that I have had with the regional transport and roads Minister on an ongoing basis in relation to support for seniors in the Regional Transport and Roads portfolio. I back in the answer that I gave last week. I am very proud of our record in relation to providing support for seniors. I thank the member for South Coast for raising this initially and for her ongoing interest and representation of people in her area.

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

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** It is important that seniors in this State get access to affordable transport. That is exactly what this Government is providing and continuing to provide. As I said last week, we are going methodically through issues that this Government has had to face because of the messes that it has been left with. This is one of the issues that came up recently, and the answer is that we are continuing to provide concessions for seniors in regional transport across New South Wales. I am really proud of the Government's record on supporting seniors in New South Wales, and I am sure that I will continue to be proud of it.

#### MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (12:58):** I have a relevant question for the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plan to invest in maritime infrastructure across New South Wales?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:58):** I thank the member for Bega for his question and interest because he represents one of the most beautiful parts of our State's coast.

**Dr Michael Holland:** The most.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** "The most," says the member for Bega. I know that is hotly contested. But it was an incredible pleasure to be there with him to announce the expansion of the Eden Cruise Wharf—an incredibly important industry for Eden and for the Sapphire Coast. It is our largest regional port. By expanding it, we will have more economic opportunities, jobs and ways for people to visit our beautiful State.

I am so pleased to be working with the member for Bega on that initiative as well as other maritime initiatives. The Government recognises that we are blessed with beautiful waterways—some of the best in the world—and our community expects us to make sure that they have access to those. During the pandemic we realised the real value of those beautiful blue and green spaces. Whether it is the kids going fishing during the school holidays or taking out the beloved tinnie, the Government wants to ensure that people can access our waterways safely across this State. But they need the infrastructure to do it safely. We cannot take that for granted. The member for Bega knows that well, as do the Parliamentary Friends of Aquatic Recreation.

Thanks to the member for Barwon, I was pleased to join him and a range of members from across the Parliament at the opening of the Sydney International Boat Show. That was a spectacular way to showcase the industry and our waterways. I was really pleased to announce that our Government is investing an extra \$44 million in new boating infrastructure and dredging. Members with channels, lakes, rivers and harbours in their electorates will understand the importance of dredging. We cannot have a scenario like we did under the former Government, which had bandaied solutions for and made ad hoc responses to dredging in this State that meant our communities were not safe. They did not have access to our waterways and our businesses were left stranded. It got to the point where public transport services could not operate.

Our Government is investing to make sure that we are doing that up-front so people can have confidence in our response. The member for Gosford knows all too well that, unfortunately, former Government members failed to look after Brisbane Water and the operation of the critical ferry services for those communities. Our investment will make sure that we have the plan in place to do that critical dredging up-front. We will also make sure that we have safe ramps and wharves. [*Extension of time*]

Some \$28 million will fund new boating infrastructure over the next four years to make sure that everybody can access our waterways. That includes older boaters as well as boaters with disabilities, because we want to ensure that our waterways are accessible to everybody. I want to make sure the critical underfunding that the Government was left by members opposite is managed. When it comes to the maintenance of a wharf or a ramp, it is no good to anybody—particularly people who want to access it each and every day—if it is not up to standard. The Government will also dedicate money in this fund to work particularly with local councils to maintain these critical assets.

The Government will not fall into the trap of former Government members who ran down our Waterways Fund, spent like drunken sailors and did not maintain this critical infrastructure. Instead, the Government has a plan to make sure that our waterways are safe and accessible to everybody and that there are wharves and ramps that mean all types of boaters and recreational fishers can access these waterways safely. We will not put our community at risk. We will ensure that businesses can thrive, tourists can visit our destinations and we can all use our waterways safely.

#### ORANGE ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (13:02):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Following our recent visit to Forbes Hospital and the inspection of the 50-year-old, heavily utilised operating theatre, will the Minister commit to funding a much-needed and long-overdue new operating theatre for this community?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (13:03):** All members who have had the pleasure of working with the member for Orange will recognise his passion and advocacy for not only the people of Orange but also the Central West more broadly. Recently I had the opportunity to spend two days crisscrossing the member's electorate, speaking with and listening to many healthcare workers and visiting many health services. I had the opportunity to go to Forbes to see firsthand some of the operating theatres and listen to some of the challenges that that district faces. I spoke on the phone to the local mayor. Many of us will know the mayor—she is very familiar—Phyllis Miller. She is a very hardworking, passionate advocate for rural and regional New South Wales. That would be the best way to describe Phyllis.

Uniquely, I had an opportunity to speak to Janine Coles, the nurse unit manager, who spoke to me about the increase in surgical load at that hospital. At the moment there are about 770 operations in those theatres each year. That is a substantial increase. I also learned—and members who pay close attention to or live in regional and rural areas would know—that that council has done a lot to support the workforce coming to that area. In fact, it has done an enormous amount of work. Working alongside the member for Orange, that council has provided incentive payments, housing support and a whole heap of what I would call on-costs that the New South Wales Government has not had to pay to get healthcare workers into that part of Central West New South Wales.

I have a number of things to say to the member for Orange. First, as a result of the member's advocacy, the Government will arrange a discussion with senior staff from Health Infrastructure and the local health district to work through a proposal about improving those theatres going forward. It is a genuine issue. Obviously there are budget constraints at the moment. Budgets are always tight, particularly in health. But I am prepared to sit down with the member, the community, local representatives from Health Infrastructure and, of course, the local health district to see what we what we can do to upgrade the facility. *[Extension of time]*

Again, many members who live in regional, rural and remote New South Wales will understand that that hospital has an ability to take pressure off other hospitals in and around the Lachlan Health Service. It is crucially important. I thank the member for Orange directly. When I was out there for two days, it was quite clear—not that we needed any more evidence—that his community thinks very highly of his advocacy and his work, particularly in relation to health care. I had a number of discussions with those in health care in a range of different hospitals and health services in his electorate, and all of them spoke very highly of his strong advocacy for not only the people of Orange but also the broader Central West communities as well.

The Government will sit down with the member for Orange, the hardworking mayor and other staff, but it will also include the team from Health Infrastructure, who will be involved in the planning, design and delivery of operating theatres, should they go through the budget process and receive approval. But let us sit down together and work on that plan. It is very important to this Government that we continue to focus on delivering health care for regional, rural and remote New South Wales. That has been a key priority of ours from day one. The ability to engage directly with local members in their communities and local community representatives as well as with local health staff and those in local government is highly valuable to the development of policy and initiatives going forward. The member has that commitment from me. I thank the member for Orange, and I look forward to working with him to deliver better health services for the people of Orange and the Central West.

#### HUNTER REGION INVESTMENT

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (13:08):** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Hunter. Will the Minister please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's investment in vital infrastructure across the Hunter?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (13:08):** I thank the member for Cessnock for his question, which it would be my absolute pleasure to answer. The Speaker will be pleased to hear that, after 12 years of utter neglect from members opposite when in government, the Hunter is once again a top priority for the New South Wales Government. The first thing the Minns Government did was reappoint a Minister for the Hunter. We have four Hunter MPs in Cabinet. Our region's voice is being heard loud and clear, and our members are delivering results for the good people of the Hunter region. The Hunter has been the backbone of the economy of New South Wales and the heart of our State's industrial base for over 100 years. It powers our State's energy grid and provides nearly 15,000 mining and energy jobs. It also has world-renowned wines and some of the world's finest thoroughbred studs.

The member for Cessnock knows only too well. They are right in his backyard. Most importantly, it has the most beautiful beaches in this country, if not in the world. We have it all, Mr Speaker, and I know you will absolutely agree with me. Those opposite really should visit. It is not that far really, particularly from the North Shore. They should pop up. They would be amazed by what they would find. After 12 long years of neglect, it has been refreshing to once again see all of our Ministers visiting and having meaningful and engaging conversations with our community. Mr Speaker, you will recall that the Premier joined us. He came up, and met with you and me, to look at the new sports and recreation centre in Morisset, in the heart of your electorate. I am thrilled we are also building a world-class basketball stadium in the Hunter region so that we can continue to have those great athletes getting from there off to the Olympics. I am sure we will have a few of those who will be playing basketball in the Olympics in Brisbane.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** The unfinished-business mob over there left a lot of unfinished business. Let us go through it and start with the sand nourishment to revitalise Stockton Beach. Who delivered it? Labor did. Who delivered Medowie high school? Labor did. Who delivered the upgrading of the Speers Point roundabout? Labor did. And let us not forget the dredging of the Swansea Channel. Who delivered that? Only a Labor government. *[Extension of time]*

Unlike those opposite, this Government is ambitious for the Hunter region and it will continue to deliver those projects.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Alongside vital infrastructure, we are investing in Hunter workers because people matter to us.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Just recently, I was pleased to see Minister Houssos visit our region to unveil a consultation paper for the Future Jobs and Investment Authorities. That is critical for our future. The people of the Hunter are pragmatic about our energy future and know that change is coming. But we will be prepared because this Government will make sure we are prepared. We are used to changing ourselves. We all recall that we used to have BHP, but we reinvented ourselves. We are a group of people not afraid of the future. The Future Jobs and Investment Authority will capitalise directly on the Hunter's ingenuity, its brilliant workforce and its diverse trade skills. We are already seeing results of the Government's focus on future energy projects, with a huge investment of \$207 million into the Hunter Valley Hydrogen Hub.

I note that those on the other side are sitting there and giggling. Maybe they would like some facts. The Liberal primary vote in Cessnock was 11 per cent. The Liberal primary vote in Wallsend was 13 per cent. The Liberal primary vote in your seat, Mr Speaker, was 10 per cent. The Liberal primary vote in Charlestown was 25 per cent. They are getting a little bit higher—the member for Maitland is a champion, with 23 per cent. What about great Kate and Port Stephens? It was 23 per cent. They must be shaking in their boots. Even in my seat, it was 28 per cent.

#### PARLIAMENTARY SITTING DAYS

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:14):** During question time, in answer to a question from the member for Oxley, I told the House that the Government had passed twice as many bills in its first term as the former Government did. Those numbers have been checked. I can tell the House that in 2023 the Government enacted 56 bills that passed this House, and in 2019 the former Government passed 18 bills in the same time.

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I should have told the House that this Government has passed more than three times the number of bills. I correct that answer and apologise to the House. I also advise the House that in the first seven weeks of this year, this Government has passed 42 bills.

#### REGIONAL BUS FARES

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

#### *Committees*

#### LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

##### Reports

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 17/58*, dated 13 August 2024. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON REMOTE, RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH****Reports**

**Dr JOE McGIRR:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health entitled *The implementation of Portfolio Committee No. 2 recommendations relating to workforce issues, workplace culture and funding considerations for remote, rural and regional health*, dated 8 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 notices of motions (general notices) Nos 1472 to 1502 have lapsed.

*Bills*

**OMBUDSMAN AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Messages**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Legislative Assembly's amendment.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

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

**NSW SELF INSURANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT (SPECIAL LIABILITY INSURANCE) BILL 2024****Second Reading Debate**

**Debated resumed from 6 August 2024.**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (14:31):** On behalf of the Opposition, I contribute to debate on the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment (Special Liability Insurance) Bill 2024. The Opposition supports the bill. The bill amends the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Act 2004 to establish a scheme of insurance for out-of-home care and youth homelessness NGOs that deliver services on behalf of the New South Wales Government. The scheme will cover liabilities arising from the physical or sexual abuse of a person and will be administered by the NSW Self Insurance Corporation, which, as well as managing the Government's own direct insurance through the Treasury Managed Fund, administers specific purpose insurance funds such as the Home Building Compensation Fund and the Construction Risks Insurance Fund.

The bill establishes a special liability insurance fund. The fund will be seeded, as I understand, subject to any clarification from the Minister, with \$23 million from the Government. NGOs will pay annual premiums into the fund. Proceeds of investment of the fund moneys must also be paid into the fund. The fund will provide special liability insurance to persons who provide out-of-home care or youth homelessness services under contract with the Crown. People in out-of-home care or receiving youth homelessness services are vulnerable. The coverage under the special liability insurance will be only for liabilities arising from physical or sexual abuse of a person occurring on or after 1 July 2007.

As *Budget Paper No. 01* notes on page B-8, the New South Wales Government's own Treasury Managed Fund is under increasing pressure from historic sexual abuse claims. Further, non-government organisations, especially the smaller agencies, have had increasing difficulty in obtaining insurance for historic abuse claims in the commercial market. The Minister's second reading speech notes that this will help around 150 NGOs and service providers that provide out-of-home care for more than 7,300 children and young people, as well as homelessness accommodation services to 4,300 young people each year. The bill will also provide the protection and certainty those organisations and NGOs need to keep providing critical services to some of the most vulnerable in our society.

As it became clearer that the commercial market would not be offering such insurance in the foreseeable future, the previous Government directed icare, NSW Treasury and the Department of Communities and Justice

to work in consultation with the affected NGOs towards a long-term solution. I am advised by my colleague the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, the shadow Minister for Families and Communities, that the bill has the support of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, which represents agencies providing those vital services to children and young people in our State. The establishment of the special liability insurance fund is a necessary measure to ensure agencies can continue to deliver out-of-home care and youth homelessness services. We agree with the Government that there is an urgent need for a long-term solution to give assurance to those in the sector and to those most at risk.

I acknowledge the work of the shadow Treasurer and of the shadow Minister for Families and Communities, and shadow Minister for Disability Inclusion in the other place in assisting me to respond, on behalf of the Opposition, to the Government on the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment (Special Liability Insurance) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the presence of Minister Cotsis and Minister Washington in the Chamber and their work in bringing the bill to the House. For the many reasons outlined, I thank the Ministers for their work and commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (14:35):** I am very pleased to contribute to debate in support of the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment (Special Liability Insurance) Bill 2024. I congratulate the hardworking Minister for Industrial Relations, who is in the Chamber, on bringing the bill to the House. As the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion, I have been working very closely with my good friend the Minister for Industrial Relations to ensure the bill comes to the House in a form that the sector is comfortable with to address a difficult issue that the sector has been facing for some time.

The bill offers a longer term solution to a big problem that has been brewing for some time in the sector. The bill ensures the Government can continue to provide care and protection for vulnerable children and young people by addressing a gap in the insurance coverage market for non-government organisations providing out-of-home care and youth homelessness services. Since the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse handed down its report in 2017, there has been a surge in claims and settlements by people who have suffered harm. As a consequence, since around 2021 commercial insurers have ceased offering physical and sexual abuse liability coverage to the market, which has impacted the ability of many non-government organisations contracted by the Department of Communities and Justice to deliver out-of-home care and youth homelessness services.

Non-government service providers are required to have appropriate insurances for those services and have raised legitimate concerns about their ability to continue service delivery, with all the risks that are involved, without adequate physical and sexual abuse cover. Some of our most experienced and well-regarded providers have told us that the situation may require them to withdraw from service delivery, which jeopardises out-of-home care and youth homelessness service provision in New South Wales. If service providers exit the market in the absence of insurance, approximately 7,300 children and young people in out-of-home care and around 4,300 young people in homelessness accommodation would be left without access to critical services and be at risk. Clearly, the consequences of that must be avoided.

Behind the bill is a lot of work that has been happening for a long time. I acknowledge the work done by members opposite when they were in government, and I acknowledge the contribution from the member for Miranda about the involvement of the former Government in the process that has led to the bill. The former Government was responsive to the problems when they became apparent in the sector a few years ago. As a stopgap, while longer term solutions were being considered, the former Government stood up the Short-Term Indemnity Scheme in 2021 to indemnify participating out-of-home care and youth homelessness service providers after major insurance providers started exiting the market. This was a temporary measure only ever intended to address immediate risks to service delivery until a longer term solution could be identified. That scheme is due to expire at the end of this year. It has already been extended to get to this point, and the short-term fix is being replaced by our longer term solution that the bill is putting in place.

The Department of Communities and Justice has worked in partnership with icare, NSW Treasury and other States and Territories for over two years to explore options. The end result of all of that work is an understanding and a clear picture that there are no other viable solutions other than New South Wales Government intervention. The Special Liability Insurance Scheme established under the bill will provide certainty and ongoing protection for service providers. It will support the viability of essential out-of-home care and youth homelessness service delivery in New South Wales. It will also assist new Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to commence out-of-home care and youth homelessness service delivery, which is critical to increasing Aboriginal service delivery and improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and young people. The need to act swiftly and support the bill could not be any clearer. I am pleased to hear that the Opposition will support the bill.

The insurance scheme will limit cover to physical and sexual abuse liabilities arising from out-of-home care and youth homelessness service delivery only. It will not provide broad cover to service providers who may deliver other services on behalf of the Department of Communities and Justice or other government agencies for which commercial insurance is still available, such as Targeted Earlier Intervention, Family Preservation, domestic and family violence, disability, and other adult homelessness and housing services. This will remove incentives for commercial insurers to withdraw physical and sexual abuse cover from other parts of the market.

The bill ensures that non-government service providers who deliver essential out-of-home care and youth homelessness services on behalf of the Department of Communities and Justice will have access to appropriate insurance coverage. This is an important step in keeping children safe and supporting young people in crisis. The New South Wales Government and the Department of Communities and Justice are committed to continued engagement with sector peaks and non-government organisation service providers through the implementation of the scheme to ensure service delivery is supported.

I acknowledge the complex and difficult work undertaken by the Department of Communities and Justice, led by the executive director of partnerships, Melinda Norton, and the director of policy and practice, Sophie Holloway. I thank them for managing the complexities of this difficult work and for working closely with the team under the Minister for Industrial Relations as well. I also thank the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies under the leadership of Maree Walk. It is the peak body that represents non-government providers in out-of-home care. I thank them for working with us on finding a solution to a rather challenging problem. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (14:42):** I make a brief contribution in support of the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment (Special Liability Insurance) Bill 2024. I thank Minister Cotsis and Minister Washington for bringing the bill to the House. This piece of legislation is not just a technical adjustment to our insurance laws; it is a critical measure to ensure the safety and continuity of essential services for our most vulnerable citizens: children and young people. The bill intends to make amendments to the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Act 2004 to create a new insurance scheme, with an associated statutory fund, which will provide insurance coverage to out-of-home care and youth homelessness services and non-government organisations that deliver services through the Department of Communities and Justice on behalf of the New South Wales Government in respect of particular abuse-related liabilities.

The core objective of the bill is to amend the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Act 2004 to introduce a new insurance scheme specifically designed to address liabilities arising from physical and sexual abuse claims in out-of-home care and youth homelessness services. This is a response to an urgent need within our community, driven by significant changes and challenges faced by non-government organisations providing these essential services. The Department of Communities and Justice currently contracts roughly 150 non-government organisations and service providers that provide out-of-home care support for around 7,300 children and young people. They also provide homeless accommodation services to around 4,300 young people each year.

The bill aims to ensure that these essential non-government organisations and service providers can continue to provide their services in New South Wales. Non-government service providers must have the appropriate insurance coverage to deliver their services on behalf of the New South Wales Government. However, in recent years many commercial insurers have withdrawn public liability insurance from the market for out-of-home care providers due to historic claims for physical and sexual abuse. Due to this withdrawal, some providers would be forced to stop providing services to those in need of them. It is important that the Government creates a replacement long-term insurance solution.

The bill establishes a statutory function for the NSW Self Insurance Corporation, called SICorp, which will offer insurance to out-of-home and youth homelessness service providers delivering services to at-risk youth under contract of the New South Wales Government. This insurance will cover the liabilities arising from the physical or sexual abuse of a person in out-of-home care or who is receiving youth homelessness services. However, the bill states that the special liability insurance does not apply to certain liabilities arising before 30 June 2007. It also does not apply to liabilities which are covered by another insurance issued before the commencement of the new division. Continuing protections for services providers will be administered by the Special Liability Insurance Scheme. Service providers will be supported to offer continued and uninterrupted critical services for children and young people. The adoption of the Special Liability Insurance Scheme will enable better governance, underwriting controls and risk management for these support services.

The bill requires that a fund be established in the Special Deposits Account. The New South Wales Treasurer will have the authority to determine investment strategies for that fund. However, it is estimated that service provider premiums will fully offset the cost of providing cover. The powers granted to SICorp are reflective of existing functions comparable to provisions for the Home Building Compensation Fund and the



Construction Risks Insurance Fund. The special liability insurance scheme will be administered by SICorp and operated by Insurance and Care NSW.

As stated, the bill serves to provide a long-term solution to address insurance coverage claims for physical and sexual abuse to non-government organisations who are providing out-of-home care and youth homelessness services. It guarantees that non-government organisations have access to the insurance that is required for them to continue to provide the essential out-of-home care and youth homelessness services that our children and young people rely on. The bill is a crucial step towards providing a long-term solution to the insurance needs of out-of-home care and youth homelessness services. It ensures that non-government organisations will have access to necessary insurance coverage, allowing them to continue their indispensable work with confidence and security.

The new scheme will also support the entry of new service providers, including Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, thus enhancing our commitment to the Closing the Gap agreement. This legislative initiative follows extensive consultation and collaboration with icare, NSW Treasury and the Department of Communities and Justice. The NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment (Special Liability Insurance) Bill 2024 represents a significant and necessary advancement in the Government's approach to protecting those who protect children and young people. By ensuring continuous and robust insurance coverage, the Government affirms its commitment to the wellbeing of every child and young person in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (14:49):** I support the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment (Special Liability Insurance) Bill 2024. I thank the Government for this legislation. This matter first raised its head during my time as a Minister. It has been an ongoing issue. I commend the work of both Ministers because this really did concern all of the non-government providers, particularly in the areas of out-of-home care and youth homelessness services, and many were looking at closing. There is no doubt that this legislation will enable them to do their great work. All members who have had anything to do with social and community services would commend the incredible work of those services, particularly in the non-government sector, that struggle with resources and pressures. This was something they did not need because the number of complaints from people speaking out about historic sexual abuse have increased. This incredible reform will benefit those organisations.

I still keep in touch with a lot of sector folk. I know that they were supportive of and grateful for the way in which the Government has engaged them. They were also very complimentary of both Ministers and their work on this legislation. It will give them the support, foundation, certainty and surety that they need. I am going to do something uncharacteristic: I commend the Government and genuinely congratulate both Ministers for this work. It has not gone unnoticed. In fact, it is very much appreciated throughout the sector. The respectful way in which the Government has sought to bring about this legislation so that the services can get on with focusing on vulnerable children and young people is appreciated.

It really is a privilege to see the work that those services do. Unfortunately, their work is never ending. We hope and pray that one day we will not need those services—that would be a wonderful thing—but, sadly, we do. I am pleased that within those services are people who give their heart and their all to the protection of the people they seek to serve. Again, I thank the Government and both Ministers for their excellent work. I echo the comments from those I speak to in the sector who are grateful for the Government's intervention in this regard.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (14:51):** The NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment (Special Liability Insurance) Bill 2024 seeks to establish a new insurance scheme under the NSW Self Insurance Corporation, or SICorp. The primary purpose is to provide insurance cover to NGOs involved in out-of-home care and youth homelessness services, particularly liabilities related to physical and sexual abuse claims. This all came about following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It became apparent that cases of child sexual abuse potentially could rear their heads 10, 20 or 30 years after the abuse occurred, which is the way trauma works in these cases. As such, the private insurance industry collapsed.

I know that because at the time I was on the board of an organisation that provided out-of-home care services for the New South Wales Government and I had the lucky—or unlucky, depending on how we want to frame it—job of chairing the risk and compliance committee. I had to drive the board and the organisation through what was a stressful and worrying period, where we seriously considered whether or not we would hand these services back to the Government because the risk was so severe and the ability to find insurance, whether short term or temporary, was very difficult. I am glad we did not do that.

That service still continues to this day and looks after some of the most vulnerable people in our community, particularly kids from multicultural backgrounds—which is a specialised service. It is preferable to keep the kids with kin and, if they cannot be kept with kin, then with someone from the same cultural background for obvious reasons. We were lucky enough to find some insurance on the London market. It was very expensive. At that time we either paid a lot of money for insurance, had no insurance or bought what was, effectively, junk

insurance. We were lucky to find temporary insurance until the then Liberal Government set up the Short-Term Indemnity Scheme in 2021. I thank members opposite for that.

This is a good example of politics being put aside and both sides coming together to look after the most vulnerable in our community. I thank the Government and the Ministers. When we are outside of this place and we are campaigning, more often than not we jump up and down because we need a new school, road or hospital. But, from our professional experience on boards and in organisations, there are other issues that we want to tackle and solve. I am genuinely proud to be a member of Parliament and a member of a government that, within 18 months of my arrival here, has solved this problem. I still keep in touch with that organisation. I still check to see how things are going and whether the issue is progressing, whether the Government is consulting with the peak body and whether they are happy. I shot an email off to one of the executives yesterday to say, "This is coming. Isn't it great? We are all very happy." It is an honour and a privilege to be part of a government that solves genuine problems which I have experienced at the coalface. I leave my contribution short and to the point. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (14:56):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to debate, particularly the member for Miranda and shadow Minister, representing the Opposition. I thank her for her eloquent contribution and for the Opposition's support. I acknowledge the important points that she made—namely, that this started when the now Opposition were in government and it has continued with the work that has been done between me, Treasury and the excellent Minister for Families and Communities, who is in the Chamber.

I acknowledge the contribution and work of the Minister for Families and Communities in this area. We have been working closely to make sure that we provide a secure process. That is important. There have been some great conversations and consultations with the sector. We have to get this right. Importantly, as the Minister said, every single hour of every single day, we must talk about the vulnerable children in this sector and how important it is that there is a government to support them. I thank the member for Mount Druitt for his relentless work. He is an excellent member. He deals with many difficult and complex issues in his area. He puts forward very important ideas and works together with all of us. He not only knocks on the doors but he also gets results for his community. I know how much he cares for his community. He is always advocating for results.

I acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Kiama and the feedback that the sector has provided. I acknowledge the excellent member for Leppington. He is a new member but a very strong one, particularly for the growing community that he represents in south-west Sydney. I acknowledge the contribution that he has made as a board member of an organisation, steering it through a tough and challenging time and understanding firsthand what was necessary to be done. He made important points about historical claims and the difficult process of the royal commission. I also acknowledge the importance of our multicultural communities as well. I thank our wonderful public servants, as acknowledged by Minister Washington. I thank Andree Wheeler, Alexandra Milez and Rose Thi. I thank the wonderful staff in the office of Minister Washington, such as Blake Mooney, and Tom Craven in my office. I also thank our agencies for their assistance with the bill.

As we have already heard, the bill will ensure the long-term viability of the State's contracted out-of-home care and youth homelessness services by ensuring that required insurance coverage is provided. The bill will achieve that by establishing a State-backed special liability insurance that will provide service providers with cover against liabilities arising from sexual assault and physical assault. We have heard about the withdrawal of commercial public liability insurance from the market. The Opposition undertook important work when it was in government, and I have placed my acknowledgement of that important work on record. It is our job to support the most vulnerable people in our community.

I acknowledge our agencies—the Department of Communities and Justice [DCJ], Treasury and icare—and those service providers that do important work day in and day out. Of the 49 non-government organisation service providers that have participated in the short-term scheme, 27 account for around half of DCJ's contracted non-government organisations' out-of-home care placements, and nine of those are Aboriginal community controlled organisations. As Minister Washington has said, it is particularly important that our Aboriginal community controlled organisations are supported in providing vital support to the community and are also viable. It is critical that we are mindful of the important responsibility to undertake that work. 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.**

### **Third Reading**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDERS REGISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Yasmin Catley, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (15:03):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce into Parliament the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Amendment Bill 2024, which makes important amendments to the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000 to ensure that the Act remains fit for purpose in meeting its statutory obligations of protecting children from serious harm, ensuring the early detection of offences by recidivist child sex offenders, monitoring persons who are registrable persons and ensuring registrable persons comply with the Act.

Child sex offender registration schemes are used in other jurisdictions across Australia and many other countries around the world. They enable police to monitor registrable persons and reduce the risks of recidivism, which causes significant harms to children. In New South Wales, the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act applies to certain "registrable" persons who have been convicted of sexual offences against or in relation to children, certain violent offences against children and offences for producing, disseminating or possessing child abuse material. The Act requires those convicted offenders to register with the NSW Police Force and to report certain personal information while they are in the community. The Act also requires registered persons to report changes to that information.

The child protection offenders registration scheme in New South Wales is a critical component of the State's response to the risks associated with offenders who have offended against children while they are in the community. The bill will significantly strengthen the current regime to ensure that our children are better protected from further potential harms posed by persons who have been convicted of serious sexual and violent offences against children. The bill will make it easier for police to detect if a registrable person breaches their reporting requirements and to take the appropriate action.

To achieve those outcomes, the bill ensures that mandatory reporting obligations apply to a greater range of serious offences against children. The bill also applies more stringent reporting obligations to persons on the register and strengthens the powers available to police to ensure those persons are complying with their obligations. The reforms are intended to ensure the Act remains fit for purpose and that police are equipped with the information and tools they need to respond to risks to our children in the community. Further, the bill makes improvements to ensure that registrable persons are advised of their reporting obligations as clearly, accurately and quickly as possible. That will provide certainty to convicted offenders and police about when reporting obligations apply, and it will also reduce the risk of errors occurring in the application of the child protection offenders registration scheme.

The proposed improvements in the bill have been informed by the important comments made in the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's Operation Tusk final report in 2019 and a subsequent review of the Act by the NSW Police Force. Operation Tusk identified that a range of complexities in the current Act contributed to a significant number of errors being made in relation to the administration of the child protection offenders registration scheme. The reforms in the bill will substantially reduce the risk of those types of errors in the future and will give the community confidence that reporting obligations for registrable offenders are being applied correctly and swiftly.

I now turn to the details of the bill. New section 2D sets out the offences that are registrable, separated as class 1 and class 2 offences. That is the same classification system used under the current Act. Class 1 offences are considered the most serious offences and therefore attract longer reporting periods under the regime. To improve clarity, the bill provides that class 1 and class 2 offences will now be listed in schedule 1A and 1B to the Act. Those schedules also detail the circumstances in which the offences attract registration. Importantly, additional New South Wales and Commonwealth offences that relate to the safety of children have been included in the new schedules.

For example, a New South Wales-based offence under section 45 of the Crimes Act 1900, which relates to genital mutilation of a female child, has been added to schedule 1A. A New South Wales-based offence under

section 91HAA of the Crimes Act, which relates to administering a digital platform used to deal with child abuse material, has been added to schedule 1B. Offences that relate to recording and distributing intimate images of a child without consent under sections 91P, 91Q and 91R of the Crimes Act have also been included in schedule 1B as class 2 offences. However, these offences will only be registrable for convicted offenders under the age of 21 where the offender has previously been found guilty of one or more offences under sections 91P, 91Q and 91R of the Crimes Act in circumstances where the victim is or appears to be less than 16 years of age.

New Commonwealth offences that have been added to new schedule 1A include certain crimes against humanity under subdivision C of chapter 8 of the Criminal Code Act 1995, such as sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and enforced pregnancy where the victim is a child. Other Commonwealth offences, such as possessing or controlling child abuse material obtained or accessed using a carriage service, which is Commonwealth Criminal Code section 474.22A, and grooming a person to make it easier to engage in sexual activity with a child outside Australia, which is Commonwealth Criminal Code Section 272.15A, have been included in new schedule 1B.

New part 2A introduces a new requirement for judicial officers that sentence a person for a registrable offence to issue an order that states that a person is a registrable person and which specifies the reporting period applicable to that person. New section 3C achieves this by providing that a court that sentences an adult for a registrable offence must make a registrable person order unless no conviction order is imposed under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. Proposed amendments to section 3A of the Act will ensure that a person who is subject to a registrable person order becomes a registrable person under the Act.

Under new section 3C (3), the registrable person order made by the sentencing court must specify a reporting period that is calculated in accordance with new section 3I. This carries across the current settings in the Act, which specifies that an adult registrable person can be subject to a reporting period of either eight years, 15 years or life, depending on the classification of the offences for which they are sentenced and their criminal history. In most circumstances, it is expected that the identification of registrable persons and their reporting period should be a simple task for sentencing courts.

However, in the event the legislative requirements imposed by new part 2A are misapplied, an amendment to section 43 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 has been included in the bill, which will allow for the proceedings to be reopened to correct a registrable person order that is made contrary to law, such as by specifying an incorrect reporting period or failing to impose a registrable person order that is required by law. It is intended that the use that is made of this provision will be the same as how it applies to the correction of similar types of errors arising from time to time during criminal proceedings.

Those provisions respond to concerns that were identified during Operation Tusk arising from the NSW Police Force assuming responsibility for the task of identifying registrable offenders and their reporting periods. Under the bill, this function will be done by judicial officers in court at the time of sentencing. It is expected that prosecutors will assist courts to make registrable person orders during sentencing hearings in accordance with their ordinary duties to assist the court arising under both the Legal Profession Uniform Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015 and the Legal Profession Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules 2015.

I emphasise that, with a couple of exceptions, which I will come to, this bill does not change the settings in the current Act that require mandatory registration and reporting obligations for adults convicted and sentenced for registrable offences. However, new section 2E provides for an expanded discretion for a court to treat two or more offences as a single offence for the purposes of the Act, including the calculation of reporting period—if the court is satisfied it is appropriate to do so. If a court is minded to treat two or more offences as a single offence, the calculation to be applied to determine a reporting period will still be that which is outlined under new section 3I. New section 2E states that matters that may be relevant to a court's decision to treat multiple offences as a single offence include: whether the offences are of the same kind, whether the offences were committed against the same person, or whether the offences were committed close in time to each other, along with any other matters prescribed in the regulations.

The bill also provides for more discretion for the courts in relation to registrable offences committed by children. Under new section 3C (1) (b), when a person under the age of 18 is sentenced for a registrable offence, a registrable person order will only be required if the court imposes a sentence other than a non-conviction order, a registrable person order is requested by the prosecution and the court is satisfied the order is necessary because the person poses a risk to the lives or sexual safety of one or more children or of children generally. The updated approach in relation to persons under the age of 18 who commit registrable offences strikes the right balance between ensuring the most serious offenders can still be subject to registration requirements and alleviating the burdens of reporting for people under 18 who are unlikely to pose an ongoing risk to the lives or sexual safety of other children.

The bill also includes a range of procedural matters that will ensure registrable person orders are clear and commence as soon as registered persons enter the community. In particular, new section 3J provides that a court that makes a registrable person order or child protection registration order must, when the order is made, arrange for a copy of the order to be given to the registrable person and, as soon as practicable after the order is made, give a copy of the order to the Commissioner of Police and any supervising authority for the person. Additionally, new section 3J (2) provides that, when a court makes a registrable person order or a child protection registration order, the court must arrange for the person subject to the order to be given written notice of their reporting obligations and the consequences for failing to comply with those obligations.

It is intended that this should occur as soon as possible after the order is made, such as before the registrable person leaves court, to ensure that there is no delay between the time that a person is registered and when they are given notice. All reasonable steps must also be taken to verbally explain the reporting obligations and consequences of failing to comply to the registrable person in language they can understand. New section 3K provides that, if a registrable person has been given a copy of their order and written notice of their reporting obligations and the consequences for failing to comply in accordance with new section 3J, then they can be taken to know that they are a registrable person, the length of their reporting period and their reporting obligations.

New section 3CA clarifies that a registrable person order is not part of the sentence imposed for the registrable offence that gave rise to the order. Further, new section 3CA (2) states that, if an appeal is made against the conviction or sentence imposed for a registrable offence, the relevant registrable person order will not be stayed and continues in force. However, if an appeal against a conviction or sentence is successful, new section 3CA (3) enables an appellate court to revoke a registrable person order if it was not required to be made under the Act if the decision of the appeal court was the original decision at the sentencing. Similarly, appellate courts may amend a registrable person order or the reporting period specified in an order if a different reporting period would be required if the decision of the appeal court were the original decision of the sentencing court.

The bill also introduces new part 2B, which clarifies requirements in respect of "corresponding registrable persons". This term generally refers to persons who enter New South Wales while they are subject to a requirement in another jurisdiction to report to an equivalent register. The Act already requires corresponding registrable persons entering New South Wales to comply with New South Wales reporting requirements so that the NSW Police Force can respond appropriately to any risk than may present while they are in New South Wales. New section 3M of the bill creates a new requirement for corresponding registrable persons to report certain information to the Commissioner of Police within five days of their arrival in New South Wales and before they leave New South Wales.

This reduces the existing time frame for corresponding registrable persons entering New South Wales to report personal information to the NSW Police Force by two days—that is, from seven days to five days—to better protect children in the New South Wales community. This requirement will not apply to persons who have given a full personal information report to the Commissioner of Police within the previous 12 months. New section 3M (2) sets out the information which must be reported by the corresponding registrable person before the end of the five-day period and before they leave New South Wales. This has been streamlined from the requirements in the current Act to allow the NSW Police Force to appropriately monitor risks posed by corresponding registrable persons and respond to any issues that may arise in New South Wales.

While there is ordinarily a defence available to registrable persons in proceedings for alleged failures to comply with reporting obligations had the person not received notice or was otherwise unaware of the person's reporting obligations, the bill proposes amendments to section 17 to provide that this does not apply in respect of the failure to comply with the requirement in new section 3M. This makes it clear that New South Wales police do not have to identify and notify a person who has entered New South Wales and inform them of their requirements to report within five days for this requirement to have effect. When this requirement commences, the NSW Police Force will advise other State and Territory police of this new requirement applying to corresponding registrable persons who enter New South Wales.

However, the expectation is that the onus will be on corresponding registrable persons to report the information required under the legislation when they arrive in New South Wales. This is a reasonable expectation to apply in respect of people who are already subject to reporting obligations in other jurisdictions and who enter New South Wales while these restrictions are still active. New section 3M (6) of the bill provides for the regulations to prescribe locations outside of New South Wales where residents who are corresponding registrable persons will only need to provide this new report if they are in New South Wales for a period of 24 hours or more. It is intended that the regulations will prescribe locations such as border towns where residents may have cause to enter New South Wales on a day-to-day basis.

New section 3N sets out requirements for the Commissioner of Police to cause written notice to be given to corresponding registrable persons that intend to stay in New South Wales for 14 days or longer. Under new

section 3N (2), these persons must be given notice of their reporting obligations, including the length of their reporting period in New South Wales. New section 3N (5) is relevant to the calculation of the person's reporting period in New South Wales. This section provides that a person must comply with reporting obligations under the Act for the longest reporting period that they are subject under another jurisdiction, or the period that would apply to them if they had been sentenced in New South Wales, whichever is longer. This ensures that the periods of obligations applying to corresponding registrable persons who move to New South Wales permanently are accurate, and that people cannot evade or reduce requirements applying to them by moving between jurisdictions.

The bill also makes amendments to the reporting obligations that a registrable person must comply with. Consistent with the current reporting framework in the Act, new section 10 in the bill requires registrable persons to give the Commissioner of Police a personal information report each year during their reporting period. New section 10A requires registrable persons to report changes to their relevant personal information. New section 11 requires them to report certain kinds of contact with children to the Commissioner of Police within 24 hours. Most personal information that is required to be reported by the registrable person will be set out in new schedule 1C and aligns with existing requirements.

However, a few important additions have been made that reflect advice from police. This includes making it clear that registrable persons are required to report web-based services, platforms, apps and games that can be used to communicate with others online, reflecting the concerning reality that many persons who prey on children may use these services and online games to contact and groom victims. However, recognising that risks to children are much less when these services relate to government services—such as the Service NSW app—or online banking services, the bill provides that the use of these types of services does not need to be reported as a web-based service used by the person, as well as any other services identified as low risk that are included in the regulations.

An updated definition of "relevant vehicle and other transport" in new section 2H of the bill will also ensure a range of motor vehicles, caravans, trailers, vessels and aircraft will need to be reported to the police. The bill also proposes amendments to require registrable persons to report changes in their personal information to police more promptly. New section 10A provides that most changes in relevant personal information must be reported within five days of the change occurring. This is a reduction from the current requirement to report these changes to police within seven days and an important enhancement to improve the timeliness of information to police.

When a registrable person has certain kinds of contact with a child, new section 10A (1) (a) (i) and section 11 make clear that this must be reported within 24 hours. This ensures that certain contact with children, such as supervising or caring for a child, visiting or staying at a household where a child is present, exchanging contact details with a child, befriending a child or attempting to establish further contact with a child is reported within 24 hours of that occurring. New sections 16C and 16D of the bill include enhancements to the powers afforded to police officers to ensure compliance amongst registrable persons with their reporting obligations.

Currently the Act provides for one annual inspection of a person's reported residential premises by a police officer. New section 16D (1) strengthens this power by providing that inspections can happen up to two times a year in respect of each residential premises identified or required to be identified by a registered person in a personal information report. New section 16D (2) of the bill provides that further inspections can be authorised by a senior police officer of the rank of superintendent or above if they have a reasonable suspicion that an offence has been committed under the Act and has not previously been dealt with.

New section 16C (2) also makes clear that the power of entry and inspection also authorises the entry into and inspection of relevant vehicles and other transport of the registrable person, and access to information held on or accessed by or from an electronic or other device at the premises or in the relevant vehicle or other transport. New section 16C (5) confirms it is a reporting obligation of a registrable person to cooperate with a police officer entering and inspecting their residential premises, including by giving the police officer information or assistance reasonably necessary for the officer to view or access data held in or accessible from an electronic or other device.

The bill also makes a range of miscellaneous procedural and administrative amendments that will enhance the operation of the scheme and ensure that its existing policy objectives are achieved. I will mention some of these briefly. New section 11G provides that a registrable person may apply to the Commissioner of Police for approval to travel outside Australia for the purposes of section 271A.1 (3) of the Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995. This section of the Commonwealth Act provides that it is not an offence for a person whose name is entered into a child protection offender register to travel outside of Australia if they have been granted permission by a competent authority.

New section 23 requires the administration of the Child Protection Register to be audited at least every two years. It is intended that this audit focus on the administration of the register by the Commissioner of Police, including matters relating to the identification of registrable persons, the application of notification requirements

and the administration concerning their reporting periods. Further details concerning the conduct and publication of the audits will be set out in the regulations. New section 24 provides for administrative review, by the Civil and Administrative Tribunal, of certain decisions made by New South Wales police under the Act. New section 25 provides for a review of the amendments introduced by this bill to be conducted by the Minister responsible for the Act as soon as possible two years after the commencement of these reforms.

The savings, transitional and other provisions in schedule 2 provide important clarity to ensure that, when commenced, the provisions operate smoothly and fairly for registrable persons. First, it is intended that the proposed new requirement for courts to make a registrable person order when sentencing for registrable offences does not apply to persons who were sentenced before the commencement of the reforms. Second, the bill also creates a limited power for the Commissioner of Police to exempt current registrable persons from reporting obligations if they only have those obligations because of registrable offences that they committed as children. This recognises that there are current registrable persons that may not have been subject to reporting obligations if the approach proposed in the bill for child offenders was in place when they were sentenced. The bill proposes the details of how this mechanism will be set out in the regulations.

Finally, I note that the matters included in this bill are numerous and will require a range of implementation support and communication updates to ensure they can commence smoothly. This will involve a range of work by government agencies to support the new orders required to be made by the court system under these reforms. Accordingly, the bill is proposed to commence upon proclamation, to ensure that supporting arrangements are in place before the commencement.

It saddens me, as I am sure it does everybody in this place, that we live in a world where persons commit sexual and violent offences against children. I am thankful for the work of New South Wales police in responding to these hideous events when they occur, and for the work they do in administering the child protection offender registration scheme to monitor and reduce risks of further offending. This bill includes a range of important reforms that will enhance the effectiveness of the scheme in New South Wales. This scheme works alongside criminal offences for offences against children and other legislative regimes designed to reduce risks posed to children, and it is important that we get the settings right to ensure that we are vigilant in protecting children in this State. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 7 August 2024.**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (15:36):** I contribute to debate on the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. I and many other regional MPs in this place know that the regions are the best place to live, work and raise a family. In fact, so many people are moving to the regions that the growth is roughly equivalent to a new city the size of Bathurst being created every couple of years. We are seeing an exodus from the major centres, particularly from Sydney. I am proud to say that the NSW Nationals go to work every day to fight for the needs of our communities and every resident who calls the country home. Our job is to make sure they get their fair share when it comes to funding, infrastructure and community programs.

There is no doubt in my mind that regional New South Wales is the engine room of this State, and we need a strong and robust funding mechanism to ensure that regional areas actually succeed. Unfortunately, this bill does not achieve that, and that is why we will not support it in its current form. When delivering his second reading speech, the member for Monaro, who joins us today, said that the Minister for Regional New South Wales "has undertaken extensive consultation around the State in coming to the measures in the bill and the direction the bill takes". There has been some moving around, but it is certainly not the feedback I have been receiving, because important regional stakeholders like the Country Mayors Association and Regional Cities NSW were completely left out, and they are feeling that they are not being considered at all.

The Regional Development Trust Fund, which was the Liberal-Nationals Government's \$3.3 billion Regional Growth Fund, has already been minimised by this Government, and now we are seeing its scope reduced as well. Following the 2023 election, the Regional Growth Fund had roughly \$600 million left over, and a portion of that has been moved into this newly branded trust. To be honest, we are not sure exactly how much, because the Minister for Regional New South Wales initially announced \$350 million, but the member for Monaro mentioned \$400 million in his second reading speech. They can talk about extensive consultation, but it is quite clear they have not consulted even each other yet around exactly how much money will be in the fund and to whom it will be available. So either \$350 million or \$400 million went into the Regional Development Trust Fund,

and the remaining \$200 million or \$250 million was put into the Working Regions Fund, which will be administered by Treasury, in Sydney.

The original fund included offshoot programs such as the Stronger Country Communities Fund, the Resources for Regions program, the Regional Job Creation Fund and the Regional Events Acceleration Fund. Those programs were designed to ensure every local government area had access to support, regardless of its size, location or representative on Macquarie Street. This bill will introduce a range of provisions that will restrict how future governments can invest in regional New South Wales. A key provision of the bill requires the Minister to outline key focus areas for where the money can be spent. The fund can no longer be used for other areas that are crucial to the development of regional communities. That is a pretty narrow approach if you ask me.

The overall impact becomes clear by comparing the two approaches. Minister Moriarty designated her four focus areas as sustainable regional industries, Aboriginal economic development and enterprise, community connection and capacity building, and improving regional service delivery. This year, only \$35 million is budgeted for those areas. In comparison, the 2022-23 Liberal-Nationals Government budget included more than \$750 million through an array of programs under the Regional Growth Fund, more than 20 times the amount on offer.

The Regional Growth Fund included \$140 million for the Resources for Regions program to support new infrastructure and community projects in towns impacted by mining. It included \$150 million for the Regional Tourism Activation Fund to support the development of infrastructure projects that attract more visitors to regional New South Wales. It included \$175 million for the Growing Regional Economies Fund for transformational projects to increase employment opportunities, infrastructure and services required for sustainable growth. It included \$100 million for the Regional Jobs Creation Fund to provide opportunities for businesses to diversify into new markets.

The fund included \$160 million for the Stronger Country Communities Fund to upgrade local parks, sporting fields, community halls and community-led programs. The nine funding streams available resulted in our regional communities getting a lot more. For example, the electorate of Barwon received more than \$98 million in one year through the Regional Growth Fund. Compared with the \$35 million budgeted for all of regional New South Wales this year, it is chalk and cheese. It is disappointing. Almost three times that amount went to one electorate. Many of our communities benefited from the Regional Growth Fund. The electorate of Bega received more than \$11 million in the same period. The electorate of Cessnock received almost \$5 million.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** Good member.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** He is a great member, and he got his fair share. Last week, the member for Monaro stated in this House that this Government is "providing long-term investment with far-reaching impacts", instead of the "one-off programs as we saw in the past". What one-off program is he talking about? That is a complete load of rubbish. All of the programs that made up the Regional Growth Fund led to continued investment, not just \$35 million across four categories. Of the \$35 million that has been allocated, \$5 million is for a loan pilot program for food and beverage manufacturers. That money is not for grants but loans. Businesses will have to pay that money back and the Government is planning to make money off the interest. That does not sound like long-term investment, or any investment at all.

In contrast, the Stronger Country Communities Fund provided \$660 million for more than 2,530 regional projects across the State between 2017 and the 2023 election. That fund covered many great local projects. In my part of the world there was a \$1 million upgrade of Barden Park Athletics Centre in Dubbo. The fund provided \$178,000 for improved mobility access for residents in Menindee. It provided \$592,000 for the Bridges Hill Skatepark upgrade in the Hunter region. It provided \$392,000 for the Hay hydrotherapy pool. The list of projects that were important for communities goes on, but they probably would not have happened under this new proposal, because it leaves what our communities need up to the discretion of one person: the Minister.

There is no doubt that axing the Regional Growth Fund was a blow to the bush. But to add insult to injury, the Government is trying to put strict parameters on its replacement. It begs the question why investment has slowed so much compared with the former Government's massive amount of funding. If only \$35 million is going to be rolled out this financial year, will only \$35 million be rolled out the year after? How much will be left in this trust fund? It may end up being a slush fund to spend big right before the election. That may be part of the plan.

This bill will also create a twin issue for funding because it will block avenues for regional cities to access Federal funding, which generally requires co-funding with the State Government. If the State is not going to tip in for projects outside the specific focus areas, why would the Commonwealth? Concerningly, the Government has established the Regional Development Advisory Council to oversee its investment strategy, but it includes no



representatives from local government or regional councils. In fact, they were specifically denied access to the council. The member for Monaro claimed:

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.

But, funnily enough, at every single event I have attended where this trust has come up, people have asked about how to get involved, including many mayors who were very upset that there were absolutely no opportunities for them to have any input. The Government claims that a genuine effort was made to consult with a wide range of stakeholders. I respectfully suggest that simply engaging with members of the Country Mayors Association and members of Regional Cities NSW would have achieved what should have been done at the very start. That never happened and it should have.

Without representation from regionally focused organisations, how will the Government invest in our regional communities in a meaningful way? Government members need to get out of the habit of making decisions for communities while sitting behind desks in Sydney. They need to trust the people who are on the ground every day. This bill does little more than make it harder for funding to flow through to our regions. It does not do what it should or what we want. I foreshadow that the Opposition will move amendments in the upper House. This \$35 million fund is a drop in the ocean compared with what has been invested previously. The way the fund is being disbursed is not right. More communities should be involved. Regional councils should be involved. The Opposition will move amendments in the upper House. We asked for the bill to be referred to a committee. That was declined. It would have been a good opportunity for people to come together to discuss how the bill will functionally fail regional New South Wales.

**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) (15:47):** I speak in support of the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. The bill today provides strategic and transparent investment to support economic growth and the wellbeing of our regional communities. Regional communities and economies play a crucial role in the prosperity and success of New South Wales. This bill will ensure a regional development framework is set up to invest in a way that makes a real difference. Robust governance arrangements are being put in place, a key pillar of the modernisation of the Regional Development Act.

The modernisation of the Act is one of three measures committed to under the Government's Regional Development Roadmap, a smarter and more disciplined approach to how governments will invest in regional New South Wales. The road map will ensure that investment in the regions meets the needs of regional communities and that people living and working there get the support they need. One of the first steps this Government took to modernise the Act was to talk to regional communities. The legislative framework established by the bill has been informed firsthand by feedback from people who live and work in the regions. This is consistent with the Government's goal of putting regional people at the heart of our decision-making.

The Minister for Regional New South Wales held a series of round tables across nine regional locations, attended by local community members, and people from the environment and education sectors, local councils, regional businesses and Aboriginal communities. An issues paper was also released, with over 230 written submissions received. The feedback both from the round table sessions and written submissions was clear: The Act no longer reflects the needs of contemporary regional New South Wales, and the people of regional New South Wales want to see a robust governance framework that ensures the effective and transparent expenditure of public funds.

In December 2023 the Minister for Regional New South Wales appointed the Regional Development Advisory Council—the first time the council had been appointed in many years. The advisory council provides the Minister for Regional New South Wales with advice on regional investment and economic development. Council members hold significant skills and experience in areas relevant to regional development. The advice from the advisory council and the feedback from the public consultation regarding the development of a transparent and robust governance framework has been incorporated into this bill and reflects this Government's commitment to accountability and probity in the investment of public funds.

This bill makes it a requirement for the responsible Minister to appoint a Regional Development Advisory Council. The current Act leaves the appointment of an advisory council entirely up to the relevant Minister's discretion. The advisory council plays a vital role in providing the Minister with expert advice and insight into regional investment and economic development. Requiring the Minister to appoint the council will ensure that investment by the trust is based on expert advice about what is best for regional communities and what will make a positive difference to people's lives, to towns and to businesses. To provide transparency and accountability about the management of the trust, the bill will require the publication of an annual report on the department's

website, which will include information about payments from the trust and about the membership of the advisory council. This 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.

In addition to the requirement that the annual report be published, the bill will also require the publication of a governance framework and an investment strategy. The governance framework will ensure the trust is administered in an effective and transparent manner. It will provide investment certainty through the development of an investment strategy; a comprehensive assessment process for trust investments; a role for the advisory council to review and provide investments from the trust; thorough monitoring and evaluation of trust investments, as per NSW Treasury guidelines; and independent evaluation and public reporting on trust operations.

The investment strategy is about delivering funding certainty for regional communities, which is a priority of this Government. It will set a framework for decision-making on investments under the trust guided by investment principles, key focus areas and investment pathways, which will ensure funding will be delivered according to community needs. To ensure that the trust remains responsive to the needs of our regions and to new challenges and opportunities, the bill requires that the published investment strategy be reviewed every two years, or more regularly as required.

In the past we have lacked a strategic investment framework for regional New South Wales. This Government is being responsible, responsive and strategic about how we can best support regional New South Wales for future success. We care about our regions, and we care about being responsible and transparent in the expenditure of public funds. This is a government that has shown time and again it will be fiscally disciplined and spend money wisely. We take this extremely seriously, and it is a fundamental part of what the bill before the House today does. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (15:53):** I oppose the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024, particularly the amendment to section 3 of the Regional Development Act 2004. The bill uses weasel words to amend the object of the Act, stating:

- (a) to promote economic and employment growth in regions,
- (b) to support sustainable economies and communities in regions,
- (c) to support place-based solutions, targeted to the development problems of particular locations and developed in collaboration with the local community, that promote improved economic and social outcomes in regions ...

As I flick through this bill, all of those points—(a), (b), (c) and all the way through to (f)—were pretty much the focus of the previous Coalition Government under a significant number of funds that provided for regional New South Wales to prosper and grow, and fostered regional growth and economic development. The programs we set in train were cut by Labor—the \$660 million Stronger Country Communities Fund, the Regional Job Creation Fund, the Regional Events Acceleration Fund, the Regional Tourism Activation Fund, the regional seniors travel card, the Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund, and funding for the Regional Arts Development Organisations.

I note that in his contribution to this debate my good friend the member for Wyong, who is also the hospitality and gaming Minister, talked about some of the benefits of this bill for regional New South Wales. However, those benefits were already being delivered to communities that so desperately require these funds to continue to grow and develop. The list of those programs provided by the former Government goes on and on. Unfortunately, under this Government it is a scorched-earth approach when it comes to regional funding. It has massaged all of those programs I have just talked about into one, reshaped them and is now trying to put its own stamp on them. It is a stamp that will have devastating effects for regional communities, purely because there will be no transparency.

A provision of the bill is that the Minister must outline key discussion areas where the money must be spent. The Minister's outlined priorities are sustainable regional industries, Aboriginal economic development and enterprise, community connection and capacity building, and improving regional service delivery. Those are motherhood statements. What do they really mean? What are the practicalities of the focus of these areas? Will we see any focus on job creation, on attracting new industries to the regions, or on our community groups that give so much for our regional communities? This is a top-down approach from the Labor Government that will hand-pick regional areas; those opposite have already looked at the electorate of Barwon, as an example, where they know they have the support of the local member out west. This will be an opportunity for Labor to inject funds into the areas it wants, not those the communities want. Those opposite are high and mighty, all-knowing about what is right for regional New South Wales, which is totally incorrect. They say, "We can tell you where those programs and projects are right across regional New South Wales."

The bill pretty much looks to pork-barrel the seats that Labor wants coming into the next election in 2027. I assure members that is the focus of those opposite. Underneath all the motherhood statements I just read to the House there are not yet any terms and conditions, no criteria and no benchmarks about the veracity of what all that looks like. There is no detail. This is similar to the election campaign of just a few years ago. Those opposite hand-picked regions and gave their Labor candidates a sum of money—sight unseen, without knowing the project—to use on whatever they could, whenever they could, picking projects they thought would help them in the election. I know this to be the case. The modus operandi was the same in my electorate and others across regional New South Wales.

What those of us in regional New South Wales want to see is the restoration of those funds established under the previous Government, like the \$660 million Stronger Country Communities Fund cut by Labor. The Regional Job Creation Fund was cut. The Regional Events Acceleration Fund was cut. The Regional Tourism Activation Fund was cut. The regional seniors travel card was cut. The Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund was cut, as were our Regional Arts Development Organisations. Projects across regional New South Wales have directly benefited. Industries have been able to expand, including engineering companies, manufacturing companies, agricultural industries, retail and small business. If they could prove there was job creation, they would get those funds. There were criteria; there was a template. It was transparent and open, and there was a process. The list goes on and on.

I note that the Government's Regional Development Trust Fund is proudly paraded by the Labor Party as the answer to regional funding woes, but we have not seen it yet. How long can it boast about a funding program without dishing out a dime? It all sounds good. But it is all motherhood statements and is going absolutely nowhere. The bill will only make it harder for people living in regional New South Wales and for those businesses that are struggling, that want to put people on and that want to expand. They want that regional growth and economic development. I can hear members of business chambers across regional New South Wales groaning at what they are hearing from the Labor Party about the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024.

A good system of true funding that made a real difference was in place. It attracted people to regional New South Wales and attracted new business to the State. It allowed businesses in regional New South Wales to expand on the back of real money. The bill makes it harder for people living in regional New South Wales, but then again Labor clearly stands for Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong—N-S-W. The sandstone curtain has been rebuilt by this Labor Government. The Opposition aims to tear it down and get the money flowing back to regional New South Wales, and only The Nationals can do that. We will continue to fight for regional New South Wales across the board. We will be moving amendments in the other place, and I call on the members of that House to support our amendments. The regions cannot afford to go backwards. The bill in its current form is the tool by which Labor will pull funding away from the regions, and it must be stopped.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (16:01):** I speak in support of the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. The Government is committed to the future prosperity of regional New South Wales, and its actions speak louder than words. Since being elected, Labor has made good on its commitments time and again. We are delivering the Regional Development Roadmap, which is this Government's plan to deliver social and economic outcomes in our regional communities. This bill modernises the Regional Development Act, yet another demonstration of what the Government is doing for regional New South Wales. The bill will ensure a modern framework to support the Regional Development Trust Fund and, in doing so, ensure that our regional communities experience the benefit of this funding for years to come. Since coming to government, Labor has shown a strong dedication to the regions. Last year the Government announced an initial investment of \$350 million in the Regional Development Trust Fund. In this year's budget, we committed a further \$50 million.

**Mr Steve Whan:** That adds up to \$400 million.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND:** It does.

**Ms Anna Watson:** We can count on this side of the House.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND:** I do not have a whiteboard for the member for Dubbo, but I could do the sums for him. This money will be the Government's mechanism to support sustainable and transformative investments in regional development. But the trust is not the only way the Government is investing in regional New South Wales. The recent budget invested in several essential services and infrastructure to improve service delivery and quality of life in rural and regional communities. That included the announcement of \$5.7 billion in disaster recovery funds to rebuild roads and transport, including \$3.3 billion in joint funding with the Australian Government; \$1.4 billion for regional education infrastructure; \$196.5 million to fund ongoing regional hospital developments in Eurobodalla in my electorate, as well as Temora, Moree, Cessnock and Shellharbour; \$200.1 million in health worker housing to support health services in regional and remote areas; and \$945.7 million to address biosecurity threats.

The Government's track record speaks for itself. This Government is delivering for the future of communities in regional New South Wales. The modern legislative framework in the bill will determine how the \$400 million in the Regional Development Trust will be invested to deliver real and meaningful change for people living and working in regional New South Wales. The Government has already announced a series of initiatives as a preview of the type of deliberate and considered investment that regional communities can expect to see from the trust following the passage of this bill.

We have announced \$15 million to deliver airstrip improvements in rural and remote New South Wales, including airstrip surface upgrades, exclusion and safety fencing, lighting, and the installation of fuel infrastructure; and a \$5 million Aboriginal Economic Development Package to support Aboriginal businesses and organisations in regional New South Wales to expand and reach their potential. The funding will assist eligible Aboriginal organisations and businesses to deliver projects that enable improved economic and employment outcomes—for example, upgrades to community-controlled facilities or the expansion of native food operations. The pilot is being designed in consultation with the Aboriginal community and will commence in the coming months.

A \$10 million Western NSW Workforce Activation package will provide funding to increase workforce participation in western New South Wales by supporting increased child care availability and upgrades in Bourke, Broken Hill and Cobar. In the first year of the program \$5 million will be made available, with a further \$5 million earmarked for a second year of the package following a review of the program. A \$5 million pilot program for low-interest loans will enable eligible small and medium enterprises in the food and beverage manufacturing sectors to apply for loans of between \$100,000 and \$1 million to increase productivity and create jobs in regional New South Wales. Those are examples of what the trust will be delivering for regional communities under this Government. It is deliberate investment, with a focus on making sustainable improvements to regional communities in a way that will be long-lasting and have a broad-ranging benefit across the State.

The new framework will also ensure investments are going where they are needed. As part of the Regional Development Roadmap, the Government committed to re-establishing the Regional Development Advisory Council to provide independent and expert advice on regional investments. The re-establishment of the advisory council is a critical step to ensure that the Government's actions in support of regional New South Wales are informed by expert advice. Its role is to provide the Minister for Regional New South Wales with advice on regional investment and economic development. Advisory council members are required to have relevant skills and experience in key areas, such as climate adaptation and resilience, community service activities, regional industry development, regional and rural economics, regional planning and infrastructure, primary industries, and knowledge and experience of supporting economic development within Aboriginal communities.

The advisory council has played a critical role in the development of the bill before the House. The road map also sets out that we would invest in the Regional Development Trust Fund, which we have done. The \$400 million now committed to the trust will go towards four key focus areas: sustainable regional industries, Aboriginal economic development and enterprise, community connection and capacity building, and improving regional service delivery. The final element of the road map is modernising the Regional Development Act 2004, which is the purpose of the bill. The bill will provide a robust legislative framework to support the Regional Development Trust Fund to be an effective investment stream for our regions.

This Government is delivering on its road map commitments through this bill. Regional communities across the State can be sure that they can rely on us to deliver for them. I reiterate my support for everything this Government is doing for regional New South Wales, including re-establishing the Regional Development Advisory Council to provide independent and expert advice on regional investments, providing critical funding to the trust, and modernising the Act to enable us to invest in the future of our regions. This bill will mean that we have delivered for regional communities with the completion of our road map. This is just the start of the extraordinary opportunities for our State—from the \$400 million invested in the Regional Development Trust and all the other great work this Government does for our regions. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (16:09):** I speak about the Regional—and I would like to think rural—Development Amendment Bill 2024. Regional development and the initiatives that promote rural and regional areas are a great idea in principle. It was a bit disappointing that there was no consultation in my electorate, which is the second biggest electorate in the State and the electorate that feeds most of New South Wales. We all want to see our rural electorates thrive and be able to assist our communities to be stronger but the bill raises some serious concerns. What concerns me most in the bill is the "how". How will the Government choose who gets help and who has enough for now? The bill sets out to expand the purposes for which financial assistance can be provided. The goal is to provide more flexibility, including broadening the types of financial assistance that is available.

Again, this is a great idea in principle. But the problem is the power given to the Minister by the legislation is quite troubling. Ultimately, the bill will give the Minister almost unfettered access to funding. A study of how all of the amendments will work together makes it apparent that the Minister may take his or her own initiative to grant financial assistance to a person in any way the Minister determines for any purpose under the objects of the Act. Wow! Just think about that—any financial assistance to any person, in any way the Minister wants to do it. As loopholes go, that one is big enough to drive a cattle truck through. Taxpayers' money must be respected and it must only ever be used properly. We must do everything possible to avoid the creation of a slush fund for this Government, or future governments, that can be used to buy political favours or to look after political mates. That is why I believe the bill needs to be amended further.

I call on the Government to consider changing the bill to ensure that the funds are allocated more carefully. Rather than having an all-powerful Minister making the call, why not divide the fund almost evenly amongst each regional and rural electorate? Then, why not ask the community where the money should go? No-one knows what a local area needs better than the locals. Each local government area could put together a group made up of a councillor, the local MP and, say, four other people from across the community who could then help target the areas of greatest need. That would allow on-the-ground knowledge to direct funds and eliminate the possibility of a slush fund. It is not the Government's money; it is the people's money. Real people should have a real say as to where and how these regional development funds are spent. The allocation of funds to the regions is a great idea, but we have to ensure that we allocate these funds in clever way that puts the needs of the locals above anything else.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (16:13):** I support the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. I congratulate the Minister for Regional New South Wales on the work that she has done to develop the bill. From day one, this Government has spoken about its fiscal discipline. Today we demonstrate this Government's commitment to using public funds responsibly. This bill is about modernising the legislative framework that governs the Regional Development Trust—a trust that has been the subject of a significant financial commitment from the Government. The Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024 will create a modern and transparent legislative framework so that the trust can deliver sustainable and long-lasting investment for people in regional New South Wales. I hope this initiative will be supported by members on both sides of the House.

I highlight some of the early investment that this Government has made. While the passage of the bill will create even more possibilities, this Government has already been hard at work delivering for regional communities. In May this year, the New South Wales Government announced an initial set of investments from the trust totalling \$35 million. The initial investment involved a package of initiatives to boost the long-term resilience of regional New South Wales, with a focus on job creation and primary industry expansion. The investments are informed by evidence, community need and consultation through nine round tables held across regional New South Wales since November 2023. I will focus on two of the programs that highlight the difference this trust can make in regional New South Wales.

The first is a \$5 million Aboriginal Economic Development Package to support Aboriginal businesses and organisations. The funding will assist eligible Aboriginal organisations and businesses to deliver projects that enable improved economic and employment outcomes—for example, upgrades to community-controlled facilities or the expansion of native food operations. This will help Aboriginal organisations in regional New South Wales to expand and reach their potential. The program aligns to one of the key focus areas that this Government will have for the trust around Aboriginal economic development and enterprise. I happily note that the rollout of this \$5 million package is already underway in the form of two programs. The first, a pilot program relating to cultural and economic development uplift, is being assessed after work with Aboriginal communities. The pilot program initiatives will be reviewed by the Regional Development Advisory Council, which will provide advice on the proposals to the Minister. The second program, which relates to Aboriginal economic development and business growth, is also underway and currently open for applications.

I also highlight the \$10 million Western NSW Workforce Activation Program, which will provide funding to increase workforce participation in that region by supporting increased early childhood education and care availability in Bourke, Broken Hill and Cobar. The first \$5 million will be made available in the first year of the program, with a further \$5 million earmarked for the second year of the package following a review of the program. This sensible initiative from the Minns Labor Government is designed to increase the availability of early childhood education and care in regional areas.

Co-designed with the early childhood sector, it is an innovative approach to strengthening the workforce in remote communities. It achieves this by addressing one of the barriers faced by parents looking to return to work in areas where there is little or no child care available at all. We all know the challenges that can exist for families juggling child care and work commitments, and this challenge is as prevalent as in regional New South

Wales as anywhere else. That is why this Government is doing what it can to ensure that all children can access high-quality early learning, no matter their postcode or circumstance.

The financial assistance made possible by the Regional Development Trust will allow early childhood education and care services to extend their hours or modify their services. This will not only give more flexibility to parents looking to get back into the workforce but also create new opportunities for childcare workers. This program demonstrates the impact that financial assistance from the trust can have, delivering the important community infrastructure, service delivery and capacity building that is critical to regional New South Wales development.

That is just some of the important work that the Regional Development Trust already does. However, we are here today to modernise the legislative framework that supports the trust. The Government recognises that while these initial investments are a strong start, there is more to be done. The bill will update the object of the Act to provide more flexibility in how we can tailor financial assistance to respond to regional community needs, including broadening the types of financial assistance available under the Act. The bill inserts new governance and reporting provisions to ensure that spending of Regional Development Trust Fund money will always be transparent and informed. The initial investments we have seen from the trust are just the beginning. I look forward to seeing what other opportunities the trust can deliver under the modernised arrangements. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:20):** I was not going to contribute to debate on the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024 because the Government is moving in a good direction on this matter. But when I heard a member of The Nationals stand up and rewrite history—history that I had a front seat at—I changed my mind. The Greens support the bill because, finally, what was a slush fund for the Liberals and The Nationals has been reviewed and now has oversight and transparency. I do not pretend that everything is perfect. I watched some of the most extraordinary pork-barrelling, which was widely documented and reported in the media. Members can google it.

I remind the House of some of those highlights. There were the sports grants of 2020 in New South Wales where 75 per cent of the \$33 million went to marginal Liberal electorates. There were the Federal sports rorts that cost the political scalp of a number of their kind in The Nationals. Let us not forget the Stronger Country Communities Fund, particularly the first round, in which 95 per cent of \$252 million was allocated to Liberal or Nationals electorates or marginal electorates. Indeed, former New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian famously said that pork-barrelling is "not illegal", but ICAC has since said that pork-barrelling in certain circumstances definitely constitutes corrupt conduct. It is surprising to hear any member of The Nationals pretending to have clean hands.

I give a shout-out to Greens Senator David Shoebridge. When he was a member of the other place, he and the Hon. John Graham, the now Minister, did very good work on uncovering the blatant pork-barrelling that went on with grants. I saw with my own eyes that assessors and announcers in The Nationals were, in a number of cases, the same person. We welcome the transparency that the Regional Development Roadmap will bring. At the end of the day, grant funding is hard-earned taxpayers' money. We are entrusted by the community and we hold that trust highly. No member today is suggesting that regional New South Wales does not deserve funding. I am certainly not suggesting that any organisation that benefited from those grants did anything untoward. On the contrary. Who was at the helm? Who controls the purse strings? It is the Liberals and The Nationals. They cannot possibly stand up and say they are the epitome of clean hands and transparency and are above reproach when it comes to grants. But I am not in any way suggesting that, simply because they were bad, we can get away with whatever we like now—of course not.

The Regional Development Amendment Bill is a key element of the road map, which is the outcome of extensive consultation around the regions. That is my understanding. The road map includes \$350 million over four years to be paid into the Regional Development Trust Fund; public consultation on potential changes to the Regional Development Act; the appointment of seven members to the Regional Development Advisory Council for an initial 12 months; and an initial investment package from the Regional Development Trust Fund, including \$45.3 million for health worker accommodation, which we welcome, and, in next year's budget, \$1.4 billion for regional school building programs. No-one could argue that that is not in the public interest. Quite frankly, that is what we should be seeing with those kinds of numbers. It is about public infrastructure and benefiting everybody.

The consultation process included 232 written submissions, nine round tables in regional New South Wales and advice from the advisory council. The consultation on the issues paper showed strong support for updating the objects of the Act, particularly to increase the flexibility of financial assistance so that economic outcomes were not prioritised over broader support for regional economies. The consultation also showed support for increasing transparency and accountability mechanisms. For The Greens, it is paramount that there be no room for financially favouring or preferring any particular electorate. Those outcomes are broadly consistent with

The Greens' policies on regional development. I give a shout-out to our spokesperson Ms Sue Higginson, MLC, for her work. She will make a contribution to debate in the other place.

The Greens support the bill. We would like to see a clearer inclusion of transition programs, particularly for industries that will be phased out—in our view, that is coal and forestry. The inclusion of sustainability terms in the objects of the Act do not go far enough. We need regeneration, not sustainability. The term ecologically sustainable development has been replaced by a nature-first concept because sustainability in the current ecological crisis will just not cut it. We need to acknowledge nature-positive and nature-first principles. Further work should be undertaken to assess what needs exist in communities, particularly First Nations communities, for support in economic, social and environmental outcomes.

This is one of those moments where I have watched members rewrite history. It beggars belief how certain individuals got away with some of the things that happened in my electorate and were ultimately rewarded. That is for another day, but members know who I am talking about. Our community organisations and our communities deserve a level playing field. They deserve to understand how grant applications are assessed and why they miss out. Some of the most bizarre outcomes resulted from the bushfire recovery grants. I note the member for Lismore is in the Chamber.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** I'm going to share one.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH:** I look forward to hearing the member for Lismore share one of those outcomes. There was no way that anyone with common sense was assessing those grants. We can deduce that it was nothing to do with extrinsic evidence or a transparent assessment process; it was all political. As I said at the time, fires and floods, as I can now say, do not recognise electoral boundaries. It is heartening that we are now in an era of working in minority government with a government that is committed to transparent governance. The Premier has said to me personally on a number of occasions that that is a badge of honour. I trust we are headed in that direction. We support the bill.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:28):** I support the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. I highlight one of the bushfire recovery funds—the Local Economic Recovery Fund, or LER, as it was called. I refer to former Deputy Premier John Barilaro. That was an example of treating public money as though it was the member's own private money to dish out to the people he wanted to dish it out to. It was a bushfire grant, so it was unconscionable to spend money in that way. At the time—from memory, it was July 2021—I said:

NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro has lost any shred of credibility he had left by defending the alleged rorting of joint NSW-Australian Government bushfire relief funding to shore up Coalition-held electorates.

When I said that, I was also talking about Tenterfield, which I represent in this place. Tenterfield is in the Lismore electorate and it has been affected many times by bushfires. It put in for some money and got absolutely nothing. When we found out what had happened, the mayor said that she felt Tenterfield had been punished because the area was not represented by a National Party member; she and I said that together in the media. It was absolutely unconscionable. I said that the New South Wales Nationals leader had lost the plot after he fronted a parliamentary inquiry into pork-barrelling of grant programs and described the practice as an investment in the regions.

I am looking at members on the Opposition benches who represent the regions, and we all want investment in the regions. But it is government money that has to be allocated in a fair and equitable way, and the process must be transparent. It is not a slush fund. Who would not want a slush fund so we could dole out money everywhere? But we cannot do that; it is public money. I am not sure Mr Barilaro understood that. A project was announced up my way and I thought, "Where did that come from?" It was not in my electorate, but it was close by. I then looked for the program that the project came under. I could not find it because guess what? It had not been announced. The project was announced without a program. I raised the matter at the time—

*[A Government member interjected.]*

It was absolutely selective. At the time, I thought, "That is odd," but no-one picked it up. Eventually Michael West Media got onto the story and found that:

... 99 per cent of a \$177-million stream of Local Economic Recovery (LER)—

we had LER and BLER, the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery—

funding for 71 projects last November flooded in to Coalition-held seats in New South Wales.

NSW Labor seats including Tenterfield, which I talked about, and the Blue Mountains—I know there were fires in that area—got nothing. They picked up just 1 per cent of the funding. I strongly support the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. It will bring more transparency and allow better governance. Funds will be allocated in a fair and equitable manner. That is important. I am not simply harking back to the past in my

contribution. As a Parliament, we must ensure public money is distributed to the regions in a way that is seen and understood, and so that local people have a say in the process.

I said at the time that it was a peculiar way—I was probably too generous—to administer taxpayers' money and resulted in lopsided outcomes. Two timber companies in the Lismore electorate received a total of \$2 million, and seven projects in the neighbouring Clarence electorate—and I bear malice towards the member for Clarence—shared in \$36.842 million. That is what happens when there is a lack of transparency and good governance around regional investments. We need to see that investment. While I did not begrudge money going to Richmond or Clarence, places like Tenterfield, Kyogle, Lismore and Tweed shire were left on the sidelines. That is enough about the roting.

**Mr Michael Kemp:** Are you going to fund the regions to 30 per cent?

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** The member for Oxley mentioned 30 per cent. Are you talking about Restart?

**Mr Michael Kemp:** No, population.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** It was not on population.

**Mr Michael Kemp:** No, I asked if you are going to fund—

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** You did not either. According to the Auditor-General's report, Restart NSW never got 30 per cent in one year. The member for Oxley might want to rethink that one.

**Ms Tamara Smith:** You picked the wrong member to fight with. She knows her stuff.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** I have every Auditor-General's report in my office. I now turn to some of the more perfunctory aspects of the bill. The bill is a product of thorough consultation with people who live and work in the regions, and with experts in regional investment and economic development. That is what we all want. This Government was elected because people wanted to see things done differently, particularly in this area, and this bill is an example of how we are doing that. It was developed with regional communities in mind. There was a comprehensive community engagement process that integrated feedback from 232 submissions on the issues paper that was released. The bill incorporates what was said at a series of regional development round tables held in Bega, Bourke, Broken Hill, Casino, Coffs Harbour, Maitland, Narrabri, Orange and Wagga Wagga. In the regions we always say that we want round tables absolutely everywhere, but the round tables were as comprehensive as they could be. There was extensive input and feedback.

The round tables also had representation from local government, businesses, local communities, Aboriginal communities, and the education and environment sectors. Everybody heard firsthand from regional communities about how the Government can best support them and invest in their futures. The feedback was clear that the Act was no longer fit for purpose and had not been reviewed for quite a while. I was around when Regional Development Australia came together at Federal and State government levels; I was part of that process. We had not considered for a while whether it was fit for purpose. It needed it to be modernised, with a transparent process and a more strategic approach to support deliberate investment in regional communities.

When we consider regional or economic development, we sometimes take a broader State view. I am glad about that. I think the member for Ballina talked about regional economies. It is important that we view regional economies differently from how we view the State as a whole. In our area we are working on economic and environmental recovery as part of the overall recovery of the Northern Rivers. Community leaders—two Federal MPs, four State MPs and seven local government areas represented by mayors—have had get-togethers and round tables. We are nearly there with our vision for recovery over the next few years, and I suggest it will continue for quite some time after that. The CSIRO, the Reconstruction Authority and the Urban Living Lab also helped us to develop that broad economic and environmental recovery framework.

When I first suggested it, I wrote to then Premier Perrottet and said it was something we needed to do over years to ensure the full recovery of our region. I also said that we should start off small but think big about how we do it and do it differently. I also said that the regional development plans that local government is required to put out every few years—I cannot remember how often it is—needed to be updated in line with where we are at the moment. I thank the Minister for her great work, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:38):** I contribute to debate on the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. I believe there are a number of good Labor members on the Government benches who genuinely care for regional communities. We have just heard from the member for Lismore, for whom I have an incredible amount of respect. I see the member for Monaro, who I believe genuinely cares for his community. I acknowledge also the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the member for Maitland. I thank her for her recent intervention to return a bus contract and ensure that the Sir Humphreys of her department did not win out.



I genuinely thank her for that. She did not do it; it was her bureaucrats. She overturned it and she should be commended.

The Regional Development Amendment Bill should be called the regional destruction amendment bill, and good Labor members are about to sleepwalk into backing a bill that guts funding in regional New South Wales. Government members have already done exactly that to the detriment of regional communities and to the benefit of trade unions in Western Sydney, where they are going after marginal votes. It does not matter whether it was the Premier retracting his promise to maintain the regional seniors travel card or his promise to invest in things like the Toolijooa passing loop in my community, all I continue to see are cuts to my community from city-centric Labor members—not regional Labor members, but the city-centric Ministers who are killing regional communities. The bill does exactly that.

I add to the very good comments of my friend the member for Murray in relation to consultation. Her electorate covers an enormous area. There was no consultation with her, with the member for South Coast or with me as the member for Kiama. The bill does not genuinely reflect the views of people in regional New South Wales. I am sorry but, based on some of the decisions of the Government so far, I simply do not trust it when it comes to investments in regional New South Wales. The Premier is city-centric, the Treasurer is only interested in winning marginal electorates and the Government is only interested in clawing back some of the funds that have been invested.

I am proud as a local member to have secured over the past few years of my time in this place record investments in my electorate—upgrades to things like the Princes Highway, which we waited years for. During the 16 years of the former Labor Government I remember it talked about the Gerringong upgrade, the Berry bypass, the Albion Park Rail bypass, the Berry to Bomaderry upgrade and the Shoalhaven River bridge. It took the Coalition in government to recognise that there was more to New South Wales than simply Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong.

The definition of rural and regional Australia under that mob opposite is everything south of Tempe and north of Gordon. We need to make sure that we do not pass a bill like this that will empower the Minister to make certain decisions unilaterally without any reference to the Parliament or their colleagues. In debate on Government reforms to grants it has been said that we can trust this Government because of the transparency measures it has put into the ministerial code of conduct in relation to grants. As I pointed out in this place at the time the reform was debated, it does not include any penalty for its breach. It was a hollow reform that did not deliver anything other than a sound bite and a press release.

Regional members know that it is incredibly difficult to attract the attention of the bureaucracy, because even the senior bureaucrats who run departments typically do not understand or come from regional New South Wales, and we as regional members have to really fight hard for every project. Sometimes that means working with our communities and attempting to work with all sides of politics to make sure that projects are put in the pipeline and delivered. But I do not believe that this bill assists regional members to do any of that. In fact, I think it will make it harder for us to get through the morass of bureaucracy.

I am sure that, unless they are the regional Minister, Labor members will actually find some challenges down the line as well, trying to break through the extra process that the bill will set up that will centralise more authority and take it away from some of the Ministers who currently administer those funds. They will be taken from Peter to pay Paul. That is what the bill does. Whilst I genuinely believe that there are good-hearted Ministers in this place who work for their community—I have acknowledged some of them and I am pleased to see that they are in the Chamber today—I do not believe this bill works. In fact, I think it will gut funding for regional New South Wales and make it harder for regional MPs to deliver for their communities.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (16:43):** Debate on the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024 has been an interesting walk down memory lane for those of us who have been in this place for more than a minute and lived through the former Government's approach to grants. I note that some new members from both The Nationals and the Liberals are in the Chamber. It is important that they understand what it was like to be in opposition on any given day when the Coalition was in government. After being in office for 10 days I woke up to the news that the Premier was coming to my electorate because there had been a flood. I called his electorate office—because knowing how to contact the Premier is not part of the kit when a member is elected to Parliament—and said I needed to speak to him when he came.

I received a phone call from said Premier's media adviser, who told me to meet them at the SES depot at Rutherford. It took quite a while to get from one end of my electorate to the other through all the road closures, and when I finally arrived I found myself with someone from *The Maitland Mercury*—God love them—and no-one else. We looked at each other and thought, "What is going on here?" My community was flooding. I had an island of 3,500 people, where I used to have a community and a village. They were going to be cut off for eight

days. I realised that the Premier was at the northern division zone headquarters at Metford despite the fact that their adviser specifically told me and the local media outlet otherwise. When I got there, the Premier's jaw dropped in absolute shock that I made it to the venue.

**Mr Steve Whan:** "How did she get here?"

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, "How did she get here? How did the media get here?" Sky News, the ABC and Prime7 were covering that event in my community and getting a briefing from the SES about my community in crisis. That was 10 days into my term, and it coloured my perspective. It made me realise that there was no depth to which the former Government would not sink to politicise every natural disaster—and it was only four years after it had been elected, so before the real rot had set in. Everything was an opportunity to do over the then Opposition and to punish communities for electing Labor members.

**Mr Michael Kemp:** Two wrongs don't make a right.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I will get to that in a minute. It continued. The member for Dubbo had a bit of a spray in the Chamber. Luckily I did not have the sound on my TV, but I saw from the gestures that he was upset. I heard a few of the conversations of the member for Tamworth. I guess they do not like the fact that things have changed. The member for Dubbo has been a member for about 10 minutes, really, in the life of a parliament. He was elected in March 2019 and got onto the front bench in December 2021 as the agriculture Minister—shortly after, again, there was a flood in my electorate. But according to members opposite, floods only happen on one side of a river. I wrote to the member for Dubbo and then agriculture Minister and said, "You've got a levee in your area"—which they changed. It was with another Minister, who said, "Well, that's just a matter for emergency services."

The former Government did not do anything about it. A billion-dollar piece of infrastructure was damaged in very severe circumstances in my electorate. Those opposite said, "It's on the wrong side of the river. It's Labor Party ground. We don't care about it"—even lovely Rob Stokes. It was always this question, "Who will be in my electorate to announce the Hunter plan?" Temporary Speaker Barr, you might remember when Stokesy came to visit. He brought the member for Upper Hunter and announced a plan in my electorate that I had no say in. Not one member opposite can say that I, as Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, with carriage of 98 per cent of the State's road network, have not tried to include them at every moment.

Those opposite talk about pork-barrelling. Seriously, the member for Tamworth needs to have a good, hard look at himself. He said, "It's the Labor way. They are too high and mighty to listen to the community." Where was I last Monday? I was in the Tamworth electorate announcing a trial of new technology to make a level crossing, where someone died last year, safer. How much more responsive to their communities do they want us to be? It is like that all across this State. This bill is about stopping the rot that set in after 12 long years of disgraceful pork-barrelling. We saw it time and again. It was documented in the bushfire grants, where all these people were just getting grants. I heard some of them did not even have a bushfire in their area, but they got money—good on them! It was a problem.

Government investment was not based on need, cost-benefit ratios, guidelines or good principles of governance; the only metric the former Government cared about when it allocated grant funding during its 12 years in government was the electoral pendulum. If investment moved the dial on a marginal seat, then the former Government was all over it. It was first to the party. But the former Government was nowhere to be seen when it came to investing in necessary infrastructure in communities of need. In my time as shadow Minister for Investment and Tourism, I tried to chase a grant program that started its life as the Regional Growth Environment and Tourism Fund. I tried to find out where that money had gone during budget estimates but was told, "No, we don't have that anymore. Now we have the Regional Tourism Activation Fund."

The Fixing Country Roads program was meant to strengthen our road network for heavy vehicles, but in 2021 while in opposition we discovered that the former Deputy Premier asked the then member for Bathurst and then Minister for Regional Transport and Roads if he had a "lazy 80" that he could hand over because he wanted to do something for drought at that time. Mr Paul Toole did not even know what that money went towards.

**Mr Steve Whan:** He handed him a \$25 million blank cheque.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It was for \$80.3 million. The 69 council applications that were waiting in that portal were decommissioned. When Mr Paul Toole was asked at budget estimates, "What did you do with the lazy 80, Paul?" he did not know. When asked, "Do you think it went to the regions?" he said, "I don't know." He did not care. It was just about giving a blank cheque to Mr John Barilaro to see what other votes he could buy. That was the way the former Government operated, and it was an absolute disgrace. Maitland was always held up as a good example to disprove the rule about pork-barrelling because my electorate did manage to get money in those dark days of the former Government. But that was because, if one looks at the map of the Maitland electorate

and the Maitland local government area [LGA] from 2015 to 2023, they are an exact match—just like the electorate and LGA of the member for Campbelltown. There is one council and one State member of Parliament.

During the former Government's pork-barrelling, funding could not go to the non-Labor part of the LGA. In fact, the electorate of the Upper Hunter now contains the northern part of my electorate. If the Liberals and The Nationals had formed government during this term, all of the government funding for my electorate would have gone to the northern part of the river, because that was how the former Government did it. It did that in Port Stephens and other local government areas up the coast. The former Government gave government funding to Liberals and Nationals electorates across our local government areas, regardless of need. I remember talking to the former general manager of Maitland council about that. I pointed out the luck of a Labor government winning the 2023 election, because at least the money would go to Maitland council to spend where it was needed, rather than going towards fixing the political dial, which is not in the best interests of the community.

I am disgusted that members opposite have lectured the Government about governance. Opposition members were too scared to ask me a question in question time today, which was sad because I could not talk to them about their strategy. The member for Dubbo is in the big seat today while the Leader of the Government, "Speako"—or whatever the Hon. Wes Fang is calling him this week—is out. The Nationals asked three questions only. That could have been a good thing, but the questions were about the metro; work on Fridays, which most Australian workers think about already, but apparently that is core business for The Nationals; and an issue that was resolved last week by a Labor member of Parliament and a crossbench member—I pay credit to the member for Kiama for that—and not The Nationals. Former Government members still have their snouts in the trough in their attempts to stop good governance at every opportunity—shame, shame, shame!

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (16:53):** I contribute to debate on the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. Labor members talk a big game but they are stuck in the past. All I have heard from Government members in debate on the bill is the past, but, like I said in question time, a good leader focuses on the future. How can we claim to honour the legacy of the Regional Growth Fund if we fail to provide every regional community with the essential resources and support they need to truly thrive? The Government has decided to spend one-twentieth of the spend of the Liberal-Nationals Government in 2022. That strikes at the very heart of our commitment to the development and prosperity of regional New South Wales. The changes proposed in the Regional Development Amendment Bill will reshape the future of our regional communities.

The Minns Labor Government's decision to dismantle the \$3.3 billion Regional Growth Fund, a cornerstone initiative established by the previous administration, marks a significant shift in the State's approach to regional development. Some \$600 million remained in the fund after the 2023 election. It was more than a financial instrument; it was a beacon of hope and progress for countless communities across our State. The Minns Government's move to reallocate this \$350 million into a new Regional Development Trust Fund and return \$250 million to Treasury represents a critical juncture in the State's approach to regional investment. The Government's approach is to rip money out of regional New South Wales and dump it into Western Sydney.

The Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024 introduces a new framework that drastically limits the scope of investment and narrows our focus to four key areas: sustainable regional industries, Aboriginal economic development and enterprise, community connection and capacity building, and improving regional service delivery. While those areas are undeniably important, the restrictive nature of this new focus threatens to sideline other crucial needs that our regional communities have. Consider the contrast between the current funding allocation and what was available under the former Government: Last year the Regional Growth Fund supported a diverse array of initiatives, with investment including \$140 million for the Resources for Regions program, \$150 million for the Regional Tourism Activation Fund and \$175 million for the Growing Regional Economies Fund.

Those programs were not just line items in the budget; they were lifelines that fostered infrastructure development, tourism growth and economic prosperity in our most vulnerable areas: the regions we represent. We grow the food and fibre and provide the infrastructure materials for the State. In stark contrast, this year the Regional Development Trust Fund will disburse \$35 million only through four specific grant programs including \$5 million in low-interest loans for food and beverage manufacturing businesses, \$15 million to improve airstrips in remote areas, \$5 million for Aboriginal business organisations, and \$10 million for childcare providers. However, that funding is restricted to just three local government areas, which is a drastic reduction from the comprehensive and inclusive funding strategy of the past.

In my community approximately 200 children are on the waitlists at each of our childcare facilities, and wait times are two or three years minimum. How is it fair or equitable if government funding is distributed to just three local government areas? The impact of this shift is not merely a statistical adjustment; it is a tangible change in the opportunities that are available to our communities. Regional councils once had the ability to partner with the Government through various programs. Now they are excluded from applying for most of the available grants

under the new framework. That exclusion deprives local governments of the vital support they need to drive regional development and meet the unique needs of their communities.

Moreover, the newly established Regional Development Advisory Council lacks representation from local governments and regionally focused organisations. That oversight raises serious concerns about the inclusivity of the consultation process and the ability of the advisory body to effectively address the diverse needs of our regional areas. Let us not forget the stories behind the numbers. In the electorate of Oxley, communities such as those of Nambucca Valley, Kempsey, Bellingen, Port Macquarie and Hastings Valley benefited from the Regional Growth Fund with significant investments. From upgrading playgrounds and sports facilities to supporting tourism projects and improving local infrastructure, those funds were instrumental to enhancing the quality of life and economic vitality of our areas.

The reduction in available funding under the new trust will leave a substantial gap in support for countless individuals and communities who rely on that vital support. Our regional communities deserve more than a restrictive, narrowly defined approach to investment. They deserve a framework that is flexible, inclusive and responsive to our diverse and evolving needs. They certainly deserve more than one-twentieth of the funding that was provided by the former Government. It is not good enough to rip out funding from areas that provide the State's food, fibre and infrastructure building materials and give it to Western Sydney. Support the regions and fund them fairly. The Minister does not have the public licence to become a dictator over our funds.

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

**OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES 2024**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:59):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates our Australian Olympic team for their fantastic, record-breaking performance at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.
- (2) Wishes the best of luck to our wonderful Australian Paralympic team in the upcoming Paralympic Games.

Gold to Australia! Go those amazing water polo girls! Go those high jumpers! Go those pole vaulters! They are amazing. Waking up every single day has been gold for Australia. It has just been amazing. When we announced the public interest debate today, we got text messages from people from across the Chamber, saying it is about time we had a very positive debate supported by everybody. I look forward to those on the other side arriving in the Chamber for this debate. It has been a mega record-breaking effort for our Aussie Olympians. It has been absolutely amazing, with a record 18 gold medals. Nina Kennedy in the pole vault, Keegan Palmer skateboarding, Matt Wearn in laser sailing, who became our flagbearer, and our men's track cycling team with two bronze on that four-gold day were amazing. There were four gold medals to wake up to in the morning.

We were on the podium for 22 sports, and New South Wales celebrated 12 of the gold medals in the games. Female athletes won 13 of our gold medals in Paris. The Fox sisters from Blaxland High School were amazing. Jess was sensational. She won back-to-back gold in C-1—so a second gold in C-1 and then gold in the K-1 canoe, and then Noémie won gold in the canoe cross. Just seeing Jess and her mum jump into the water with Noémie sums up the joy the family has surrounding their athlete. This brings tears to my eyes. Emma McKeon from the Illawarra won a gold medal in the 4 x 100 freestyle, silver in the 4 x 100 medley and bronze in the 4 x 100 mixed medley, which bettered Ian Thorpe's record of the number of gold medals won over the course of an Aussie athlete's career. What a legend.

Saya Sakakibara won gold in BMX racing. Originally from the Gold Coast, she moved to the Illawarra, part of the New South Wales crew. She crashed in Tokyo and, sadly, did not qualify for the final. We send love to her brother Kai, who suffered a brain injury just after the World Cup in 2020. But to come out and win gold in Paris was amazing. Arisa Trew, our 14-year-old legendary skateboarder, is our youngest ever gold medallist. As a nation, we should be so proud.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Get that girl a duck.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** Absolutely. These amazing athletes deserve to be celebrated, and I am really proud that the Premier has announced a welcome home event in Tumbalong Park on 13 September to welcome home both our Olympians and Paralympians, and it gives us as the general public an opportunity. I know it is a prop, but members need to check out my green and gold fingernails and keep living our green and gold and enjoying the experiences. I thank the NSW Institute of Sport [NSWIS], which has done us proud in producing a pathway

for future champions. I thank everyone involved at NSWIS. They have had 24 New South Wales scholarship holders as Paralympians. I had the privilege of being one of those scholarship holders back in the day. This inspires a new generation. Athletes get on the press afterwards and speak, like Jessica Hull, the first woman in Australia to win a 1,500-metre race. She sold her sport to the next generation. It was amazing.

There is an inspired group of young track athletes from the Central Coast. I am an absolute fan of Nicola Olyslagers, with silver, and Eleanor Patterson, her teammate, who got bronze. Getting those two medals is a record for the Aussies in the high jump. The Stingers, Opals and Hockeyroos were amazing. I acknowledge that it is a major journey to the games. It is important for regional athletes, because they take their communities and their towns to the games with them. There were so many fans, families, volunteers and friends of regional athletes—and of athletes in general—at the games, cheering them on. I thank everybody who takes that journey with their athletes. I thank the journalists who reported to us. I also thank Woolworths, which I do not usually thank in Parliament, which ran a fantastic inclusive campaign, promoting both our Olympians and our Paralympians.

It is not long to go until the Paralympics. They have two weeks to clean out the Paris Olympic Village before they move the Paralympians in. From 28 August to 6 September will be Paralympic glory. Hopefully our Aussies will beat their medal tally from Tokyo, where they got 21 gold, 29 silver and 30 bronze. The pressure is on. We are competing in 10 of 17 sports. I encourage all members to buy a seat online to support our Paralympians. I thank the Minister for Sport, who not long after we came to government came out and matched the previous Government's commitment to the Olympians with a commitment to the Paralympic movement. The Paralympic movement has never got equitable funding. This is the first State in Australia to provide equitable funding for the Paralympic movement. We have 160 athletes: 90 male and 70 female. Some 27 of them were born overseas, and 61 will be making their Paralympic debut in Paris.

A really important part of the Paralympic movement is the Paralympic talent identification pathways. Fifty-four of the athletes will be there because they have been identified in "come and try" opportunities across communities, for people with disabilities to get involved in sport. I am excited to be involved in the commentating for Stan Sports. I will be getting up early in the morning to tell Australia what is going on there. We have a lot of favourites, including Central Coast favourites Dylan Littlehales in the canoe, KL3 class, and Rowan Crothers and Ella Jones in swimming, but also Central Coast athletes in a lot of team sports.

I had the joy of being part of the National Wheelchair Basketball League grand final on the weekend. We have 12 sensational guys going to the Paralympics with the Rollers, which will be amazing. Our rugby team will be challenging the best of the best and hopefully bringing home a gold medal. The Olympic and Paralympic games bring smiles to our faces. They bring a joy different to the State-against-State, mate-against-mate competitions. While Paris is amazing and we got a record number of medals, the journey is to 2032 and other home games in Sydney. Bring it on.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I thank the champion member for Gosford, a celebrated Paralympian in her own right.

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (17:07):** I join with the member for Gosford in bringing to the attention of the House the extraordinary efforts of our athletes in Paris, as they celebrated our most successful Olympics in history. I am sure every member in this place has watched the highs and the lows of the Olympics. We celebrated the athletes of our electorates, and all joined in the spirit of unity, of overcoming obstacles, of celebrating achievements and the general inspiration that the Olympic Games bring to each of us. So many athletes from New South Wales brought us joy. But before we get to some of the highlights from New South Wales I highlight that Australia finished these games in fourth place, with 53 medals. That is 18 gold, 19 silver and 16 bronze. The incredible thing is that, of the 18 gold medals, 13 were won by women. There were only eight gold at one point, and they all had been won by women. When Cam McEvoy won his gold medal in the 50 metres freestyle, I was so excited not only for him but also to see the men on the board for gold, as well.

We all loved the Dolphins. They were incredible. As the member for Gosford said, the Fox sisters were incredible. We are so proud of our homegrown talent. It would be remiss of me not to highlight some of the favourite stories from the New South Wales team in the Olympics. Who can go past Jess Fox and her incredible two gold medals. She is our first Australian to win six individual Olympic medals, and now she has surpassed the group of Ian Thorpe, Liesel Jones, Shirley Strickland and Anna Meares, who all won five. It was an incredible effort. It was remarkable to see her win both of her main kayak events. It was an amazing story when her sister Noémie won that third category in the games and beat Jess in the kayak cross. Those sisters are an absolutely incredible story. I look forward to celebrating them, along with many others, when the athletes return tomorrow.

Emma McKeon has an incredible Olympic record for Australia. She is Australia's most decorated Olympian. She has won 14 medals across three games. That is extraordinary. I know we all enjoyed watching her

race more in Tokyo, but it would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the incredible legacy she has left behind. She is an incredibly humble athlete from the Illawarra. We are incredibly proud of her efforts. Rounding out some of the female achievements, I highlight Saya Sakakibara. Her story made everyone so incredibly emotional. I loved watching her win, knowing that she crashed out in Tokyo and overcame many obstacles. She was racing for not only herself but also her brother, with his number. Watching Kai in the stands, watching his sister's victory, was amazing.

I have loved each and every minute of the Olympics. I am a little bit sad we do not have as much to watch on TV anymore. Our athletes are some of the most inspirational people around. I recognise that a former Paralympian is a member of this place. The member for Gosford plays a really special role in highlighting not only the spirit of the Olympics but also the spirit of the Paralympics. I hope all members join with me to celebrate our Paralympic athletes in the same way that we have celebrated our Olympians. I know it will be an incredible two weeks of following them in Paris.

There were 118 New South Wales athletes in Paris. That is incredible, particularly when only 460 Olympians from the entire country get to go. Basically, a quarter have come from our State. We could not be prouder of them. There have been so many sports, so many triumphs and so many stories that we all have bought into. I loved seeing the Opals win their first medal since London. I have enjoyed seeing everyone join in the spirit of unity. It is something that we need to embrace more in this place. I thank the member for Gosford for moving this motion. Sport is a great unifier for communities. We will all be cheering on our Olympians when they come home and our Paralympians as they take on the fight in Paris.

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (17:09):** What a great result, fourth in the world! We are certainly punching above our weight. The Australian Olympic team set a national record, with 18 gold medals, 19 silver medals and 16 bronze medals, totalling 53 medals from the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. It was absolutely marvellous. The games are not only a showcase of the world's best talent but also a testament to the resilience, determination and spirit that define Aussies. From our local parks and sporting fields, all the way to the world stage, our athletes carried with them the hopes and dreams of an entire nation. What a journey it has been.

We know the success of an athlete is never achieved in isolation; it takes a community. I congratulate all the sport administrators who gave volunteer hours to ensure our Aussie athletes could compete on the world stage. I thank all the coaches, who plan and guide every step of an athlete's development, combining technical expertise and motivation to help them reach the highest levels. I congratulate also the family and friends who offer unwavering support, encouragement and love. They are there for the early mornings and late nights, and through every victory and setback. They provide the foundation that allows the athletes to focus entirely on their goals. I thank them.

Finally, I congratulate our athletes. I hope they all know that they have done us very proud. They have been part of a wonderful event which they will cherish for the rest of their lives. One athlete I would like to acknowledge is a former Panania resident, 19-year-old Abbey Lee Connor, who showcased an incredible performance in the 200-metre butterfly race at the Paris Olympics this month. Abbey's journey to the Olympics began with her debut at the 2022 World Aquatics Championships in Hungary. At the Paris Olympic Games, Abbey Lee Connor placed seventh, behind another Aussie, Elizabeth Dekkers, who placed fourth, narrowly missing the podium by 2.02 seconds. Competing in what is arguably one of the most challenging swimming disciplines, butterfly, Abbey has not only represented her country, but also inspired countless others with her dedication and spirit. Abbey has made us all proud with her Olympic journey. We wish her continued success and all the best in future competitions.

I have been involved in sport all my life, playing internationally and at world cups. I know there is nothing like it. I recently attended the Touch World Cup, where Australia won in many divisions. Touch rugby is another sport where Australia punches well above its weight. Touch would be great for the Brisbane Olympics as it is played in more than 50 countries around the world. It leads the way in equality for women, with a long history of both men and women competing. As the Paris 2024 Olympics end, I reflect on my memories of competing at world events and the friendships I made with not only teammates but also competitors from other countries. It was great to be part of the celebrations at the end of the tournaments and I am looking forward to celebrating with the New South Wales athletes on 13 September at Tumbalong Park.

The Olympic Games will inspire new generations of Australians to join a team, play a sport or take up a new physical activity. This season, it will be wonderful to see an increase in the number of participants at local sporting grounds and athletics clubs. Young people have seen what is possible with hard work, determination and a bit of Aussie grit. They witnessed their heroes rise to the occasion and will now dream big, knowing that they can achieve greatness.

Sport plays an important role in our communities. It unites us, brings us joy and fosters a sense of belonging. It teaches us valuable life lessons about teamwork, perseverance and the pursuit of excellence. We must continue to support and invest in sporting programs, ensuring that every young Australian has the opportunity to reach their full potential and create lifelong friendships. We wish the Paralympians the best of luck in the upcoming games. I look forward to celebrating their success as well. The Olympians have made us all incredibly proud. They have shown the world what it means to be Australian and have written a new chapter in our nation's sporting history. We celebrate with them and thank them for inspiring us all.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:17):** I congratulate our Australian Olympic team on their recent efforts and wish the Australian Paralympic team all the very best in the upcoming Paralympic Games. I brought a prop into the Chamber if the Temporary Speaker will indulge me for today. This little mascot was brought to us before the Olympics so parliamentarians could all get invested and involved. Members and all Australians have gotten behind our athletes, watching the late night and early morning events and getting involved. The Olympic Games are one of the most prestigious and revered sporting events in the world. They embody the pinnacle of human athletic achievement. They provide a stage where athletes can showcase their talents and extraordinary feats of strength, speed, skill and endurance.

The stories of the Olympics are about not only the medals, but also the determination and perseverance behind every performance. They are stories of athletes who overcome obstacles and push beyond their limits to achieve their personal best. Just competing in the Olympics is a monumental achievement. It is a moment of glory that represents years and years—often a lifetime—of relentless effort and sacrifice from the athletes and the people they love. The 2024 Paris Olympics have come to an end. They were the most successful games in Australian history. We won 18 gold medals, 19 silver medals and 16 bronze medals. That is an absolutely amazing achievement for our athletes across a variety of sports and disciplines. I know we can do even better when we get to Brisbane.

Locally, my community was represented by four Olympians. I acknowledge their incredible efforts. I congratulate Neutral Bay local Michelle Bromley, who competed in the team table tennis. Her team was unfortunately knocked out by the Chinese Taipei team. I congratulate Mosman local Rowena Meredith, who sensationally claimed a bronze in the 2020 Olympics and finished eighth in Paris as part of the Rowsellas women's quad sculls. Excitingly, two of our young Mosman locals won a silver medal as part of the Australian Stingers water polo team. Tilly Kearns and Sienna Green were part of the first Australian side to reach the final since the class of 2000. I know there was a lot of talk about Ilona Maher on the socials—and I love her too—but members had to follow Tilly and Sienna on social media to know everything that was happening in the Olympic village.

After defeating three-time defending champions the United States of America 14-13 in a thrilling shootout on Friday morning, they played Spain on Saturday night in the gold medal match. I know so many people were up late to watch that one. Before that game, it was clear to all of us that the Stingers felt they had already achieved immense Olympic success, judging by their wide smiles as they walked onto the pool deck. It was heartbreaking for so many of us to see them suffer the 11-9 defeat to Spain, but those girls can hold their heads high and be proud of winning that silver medal; they are our silver Stingers. I congratulate the whole team, particularly Tilly and Sienna. Our community is incredibly proud of their Olympic efforts. Particularly, the Queenwood school community is incredibly excited to see Tilly's success.

I extend a huge congratulations to our entire Australian Olympic team. There were so many highlights. I spent a lot of time watching different events with my kids—often on the replays, as the live events were not conducive to their bedtime. My community loves rugby, and it loved watching the women's sevens. The Australian team did a phenomenal job in its campaign. We loved watching the Dolphins in the swimming. Some of the newer sports offered highlights, such as the BMX—the member for Miranda spoke about Saya Sakakibara in her contribution—and the skateboarding. A personal highlight was the breaking. I have no idea how anyone can do it. My kids loved it. I was excited by Raygun. I love that the world is going crazy for her, because I am going crazy for her. I am a Macquarie alumna and she is at Macquarie; I hope I get to meet my hero one day.

Whatever our athletes were doing across myriad sporting events—whether they were swimming, running, riding a horse, sailing, diving or cycling—we were proud of them for taking part. We are looking forward to Los Angeles 2028 and even more excited that the Olympics will be on home soil in Brisbane in 2032. I know the member for Auburn will be happy to back me up when I say we need to add netball to the Olympics for Brisbane. Lastly, I acknowledge the member for Gosford and wish our Paralympians all the best as they compete in the upcoming games. My kids and I were watching some of the teasers for the event and they were profoundly astonished—I could see it in their faces and hear it in their utterances—at everything these elite athletes had overcome to get on that global stage. Considering the inspiration our Paralympians provide, I know we have many more exciting stories still to come.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:22):** Certainly the New South Wales parliamentary netball team has turned up to the Chamber in full force tonight to acknowledge the Olympics in this debate. This year our best ever Olympic team included 469 members across 33 sports, with an astounding 239 debutants. Some sports do not get mentioned, but they should. Our badminton team included Tiffany Ho from New South Wales—who attended Strathfield Girls High School in the electorate of the Temporary Speaker—as well as Angela Yu and Setyana Mapasa. Unfortunately, Tiffany came up against a tough United States opposition in the singles but achieved an excellent result teaming up with Angela Yu in the mixed to defeat India. I say well done to our badminton team.

For the benefit of members, I will list our Olympic hockey players from New South Wales: Blake Govers from Wollongong, Flynn Ogilvie from Woonona, Grace Stewart from Gerringong, Grace Young from Grafton, Jocelyn Bartram from Albury, Ky Willot from Newcastle, Lachlan Sharp from Lithgow, Mariah Williams from Parkes, Matthew Dawson from Killarney Vale, Thomas Craig from Lane Cove, and Timothy Brand from Chatswood. It proves not only the depth but the breadth of hockey in New South Wales. It is a tremendous result for Hockey NSW. Those players left nothing on the field. We are always immensely proud of our hockey teams, as we are with all our Olympians. I also give a big shout-out to Peter Boukouvalas from Georges Hall—in the electorate of the member for East Hills—and Laura Paeglis in the archery mixed team. Often the archery guys do not get a mention, but they should.

The athletes I have named are a few of the outstanding athletes who made up our Olympic team. While we may run out of superlatives praising the efforts of the 469 members of the team, I also acknowledge the thousands and thousands of volunteers that make our Olympic team possible. Behind the love of swimming is the mum, dad or grandparent getting up in the dark to make sure the athlete gets to the pool; the trainer at the pool in the wind and cold with their stopwatch; and the Aussie swim teachers that often spend all day in a pool teaching kids and adults to swim. I thank every single one of you. Behind every Matilda, Opal or rugby sevens player are thousands of local community members who get everyone out on the park every weekend—the coaches, managers, line markers, canteen staff and the long-suffering referees and touchies. Behind every Olympic team are those who selflessly give their own time to ensure every boy and girl has an opportunity, whether it is just to make friends and get some exercise or dream of chasing an Olympic spot. I thank them all—this is their Olympics too.

While sport is a unifying pursuit that we all adore, unfortunately it sometimes can be marred. It was unedifying to watch the pursuit by many in the media of the boxer Imane Khelif. However, it was brilliant to watch the Algerian community and the women boxers coming out to have her back. As with Caster Semenya before her, she should never have been in this situation. I ask anyone who has a daughter to imagine their red-hot anger if this had happened to her. The other unedifying incident were the comments, again by sections of the media, regarding the breakdancing of Rachael Gunn, known as "Raygun". Many members in this Chamber talk to schools in our electorates. The message I always send to children during those talks is to always put their hand up.

Opportunity goes to those who have a go, which is exactly what Rachael did. She put her hand up and gave it a go. Unlike many in this country, she will forever be an Olympian and part of Australia's best Olympic team. I say well done to the Australian Olympic team members, and particularly Anna Meares, for getting in behind Rachael and getting hot under the collar at the reporting. I would have thought the fact that Rachael competed with typical Australian humour and the type of self-deprecation that Australians could take a gold medal for speaks for our hedonistic Australian character as much as anything at the Olympics did. It should have been celebrated by the national press.

While members make speeches in this debate today, I remind them that the race is only half run. On 28 August our Paralympic team will take to the Stade de France. Of course, we should not have favourites with the Australian team, but I give a big shout-out to Tim Hodge and Ricky Betar, who will be representing Australia in the pool, and to all the team at the Ruth Everuss pool in Auburn, which does such a great job. To our goalball team—made up of Michelle Rzepecki from Redfern, Amy Ridley from West Pymble, Brodie Smith from Maitland, along with Jenny Blow and Meica Horsburgh—I say have fun and play hard. Our goalball team placed fifth at Tokyo after a countback; I am putting that team down as one to watch at these Paralympic Games. I am sure everyone in Australia will be joining in. If they have not done so, I urge them to go to the Paralympics Australia home page and join the official cheer squad for team green and gold.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:27):** I thank the member for Gosford for bringing forward this public interest debate on the Olympic and Paralympic teams. How beautifully French the games were—chic, stylish and absurd. It was difficult at times to watch the opening ceremony with a five-year-old son and four-year-old daughter to explain to them what was going on, but from the masked torchbearer to the athletes entering via the River Seine, it was an amazing French opening ceremony that certainly set the scene for what was an amazing games. As members have said, it was Australia's most successful Olympics, which is something to behold.



I thank the members for the electorates of Gosford and Miranda for holding the Parliamentary Friends of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements event before the games kicked off. It was a wonderful precursor to remind all of us in this place of what was to come. But even the CEO of the Australian Olympic Committee could not have given us an indication that we were about to watch our most successful games. I thank the members for bringing the Olympics to all of us in State Parliament; we really appreciate that parliamentary friends group.

As members have said in this debate, everyone had their own special moment, person or team they wanted to cheer for. For me, it was Jess Hull's silver medal win in the 1,500 metres. That is a very hard distance. It might not look like it today, but in high school I fancied myself a 1,500-metre runner and all I remember is that it is a very difficult distance. To knock over silver is an amazing effort from Jess Hull. The Fox sisters did an amazing job. But for me, it was the Stingers, the hard-charging, take-no-prisoners Australian women's water polo team who dispatched the United States and then pulled a silver against undefeated Spain.

The Stingers were a powerhouse driven by two wonderful northern beaches athletes. Bronte Halligan began her water polo journey at the Sydney Northern Beaches Breakers. In 2014 at 17 years of age, while still a student at Stella Maris College in Manly, she was selected for the Aussie Stingers team. She went on to further her water polo career in the United States at the University of California, Los Angeles, and eventually made her Olympic debut in 2020 in Tokyo before collecting a silver this year. Also from the northern beaches is Sienna Hearn from Manly. She made a wonderful effort. She began her water polo career at the age of seven with the Sydney Northern Beaches Breakers water polo club. She rose through the ranks as a junior before eventually making her national team debut for the Stingers at the 2022 World League Intercontinental Cup in Peru. Since then, she has had a dominant run of form, competing on the world stage at the 2024 world championships in Doha and the Paris Olympics. Manly and the community are incredibly proud of Bronte and Sienna.

I note the member for Auburn's comments. We must shout out and tip our hat to Anna Meares, an amazing chef de mission who transitioned from a leading cyclist in her own right to head up the Olympic team. She has done it with aplomb; she dealt with many serious issues and did it superbly. Well done to Anna Meares. Let us hope she continues in that role for many Olympics to come. I also importantly acknowledge the words and sentiments of the president of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, who essentially said that against this global backdrop of turmoil and challenges, which never really seems to go away, the Olympics provide us with a moment around the world to take a step back, have a circuit breaker and reflect on humanity.

People might roll their eyes and dismiss sport from time to time, but it is an international language, it is a great leveller and it is a great opportunity for people to shed a tear. Sometimes, somehow, sport gets into a person when they are watching it, and it does a wonderful job. I think this Olympic Games, as Thomas Bach said, was about peace and unity, and it certainly delivered that. I thank the member for Gosford for bringing the public interest debate forward. It was an amazing Olympics, and I think we have all thoroughly enjoyed watching it. The last words I must say are: Let's go, Paralympics!

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I thank the member for Manly. It is nice that the Olympics have brought a moment of unity to the public interest debate as well.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:32):** In reply: Oui, je suis d'accord, Mr Assistant Speaker. Bonne soirée, tout le monde. Farewell to our Olympians and the Parliamentary Friends of the Olympics and Paralympics in the New South Wales Parliament. It was fantastic. The member for Camden got a photo with Raygun, who visited us in the Parliament. It is fantastic what we can do in this Parliament. I thank my co-host, the member for Miranda. Celebrating the first eight out of eight medals as a woman in sport in Australia was amazing. Seeing the importance of family with Saya Sakakibara racing for her brother in the stands was also amazing.

The member for East Hills referred to the connection with family. The friendships and relationships made around the world when travelling is absolutely incredible. As the member for East Hills said, Australia definitely punched above its weight and New South Wales punched above its weight. I thank the sports administrators and coaches who helped so many of our athletes get on their journey. The member for Auburn referred to the volunteers that get all those young people onto the fields on a journey of fitness and wellbeing, which is super important, but also on a journey to the Olympics and Paralympics.

The member for North Sydney referred to young people in her community. The Stingers definitely have a home on the northern beaches and the North Shore, as we heard from the member for Manly. We also heard the stories of determination and of overcoming obstacles to push beyond limits. I also reflect on that lifetime of sacrifice that belongs to our Olympic and Paralympic athletes. The member for Auburn mentioned sports that did not get a mention, which is also really important because every single person on that team of 469 members are phenomenal human beings.

I reflect on the friendships and relationships. Bridie Kean was a young Paralympian who got her leg signed by an athlete in this Chamber to say, "One day you will be a Paralympian too." Bridie and I played together at the Paralympics, and I introduced her to the president of the International Paralympic Committee, who was an English wheelchair basketball player in Rio. Bridie is now going into the Paralympics in Paris as the assistant chef de mission. It is just beautiful to see the journey from aspiring to be an athlete to being an athlete, to post-athlete and what one can be. I know Bridie will be at the welcome home event at Tumbalong Park on 13 September. Bonne chance to our Paralympians. It is an incredible journey from being selected to the uniform arriving—sometimes athletes love the uniform, sometimes they do not, but it is absolutely fantastic—to the thrill of deciding whether or not to go to the opening ceremony. I know it is life-changing. Lots of our family and friends will be there. I thank the House for indulging this beautiful commitment to the Parliamentary Friends of the Olympics and the Paralympics and to the Olympics and Paralympics movement in Australia.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Bills*

## **BETTER REGULATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

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

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:36):** I make a brief contribution to the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. I do not relish the role I have right now in talking about some of my colleagues on the other side of the House who, in the debate on this bill, have not provided an honest assessment of where we are and where we have been, not providing appropriate context to some of the decisions that have been made in the past, and pretending that the sky is going to fall based on the proposed amendments, which are fundamentally just administrative arrangements. I will talk to each of those matters.

First of all, by way of this bill and by way of the existing Act, there is a trust fund of money which is intended to be spent across regional communities. The biggest injection into that trust fund ever was the money that was allocated to be spent through that trust fund following the sale of the New South Wales part-ownership of the Snowy Hydro to the Federal Government. That accounted for about \$4 billion. An interesting accounting process happened with that sale where the money kind of went into consolidated funds and then would be farmed back out through the trust fund. But, in essence, let us imagine for a second that the \$4 billion was sitting in the trust fund, which by and large was almost the entire quantum of the fund that the money allocated.

The first thing that happened was that the Leader of The Nationals at the time carved out a quarter of that money for himself and the electorate that he represented. So a quarter of it is gone and everyone else is scrapping for the other three-quarters. The rest of the members of the National Party and the Liberal members who live in regional communities took that lead from the leader and thought, "I've figured out this game. The idea here is to get your snout in the trough and get as much of that money as you can for your own private little personal projects in your neck of the woods." Despite the fact that the money was intended to be a regional New South Wales transformation fund, it was determined by the leader and his cohort that this was going to be spent and frittered away on private vanity projects.

One quarter has already gone to the leader of the party. Another quarter is going to go into a whole bunch of programs with various labels that are going to be distributed across primarily Liberal and National Party electorates—statistics tell us in excess of 90 per cent. There remain two quarters. One of those quarters was used in the lead-up to the last election. I think two of the members opposite have cited \$750 million. I will take their word for that. Let us call it \$750 million. That is a little bit under a quarter. Now three-quarters of that cake is gone. A tiny little sliver went to some electorates that were not held by the Liberals and The Nationals. A little bit went to the electorates of Cessnock, Maitland or Barwon and a few other places around the traps. But we now have less than one-quarter of the total fund that was available. That is the true context of the fund as it is today.

It is dishonest and disingenuous of those opposite to come into this House and say, "Well, hang on! We spent \$750 million in our last year in government and now this Government is only allocating \$400 million to the fund." That might be true, but there is only \$400 million left. They might argue it is \$600 million—again, because their accounting practices are a little difficult to follow—but it does not matter. It might be \$300 million, \$400 million, \$500 million or \$600 million, but the truth is that 75 per cent of that cake is gone. It does not matter which side of politics is in government today; that government can only manage whatever is left in the bucket. That is the financial honesty and truth about the fund that has been set up.

It is incredibly disappointing to hear those opposite suggest anything other than what I have just described as the truth, particularly when they have enjoyed 12 years in government, during which time a number of them became Ministers and would have had a deep connection and contact with the Act, and would know the long history of the money and of the fund. It is disappointing, because what I have said is the truth. The Government is working with whatever money is left, as disappointing as that is. As disappointing as it is, this year only \$35 million might be distributed instead of the \$750 million. But the Government cannot invent money and it cannot print money. There was a massive bucket of money that was going to be transformational. In country and bush terms, those opposite did something with that money: They wet the wall with it, and it is gone.

We on this side are taking a very responsible approach with what is left. Here is where responsibility kicks in. We are going to set up an advisory council. The legislation that already exists allows for an advisory council. The problem is, I am advised, one has not existed since 2015. Those opposite got rid of a group of people who might have advised them on the best use of that money, and put all the power back into just the Minister. Those members are going to say, "Hang on, you guys are putting all the power in the Minister." The legislation since 2004, and when it was amended in 2015, and again today in 2024, gives enormous amounts of power to the Minister—but also the advisory council. There will be a change of wording in the Act. It will no longer say that the Minister "may" have an advisory council; it is now going to say that the Minister "must" have an advisory council.

From 2024 onwards, the Government will do something that the previous Government would not do, and that is have a group of people that the Government will be responsible for in the implementation of this legislation and the money that sits in the legislation. That is a massive step into transparency and engagement with the broader community. I ask Opposition members not to cry crocodile tears that the bill will somehow suddenly put a whole bunch of power in the Minister's hands. That was in the legislation all along. The intention of having an advisory council was to provide a few checks and balances on the Minister. It was those opposite who refused to put in place an advisory council at a time when the fund had the biggest bucket of money ever in its history. That was the time that they got rid of the checks and balances. That was the time that they decided there was going to be one person responsible for all of that. Hence, the former leader took the first quarter of the pie—a little bit greedy, some might say.

Another consequence of the bill will be transparency of reporting. The bill will increase transparency by necessitating that the Minister must, by 30 November after each financial year, publish an annual report on the department's website that includes all the financials. "The Minister must" is a brand new set of words and a new turn of phrase. I will go to what the Act currently says after the those in the former Government amended it in 2015. Were they about transparency? Well, let us check what part 3, section 14 says at the moment—this is the one they want to keep. It says:

A person must not disclose any information obtained in connection with the administration or execution of this Act ...

I will say that again. The current wording in the Act that the Opposition will vote to keep says, "A person must not disclose". The Government is not going to cop that. It is going to amend the legislation to make sure the Minister "must" release the financials. That is transparency. That is a government bringing transparency through a piece of legislation. I am stunned and shocked to have heard the Leader of The Nationals earlier say in this Chamber that the Opposition was going to oppose the bill. The leader and his followers are opposed to the Minister reporting publicly on how the money is spent. They are opposed to the Minister being compelled to set up a regional advisory committee. And they are pretending that the money that they have wet the wall with over the past four years is somehow endless and never-ending. Well, I have a certainty: The bladder was only so full at the start. There is not much left. The Government is going to be incredibly responsible about how it spends whatever is left. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:46):** I make a short contribution in relation to the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. Labor members cannot fool country people. They cannot come into this place and pull the wool over people's eyes. People in the regions know one thing: Labor is not investing in regional New South Wales. Labor is failing to invest in our communities. Every time Labor gets in, it is a reminder to communities that our regions were starved of the investment that we deserved. We on this side love our regions.

We love our regions because of the people. We love our regions because of the investment that actually makes a difference to the lives of people in our communities.

We all think that regional New South Wales is a great place to live, play, invest and work in. That is why it is important that an equitable share of funding continues to go into regional New South Wales. But that has been forgotten under this Government. Investment in our communities is now smoke and mirrors under this Government. Many projects have been stopped. Funding that has gone into communities is no longer there. One thing is very clear: There are members from regional communities who do not have a say. They are being completely run by the city-centric Ministers and those living in the city. They have previously spoken about the importance of these projects and how investment in them was life-changing for the residents of these communities. They ensured that regional New South Wales was getting its fair share of funding. Regional New South Wales has the most diverse regional economy in Australia. We are talking about those areas outside metropolitan New South Wales—outside Newcastle, Wollongong and Sydney.

Why would we not invest strongly in regional New South Wales? It is where one-third of the population lives. It generates around one-third of the employment in this State and has around 30 per cent of our businesses. It generates around 30 per cent of gross value added and provides around \$125 billion in gross State product. It contributes over 8 per cent of Australia's GDP. As we can see, it is a worthwhile place to invest. Regional New South Wales, as we know it today, is the engine room of the State—whether it be agriculture, manufacturing, fisheries, tourism or resources. Those are areas with strong economic activity today. Regional New South Wales also has emerging industries, including advanced manufacturing, critical minerals, ecotourism, recycling, water management and waste management. All of those areas need continual investment. If the Government does not invest in the regions, country people will see through that. They will see the Government is treating them like second-class citizens, which is not right or fair.

The Regional Growth Fund has been mentioned in the House today. That fund invested in thousands of projects in this State. Those projects produced economic growth and responded to the needs of people in regional New South Wales. Whether it be through the Stronger Country Communities Fund or through tourism, all funds played a part in developing a stronger regional New South Wales. Why shouldn't governments have a vision to ensure that regional New South Wales is connected? Why shouldn't people travel to the Far West of the State and have mobile coverage? Why shouldn't people have good road and freight networks, with goods being moved around New South Wales? Why shouldn't people enjoy secure, sustainable water and energy in this State? A number of years ago some towns nearly ran out of water. Investments like that are critical to ensure regional New South Wales gets its fair share.

Thousands of projects were invested in under the Regional Growth Fund—in every local government area, irrespective of where the electorates were located. I hear Government members in the Chamber complaining. Why shouldn't people get new investment in sports? Why shouldn't people get investment in sporting fields? Why shouldn't people get lighting for their netball fields? Do members opposite think it is okay to say to people in regional New South Wales, "You shouldn't have good facilities. The only facilities you should be using are the ones that you have to drive six or eight hours to Sydney to use"? Why shouldn't our kids have a future? Why shouldn't they be given the same opportunities? Those programs created jobs for our communities, and they also invested in tourism.

I highlight the Stronger Country Communities Fund. Members can talk about that fund but I put this on record: The Stronger Country Communities Fund invested in every regional local government area. It ensured that a base amount was given to every local government community, which meant that local government could invest in community projects. It ensured that playgrounds were built. It ensured that bike paths, playgrounds and community halls in those communities were upgraded. Every community was given a base amount. On top of that, the base amount was topped up depending on how many people lived in a particular area. The population determined how much extra that area would receive. Every community received that funding.

Resources for Regions was another fund. It did not go to every community. Why would it go to every community? Not every community is a mining community. It went to communities impacted by mining activities. We know that in those communities heavy machines use the roads and impact on bridges that have load limits. Therefore, councils with mining-related activities were given a base amount of funding and any additional amount depended on employment and the royalties that would come from mining activity in those areas being reinvested in those communities. Thousands of projects and hundreds of millions of dollars went into those communities that actually needed and deserved them. Members opposite come into the Chamber and say, "Let's go to an advisory panel and put all the money in a big pool and look at giving it out here and there." These communities and these councils are giving their fair share of wealth to the State of New South Wales. The Government is taking that opportunity away from them. We can put it into a pool and give it to an advisory board and send it back to the Minister, but our system ensured that every local government area impacted by mining received that investment.

Mining plays a very strong role in the New South Wales economy, whether it is in Parkes or in Singleton. There are around 40,000 mining jobs in this State. That is why we need to make sure those communities are supported, whether the industry employs people directly or indirectly. The Regional Tourism Activation Fund and the Regional Job Creation Fund supported existing businesses that wanted to expand and new businesses that wanted to move to the regions. The Regional Job Creation Fund created over 7,000 jobs. Those programs make a difference to the lives of people in regional New South Wales. Labor is treating our regional communities like second-class citizens, and they have had enough.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:56):** As a regional member, I make a short contribution to debate on the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. The Central Coast region has long sought to have its regional identity recognised by other parts of the State and by government. It has been a long process, which can be complemented by a bill like this. There has been a lot of talk tonight about how much money is going to flow through this process. But we have been doing things on the Central Coast to build a regional identity and promote the region without spending any money. I am reminded that back in 2004 I made an application to the Geographical Names Board to have the Central Coast region defined properly. People used the term to describe our region, but it was not official and the area was not properly identified. The region has several local government areas. Part of the process of making sure our region was properly identified involved certifying what it looked like. We did that back in 2004 and 2005. The move was supported by both local councils at the time. Those councils have now amalgamated to become the Central Coast Council.

My approach to the region has always been to make sure the Central Coast is recognised as a region in its own right, not part of the Sydney metropolitan area or of other country regions throughout the State. We have been able to build on that strength on the Central Coast, with members on both sides of the House arguing for the area to receive its fair share based on its regional needs rather than whether it is a metropolitan area or a group of regions. It has been a strength of our area, and it is something we have been able to do without necessarily demanding money.

It is a strength that some European countries have built upon in terms of geographical indicators that are built into their product manufacturing and sales processes—for example, champagne has to come from a particular region in France. It is a real strength for business and for the people of Europe to connect products made in regional areas with a particular geographical designation that can be legally enforced. It creates value and it creates wealth for a region. It is a framework that can strengthen a region which does not necessarily involve the expenditure of government money to prop up a region, important as government money is.

I note the comments made by the member for Cessnock, which well canvassed the ongoing debate about how much money will be forthcoming to the regions. The bill provides a fairer framework for the delivery of monetary support for the regions. I also suggest to both sides of the House that it provides us an opportunity to look at a whole bunch of other ways that we can strengthen regional identity. By strengthening regional identity, we can add value to the products and the services delivered by regions. Not only will that benefit the regions, but it will also benefit the whole State. We need to strengthen our regions as best we can. This bill is a good step in making that system fairer and more transparent. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (18:01):** I contribute to debate on the implications of the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. In its current form, the bill diminishes the importance of regional New South Wales to this State. Smart governments recognise that regional New South Wales plays an important part in the State's economy. When the regions are thriving, so is the State. The Regional Development Trust Fund, formerly the Liberal-Nationals Government's \$3.3 billion Regional Growth Fund, has already been minimised by this Government and now we are seeing its scope reduced as well. As I understand it, a mere \$350 million for regional development has now been allocated.

**Mr Steve Whan:** It's \$400 million.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN:** It is \$400 million, is it? I am sorry. There was a bit of disparity and change. One Minister said something and another Minister said—

**Mr Steve Whan:** No, you guys can't add up. There are two budgets.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN:** This allocation is woefully inadequate and raises serious concerns about the commitment to fostering sustainable economic growth at the local level. Funding by the Liberal-Nationals Government's original fund had branch funding programs such as the Stronger Country Communities Fund—and some great things have come out of that fund for our communities—the Resources for Regions program, the Regional Job Creation Fund and the Regional Events Acceleration Fund, as well as the Growing Local Economies Fund. They all played a pivotal role in supporting initiatives that spur economic development in our regions. By

redirecting funds from this crucial program and others, we are jeopardising the progress and potential of local economies across the State.

The bill seeks to introduce a range of provisions restricting how future governments invest in regional New South Wales. One of those provisions include that a Minister can identify where money can be spent. Minister Moriarty has identified four focus areas in the bill, with a meagre total of \$35 million in the budget for those areas. The \$35 million allocation falls significantly short of meeting the diverse and pressing needs of our regional communities, and it risks undermining their ability to thrive and prosper. If we take a closer look at the \$35 million allocation, \$5 million has been allocated as a loan pilot program for food and beverage manufacturers. The Liberal-Nationals Government had an allocation of 20 times that amount for the same areas.

We cannot afford to overlook the essential role of robust regional development policies in driving inclusive economic growth. Underfunding those efforts not only hampers the prospects for job creation and infrastructure advancement but also inhibits the overall competitiveness and vitality of our local economies. It is incumbent upon us to advocate for an equitable and strategic allocation of resources to support regional development. We must champion the importance of sustaining and enhancing the economic wellbeing of our communities, ensuring that they have the necessary resources to flourish and thrive. Our communities deserve better. It is our collective responsibility to uphold their best interests. I ask the Government to consider including local governments and their advice on the ground. They are in the thick of it with their communities. They should be consulted. Please do not disregard local government. Local government is an important part of the process.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:05):** I make a contribution to debate on the Regional Development Amendment Bill 2024. From the outset, I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Dubbo, who foreshadowed that amendments to the bill will be moved in the other place. I think one member called it the regional destruction fund, which is appropriate considering what I have seen and what the Central Coast region received under the former Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government. It was interesting to listen to the two Government members from the Central Coast in this debate—the member for Wyong, and Minister for the Central Coast, and the member for The Entrance. The member for The Entrance talked about how money was not really that important to regional areas. I will cover off in some detail about how our region received record funding for the entire Central Coast under the former Liberal-Nationals Government.

The bill establishes the Regional Development Trust Fund and the appointment of a regional development advisory council. The key provision requires that the Minister must have an investment strategy outlining focus areas. Minister Moriarty has outlined her four priorities—I note that shark nets were not included—of sustainable regional industries, Aboriginal economic development and enterprise, community connection and capacity building, and improving regional service delivery. I note the comment by the member for Goulburn, who is the former Minister for Local Government, in her contribution about the important role that councils play in the regional investment outside of metro Sydney.

Councils play a huge role in service delivery on the Central Coast. The council was placed in administration under the former Government, which was extended by the Minister. It is interesting to note that the former Labor-led council was put into administration, with a Labor mayor racking up half a billion dollars worth of debt. I believe one of the former sacked councillors on the Labor side is now running in the number one spot in Wyong. He can start by saying, "I apologise", closely followed by, "I withdraw my candidacy."

When I pulled up the Regional Development Trust Fund webpage, I noticed the image of the Terrigal Boardwalk. That was interesting because under this trust fund, that project would not be funded. It is a perfectly good example of how the fund does not look after regional New South Wales. The Government's own image for the trust fund is of a project delivered by the former Liberal-Nationals Government and the Central Coast Council working collectively together. That project was opposed by every Labor councillor—or the sacked ones—and it would have been ineligible under the Regional Development Trust Fund. The boardwalk was jointly funded by the former Liberal-Nationals Government with \$2.8 million through the Regional Growth - Environment and Tourism Fund, and \$2.9 million from Central Coast Council's own Terrigal business levy. That is only one glaring example, of which there are many, so members can get comfortable and I will start rolling through them.

The \$3.3 billion worth of regional funding programs established under the former Coalition Government include the \$150 million Regional Tourism Activation Fund, the \$175 million Growing Regional Economies Fund, the \$3 million Regional Media Fund, the \$160 million Stronger Country Communities Fund, the \$24 million Business Case and Strategy Development Fund, the \$20 million Regional Events Acceleration Fund and the \$100 million Regional Jobs Creation Fund. The amendments in the bill mean that the Central Coast Council will now be ineligible to apply for any of those regional development trusts under the Minister's guidelines that have now been released.

I will outline some of the projects that council was funded for through the Stronger Country Communities Fund. It is very interesting to read through the list. The \$700,000 amenities upgrade at Central Coast stadium was in the electorate of Gosford. The \$850,000 outdoor water park at the Peninsula Leisure Centre was in the electorate of Gosford. The \$165,181 Kariiong Child Care Centre playground upgrade was in the electorate of Gosford. That was in rounds one, two and four. Another interesting one is the North Entrance Beach toilets and change rooms replacement, which received \$260,000 and was in the electorate of The Entrance. This is a good one—the \$908,616 upgrade to amenities at the Adelaide Street Oval at Tumbi Umbi was in the electorate of The Entrance. There was \$850,000 for the Niagara Park stadium upgrade. Of course, you guessed it; that is in the electorate of The Entrance.

The Central Coast Council community facility air conditioning project, which provided air conditioning to 25 different community organisations across the Central Coast, received \$126,000. The \$995,700 shared footpath and cycleway at Bungary Road in Norah Head was in the electorate of Wyong. The \$542,269 shared footpath and cycleway at the Tuggerawong foreshore was in the electorate of Wyong. The \$259,000 building of a new clubhouse at the Don Small Oval in Tacoma was—you guessed it—in the electorate of Wyong. The Norah Head community space is one of my favourites. Some \$935,000 was delivered to the Central Coast Council to build a brand-new community space and a community hall, which the member for Wyong and the Federal member for Dobell recently opened, saying "How wonderful it is that we're able to work together with council." I point out that almost a million dollars worth of funding was provided by the former Liberal-Nationals State Government to deliver that fantastic piece of community infrastructure. Under those opposite, none of those projects would have been funded. There is another \$520,000 for the Harry Moore oval in the electorate of Wyong to upgrade drainage and irrigation.

I will summarise. Under the Stronger Country Communities Fund, there was \$3,377,000 for projects in the electorate of Wyong, just over \$2 million for those in the electorate of The Entrance, and \$1.7 million for those in the electorate of Gosford. A number of projects have been funded in my electorate as well, including the \$229,000 refurbishment to the Terrigal Rotary Hall; the almost \$1 million shared footpath and cycleway at Carrack Road; and a \$145,000 refurbishment of the Erina Library, which is utilised by everybody on the Central Coast. There is also the \$300,000 upgrade of the Terrigal BMX facility. We talk about young people playing sport. Members will notice that a lot of the upgrades are sporting facilities and community halls used by young people. There are also half a million dollars worth of new amenities at Wamberal beach. The list goes on. The Davistown district playground renewal received \$340,000.

Under this proposal, none of those projects would ever have seen the light of day. Those opposite should not worry; we can provide them with the list so they can see what was delivered. In addition, local governments have been excluded. The other thing is the Regional Job Creation Fund. I point out for the Minister's information that the Central Coast received more than \$6 million worth of funding from that fund. Again, I used to come into the Chamber and listen to those opposite saying that it was pork-barrelling and that it was disgraceful. Of that \$6 million, not one dollar went to the Liberal electorate of Terrigal. Every one of those funds went to the three Labor electorates on the Central Coast. Isn't that interesting? It is very illuminating.

In fact, the member for The Entrance and the member for Wyong were recently at Performance Engineering Group congratulating it on the great work that it has done to increase its staff numbers. It received \$140,000 through the Regional Job Creation Fund. Those members were congratulating that group on a fund that we provided. I thank them for acknowledging the great work we did helping to fund those businesses and employ more people on the Central Coast. The list goes on. Vision Lighting in Gosford received \$600,000 to expand manufacturing. One of the best ones, and one that I was most proud of, was the facility upgrade at Cordina Foods. The \$2 million to upgrade Cordina Foods in the electorate of Wyong provided an additional 100 full-time jobs in that electorate and surrounding areas.

For those opposite to come into the Chamber and talk about pork-barrelling and transparency is galling in the extreme. They are the same bunch who implemented the Local Small Commitments Allocation program. If there ever has been a program with zero oversight, that would have to be it. It is really interesting because even now, more than a year and a half into this term of government, \$170,000 of Local Small Commitments Allocation grants in my electorate have still not been provided. We believe it is because there is an oversight issue with some of those grants. Those opposite have lectured us about oversight, but they ran that dodgy grants program, where nobody was told about the allocation of grant funding at all leading up to the State election other than those receiving the money. It was not open for anybody to actually apply. We have seen the impact of regional investment. What we are concerned about is the total lack of regional investment by this Government. The Minister would not even know where the Central Coast is, quite frankly. She has never visited.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** I take objection to that.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** The member for Canterbury has probably visited, but the Minister hasn't. It was great to see the investment going into the Central Coast under the former Liberal-Nationals Government. It was record investment providing literally hundreds of new jobs and infrastructure for our communities which, under those opposite, councils will not be able to apply for because they are being excluded. Councils should be brought to the table as a part of this. I am glad that amendments will be moved in the other place to include councils because they play a pivotal role in delivering funding for regions like the Central Coast.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (18:15):** In reply: The gall of some members of the Opposition, particularly The Nationals, in their comments today! Some of them have claimed that the Government is going to reduce transparency and the amount of money available to regional New South Wales. Some of them have claimed that the Government is going to stop being responsive and talking to communities when it is actually the opposite. The bill is about putting transparency and accountability into the allocation of funds to regional New South Wales. It is an absolute contrast to the way that the Liberals and The Nationals worked, but it is what people expect.

I thank the members who have contributed to debate: the member for Ballina, the member for Murray, the member for Lismore, the member for Kiama, the member for Maitland, the member for Oxley, the member for Cessnock, the member for Dubbo, the member for Tamworth, the member for Wyong, the member for Bega, the member for Shellharbour, the member for Bathurst, the member for The Entrance, the member for Goulburn and, finally, the member for Terrigal, who spent his contribution to debate patting himself on the back for all the previous expenditure in the area and making false claims about it. I will go through some of the comments.

One thing that absolutely summarises the way Opposition members have gone about this matter is they clearly did not read the bill. They have spent their time talking about the categories that the Minister will outline and saying that the Minister is the only one who can allocate funds when the bill clearly states that there are two ways of going about getting funding—through allocations made through the categories process and from community-initiated applications. Opposition members did not mention that once in any of their speeches. Quite clearly, they have come into the Chamber to reel off their record—or their fabricated record in many cases, as the member for Cessnock pointed out—on regional funding. They did not even bother to read the bill and see the range of ways that communities would be able to access funding.

There is one other key point that they do not want to talk about. They talked about the amounts of money they had in their funds and their—to quote the member for Dubbo—"offshoot" programs. What they did not say is that that was all funded, as the member for Cessnock correctly pointed out, by one-off payments from assets—whether that was Snowy Hydro or privatisation that took place in other aspects. But there is a simple issue with that, and anybody who might one day read this bill would know: You can only sell an asset once. When you've spent all the money, there ain't no more to be spent. That is why the Government has been elected. I note that the member for Dubbo and others said that there was \$600 million left in the fund—well, not that we or the Treasury can find. I do not know where it is—perhaps spread out in those little programs that could be given out at the behest of a Minister or the Deputy Premier of the day. It is probably enlightening. I am sure a lot of members have heard friendlyjordies' interesting recording of a dinner held during the Upper Hunter by-election in 2021.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Point of order: Mr Temporary Speaker, I ask you to draw the Minister back to concluding remarks on the bill. He is not discussing the bill. He is digressing from the substance of his own bill, which he has come into the Chamber to discuss.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I observed most of the incredibly wideranging debate. The Minister spoke about transparency before he was interrupted. There is no point of order.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** It is interesting that the member who tried to make political appointments on the local councils in his local area when in government should take a point of order like that. It was amazing to hear what was said in that recording. The voice, which sounded remarkably like the former Deputy Premier, was recorded discussing the allocation of funds in New South Wales. The member for Bathurst, who contributed to debate on the bill, was mentioned in that recording when the person whose voice sounded remarkably like the former Deputy Premier of New South Wales said of the member's office, "We need a \$25 million blank cheque." He was not going to tell him what the money was for; he just said, "Let's have it." The recording continued:

Paul, it's a majority government.

Treasurer Perrottet. 25 million.

While I've got you: 42 million for Muswellbrook Hospital. 11 million for Singleton. There's some bloody little RFS shed, Kaguya or whatever ... and then 650,000.

He proudly bragged about the fact that he plucked out those numbers. There was no governance whatsoever. I heard from other Nationals members around the State who were annoyed not only with the way the former



Deputy Premier allocated those funds but also because they did not have a say. For Opposition members to say that the Government has not consulted with local government is absolute hypocrisy. Local governments have told me that grants were announced by the former Government with no consultation at all. The former Government did not check on the priorities of those councils, nor did it consult on who would pay for the running, staffing and maintenance of projects that were funded by the former Government. The hypocrisy is absolutely amazing.

I agree with the member for Bathurst, who said, "You can't pull the wool over country people's eyes." He is absolutely right. That is why the National Party has its lowest number of seats in this place in 99 years. Country people will not have the wool pulled over their eyes; they know exactly what is going on. In his contribution to debate on the bill—and he forgot to talk about half the bill; maybe he did not read it—the member for Dubbo said the Country Mayors Association had not been consulted. The Minister met with the Country Mayors Association and spoke at its forum. A number of Opposition members said that local government was not a part of consultation on the bill, but local government was part of the consultative process.

Opposition members claimed that the bill would restrict how dollars can be used, but let us look at how regional development should be run. Regional development should be run in a way that contributes to the long-term economic benefit of the communities involved. It should be run in a way so that communities can say, "This is our priority and we want the investment to be made in programs that generate economic wealth and wellbeing for decades to come." That is Labor's history of regional development. More recently, regional development by The Nationals—and regional Liberals, according to contributions from those members—was about how to get the first photo in the paper or the best bang for buck before the upcoming election. Nationals members had more big fake cheques than you could poke a stick at.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** You did too.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Yes, I used to have a fake cheque too—but mine were well considered. I have said a number of times that The Nationals love building shiny things. Although Nationals members were sometimes good at building buildings, they were never any good at putting staff in them. The hospitals were like the ideal hospital out of *Yes Minister*: There were no patients or staff. The same went for schools: There were no teachers in classes. Former Government members could build the shiny new things but they could not maintain them down the track. As Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, I am seeing that now. Former Government members would not staff TAFE, let alone maintain it. Funding for regional development should be considered and discussed with communities in a way that produces long-term economic benefit, growth and wellbeing for those communities.

Programs should not just be announced at the drop of a hat because a member felt like it or because it would provide that member with political benefit. The member for Dubbo said that this legislation would leave it all up to one person: the Minister. But that is the way it operated under the Liberal-Nationals Government. One of the reasons that I and the member for South Coast are in government, having won seats off the Coalition at the last election, is because we said, "It is not good enough to allocate taxpayers' hard-earned money in a way that is political and does not have proper probity or accountability around it." The Leader of The Nationals said that it is terrible to leave it up to the Minister, but that is not true. The bill obliges the Minister to set up a committee to provide advice on these grants. That is one of the ways to achieve transparency and probity.

Of course, another way to achieve transparency is for the fund to report each year on the money that has been spent, unlike the opaque processes of the former Government. Opposition members went through multiple different funds and they were completely opaque with communities about how those funds were distributed—unless they were lucky enough to receive one of those overnight allocations that we heard about. The Nationals claimed that these decisions were made behind a desk in Sydney, but it is the absolute opposite. The member for Tamworth said with a straight face that the bill would reduce transparency. That is absolutely outrageous. The member also listed a number of projects that he wished to claim credit for as a member of the former Government.

The bill is absolutely necessary to ensure that we use taxpayers' money properly. Far from minimising the importance of regional New South Wales as the member for Goulburn would have us believe, the bill recognises that the long-term economic growth of regional New South Wales deserves serious consideration. It is absolutely untrue to say that the fund will provide only \$35 million this year. Opposition members have an inability to read. So far \$35 million has been announced this year. Obviously it is possible that more funds will be announced as we go through the process to ensure that there are appropriate projects for funding to go towards. Some \$400 million is in the fund, comprising \$350 million to start with from last year and \$50 million from this year's budget. The whole idea is to set up a framework for when more money comes into the fund.

But it is not just \$400 million because this Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that the promises that were made to regional New South Wales are kept and that the destination of what is left of the Snowy Hydro funding and future funding into regional New South Wales is allocated appropriately, strategically

and with long-term benefits. This is not about photo opportunities or programs that do not employ people but provide a good story in the local paper. This is not about cutting funds, as the Opposition has suggested. The funding amount is not set by the bill. The bill provides a framework to allocate funds. That is important because the people of New South Wales said very clearly that they were sick of the pork-barrelling and lack of transparency from the former Government, which doled out \$27 billion in the lead up to a single election. That was the most blatant attempt to pork-barrel an electorate that I have ever seen.

The member for Bathurst said that country communities raised the money and they deserve to have the funds allocated to them. Yes, they do—and they deserve to have it allocated transparently and appropriately. I think anyone in country New South Wales will absolutely agree with that. This bill provides more flexibility in the allocation of funds, including by broadening the types of financial assistance available under the Act. That means we can support a whole range of areas, but with appropriate transparency, accountability and planning. The bill provides a rigorous process for making financial assistance decisions. As the member for Murray pointed out, real people should have a say in how funds are spent. That is why funding priorities can be identified by the community or the Government and will be assessed by a rigorous process around the advice of the Regional Development Advisory Council.

I look forward to seeing the Opposition's amendments in the upper House. They may have titles such as "Bring back the barrel" or "Bring back the rort" because that is what it is about. It is about the Opposition's complete failure to acknowledge that the people of New South Wales want accountability in the use of funds. They want assessment processes that mean one community's worthwhile project is ranked according to proper criteria against another's worthwhile project. It is great to hear members list all the fabulous grants that went to their electorates. But what if in the electorate next door, which is held by an Independent or a Labor member, there was a more worthy project than those that were funded? What about the bushfire grants? The member for Lismore gave some outrageous examples.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The member for Terrigal will come to order.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** We know about the bushfire grants that were made after the terrible fires in the Blue Mountains, but none of them went to that electorate. It was an outrageous process. This Government will even put in place an independent probity adviser to make sure that the assessment process works and is above board. That is a fundamental move; it is about making sure that regional New South Wales gets funding that delivers long-term benefits and making sure we are turning away from the previous Government's model, which was about political benefit, not community benefit.

Labor has a history of this. The Nationals members trotted out the old line in this debate that Labor does not support regional New South Wales. But most of the economic infrastructure in regional New South Wales that generates the dollars talked about by the member for Bathurst and others was put in place by Labor governments. Some 70 per cent of the dams that supply irrigation water in New South Wales were built by Labor governments. Most of the irrigation infrastructure in New South Wales was built by Labor governments. Most of the electricity network in New South Wales was built by Labor governments. Interestingly, the cotton industry was started by a Labor government. Most of the hospitals and schools around regional New South Wales were put in place by Labor governments.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The member for Hawkesbury will come to order. The member for Terrigal will come to order. Members will remain silent or leave the Chamber. If members continue to interject, I will have them removed.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** They do not have a clue. I hear Opposition members interjecting in question time about school closures. When the Nats held Monaro for a sad 12 years, five schools in the electorate closed. Yet members opposite rant about what Labor does. We are seeing a great deal of hypocrisy.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** How's Country Labor going?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Order! The member for Terrigal will remove himself from the Chamber until the end of the Minister's contribution.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Terrigal left the Chamber at 18:33.]*

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I am sorry to have tempted my friend into that series of rash interjections.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I am sorry too.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The Minister for Regional New South Wales, the Hon. Tara Moriarty, has made a terrific effort. She is a resident of regional New South Wales; she lives in Queanbeyan. She has travelled around this State comprehensively. Unsurprisingly, when the media do their round-ups of what Ministers spend on travel,

she is at the top of the list because she is in regional New South Wales all the time. She received 232 submissions to the issue paper. She held nine round tables throughout regional New South Wales. The consultation involved 14 mayors and 12 general managers, and Local Government NSW is represented on the Regional Development Reference Group. So we have had comprehensive feedback and funds have been allocated.

Fundamentally, it is about not going back to the bad old days of hearing a person who sounded remarkably like the former Deputy Premier saying at a pre-election event, "You know what? We will get into Scone this week. We will give them some money for their roads, another \$21 million." Another person at the dinner said, "So you are not done yet?" The person who sounded like the former Deputy Premier replied, "God, no. There are five days. I am going to give that guy \$4 million for this, \$4 million for that." Another person at the table said, "This is like the 12 days of Christmas." "Why not?", said the person who sounded like the former Deputy Premier, "You can have it all in New South Wales." He was a little honest earlier in the exchange when he said he appreciated a person at the table not calling him "Pork Barilaro". Who knows where that came from?

This is fundamentally about giving the people of New South Wales a regional communities development fund process that works and delivers for them, which offers them transparency and makes sure they can be confident that when the Government allocates funds it is done on the basis of comparing the merits of projects, of a project meeting the long-term needs of the community and of helping to develop jobs and welfare in communities, and that it is not just a slush fund for The Nationals and Liberals to give out money for political purposes. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **NSW SELF INSURANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT (SPECIAL LIABILITY INSURANCE) BILL 2024**

### **Returned**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

## **RETAIL TRADING AMENDMENT (ANZAC DAY TRADING HOURS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 6 August 2024.**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (18:37):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. I acknowledge any veterans who may be present in this Chamber, those veterans who are not present, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and fought and died for our freedom, and current defence personnel. Anzac Day has been observed in New South Wales since 25 April 1916, when convoys of cars carried soldiers wounded at Gallipoli and their nurses through the streets of Sydney. Interestingly, this first anniversary of the Gallipoli landings was marked in the Australian camp in Egypt by a sports day. However, sporting events were not held on Anzac Day in New South Wales for 44 years, from 1916 until 1960, when late-afternoon games were permitted.

In 1919 the Sydney parade was cancelled as a result of the Spanish influenza pandemic, but a commemorative service was held in The Domain, of all places, with all participants required to wear masks and stand three feet apart. Anzac Day was first marked as a public holiday in New South Wales in 1925 by an amendment to the Banks and Bank Holidays Act 1912 that was passed in 1924. Dawn services have been held continuously in Sydney since 1928. By the 1930s, the still-familiar rituals of Anzac Day observance had become established: dawn vigils, marches, memorial services, veterans' reunions and, of course, games of two-up. In 2008, the then Labor Government introduced the Shop Trading Bill 2008 to further deregulate shop trading hours in New South Wales. It included a provision that removed any trading restrictions after 1.00 p.m. on Anzac Day.

This bill would amend that provision and remove three references to "before 1.00 p.m." from the Act. As a result, the retail trading restrictions that currently apply until 1.00 p.m. on Anzac Day will now apply for the whole day. The restrictions apply to shops, defined as premises "that are used wholly or predominantly for the retail sale of goods". The Act includes an extensive list of exemptions, including cake and pastry shops—where

people can purchase Anzac biscuits—chemists, florists, fruit and vegetable shops, newsagencies, nurseries, restaurants and cafes, seafood shops, takeaway food shops and petrol stations. The Act does not apply to hotels, small bars or clubs. The bill will align the trading restrictions on Anzac Day to those in force on other days that are sacred to our community, including Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Christmas Day. I note the proposed amendment of the member for Wagga Wagga around Easter and Anzac Day occurring at about the same time and the need to ensure that regional areas are not exempt from the change.

The Opposition supports the Government's modest change in this bill, which reflects a continued tradition of 108 years of honouring those who gave their lives in service of our country and supporting all our veterans and their families to mark Anzac Day with due respect. The Opposition does not support the proposed amendments foreshadowed by the member for Sydney to shut down gaming rooms and poker machines on Anzac Day. Whilst the member may have good intentions, there is no evidence that closing gaming houses and shutting down poker machines from operating for one day of the year will be the panacea to deter gamblers. It is tokenistic and does not serve to deliver the change sought through the amendment of Anzac Day trading hours. The Opposition has a clear policy to introduce cashless gaming as soon as possible and objects to the inordinate delay in moving towards that clear goal by the Labor Government, which has kicked the cashless gambling can down the road.

I also acknowledge the concerns raised by Wesley Mission and others about the prevalence of problem gambling among veterans, which is a symptom of us not doing everything we can to support veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life after returning from active service. Some veterans struggle; however, the amendment of the member for Sydney would not have any real effect on problem gambling because it would merely close gaming venues for one day of the year. After morning Anzac Day services and marches, many veterans gather together to reconnect and reminisce at hotels and clubs, including RSL clubs. As well as the traditional game of two-up, some veterans may make use of the gaming facilities at those clubs. There is no clear case for interfering with the operation of gaming venues on Anzac Day only.

One possible motivation for the Labor Government to introduce this legislation is to save face following the debacle only months ago when the Premier back-pedalled after his Ministers approved the Pandemonium 2024 music festival in The Domain. The festival would have competed with the nearby annual Anzac Day service. It was not an oversight by the Government but a lack of understanding of the reverence that should never be challenged when it comes to honouring and respecting our veterans, especially on Anzac Day.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (18:43):** I support the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. As Minister for Veterans, I commend the work of the Minister for Industrial Relations to introduce this bill. As Minister I attend a large number of commemorative events and the feedback on the bill has been very positive. The Anzac spirit has had a strong presence in Australian culture for the past 109 years; however, it is felt strongest within our veteran community. The spirit of the Anzacs started with the landings at Gallipoli and has continued through the campaigns of New Guinea, Bougainville, the Middle East and our more contemporary conflicts.

Our Australian Defence Force personnel serve their nation with honour and distinction in the most trying of conflicts. They carry the Anzac spirit with them. Due to their heroism and honour, Anzac Day has become one of the most sacred and important commemorative events on the New South Wales and national calendar. It is a day when we pause to remember those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in service of their country. However, for many in our community it is not always easy to take part in commemorations or to honour current and former service men and women due to afternoon work commitments. Many in the community have to weigh up whether they can attend their local commemorations due work commitments.

This bill will make it easier, particularly for young people working in large retail organisations, to participate in Anzac services and ceremonies throughout the day. Attending events is especially difficult for people living in regional areas, where there may be only one commemoration in town. It is also family friendly, allowing greater flexibility for parents to support their children's participation in commemorative services. Many schools and youth groups, including cadets, scouts and guides, take part in local commemorative services. That creates a challenge for parents to balance work and family. Our veterans deserve to be properly recognised, and the community should be given the right opportunity to honour them.

On 10 July I stood with the Premier, RSL NSW president Mick Bainbridge and Families of Veterans Guild CEO Renee Wilson to announce the Government's commitment to honour veterans in New South Wales. Mick Bainbridge said that extending the trading restrictions will allow members, veterans and their families to attend commemorations in Sydney and across New South Wales and be with their families. Renee Wilson said that this was an important decision by the New South Wales Government to ensure that on Anzac Day we acknowledge that the freedoms we enjoy today exist due to the sacrifices of our service men and women. Extending retail trading restrictions on Anzac Day is just one way to honour our veterans. It will ensure that our

veterans are recognised and that they are able to take part in services throughout the day with their families and friends.

The Government recognises the importance of Anzac Day to our nation and wants to ensure that there is no commercialisation of the day. The bill considers how businesses, workers and residents of New South Wales engage on Anzac Day. Currently, retail businesses are restricted from trading on Anzac Day until after 1.00 p.m. unless they are exempt under the Retail Trading Act 2008. Consultation has demonstrated that both veterans and the broader community are in favour of extending restrictions on trade. New South Wales will fall in line with other States, with full-day trading restrictions currently in place in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. The bill makes significant changes to the Retail Trading Act 2008, extending retail trading restrictions on Anzac Day. The changes will commence from the passage of the bill, well in time for Anzac Day 2025.

The bill will ensure that non-exempt stores cannot trade on Anzac Day. By limiting the types of businesses that can operate on Anzac Day and by giving workers the decision-making power on when they work, we are securing the sanctity of Anzac Day and strengthening workers' rights. The Act currently exempts a range of retail shops, cafes and licensed venues from restrictions. The bill will not affect a local pharmacy, greengrocer or service station, ensuring that the community can continue to function. The bill extends retail trading restrictions only for businesses that are not currently exempt under the Act, including large retailers such as Woolworths, Coles, Kmart and Bunnings. The changes to the Act will allow non-exempt businesses to seek an exemption from the restricted retail trading provisions through an application to the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service in certain circumstances.

During the consultation process for the bill, 299 submissions were received. The majority of the submissions were from members of the public, veterans and unions, and were overwhelmingly in favour of extending restrictions on trading hours. The bill sends a message to veterans and their families in New South Wales that their sacrifice and bravery will not be overlooked. The bill reaffirms this Government's continued commitment to ensuring that the Anzac tradition is preserved and respected for future generations. Again, I thank our veterans for their service. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations. Particularly, I thank the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association for its contribution to bringing this great initiative forward. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (18:49):** I strongly support the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. Anzac Day is our national day of remembrance—a day when we commemorate personnel who served this country in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations and recognise the sacrifices they made for freedom and democracy. It provides an important reminder of the toll deployment has on service personnel and their families. As members know, services on Anzac Day start at dawn—the time of the original landing at Gallipoli—and continue all day, hence the need for this bill to ensure that trading ceases throughout the day to allow for people to participate in those events. I regularly attend the Mustard Seed Uniting Church Anzac Day service at Union Square in Pyrmont and the Anzac Day dawn service at the Anzac Parade Obelisk in Moore Park. I find the services an incredibly moving and important opportunity to show my gratitude towards inner city veterans past and present. I pay special tribute to our LGBTQ diggers who served in silence and our First Nations diggers who, after serving, were overlooked and even shunned for many years.

The Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024 recognises the importance of Anzac Day by ensuring that people in New South Wales can observe the day beyond the dawn service. It will require shops and non-essential services to stay closed for the entire day rather than allowing them to open at 1.00 p.m., as is currently the case. The Government has raised concerns that commercialisation has crept into Anzac Day, detracting from its important purpose and drawing people away from opportunities to reflect. I welcome the bill and the increasing recognition and support for our diggers.

Conflicts and peacekeeping missions are dangerous for those who serve. They are confronted with the risk of injury, capture, suffering, misery, savagery, torture and death, as well as witnessing dead and mutilated bodies. Trauma is common and can lead to long-term emotional and psychological impacts. It is well known that the incidences of post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse and generalised anxiety disorder among returned personnel are significantly higher than in the general population.

What is less well known is the link between service and gambling harm. Veterans with a gambling problem are at higher risk of criminality, suicidal ideation and threatening physical violence than veterans without gambling problems. Suicide is a serious problem, with almost 44 per cent of veterans with a gambling problem experiencing suicidal ideation and one in five having made attempts or plans. Veterans with gambling problems are being put at risk whenever they enter venues that have electronic gaming machines. With that in mind, I intend to move amendments at a later stage to extend the closure of shops and non-essential services to gambling in clubs, pubs and casinos.

Anzac Day should be a safe day for returned personnel, a day when they can feel appreciated and protected from emotional stress and triggers. Many will be attending pubs and clubs, and we should give those with gambling problems some reprieve on the day that we set aside to honour them. We should not only commemorate veterans on that day but also support them. James Brown, the former president of RSL NSW and chair of Invictus Games Australia, states:

I agree that if we are shutting down shops on Anzac Day, we can shut down poker machines as well ... I've seen too many veterans turn up on the RSL's doorstep needing help after gambling addictions have ruined their lives.

One of the aims of the bill is to encourage people to participate in Anzac Day events after the dawn service by closing non-essential services and shops for the entire day. Electronic gaming is neither an essential service nor an activity that supports the commemoration of veterans. If we believe that it is untenable for the community to go shopping on Anzac Day, including shopping for groceries, then it is untenable to say that it is okay to put the week's grocery money into a poker machine. Gaming shuts down when shops and other non-essential services close on Anzac Day in Queensland and Western Australia, so the argument that the proposal is untested or tokenistic is completely false and shows a lack of attention and research from some members of this place.

If the aim of the bill is to strengthen how New South Wales recognises Anzac Day—and to quarantine the day as something sacred for veterans and returned personnel and their families—there is no justification for allowing poker machines in gaming rooms to be one of the only businesses that can open on that day. As someone with friends, family members and staff who have served, I strongly support the bill. As someone with friends, family members and constituents who have experienced gambling harm, I call on members to support my amendment.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:55):** The Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024 amends the Retail Trading Act 2008 to restrict trading hours on Anzac Day. It has been wholeheartedly welcomed by those I have spoken to in my community. Originally used to commemorate those who fought in World War I, Anzac Day on 25 April is a day to honour and remember the men and women who have fought, have served, are currently serving or have lost their life in military or peacekeeping operations in which Australia has been involved. It is a significant day every year.

As the daughter of a serviceman who served in the Royal Australian Air Force in World War II, Anzac Day is incredibly important to me. I appreciate exactly why veterans in my electorate and their families feel the same way. Anzac Day is a time to remember Australia's service men and women who have served with distinction on the Western Front, at Gallipoli and elsewhere since World War I. The Anzacs at Gallipoli helped shape the modern Australian story. The term "Anzac" also expresses the wonderful values that are seen as Australian, including courage, egalitarianism, endurance and mateship. The memorial wall in Gallipoli quotes Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey's first President. The quote is also replicated on the Kemal Atatürk Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra. It reads:

Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives ... You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours ... You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries, wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

Anzac Day is a time to remember more recent conflicts involving Australian defence personnel, police and civilians who have been involved in United Nations missions and other multinational peace operations. I have come to know members of the Merrylands and Cumberland RSL sub-branches in my electorate very well, along with the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia, which is based in my electorate.

Granville made a big contribution to the effort in the Great War. Some 1,469 names appear on the honour roll for Granville and district. Two men from Granville, Private George Cartwright and Lieutenant Arthur Hall, were recognised for their service, bravery and sacrifice with the awarding of Victoria Crosses. Granville soldiers served in New Guinea in 1914 before heading to Gallipoli. Some 157 soldiers from Granville died at the Gallipoli landings. Granville RSL Sub-Branch recently merged with the Cumberland RSL Sub-Branch, and together their members have continued the Anzac tradition of serving with distinction.

Earlier this year I joined members of the Merrylands RSL Sub-Branch for their Anzac Day dawn service at Charles Mance Reserve, along with about 3,000 other people. Charles Mance was born on 3 December 1900. At the age of 16 he lied about his age and enlisted for World War I with the 1st Battalion. He received many honours recognising his military service—including the Légion d'honneur, France's highest decoration—and was president of the First World War Diggers Association. Charles Mance was honoured with a state funeral in 2001. At the time of his passing, he was one of the last remaining Anzacs. During his life, Charles visited many schools and tried to teach everyone about the horrors of war. He said, "War is no solution to a problem; it's useless. Why

make things that destroy humanity? We should utilise the wonders of the Earth." His words ring as true today as they did years ago.

The Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) has its office in Granville. The experience of Vietnam vets was very different to that of the Anzacs. There was not the ticker tape parade for service people returning home. Many national servicemen, doctors and nurses were more likely to arrive at Sydney airport on a late-night flight direct from Saigon and then be dispersed among their waiting families or wait hours for a connecting flight or train ride home. I thank all those who came before us, and those who served in the Australian Imperial Forces and more recently in the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force.

Trading restrictions for Anzac Day vary across Australian States and Territories. In New South Wales, retail businesses currently cannot trade on Anzac Day until after 1.00 p.m., unless they have an exemption. A number of businesses, however, are automatically exempt from Anzac Day trading restrictions, such as chemists, florists, newsagencies, restaurants and cafes, takeaway food and drink shops, and petrol stations. A business that is not automatically exempt may apply for an exemption from NSW Fair Trading. An exemption will be granted only if in the exceptional circumstances of the case it is in the public interest.

In September last year the Department of Customer Service released a consultation paper seeking feedback from the public about Anzac Day and then used that feedback to determine whether the current policy and legislative settings should remain in place or whether changes should be made. Of the 299 submissions made by businesses, veterans' unions and the public, 276 submissions supported further restrictions to trading on Anzac Day. The proposed new restrictions in the bill are long overdue. In South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, retailers are generally closed unless restrictions apply. I acknowledge the State's veterans and thank them for their contributions to our State and our nation. The New South Wales Government believes this is an important bill. I quote from the Premier's announcement about why the bill is so important. He said:

For Australians, no occasion could be more solemn or significant than ANZAC Day.

Every year, as the dawn breaks through in the east, we pause as a nation to honour the Australians who have given their life for our safety and our freedom.

Whoever we are, wherever we live, whatever our faith or background, we all unite behind a simple promise:

'We will remember them'.

When we say these words at dawn services and at memorial marches, we mean them.

Which is why, as of next year, New South Wales will extend our retail trading restrictions across ANZAC Day, to make sure our veterans are recognised and free to take part in services throughout the day.

I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (19:01):** On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to the debate on the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. In its current form, The Greens cannot support the bill. Its premise is simple. Currently, shops in New South Wales are required to remain shut until 1.00 p.m. on Anzac Day, after which time they are allowed to open for business. The bill amends the Retail Trading Act 2008 to prohibit shops in New South Wales from opening at any time on Anzac Day and to prevent banks from seeking approval from the department secretary to open after 1.00 p.m. It is important to understand that the bill does not require everything in New South Wales to be shut on Anzac Day. The existing exemptions for small shops in section 8 of the Act and businesses of a certain nature, including restaurants, nurseries and bookshops, in schedule 1 to the Act, alongside exemptions for premises with a hotel licence or small bar licence, remain in place. Notably, gaming venues are also allowed to stay open.

The Greens recognise that the bill comes off the back of public consultation on Anzac Day trading restrictions and a long-run campaign by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association launched in 2022 that urged the New South Wales State Government to ban all retail trading and "restore Anzac Day as a whole day of commemoration". In bringing the bill to the House, the Government has presented it as an attempt to "end the creeping commercialisation of Anzac Day", which it describes as "Australia's most sacred of days". The Premier has said that no occasion could be more solemn or significant.

Given that, it is almost impossible to fathom how allowing people to engage in problem gambling and play the pokies after 1.00 p.m. on Anzac Day is consistent with that goal or those sentiments. If the New South Wales Labor Government is serious about its aims and about encouraging a day of solemn reflection within the community, I do not think its response would then be to defend the operation of harmful gaming machines, suggesting that it is in line with various traditions of that significant day. The Government should not ignore the clear, unfortunate and very tragic links the member for Sydney has raised between veterans and problem gambling.

A 2021 study conducted by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation found that 13.4 per cent of veterans who return to civilian life report experiencing gambling problems. A follow-up study conducted in 2023 found that of those who reported problem gambling, over 40 per cent experienced suicidal ideation. Veterans who experience problem gambling are twice as likely as their peers to attempt suicide, and we know that veterans are already over-represented in rates of suicide across the country. We also know that the harm caused by problem gambling is not limited to veterans. Last year people in New South Wales lost a record \$8.1 billion to poker machines, the equivalent of \$1,000 for every adult and child in the State. The heaviest losses were incurred by communities in Western Sydney, where we know they are compounded by other forms of institutionalised disadvantage.

In 2023 the two local government areas in which community members lost the most money to poker machines were the Canterbury Bankstown and the Fairfield LGAs, both of which have the lowest household incomes in Sydney. In Canterbury Bankstown the community lost \$325 million to 5,000 poker machines, and in Fairfield they lost \$313 million to 3,800 poker machines. We in this place should be doing everything that we can to address problem gambling, not encouraging it on a day when there is, quite literally, very little else for people to do or very few places where people can spend their money. There is also the trauma that the day can personally cause for those impacted by war, who may then seek ways to escape that trauma.

To that end I note that both the member for Sydney and my Greens colleague in the other place Ms Cate Faehrmann will be seeking to amend the bill to ensure gaming venues are treated like other non-exempt retailers and are required to remain shut on Anzac Day. The amendments would insert new section 6AA into the Act to ensure that any part of a casino or hotel in which gaming occurs or gaming machines are operated, or any other gaming machine area, is treated like a shop for the purposes of restricted Anzac Day trading. It was deeply disappointing to see reports today that the New South Wales Labor Government has already indicated that it will not support the amendments of the member for Sydney and Ms Cate Faehrmann. The Greens support the amendments and want to see them passed as a sensible move to signal to our community that gambling harm is of serious concern to us, and that we want to address the resulting broader harms.

I end by speaking briefly about the broader narrative around Anzac Day, acknowledging that nuance is required when we talk about the military and Australia's wartime history. In this place we have heard much about how Anzac Day is one of our most sacred days and that it is a day of unity for all communities. To recognise that people have different and complex, but equally valid, views on what Anzac Day means to them does not detract from the solemnity of the day, the contributions that veterans have made and the lives that have been lost. That is particularly true as many in our communities rightly question the role of Australia in conflicts that are taking place right now overseas and advocate for global justice and peace.

Framing Anzac Day as our most sacred of days that brings us together strips out that nuance and erases and ignores the valid and real concerns from many in our community about the harm and trauma caused by war and about what is being remembered each year. That includes First Nations activists and communities calling for the Frontier Wars to be included in Anzac Day commemorations, rather than their erasure from such events. War has a deep and lasting negative effect on all of those who fight and all of those who come after. War also has a huge impact on the community. The Greens believe that we must oppose war, reflect on the harm and suffering it causes and tell the truth about our history, but gambling has no part to play in any of that remembrance.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (19:08):** I make a contribution to debate and speak in support of the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. Anzac Day is by far one of the most significant and solemn days of the year for Australians, marking the anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli during the First World War. The bill seeks to extend restrictions on retail trading for non-exempt shops on Anzac Day. Public consultation on the matter in 2023 revealed that there was majority support for greater trading restrictions on Anzac Day to allow members of the community to pay their respects and partake in commemorative services throughout the day.

The New South Wales Government acknowledges the significance of Anzac Day and the important role it plays in Australian society. Anzac Day on 25 April has long been a national day of commemoration to acknowledge the sacrifice of Australian service men and women in defence of our nation and way of life, both past and present. This Government is committed to ensuring that the Anzac tradition is preserved and that community members have the opportunity to show their respects and commemorate the day without the distraction of retail trading.

For far too long retail workers have missed out on the opportunity to remember, celebrate and honour the veterans who fought for the democratic country that we live in today. Many of those workers, like my son, have worked in the retail industry for several years and the opportunity to attend the Sydney march to acknowledge those who have served is hampered because they are required to work for major retailers. Currently in New South Wales retail businesses are restricted from trading on Anzac Day until after 1.00 p.m., unless they are exempt



under the Retail Trading Act 2008 or have obtained an exemption from NSW Fair Trading. The Retail Trading Act 2008 currently provides exemptions for a range of small retail shops, licensed bars and hotels, and shops of a certain kind such as chemists, and fruit and vegetable shops. Those exemptions will stay in place.

The Minns Labor Government will extend retail trading restrictions to preserve the sanctity of remembrance, which will give all Australians the opportunity to unite with the new generation of veterans, especially those who were not able to do so before. The bill will amend the definition of "restricted trading day" and extend the restriction to the entire day, not just before 1.00 p.m. This will require shops to be closed on Anzac Day. The restriction will extend to banks too. Introducing full-day trading restrictions on Anzac Day will bring 25 April in line with the other restricted trading days throughout the year such as Good Friday, Easter Monday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, and bring New South Wales in line with other States around the country.

Since I became the representative for Parramatta, I have come to know members of the Parramatta War Widows and the City of Parramatta RSL Sub-Branch. Over the years, I have also become very familiar with the Cumberland RSL and Epping RSL sub-branches. It has been an honour to get to know those men and women, who work diligently to not only honour the memory of those lost in past battles but also support those who have returned from service. These members play a significant role in bringing together returned service men and women who served in conflicts as citizens of other nations.

Madam Temporary Speaker, you and I were at the Kokoda Track this year. It was very moving to see not only those who served there in conflict as Australians but also those who represented other countries that they lived in when they served in conflict. Whether they be Korean, Turkish, Afghan, Tongan or representatives of any other nation, the role that our RSLs play to embrace and support these men and women is to be commended. It highlights yet another reason why introducing the bill is an important action. I also acknowledge the life-changing work that Legacy does across our State to support those who have been left behind as a result of the loss of a husband, a father, a mother, a wife, a partner or a significant other. The bill acknowledges and provides for more family members to have the opportunity to remember without needing to go to work on that day.

RSL NSW President Mick Bainbridge speaks for many. He said, "Too often, the pastoral needs of veterans, and the friends and families who support them, are overlooked." Mick welcomes the support of our Labor Government as well as the support of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association to ensure that Anzac Day, the seminal veterans' day of this country, is observed. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations and the Minister for Veterans for their hard work on the bill. The bill acknowledges the significance of Anzac Day and the veterans that it commemorates by extending an opportunity for a full day of thanks in return for their sacrifice. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (19:14):** I speak in support of the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. The bill will extend Anzac Day retail trading restrictions and require all non-exempt shops to remain closed for the whole day. Anzac Day has long been legislated as a restricted trading day in New South Wales. That trading restriction has allowed Australians to pause and reflect on what our servicemen and servicewomen have contributed to Australia. It is a day that commemorates that service. Since the commencement of the Retail Trading Act 2008, Anzac Day retail trading restrictions cease at 1.00 p.m., and all retail shops can open and continue to trade from that time. That has led to a creeping commercialisation of Anzac Day, which the bill endeavours to reverse.

Anzac Day is a solemn day of remembrance and a time for reflection. It is a day when the community honours the sacrifices and contributions of the men and women who have served, and those who continue to serve, our country through our defence forces, as well as their family members—those who live with the loss of their loved ones through the theatres of war or when they return back home and face challenges with post-traumatic stress disorder, and those who are continuing to live, love, nurture and support their loved ones when they leave the forces. It is a special day that I continue to encourage all members of the Australian community to honour, lift up and revere.

War should never be glorified. However, it is vital that we recognise and give thanks to those who have made, and continue to make, significant sacrifices to ensure the freedoms we enjoy today. The legacy of their bravery, camaraderie and dedication must always be held in the absolute highest regard. I am immensely proud to be a patron of the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch. The role has allowed me to engage closely with the veteran community, understand their needs and advocate on their behalf. It is an honour and a responsibility that I take very seriously. It has provided me with a deep insight into the significance of Anzac Day and the values that it represents.

At this point, I mention "The Train", as it is colloquially termed, in St Marys—an old set of trains that has been there for many decades. That is where they hold barbecues and gatherings. It is where they hang out together, run courses and provide veteran services. I once visited in the lead-up to a commemoration event and talked to

some of the old fellas on the verandah. It is one of the most joyous occasions when you hang with those true-blue Aussies. There is not an element of political correctness in anything they say. It is so real, raw and truly Australian and authentic.

One thing that they said, which I have never forgotten, is how much it means to them as returned servicemen to look around during a commemoration event—either Anzac Day, Vietnam Veterans' Day or Remembrance Day—and see the young people. They see the young kids, who may be in uniform, may be toddlers or may be teenagers, and it means the world to them to see that the next generation is coming out, honouring them, thanking them and holding them in great reverence. I echo those comments and feelings. I want to continue to see crowds pouring into commemoration events. It is really important to our veterans.

It is pleasing to note the significant growth of the Anzac Day spirit across our community, which is clearly shown by the increase in the number of people who attend our local services each year. The Retail Trading Act 2008 currently mandates that the restrictions cease at 1.00 p.m., unless exempt on Anzac Day. However, the bill seeks to extend those trading restrictions to encompass the entire day. This change is aimed at ensuring that all Australians, including many retail workers who have not previously been in a position to observe this day, will have the opportunity to fully participate in Anzac Day commemorations for the entire day without the distractions of commercial activities. The bill emphasises the importance of this national day of remembrance, allowing us all to pay our respects and reflect on the profound impact of the service and sacrifice made by our servicemen and servicewomen.

In proposing this amendment, we recognise the need to balance commercial interests with the cultural and historical significance of Anzac Day. The bill will retain existing exemptions for essential services, ensuring that no-one is left without essential items such as food, fuel and medicine. Other exemptions may be applied for and granted if deemed crucial. It is our shared responsibility to preserve the sanctity of this day, ensuring that its true meaning is not overshadowed by the presence of everyday retail trade and the regular business of the day. The bill aims to provide a clear and respectful opportunity to honour our veterans and ensure that Anzac Day remains a dedicated time for reflection and gratitude. The bill reinforces our appreciation for the service of all who have served our nation and continue to serve our nation. It acknowledges that Anzac Day will remain a significant day for us now and for the generations to come. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (19:21):** I support the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. This significant piece of legislation is a testament to our collective commitment to honouring and respecting one of our nation's most cherished days—Anzac Day. The bill seeks to amend the Retail Trading Act 2008, reinforcing the sanctity of Anzac Day by extending the restriction on retail trading hours to cover the entire day. The bill will make amendments to the Retail Trading Act to extend the Anzac Day trading restrictions to require that all non-exempt retailers remain closed for the duration of the day, reaffirming the importance of paying tribute to those who have served and those who continue to serve our country.

Anzac Day holds a special place in the hearts of Australians. It is a day of profound significance, when we unite as a nation to remember and pay tribute to the brave men and women who served and sacrificed for our country. From the shores of Gallipoli to contemporary peacekeeping missions, Anzac Day is a poignant reminder of the courage and commitment of our armed forces. As we gather to reflect and honour their legacy, we must ensure that the day remains one of respectful observance rather than commercial activity. The proposed amendments under the bill seek to address that issue by reinstating Anzac Day as a full-day restricted trading day, akin to Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

The bill contains several key provisions, including amending the definition of "restricted trading day" to remove the words "but only before 1.00 p.m.", ensuring that retail trading restrictions apply for the full day; amending section 4 of the Act, which governs trading hours on restricted days, to mandate that all shops must remain closed throughout Anzac Day, with certain exemptions; and amending section 14E of the Act to prohibit banks from seeking approval to open on Anzac Day altogether, removing the possibility of any commercial operations on this day. Those changes align our legislative framework with the deep respect that Australians feel for this day and reinforce our collective commitment to honouring those who have served.

The bill makes further amendments to the approval for banks to remain open on restricted days. Currently, under the Act, a bank can apply to the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service for approval to open on a bank close day, including Anzac Day. However, under the Act, approval cannot be granted for a bank to open before 1.00 p.m. on Anzac Day. The bill removes the "before 1.00 p.m." requirement, meaning that a bank cannot seek approval from the secretary to remain open on Anzac Day at all. The bill provides for essential services such as chemists, petrol stations and takeaway food shops to continue operating. Those provisions ensure that the community's critical needs are met while upholding the day's solemnity. Retailers and businesses with exceptional circumstances can apply for exemptions if it is in the public interest, ensuring that the balance between public service and respect is maintained.

The legislative change is about not only restricting retail hours but also strengthening worker rights. Many Australians employed in retail and other sectors may find their ability to participate in Anzac Day commemorations compromised by work commitments. By limiting trading hours, we are empowering workers to observe that important day with their families and communities. The bill reflects our commitment to respecting both our veterans and those who serve our community in various capacities. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, for bringing the bill to the House. I acknowledge her department's extensive consultation with the various stakeholders, namely the Australian Retailers Association and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association. Furthermore, I acknowledge the input of our RSLs, veterans' organisations and advocacy groups.

I also give a shout-out to my local Rooty Hill RSL Sub-Branch, which does an amazing job each Anzac Day. The dawn service attracts more than 5,000 residents. In 2015, at the 100-year anniversary of Australia entering World War I, the dawn service had 10,000 people in attendance. It was a memorable service at which Australian television presenter Kerri-Anne Kennerley was the emcee. I also acknowledge the Hon. David Harris, the Minister for Veterans, for his advocacy and support for this piece of legislation. Anzac Day represents more than just a historical event; it embodies the spirit of unity, respect and gratitude that defines us as Australians.

The bill seeks to preserve the essence of Anzac Day by ensuring that it remains a day of reverence, free from commercial distractions. It is a small but significant step in acknowledging the sacrifices made by our service men and women, and ensuring that their legacy continues to be honoured in the manner it deserves. It is vital that we show our respect and support for our veterans and current forces. The bill shows that the Government recognises the importance of Anzac Day and acknowledges the sacrifices our veterans have made. Let us reaffirm our commitment to honouring our veterans and to ensuring that Anzac Day remains a day for reflection, remembrance and unity. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (19:27):** I make a contribution to debate on the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. Firstly, as a returned serviceman who has served in the forces for nearly 10 years, including three tours of duty, I tell members there is no day more sacred, no day more special and no day more preserved in our memories than Anzac Day. The bill helps to commemorate Anzac Day by further restricting Anzac Day trading hours. It also aims to remind Australians that Anzac Day is a day of remembrance. It requires a small commercial sacrifice, while we remember why we are the best country in the world.

Personally, I have never seen so many people at dawn services. I have never seen so many young people march by as proud descendants of returned service men and women, flying flags with great big smiles and displaying hard-won medals of their service or that of their ancestors. I have never seen so many people and so much pride in our Anzac Day traditions. In fact, it really warms my heart. I see kids with a day off school. I see business owners who normally would be toiling behind a counter, sitting at a computer or out on the farm. It is an opportunity to set the example and to promote our community by understanding the sacrifices and respecting those who gave their lives to protect our freedoms.

Restricting non-essential trading on Anzac Day will allow more working-age people to participate in Anzac Day commemorations and traditions, as they now will not need to get ready for an afternoon shift at work. We must take every opportunity to teach our children the importance of the sacrifice our brave men and women made for our freedoms, and to remind our mums and dads that people just like them saw their own brave children leave to go to war with no guarantee they would return home. I am proud to say that we are doing a great job at that.

I turn to the foreshadowed amendment to the bill. The member for Sydney chooses to utilise this day as a weapon in his personal fight against gambling. It is a terrible use of his position. I cannot believe any member in this place would choose to make such a move when it is the democracy of Australia and our veterans of the world wars and of recent wars that has given him the privilege to speak freely, and no other reason. A one-day ban on pokies will do nothing to address a 365-day-per-year problem. To be honest, I am one of those who thinks problem gambling needs addressing. It needs addressing much, much faster than the current Government is doing. I realise it is a balancing act to get this legislation right, but the Government cannot make a promise and keep blaming the previous Government, all the while breaking its promise to end problem gambling.

Two-up is symbolic and a treasured tradition on Anzac Day. It represents the very spirit of our Anzacs, and it is a sacred tradition reserved only for Anzac Day. Plenty of veterans just want to grab a beer on Anzac Day and go to the two-up ring. If their local pub does not have a two-up ring or if they are not mobile enough to stand around the two-up ring, they might just want to kick in \$50 in a syndicate with a few mates. Often that syndicate leads to us talking much more broadly than we would at any other time. We may only see each other once per year, and if we choose to sit around a poker machine and catch up and speak about topics that help us to process life, then what is wrong with that? I might add that not all veterans have gambling problems. I reiterate that the foreshadowed amendment is a weak and symbolic politicising of an issue that has nothing to do with Anzac Day.

To the member for Sydney, I say this: Please, fix problem gambling, but take your prescriptive and paternalistic view of Anzac Day elsewhere and show some respect. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:31):** It is indeed a privilege to speak in debate on the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024, as Anzac Day holds a special significance in the lives of all Australians. I thank Minister Cotsis, the Minister for Industrial Relations, for her introduction of this important legislation. I acknowledge Minister Harris, the Minister for Veterans, and thank him for his extensive collaboration with stakeholders to develop this important bill. I also acknowledge my good friend the member for Campbelltown, the Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney, as well as the Deputy Premier. I thank each of them for their support of the bill and for their general support in all matters affecting our service men and women. As members may know, the member for Campbelltown is a veteran himself, a former soldier in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and the Royal Australian Corps of Transport.

The bill also holds significance for me, having previously spent eight years as a soldier and non-commissioned officer and officer cadet in the Australian Army Reserve. I should note, however, that the bill is significant for all Australians, not just those who served, as the Anzac spirit is a reflection of the tremendous sacrifice made by Australian men and women and their families for their country. We are privileged to live in Australia as it is today because of their service and their sacrifice. In the First World War alone, over 400,000 men and women enlisted in the Australian armed forces. Of that number, over 60,000 were killed in action and over 150,000 were wounded. Together, that is more than half of the men and women who served that were either killed or wounded. It is inevitable that most Australians would have had a family member directly involved in the First World War or the wars that followed.

The significance of the Anzac story is evident through Australian popular culture. We know of songs such as Cold Chisel's *Khe Sanh* and Redgum's *I Was Only 19*, both about the Vietnam War. We have films such as the 1981 war drama *Gallipoli* and the 2015 ABC documentary *Why Anzac?*, in which actor Sam Neill traces the Anzac story 100 years on from its origins on the shores of Gallipoli. The Anzac stories still speak to us because they are more than just stories. They are more than just myth. Those were real men and women, with real families, who fought for and served our nation.

The Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024 seeks to further restrict the existing trading hours on Anzac Day. The bill is an amendment to the existing Retail Trading Act 2008, which provides for the laws governing retail trade on 25 April each year. Under the Retail Trading Act, there are restrictions on businesses trading on Anzac Day, including periods of time in which businesses may trade and which businesses are prohibited from any trade on that important day. Currently retail businesses are restricted from trading on Anzac Day until after 1.00 p.m., unless an applicable exception applies. That usually coincides with the Anzac Day march. The exceptions are published in schedule 1 to the Act and include businesses such as chemists, newsagencies, cafes and petrol stations.

Through community consultation with stakeholders such as veterans, businesses and the wider public, the Government has identified a need to propose the further restrictions outlined in the bill. I stress that the bill does not aim to arbitrarily burden businesses—that is not what the bill is about. The bill simply aims to facilitate a full day for our communities to reflect upon a fundamental part of Australian history in order to commemorate and remember those who selflessly served and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our democracy and our freedom.

The bill proposes three amendments to the Retail Trading Act 2008. Firstly, the bill amends the definition of restricted trading day by removing "but only before 1.00 p.m." from section 3 (1) of the Act. Secondly, the bill amends section 4 (10) by omitting the words "before 1.00 p.m." in relation to restricted trading days. Thirdly, the bill seeks to omit the words "before 1.00 p.m." from section 14E (1). Whilst we recognise the need for commercial trading, Anzac Day is so incredibly important that it warrants our full attention and nothing else.

In Western Sydney thousands of residents attend Anzac Day services each year. In my own electorate of Prospect, residents attend services at locations such as the Seven Hills-Toongabbie-Wentworthville RSL Sub-Branch and the Smithfield RSL Sub-Branch—of which I am a proud member. Notably, the Smithfield RSL memorial park contains an honour roll in remembrance of more than 300 servicemen who perished in World War I. They came from the little community of Smithfield and across Fairfield.

For many Australians it is a solemn tradition to attend a dawn service and remember those who served and those who died for this country. In 2016 I spoke in this House about two local heroes from my electorate, Norman and Leo McCarthy, for whom the Smithfield RSL memorial park is named. They were brothers and veterans of World War I who served in the 12th Australian Light Horse Regiment, which led the charge at Beersheba. Leo, who served his country again in World War II, paid the ultimate sacrifice at the Changi concentration camp. The

12th Australian Light Horse is also special to me because I served in the amalgamated 12th and 16th Light Horse, known as the 12th/16th Hunter River Lancers, in which I was a trooper.

The spirit of the Anzac lives on through the memory of the McCarthy brothers and countless other veterans. The spirit is preserved through the community's observance and remembrance at Anzac Day services. The imposition of commercial trading hours detracts from that significance and should be avoided where such trade is not strictly necessary. The importance of preserving the solemnity of the day cannot be understated. Anzac Day holds a special significance in the lives of all Australians. With this legislation, the Minns Government aims to preserve the solemn nature of Anzac Day and the Anzac spirit. The amendments will provide the opportunity for all Australians to take a full day to observe and remember our veterans. Lest we forget. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (19:39):** Today in the New South Wales Parliament a group of Independent and Greens MPs tried to politicise one of our nation's most sacred days. As a veteran who served six years in the Royal Australian Air Force as a signals operator, my strong message to them is: Leave Anzac Day alone. The member for Sydney's amendment to the Government's Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill is nothing more than a political stunt. There is no evidence to suggest switching off poker machines for one afternoon would have any positive impact in addressing problem gambling, and the member for Sydney needs to come forward with what he is basing his position on.

The Liberals and The Nationals remain committed to bold action, like transitioning to a cashless gaming system. I am calling on the Minns Labor Government to roll out broader reform as a matter of urgency. The Labor Government promised it would report back on the cashless gaming trial in November, but its slow approach has meant that the trial has only been rolled out at three of the promised 27 venues. The clock is ticking. With that deadline just three months away, there is growing frustration and angst around when we will see real action. Our veterans do not deserve to be used as a political football. The Greens and Independent members, in particular the member for Sydney, should be ashamed of their political stunt. They should be directing their frustrations at the Government, not the Anzacs and the veterans. Leave Anzac Day alone.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:42):** I support the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. Anzac Day is a solemn day. In a country that is in many ways very secular, it is almost the only spiritual day we have left. We speak of the Anzac Day spirit, so I think it is quite appropriate that we honour that fully through the ceasing of trading that has been proposed in the bill. It is great that there is renewed interest in Anzac Day. There were record crowds in Wagga Wagga this year. It is great that there are families who are now joining the tradition and veterans who are passing it on to their kids and grandkids. It has become quite a gathering. We saw that during the pandemic, when we could not have Anzac Day. Who will ever forget those images of people lighting their candles on their driveways together to commemorate that day?

Of course the day is one thing. I note that we have an obligation not just to commemorate and remember but also to support our veterans and to ensure that we respect and care for them. I note the recent findings of the royal commission into veteran suicides, but I also note the efforts being made by RSL LifeCare, with whom I met today. It has established a number of health and wellbeing hubs in our region, including one in Wagga that is doing a lot to help veterans, particularly contemporary veterans, navigate the system and get the help they need. I also take my hat off to Pro Patria, an organisation that has been established in Wagga to provide clinical services to veterans—again, particularly contemporary veterans—who often, sadly, feel left out of the system and as though they come back without having the respect and the access to services that they need. I fully support the bill. I think it is a great effort that the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association particularly have made. I take my hat off to Bernie Smith at the shoppies. It is great work by them and by the Government for bringing the bill to the House.

I foreshadow that I will be moving an amendment to clarify a situation that has been brought to my attention: Under the Retail Trading Act there are some exemptions in place for shops that operate in tourist and holiday locations. Every few years, Anzac Day falls within the Easter holiday period. So there is some confusion as to whether those shops will be bound by the current amendment or not. My amendment will make it clear that they will be required to shut. When you look at that previous legislation, there might be some doubt. I also foreshadow that I will support the member for Sydney's amendment. I will speak more on that at the time. There have been a number of comments made about it by other members, including the member for Tamworth and the member for Oxley.

I do not think that is about the quantitative reduction in gambling harm that will occur on that half a day; it is an important symbolic recognition that we do accept that gambling is harmful. If we are going to stop people shopping on the day, it does not seem to be inappropriate, as a mark of respect, to ensure that people will not be gambling on that day. I realise that the Opposition and the Government do not agree with that. People have visions of veterans gathered around poker machines to share war stories. People play poker machines in solitary misery,

losing money. That is what happens. Play two-up, by all means. Celebrate the day. But we need not accept that poker machines should continue to operate when we are asking businesses to shut as a mark of respect. This is not a stunt; it is an important step in ensuring that we respect Anzac Day fully. I congratulate the Government, the Minister and the union movement for their work, and I support the bill.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (19:46):** I support the Government's proposed Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024, and I thank the Minister, who is in the Chamber, for bringing the bill to the house. I also thank the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association—the very first union that I ever joined, as a trolley boy at Woolworths—and its New South Wales secretary, Bernie Smith, for the campaign to amend the retail trading hours. Anzac Day is one of the most solemn days in the Australian calendar. I will not go into the history of Australia's involvement in the wars, but I acknowledge the over 103,000 service personnel who have died in the conflicts that Australia has been involved in.

We have seen the pursuit of the almighty dollar impact on many core beliefs and traditions of this nation. A few years ago, there was outrage when the major supermarkets started selling hot cross buns soon after Boxing Day but, over time, people have given over to the dollar. Now the commercialisation of Christmas and Easter has become commonplace, and that is slowly creeping into other religious days. Premier Chris Minns has drawn a line in the sand with Anzac Day. The Premier summed it up well when he said:

Every year, as the dawn breaks through in the east, we pause as a nation to honour the Australians who have given their life for our safety and our freedom. Whoever we are, wherever we live, whatever our faith or background, we all unite behind a simple promise: 'We will remember them'.

Those were great words from our leader, Premier Minns. To truly reflect on our service personnel, the Government, with the support of the Parliament, will extend retail trading restrictions on Anzac Day to midnight. Some people may say that they have been inconvenienced because they cannot shop at a major supermarket or they may lose a few hours of work and pay, but what is the price of the freedom we enjoy today? It would be great to have time to reflect by watching documentaries about past wars or talking to some of our veterans. Education is needed to stop the horrors of war from continuing. The prayers and speeches that are given on Anzac Day reflect on the horrors and sacrifices of war and the fact that we should not allow war to happen again.

Sadly, the world has failed to keep peace this century. There is war and destitution across the world, including in the Middle East and Ukraine. Approximately 35 countries are experiencing terrorist insurgencies, civil wars, drug wars and border disputes. Today, more than ever, we need a day for reflection—a day to commemorate those who have served. Many Australians paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we can live in peace and freedom. We must have uncomfortable conversations about the alternatives to war and how to give peace a chance. Some people will feel that their civil liberties have been infringed by these restrictions, even though they can still go to restaurants, pubs and clubs, and even though they can still go to smaller shops or fill up at the petrol station.

It is time to encourage everyone to attend a dawn or daytime service so they can reflect on wars and what they mean. Parents of young or teenage children should stop for a moment and ask how they would feel about sending their children to war if conscription were to return. Anzac Day should be a day to have difficult conversations about whether we as individuals can do something to reduce world conflict. Are governments around the world doing everything they can to avert war? On 31 December 1915 *Psalm 96* was read out during the Intercession Day service. It read:

Have mercy, Lord, make wars to cease;  
Give unto us in nearing days  
Thy blessing in a world of peace,  
So shall the whole earth sound Thy praise.

Anzac Day is not a day to celebrate war; it is the complete opposite. Anzac Day is a day to thank those who fought or died to deliver a better world and to share the importance of peace. Premier Minns said:

Remembering the fallen means stopping what we're doing, putting aside our daily concerns, so we can properly reflect on the Australians who've gone before us.

That echoes the sentiments of the Anzac commemorative service held on 25 April 1916 at Westminster Abbey in London, the first anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, where people gathered to praise and thank those who died in Gallipoli for their king and empire. After calling out the units that were involved in the battle, the dean of the abbey said:

All these fought valiantly. Their deeds will be remembered evermore. In future ages the sons of our Empire ... we resolve that, by God's gracious favour, our brothers shall not have laid down their lives in vain.

Those words, which were spoken 108 years ago, still have meaning, as is reflected by the large attendances at remembrance services across Australia. I thank the Blacktown RSL Sub-Branch for encouraging people to listen

to solemn speeches and commemorate the dead. Thanks to the hard work of John O'Brien and Bradley Lawless, the team deliver a solemn commemorative ceremony and reflection followed by a traditional breakfast—and there is always camaraderie. I thank all the veteran organisations for their efforts to support our veterans. This law will allow a greater number of people to attend services and ceremonies without feeling the worrying need to rush back to work. Commemoration of our service people is needed. Difficult conversations about how to prevent future wars are needed. These amendments to Anzac Day trading are needed. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (19:54):** I speak in support of the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. Anzac Day is truly one of our national days. Of all the holidays that we have such as Christmas, Easter or bank holidays, there are certain moments in our national identity that are exclusive. While Christmas and Easter are founded on Judeo-Christian traditions and beliefs—and bank holidays are based on other matters—Anzac Day is one public holiday that, when taken in our national context, is something that everyone can be proud to be a part of. It symbolises and commemorates a foundation stone of who we are as a nation. Anzac Day is so important because everyone—irrespective of their race, gender, religion, sexuality or other immutable characteristics—can partake in and be a part of it.

While this bill does not make Anzac Day activities available to every individual in our community because other essential workers need to contribute to the running of society, it will allow an additional class of people to remember what is great about our nation and to remember those 8,000 troops who sacrificed their lives so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we have today. It is important that we take a moment to remember them each year. In my community, I am honoured to have five RSL sub-branches. These include Club Palm Beach, headed by Mark Ferguson; Avalon Beach RSL Club, headed by Richard Menhinick; Pittwater RSL Club, headed by Deb Carter-Hendy; Narrabeen RSL Club, headed by Garry Maurer; and the War Vets Village Narrabeen, headed by Roy Parkinson.

There is a slew of Anzac Day services in my community each year: pre-Anzac Day services, the Anzac Day services and then the post-Anzac Day services. From year to year, people can attend anywhere from six to 10 wonderful commemorations. To take a moment as a Parliament to allow people to engage and participate in these services is a fundamentally decent thing to do. This debate should really be non-political. A foundation stone of this nation should be above politics. It has been disappointing that other members have used this moment to prosecute arguments relating to other important issues and discussions that the House needs to have. I remind members that our Anzac warriors and service men and women should never be used as a political weapon. It is disappointing and regretful to think that, later this evening, this debate may descend to that.

I commend those who have partaken in this debate in the spirit in which it was brought, which is that we might allow more in our community to participate and engage. I do not know if members of the other place get invited to Anzac Day services, because they do not have constituencies, but I probably speak for most members of this House when I say that it is an honour and privilege to attend Anzac Day services and lay a wreath. It is an honour that we can continue that tradition, and it is so important that we do because it has been many years since we have seen the conflicts that forged the nation we have become.

My concern is that, if we do not take the time to remember Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and other occasions, the youth of today may not understand the significance of those occasions. If that becomes the case, they will not understand the fabric of who we are as a nation. It is important that we help them to remember through our education system and our sub-branches not only on Anzac Day but also on other days. Our sub-branches do great work with schools and other community groups. I commend the bill to the House and look forward to it becoming law in this State.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:59):** In reply: I thank members for their excellent contributions to debate on the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the member for Hawkesbury, and shadow Minister for Veterans, for her contribution to her local veteran community and also for the Opposition's support of the bill. She said that something meaningful about Anzac Day events is the reconnection and reminiscing that happens. There is a connection with our war veterans.

I acknowledge my good friend, an excellent servant of the people of Wyong, the member for Wyong, and Minister for Veterans, who alongside the Premier made this important announcement and played a crucial part in ensuring that we are here today. I thank him and his staff. I know that he is a strong advocate for our veterans. I acknowledge his important work. I acknowledge the support of the member for Sydney for the bill. He has foreshadowed an amendment. I also acknowledge what he said about the important contribution of our LGBTQ veterans to our freedom and democracy. He also talked about the importance of observing this national day. I will have more to say about the member for Sydney's amendment during the Committee stage.

I acknowledge the member for Granville's dad's service to the Royal Australian Air Force in World War II. She talked about the Vietnam vets and the non-recognition and criticism they got when they returned. That is something for which we are deeply sorry. I know that governments have tried hard to acknowledge the contribution of our Vietnam vets. I acknowledge the member for Newtown, who talked about the recognition of this important day. She talked about the meaning of war and its deep and lasting negative impact on the community. She also talked about her support for the member for Sydney's amendment. I thank the member for her contribution to that effect.

I thank our new member for Parramatta, who as the former Lord Mayor of Parramatta has attended many of Anzac Day events. She represents a large multicultural community and has worked with her community in organising important commemorations leading up to Anzac Day. We heard about the member's experience on the Kokoda Track and how she has worked together with local Korean, Turkish and Afghan communities. She also acknowledged the life-changing work of Legacy.

I thank the member for Badgerys Creek for her contribution. She spoke about the challenges faced by veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and said that war should not be glorified but that we have a responsibility to honour those who have made sacrifices for us. She shared a lovely story with us. Many of us have similar stories of sharing a yarn with a veteran on Anzac Day. It is a day when veterans from all backgrounds and races come together to talk about their service and about life. Some of the things they say might not be politically correct, but it is an important part of our Australian history and tradition.

The hardworking member for Mount Druitt spoke about how his local multicultural community commemorates Anzac Day. He is a strong advocate for veterans and making sure that they have adequate housing and mental health support. He acknowledged the Rooty Hill RSL Sub-Branch, which has hosted over 5,000 people at its commemorative events. I acknowledge the member for Oxley and thank him for his service to Australia in Timor and Iraq. He has a strong view on the amendment foreshadowed by the member for Sydney. He spoke passionately about our fallen soldiers who fought for democracy and for all of us—including the member for Sydney. He also spoke about his local community.

I thank the member for Prospect, who spoke about his service in the Army Reserve and the service of others in his electorate, including the fallen soldiers from Smithfield and those who have recently returned from deployment. He spoke about the difficulties and challenges faced by our veterans, what help is available to them and what further important services we must advocate for. I thank the member for Tamworth for his contribution. He also has a strong view on the amendment of the member for Sydney. I also thank the member for Wagga Wagga, who spoke about the importance of Anzac Day and its revival since the COVID pandemic. He recounted the year of the lockdown, when people were unable to leave their homes, so they stood outside their front doors holding lit candles to commemorate Anzac Day. He spoke about the large public gatherings that have taken place on Anzac Day over the past few years since then. He also spoke about the RSL LifeCare hub that has been established to help veterans. The member acknowledged the service of our more recent veterans. He is working hard to advocate for their access to services, particularly in regional communities. He acknowledged SDA New South Wales for its very important work.

I acknowledge the contribution of the hardworking member for Blacktown. As a former mayor of Blacktown, he has worked with local RSL sub-branches and communities in Western Sydney to ensure veterans have access to appropriate services. The member for Blacktown is a historian. He loves history. He spoke to us about the Gallipoli campaign and shared a prayer. I thank the new member for Pittwater, whose comments were very noble for a young person. He talked about the exclusivity of Anzac Day as opposed to the other days. He gave a very well-crafted contribution to debate. I acknowledge his comments about retail workers participating in Anzac Day events and the RSL sub-branches that he has relationships with.

During my second reading speech I noted that Anzac Day is important for all Australians. We come together as a nation to pay our respects and remember the sacrifices made by the many people who have protected our great nation. If not for the sacrifices of those brave men and women, our nation would be very different today. The bill demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to ensuring that the Anzac tradition is preserved and that we never forget those who served to protect us. I thank the Fair Trading customer service staff who supported the development of this bill, including through consultation with key organisations, groups and stakeholders.

I thank the wonderful public servants Warren McAllister, Nicole Lewis, Jenna Dries and Kevin Cen for their work and commitment to ensure that Anzac Day remains a day of reflection and appreciation for those who serve us so bravely. They are in the public gallery this evening. I also thank industry stakeholders and local community representatives. I made a long list of acknowledgements in my second reading speech. I thank all members of the public who engaged with the department to advocate for Anzac Day. It is very much appreciated.



I thank my amazing chief of staff, Ayshe Lewis, and Minister Harris's chief of staff, Andy Meehan, for their solid, hard work on this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Alex Greenwich and Dr Joe McGirr.**

### Consideration in Detail

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

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (20:13):** I move my amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-129C:

No. 1 **Restrictions on certain gaming on Anzac Day**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 5—

#### [2A] Section 6AA

Insert after section 6—

#### 6AA Gaming venue taken to be shop for the purposes of restricted trading on Anzac Day

- (1) A gaming venue is taken to be a shop for the purposes of section 4(1)(c).
- (2) For subsection (1), sections 5, 6 and 22B (the *relevant provisions*) apply in relation to a gaming venue as if—
  - (a) a reference in the relevant provisions to a shop included a reference to a gaming venue, and
  - (b) a reference in the relevant provisions to a shop being kept closed at all times on Anzac Day were a reference to a gaming venue being kept closed from 3am on Anzac Day until the end of the day, and
  - (c) a reference in the relevant provisions to an occupier of a shop were a reference to the licensee of the gaming venue or the premises in which the gaming venue is located, and
  - (d) a reference in section 5 to a requirement to keep a shop closed on a restricted trading day in accordance with section 4 were a reference to a requirement to keep a gaming venue closed on Anzac Day in accordance with this section.
- (3) This section applies despite the *Gaming Machines Act 2001*, the *Liquor Act 2007* or another Act.
- (4) To avoid doubt, nothing in this section prevents the playing of two-up in a club or hotel at any time on Anzac Day.
- (5) In this section—

*club* has the same meaning as in the *Gaming Machines Act 2001*.

*gaming machine* has the same meaning as in the *Gaming Machines Act 2001*.

*gaming venue* means the following—

- (a) any part of a casino, within the meaning of the *Casino Control Act 1992*, in which gaming is conducted or gaming machines are operated,
- (b) any part of a hotel in which approved gaming machines are operated,
- (c) a gaming machine area, within the meaning of the *Gaming Machines Act 2001*, of a club.

*hotel* has the same meaning as in the *Gaming Machines Act 2001*.

*licensee*, in relation to a gaming venue, means the licensee of the gaming venue under the *Liquor Act 2007*. My amendment builds on the reforms in the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024 to strengthen the way New South Wales honours Anzac Day. There has been a great deal of media coverage and discussion about this amendment. That is because the community is confused. Parliament is extending the restrictions on Anzac Day trading to a number of businesses to pay respect to Anzacs, something I fully support. But people are confused because we are keeping one of the most harmful businesses in our State operating on that day in venues where people gather, including gaming rooms. Poker machines take \$8 billion from New South Wales families every year. Some have characterised the amendment as in some way radical or tokenistic. Western Australia does not allow electronic gaming in its casino on Anzac Day. Queensland, during its cessation of business on Anzac Day, also does not allow poker machines. New South Wales is by no means leading when it comes to this issue.

The amendment will ensure that gambling is treated as a non-essential service for the purposes of restricted trading on Anzac Day, with gaming closed when shops are closed. The electronic gaming machine rooms in clubs,

pubs and all casinos will close at 3.00 a.m. on Anzac Day and stay closed for the rest of the day. Veterans, returned service personnel, their friends and families, and the wider community will continue to be able to eat and socialise at clubs, gather at pubs and play two-up, as they have for decades. Other gaming and gambling activities have no connection to Anzac Day commemorations and should not be treated as essential services.

Problem gambling is common in the community and causes significant distress, including for returned service personnel, who suffer from comorbid conditions that compound symptoms. Veterans with gambling problems feel worse than other veterans. Australian active military personnel and recently transitioned veterans report higher rates of gambling than any other service personnel, likely because of the widespread access to electronic gaming machines in this State. New South Wales has the most electronic gaming machines in the world, outside Nevada, with around 90,000 spread out across the State. As I said, \$8 billion is lost in poker machines every year. Surely we can give it a rest on Anzac Day.

Anzac Day should be a safe day when our veterans feel supported and honoured rather than lured into a destructive habit. That is especially important given the proliferation of gaming machines in RSL clubs, where many diggers rightfully attend for Anzac Day. Today my office has been inundated by service men and women supportive of my amendment and concerned about approach of the Government and the Opposition. James Brown, former President of RSL NSW and Chair of Invictus Australia raised concerns directly with me about veterans suffering from gambling problems. He supports the amendment, saying, "I agree that if we are shutting down shops on Anzac Day, we can shut down poker machines as well. I've seen too many veterans turn up on the RSL's doorstep needing help after gambling addictions have ruined their lives."

Just as we do not want the community spending Anzac Day shopping, we do not want them spending it sitting at a poker machine, losing their savings. We want people to take the time to reflect on service, sacrifice and the impacts of war. We want those who have lost their lives to service to be remembered. I agree with the Government and other members across the political spectrum that Anzac Day is special and should be cherished and quarantined. The amendment strengthens the goals of the bill to improve the way this State respects Anzac Day and the veterans whom the day honours. Importantly, we are saying to people, "You can't shop. Coles is closed. But you can spend your week's grocery money in a poker machine on Anzac Day." To me, that sounds wrong; to many members of the public, it sounds wrong. I commend the amendment to the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (20:17):** The Government does not agree with the amendment proposed by the member for Sydney. As much as I value the member for Sydney's express concern about the impact of gambling addiction, particularly for those whose addiction to poker machines is a significant issue in the community, this is neither the right vehicle nor the right time. With great respect to the member for Sydney, it smacks of virtue signalling. As a public defender over the years, I appeared for many people charged with serious dishonesty offences who suffered from gambling addiction. In hundreds of those cases, I tendered psychologists' and psychiatrists' reports in relation to gambling addiction. On no such occasion did the presiding judge provide any mitigation recognising that gambling addiction was a substantial problem. It was dealt with as a straight-out act of dishonesty.

No-one is more pleased than I am that the community is now concerned about gambling addiction and its impact upon the community. However, without being disrespectful to the member for Sydney, when I say that it is virtue signalling, when the Roosters play the Dragons in the afternoon of Anzac Day I do not hear that the member proposes abolishing betting on that football game, which a person can do electronically. Why does he single out poker machines, which might be used by veterans after their march and their almost compulsory use of rum? Does the member for Sydney propose a law to block off access to the poker machine section of the club if those veterans want to put some money into a poker machine when they visit their RSL club after the march?

I do not understand why an issue like this has received so much notoriety. Has it really got to do with Anzac Day? Is it really because we are going to respect our veterans and their service to the freedoms that we enjoy today? All members value the contribution of those veterans to the very freedoms that they fought for and their comrades died for. Do we want to take away their freedom to utilise a gaming device—only a poker machine device—that they might want to use on their day? If this is an issue that has so troubled the member for Sydney and those others who support his movement today, there has been ample time over the number of years he has served in this House to propose something for Anzac Day. Why is this matter now tacked on to a bill where the Government wants to make a first, significant step to honour and value those who have served our nation in this particular area?

The Government does not support what the member for Sydney is proposing. It is neither the right bill nor the right time. I am grateful that the Government has proceeded with this bill in the first place. I express my appreciation to Bernie Smith and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association for pursuing this issue with the Government. But this is neither an appropriate amendment nor the appropriate time. This bill is not the appropriate vehicle to achieve the objective of the member for Sydney, one that many share in the medium to long

term. There are significant gambling addiction problems. Gambling is infecting professional sport and the lives of people around the world. But I simply say that I believe this, as an issue, is nothing more than a stunt.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (20:22):** I support the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill 2024, which seeks to amend the Retail Trading Act 2008, and the thoughtful amendment of the member for Sydney. In her second reading speech the Minister for Industrial Relations noted that the Government's bill seeks to address "the creeping commercialisation of Anzac Day" since the Act commenced. The Minister said that reinstating Anzac Day "as an all-day restricted trading day" would ensure that it "remains a solemn day, reserved for observance and reflection". Although the bill would require non-exempt shops and banks to remain closed the whole day, the Minister noted the Act would retain all its existing exemptions to ensure that communities can still access essential services on the day.

Put simply, I do not believe gaming venues are essential services. Those venues can certainly afford for gaming rooms to be closed on Anzac Day. We know from publicly available information that the New South Wales clubs with the most poker machines are making supernormal profits. I support the amendment of the member for Sydney for one day of grace to honour our veterans and their families with a ceasefire on these one-armed bandits. This is not a stunt; this is an opportunity. I accept what the Leader of the House said in that this is being brought up because the Government brought the bill forward. This is an opportunity for us to say, "This is the bill," and to take action and show some leadership on it. I support my RSL clubs, but I see this as an opportunity for them as well. If now is not the right time, then when is?

There have been many times when this bill could have been brought forward, but there was an opportunity presented. So it is not a stunt; it is an opportunity. The Government has consulted with the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association [SDA], but has it consulted with the sub-branches at any length? I have consulted with some of mine, and they are happy with the amendment. I urge the Government to pause and take on board what is being requested. The Government should ask the sub-branches, as it has asked the SDA, and do the right thing. If the overwhelming response from the sub-branches is no, and they are happy to have the poker machines, that is fine. I would still probably vote against the bill, but at least we would have asked them and heard from them.

I think the Government would get a different reaction if it consulted the sub-branches and not just with the SDA, because Anzac Day is about reflecting on and showing reverence for our highest ideals and values. I do not see playing the pokies as compatible with our Anzac spirit and what we seek to evoke on this important day in our community. Having spoken to family members and friends who are in the services, they agree with me. I ask the Government to pause and consult the sub-branches, and then reintroduce this legislation.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (20:25):** As the Leader of the House indicated, the Government does not support the amendment moved by the member for Sydney. The explanation has been ventilated very articulately by the Leader of the House. I have enormous respect for the member for Sydney, but I put on the record that the Government opened up consultation last year. With all due respect, if this was a huge issue for the member for Sydney, he could have spoken to me or put forward a submission on behalf of the people he represents. I heard the arguments advanced by the member for Sydney, but they were not about the bill. This bill is about retail trading on Anzac Day. The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association has been campaigning on this issue for a very long time.

We all agree that the measures in the bill are very important. I do not hear anyone opposing this bill. A lot of work has gone into this bill and there has been extensive consultation. I could say there has been over-consultation on this bill. As the Minister with carriage of this legislation, I must say this is the first time I have heard of this amendment or this issue specifically in relation to the Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Bill. The Leader of the House eloquently stated the Government's position, but I mention a couple of things from a local member's perspective. I have in my electorate some of the largest clubs—Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL Club, the Canterbury League Club and the Campsie RSL—which work really hard in the lead-up to Anzac Day commemorative services, whether they organise commemorative services beforehand, during or after. I note the comments of the member for Pittwater.

More importantly, the clubs put a great deal of work into engaging with local organisations and our local schools. The whole Anzac Day dawn service at the Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL is run by our local primary school and high school students. The local clubs and our sub-branches do such an important job. They provide the big breakfasts on the day. There is a lot of camaraderie and so much spirit. I hear what the member for Sydney said with respect to gaming, but I put on the record the Government's gaming reform agenda. As the Leader of the House said, there is a time and a place. The Government is listening, working really hard and doing things in a considered and methodical way. A huge process is being undertaken with respect to the gaming reform agenda.

The Government has a broad gambling reform agenda to address gambling harm. Members of the Government are all on the same page with respect to the harm that gambling does to people.

Since being elected, the Minns Labor Government has established an independent panel of experts to advise it on gaming reform and oversee a cashless gaming trial in our State. The Independent Panel on Gaming Reform, which includes experts and representatives of harm minimisation groups such as Wesley Mission, is due to deliver its road map for further gambling reform to the Government in November. That report may recommend changes to the Gaming Machines Act 2001 to help address gambling harm. The work of the independent panel builds on a suite of reforms, including banning all external gambling signage in venues, forbidding political donations from clubs with electronic gaming machines and strengthening harm minimisation requirements at venues with gambling machines, such as introducing responsible gambling officers for venues with more than 20 machines. The Government has also committed \$100 million to harm minimisation, investing in research, treatment, services and reform.

The Government will be guided by the experts on the most appropriate mechanism for legislative change, rather than misuse the Retail Trading Act to achieve it, which may have severe unintended consequences. That is not the Act to amend. We should not amend that Act to try to push an agenda. We are going through a process to achieve gambling reform. I again acknowledge the very measured and good work of Minister Harris on that important reform. I know that some harsh words have been said to the member for Sydney by some members opposite. I give people the benefit of the doubt and take them at face value. I really hope that the member for Sydney is not utilising the bill to, as the Leader of the House said, virtue signal and undermine the entire noble purpose of the bill. As indicated, the Government does not support the amendment.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (20:32):** I thank members for their contributions to debate on the amendment and for the well-reasoned and detailed explanation by the Minister of the Government's opposition to it. I thank the Leader of the House, and I thank the member for Wakehurst for his support. To the Minister's point, I assure the House that I do not propose the amendment as a form of virtue signalling or as a stunt. Unattributed quotes from Opposition members in *The Daily Telegraph* called it a laughable amendment.

My electorate has some of the largest Anzac Day celebrations, celebrations of Anzac spirit and commemorations of Anzac Day, including the Martin Place dawn service. My electorate probably has more poker machines than any electorate in the State. We feel the effects of gambling very hard. I have friends, family members and staff who have served this country and others. I have friends, family members and constituents who have suffered the horrors of gambling harm. With goodwill I bring the amendment to the Parliament of a State that loses \$8 billion a year to poker machines. I propose it as an amendment to a bill that restricts retail trading on Anzac Day because we are saying that, instead of shopping or engaging in other activities on that day, we should be focusing our energy on commemorating Anzacs.

I am bewildered how the Government and the Opposition can justify that poker machines are an essential service that must be able to continue. At least the Government has provided reasons; we have not heard any from the Opposition. As members know, I will continue to work across the Parliament, with the Government and the Opposition. The Independents have a really strong working relationship with Minister Harris when it comes to gambling reform, and indeed with all Ministers in this place. Action on gambling harm can be taken seriously at the same time as the Anzac spirit is honoured. That is my intention in bringing the amendment. I fully accept that I will not succeed in the vote. However, I hope, at the very least, we have been able to bring attention to the range of issues that I outlined in my speech and throughout the day. I commend the amendment to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that amendment No. 1 of the member for Sydney on sheet c2024-129C be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being only five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 5**

Mr A. Greenwich  
Ms J. Leong  
Mr J. McGirr  
Ms K. Shetty  
Mr M. Regan

**Amendment negatived.**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:39):** I move my amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-133A:

No. 1 Exemptions under Shops and Industries Act 1962

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 7—

**[4] Schedule 2 Savings, transitional and other provisions**

Insert at the end of Schedule 2—

**Part 6 Provision consequent on Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Act 2024****12 Exemptions under Shops and Industries Act 1962**

- (1) This clause applies to a shop to which this schedule, clause 2 applies.
- (2) Despite clause 2—
  - (a) the amendments made by the *Retail Trading Amendment (Anzac Day Trading Hours) Act 2024* apply in relation to the shop, and
  - (b) the shop is not exempted from the requirement to be kept closed on Anzac Day.

This is a small amendment to remove any doubt in relation to "Schedule 2 Savings, transitional and other provisions" of the Retail Trading Act. It has been brought to my attention by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association that there is the potential for confusion when Anzac Day falls within the holiday period after Easter, and that happens every five to seven years. In those circumstances there may be shops that would ordinarily be required to close as a result of the current amendment but whose keepers might, because of those previous exemptions, argue that they do not have to be closed. The amendment is to remove any doubt in relation to that, so that those establishments will be required to close, even if Anzac Day falls within that holiday period.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (20:41):** I thank the hardworking member for Wagga Wagga for the important amendment. The Government wholeheartedly supports it and acknowledges the member's contribution to his local community. Currently, regional holiday destinations in 41 local government areas outside of Sydney have ongoing exemptions from retail trading restrictions at Easter—so Good Friday and Easter Sunday—and/or the Christmas Day public holiday. This provides a boost, of course, to local economies at peak holiday periods. Boxing Day is still a restricted day, but staff may elect to work. It is an issue that the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association has been advocating for since the former Government made changes to Boxing Day trading, but we will leave that for another day.

The amendment applies to 31 of the local government areas. Due to the dates for Easter changing each year, once every few years Anzac Day is caught under this exemption. The advice from our wonderful public servants is that this will happen three times between 2025 and 2040. For example, the local exemptions in Coffs Harbour extend to a week after Easter Sunday; in 2025 Anzac Day will fall within this period. The amendment will ensure that the full-day trading restriction will still apply on Anzac Day, as intended.

The amendment put forward by the member for Wagga Wagga will ensure that Anzac Day trading restrictions will operate as intended and that regional communities are provided with the same opportunities as those in metropolitan Sydney to pay their respects. For clarification, the amendment will not apply to regional small businesses, such as shops across from the beach and in walking areas. A number of the local government areas have various shows, festivals and events. For example, the Leeton SunRice Festival and other events will not be affected. For this reason the Government supports the amendment.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that amendment No. 1 of the member for Wagga Wagga on sheet c2024-133A be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

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

**Third Reading**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Community Recognition Statements***IVAN JOHNSON, OAM**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (20:45):** I recognise Ivan Johnson, OAM, for his remarkable 70 years at Mollmook Surf Life Saving Club. Ivan joined the club in the early 1950s. Under his leadership, the Mollmook Surf Life Saving Club has become an essential part of the coastal community. With over 220 members, it stands as one of the strongest surf clubs in New South Wales. Ivan has been a dedicated patroller and patrol captain,

serving as club president during the 1970s and 1980s. Ivan also produced the club's magazine, *The Mollymook Mag*, for 37 seasons, ensuring that members stayed informed and motivated. In recognition of Ivan's tireless efforts and exceptional service in surf lifesaving, he has received many notable accolades, including the Centenary Medal, the Surf Life Saving Presidents Medal and the Medal of the Order of Australia. Ivan's legacy will endure at Mollymook for years to come with a surfboat named in his honour. Ivan embodies a life devoted to surfing, community and the ocean's allure. I commend Ivan for his tireless dedication to both the Mollymook Surf Life Saving Club and the surf lifesaving movement.

#### **PORT MACQUARIE AND DISTRICTS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:46):** I congratulate the Port Macquarie and Districts Family History Society, which has again been recognised and awarded for its impressive journal, *Footsteps*. *Footsteps* is a quarterly publication that provides a platform to publish articles about the research of the society's families. There is often a theme to encourage creativity, or simply a call to submit entertaining snippets, interesting research or just what a person has discovered about their family tree. Such is the quality of the organisation that multiple awards have been won over the years for both its website and its journal. In 2014 and 2017 the society celebrated success, winning the Dorothy Fellowes Website Award. Consistently maintaining an award-winning standard, *Footsteps* won the Nick Vine Hall Category A award in 2011 and 2014 and was awarded second place in 2020 and 2023-24. It is an annual award for the best quality family history journal or newsletter in Australia or New Zealand. Nick Vine Hall, AM, was a highly respected researcher, author and ABC guest speaker who made a significant contribution to the field of family history and genealogy.

#### **JOHN MCCLOGHRY**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:47):** I acknowledge the wonderful achievement of John McCloghry, an SES Shellharbour unit volunteer, in receiving the Commissioner's Commendation for Courage and the National Emergency Medal on Wednesday 19 June 2024. On New Year's Eve 2019 the Fishermans Paradise and Conjola bushfire took many lives and livelihoods. John McCloghry has been honoured for his bravery in saving scores of people during the fires. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I congratulate John on his amazing act of bravery and thank him for his service to the SES and community.

#### **BATHURST COUNTRY MUSIC CLUB**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (20:48):** I acknowledge the Bathurst Country Music Club, which celebrated 40 years last weekend. The Bathurst Country Music Club was founded in 1984 by a passionate group of locals, under Cliff Berry, Betty Berry and Don Nash, so that community members could come together to enjoy country music. It is still going strong 40 years later and holds a monthly muster where a variety of musicians play in an open mic setting and music enthusiasts listen, sing along and dance the night away. It has proven to be a great success, with bumper crowds returning monthly to the RSL club. The club's musters are not only social events that allow locals to come together for a common interest, but they also give local musicians a friendly environment to give performing a go. Having attended a number of events, I can confirm that the audience is very supportive and will dance to any and all musicians. I acknowledge president Barry Fitzpatrick and all of the committee members, who have done a phenomenal job in keeping the event running. They say that country music is about one of three things—a dog, a horse or a broken heart—but Bathurst Country Music Club makes country music about the community, and we are lucky to have a club like it.

#### **VERONA COMMUNITY DAY**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:49):** In June Verona School hosted the annual Verona Community Day, an event celebrating the vibrant spirit and diversity of its students. Verona School is a school for specific purposes, empowering its students to be valuable and productive members of the community through holistic, meaningful learning opportunities. On Verona Community Day, the school welcomed parents, carers, agencies and businesses to participate in stalls and activities run by students, celebrate the presentation of community spirit awards, and formally induct student leadership council members. I commend principal Carla Scott, assistant principal Mohammed Chebib, student support officer Felicity Zahra, the community engagement team and the student leadership council. Their tireless efforts have created a school where every student feels valued and empowered.

#### **NORTHERN BEACHES CHORUS**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (20:50):** Today I congratulate the Northern Beaches Chorus, which recently received a second place medal in Fremantle, Western Australia, for small barbershop chorus performances in Australia. The Northern Beaches Chorus is a local women's singing group that rehearses in Belrose. It is part of the worldwide organisation the Sweet Adelines, which sings four-part barbershop a cappella. These local women, aged 16 to 80, are a great reflection of our community, with diverse cultural backgrounds. To

prepare for the regional competition in Fremantle, in addition to their standard weekly rehearsals, the chorus members participated in additional rehearsals, including a weekend retreat with specialist coaches. Off the back of this competition, they competed against other community choirs of all genres at the Sydney Eisteddfod, placing second again. The Northern Beaches Chorus was one of only five choirs invited to compete in the Sydney Eisteddfod Open Choral Championship, with choirs from across New South Wales. Now the Northern Beaches Chorus members are looking forward to all the upcoming Christmas concerts. The members love to share their joy of singing, and always welcome new members. Well done to the team. I will not be joining them.

#### AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (20:51):** This morning I was delighted to meet with volunteers and officials from Australian Red Cross on its 110th anniversary, with a celebration breakfast in the Parliament of New South Wales. Australian Red Cross boasts a community of over 20,000 members and volunteers, providing humanitarian support and community programs. They act locally and connect globally to deliver what is needed, when it is needed most. In the Prospect electorate, many know the difficulties of migration. For many, Australian Red Cross has been there to help. It provides family and domestic violence assistance, emergency relief for migrants, and migrant and refugee settlement services. It is an organisation that exists to reduce human suffering. I congratulate New South Wales director Kate Miranda, New South Wales divisional advisory board chair Nick Young, and all volunteers and supporters who make Australian Red Cross what it is today on celebrating 110 years.

#### ISABELLE STAPF-GIANNAKIS

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (20:52):** I recognise the nomination of Isabelle Stapf-Giannakis for the Surf Life Saving Sydney Northern Beaches Branch Lifesaver of the Year Award in 2024. Since joining Freshwater Surf Life Saving Club, Isabelle has volunteered with enthusiasm, dedication and commitment, having attained her Bronze Medallion, IRB Crew and first aid awards in 2021, the Freshwater Young Patrol Person of the Year for three years running, and the Freshwater Patrol Person of the Year in 2024. Isabelle's knowledge and understanding of members, her vast experience in the different methods of patrolling, and her ability to impart her knowledge to others all help her to be seen as a future leader of Freshwater Surf Life Saving Club. I congratulate Isabelle on her nomination. Her club is proud of all she has done and will continue to do.

#### SERBIAN FOLKLORIC FESTIVAL

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:53):** Liverpool is home to one of the largest Serbian communities in Australia, and we are deeply proud of that. It was wonderful to join the community for the gala night of the thirty-sixth annual Serbian Folkloric Festival. First celebrated in 1987, the festival was the first of its kind in Australia, providing a platform for Serbian food, culture and dance to take centre stage and be shared with our broader community. I was particularly excited to see Ivana Ilic of *Australian Idol* fame perform. I know that the Serbian community in Australia is deeply proud of her. Of course, it is not a party without dancing. I got to try my hand at traditional Serbian dancing, although I may need a touch more practice. As usual, Bonnyrigg Sports Club in Bonnyrigg Heights played host to the festival. Bonnyrigg Sports Club is the unofficial home of Sydney's Serbian community and has been instrumental in sustaining Serbian culture in our diaspora community. I was so excited to present the club with its cheque for a Community Building Partnership grant to go towards renovations and upgrades of amenities.

#### URALLA ART PROJECTS

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (20:54):** I recognise the achievements of Uralla Shire Council for its initiative to put Uralla on the map as a must-see tourist destination. The council has provided four public spaces for visitors and locals to gather and enjoy, whilst preserving the town's historic architecture and enhancing amenities. These spaces include a series of new sculptures known as the *Constellations of the South*, the *Fibonacci Installation* at Pioneer Park, the transformation of Rotary Park, and the refurbishment of the Uralla Courthouse. I congratulate Uralla mayor, Robert Bell, and his fellow councillors, as well as general manager Toni Averay and council staff for their foresight and implementation of each of those projects. The council also used the recent opening of the courthouse as an opportunity to raise money for a very worthy local facility—the McMaugh Gardens Aged Care Facility. I commend all involved in each of those projects, with special thanks to the artists. The hard work and commitment to improve Uralla has been a team effort and will be enjoyed for many years to come.

#### ST JOHN'S CHURCH CAMDEN

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (20:55):** After the death of John Macarthur in 1834, the first registered land title for the new Camden township was the nominal sale of 2.4 hectares by his sons, James and William, to the Bishop of Australia, Reverend William Broughton, in May 1841, for the erection of a church, a

residence for a clergyman and a burial ground. On 7 July I was happy to attend St John's church to celebrate 175 years of nonstop service to the community and nonstop worship in the area. The Very Reverend Kanishka Raffel, the Archbishop of Sydney, was a guest. I thank the Reverend Matt Stedman for inviting me and helping me to unveil the plaque in the foyer of the incredibly iconic church. It was an absolutely fantastic day and I was very honoured to be there. It was a beautiful day full of Camden tradition. I congratulate St John's church, because 175 years is really something to celebrate.

#### **MEN'S LEADERSHIP FORUM**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:56):** We know that if the scourge of violence by men against women is to end, it is men who must change. With that in mind, I congratulate a coalition of men and women who came together last month to inspire the men of Wagga Wagga and surrounds to tackle this issue in a constructive and inspiring way. In response to community demand, the Wagga Women's Health Centre [WWHC] organised what it believes to be Australia's first men's leadership forum against family and domestic violence, which I was proud to attend. Men responded admirably, with a range of leaders across politics, sport, business, defence and Aboriginal support groups coming to the fore. It was a great way to send a message that men's violence is never okay. I thank the WWHC's Johanna Elms and Vickie Burkinshaw for making it happen. I also congratulate the many men who took a lead, including Wagga Wagga mayor Dallas Tout; Mawang Gaway secretary Bernard Higgins; specialist psychologist Adam Blanch; the member for Riverina, the Hon. Michael McCormack; David Kramer from Small Steps 4 Hannah; and Murrumbidgee Men's Group founder Rhys Cummins. By leading together, we are taking small steps towards major changes. I thank them all.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I ask members to keep their community recognition statements to within one minute.

#### **AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:57):** I wish a happy 110th birthday to the Australian Red Cross. What a milestone for everyone involved! Many symbols represent Australia and our strong values. The Red Cross is humbly one of them. Today we cannot overlook the importance of this symbol and the hard and tireless work of the people behind the Red Cross. As a nation, we are very blessed to see the Red Cross symbol as a heroic sign instead of a sign for salvation. Exactly 110 years ago the remarkable Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, the wife of the Governor-General, formed the first Australian Red Cross branch just nine days after the First World War. Today the Australian Red Cross continues to be the global beacon that offers support to people in dire need. Locally, the Gosford Red Cross branch does so much for our community, such as promoting the importance of donating blood and engaging with our community members who knit adorable teddy bears for sick children in hospital. That is just gorgeous. As a member of Parliament, I am sincerely thankful for the Australian Red Cross and everyone involved in this fabulous organisation.

#### **KIRRAWEE VETERINARY HOSPITAL**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (20:58):** I congratulate the incredible team at Kirrawee Veterinary Hospital on winning the Outstanding Pet Care category at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Founded in 1976 by Dr Bill Ilkin and his wife, Margueritte, today the hospital is overseen by their son, Simon, and has developed a reputation for providing the highest standard of veterinary medicine. In fact, it is now the team at Kirrawee Veterinary Hospital that I trust with the care of my "pawfect" cavoodle, Simba, and he has never been happier. I acknowledge the team behind Kirrawee Veterinary Hospital. I recognise Simon Ilkin, Seta Krikorian, Mary Hong, Catherine Coyle, Catherine Moss, Rachel Booth, Henry Truong, Chanel Ilkin, Natasha Compton, Hayley Minati, Caitlyn Hackfath, Samantha Harris, Sheridan Ka, Jennifer Lane, Jessica Chamberlin, Katrina Morel, Joanne May, Lisa Papworth, Joanna Goldman and Margaret Cohn-Urbach for their efforts in caring for our furry friends. I again congratulate the team at Kirrawee Veterinary Hospital on their success at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards and extend my best wishes for the future.

#### **CAMPBELLTOWN SPORT CLUB VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (20:59):** As we come to the close of the winter sport period, I acknowledge all of the volunteers in Campbelltown who have contributed so much, whether it be with the Campbelltown Thunder Netball Club, the Campbelltown Cobras Soccer Club or the mighty East Campbelltown rugby league club. I acknowledge all of those hardworking volunteers, particularly the mums and dads who give up their weekends to take their kids to play sport. I used to do it, but my children are a bit older now. What the volunteers do is so sensational. It is important that we do everything we can to invest in our junior sports. I again thank everyone involved.



### **YAMBA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (21:00):** Tonight I acknowledge the remarkable volunteers of the surf lifesaving clubs in my electorate of Clarence. Before too much longer we will be back on our beaches, and we can rest assured that those volunteers will be doing their best to keep us safe. One of those iconic clubs is the Yamba Surf Life Saving Club, which was founded in 1908, making it one of the world's oldest surf lifesaving clubs. Last weekend it held its annual general meeting. I acknowledge and congratulate Joe Dougherty, Alan Lawrence, Jane Lawrence and Ray Wiblen on 25 years service; Jimmy Baird, Ray Killen and Peter Sweetman on 40 years service; Terry Sahlqvist and Geoff Sanders on 60 years service; and, most remarkably, Bill Dougherty and Jim Saunders on 70 years of continuous service to the Yamba Surf Life Saving Club. I am sure the House would agree that is an outstanding achievement.

### **UNITED MUSLIMS OF AUSTRALIA**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (21:01):** I congratulate the United Muslims of Australia [UMA] sisters, who will receive \$7,000 thanks to the New South Wales Government's Local Sport Grant Program. The organisation will use the funds to boost female participation in basketball through its "play and unite" basketball program. Through initiatives such as that, the UMA strives to educate and mentor Muslim youth to become active and positive Australian citizens and role models. In addition to recreational programs, it also provides cultural, educational and employment assistance to young people. The UMA centre in Padstow can host up to 1,000 visitors a day, providing a safe and secure environment for members to thrive. Sporting activities are so important for building friendships and creating healthy lifestyles for both body and mind. It is important to encourage women to participate in sport by providing a place where they feel safe and supported. I congratulate UMA on its ongoing work to improve lives in our community. I look forward to seeing the sisterhood in action shooting hoops soon.

### **BERRY PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (21:02):** Only last week I was in this place acknowledging Berry Public School's public speaking champions, including two-time winner Billie Gibson, who went on to follow a tradition of presenting her winning speech to the Berry Rotary Club. Today this Parliament recognises Berry Public School, which was recently crowned Primary School of the Year – Government at the Australian Education Awards on Friday 9 August. What an incredible achievement for Berry Public School. I commend school principal Bob Willetts and the wonderful staff, who all deserve the award. Berry Public School is a school of excellence for the region, with a highly involved and proactive parents and citizens association. Its motto is "Our community: a culture of care, respect and enrichment". The phrase "The Berry way" is used to remind everyone in the school community of the core values and behaviours that underpin the positive school culture, and the award comes on the heels of the 2023 national wellbeing award received by the school. The award confirms an amazing school culture. Congratulations to Berry Public School, its students, staff and P&C. The community of Berry and the New South Wales Parliament celebrate the best government school in Australia for 2024.

### **HOPSKOTCH KINDERGARTEN**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (21:03):** My office receives a lot of invitations, but none more exciting than the one I recently received from the Turtles at Hopskotch Kindergarten in Schofields. Hopskotch is right in the middle of a huge development of units, and the road leading to the school is atrocious, so the centre reached out to me for assistance. Blacktown City Council responded quickly to get the repairs underway. Before long, the kids could see the power of community advocacy and speaking up. A few weeks later, when I received the Turtles' invitation to a special morning tea, I jumped at the chance. The kids took great pride in showing me around their day care centre and sharing stories and laughter. Spending time with the kids was not only fun but also insightful. At one stage, a young boy pointed over the fence to the cow paddock, now being filled with unit towers, and said, "Look over there! That is the future." I thank the incredible staff, especially Mrs Emma Ark, for helping the children with their advocacy. Schofields' future is bright with Turtles at the helm.

### **KATE BARRY**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (21:04):** I congratulate Kate Barry, who represented the electorate of Drummoyne at the 2024 Y NSW Youth Parliament held in July. Kate is a local student who has served her role with distinction and is to be commended. I met Kate during the mock parliamentary sitting week, in this Chamber, and I was inspired by her passion to make a difference. Kate was a member of the Arts, Music and Culture committee, drafting legislation aiming to "foster the exposure of the creative and performing arts industry for young people across New South Wales". We need to listen more to our youth. The Youth Parliament gives young people an opportunity to have their say and influence policy. As a young woman interested in politics, Kate is contributing to more diverse representation in our institutions and political systems. I thank Kate for

representing our electorate so wonderfully and congratulate her on her participation. She has made the Drummoyne electorate very proud. I wish Kate all the very best.

#### **BEVERLEY HUNTER**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (21:05):** I congratulate my constituent Beverley Hunter on being awarded 50 years of service as a Justice of the Peace [JP]. She has always been a strong advocate for her community. Prior to moving to the Central Coast, Beverley was an Independent alderman on South Sydney council, and continued beyond its amalgamation with Sydney City council for seven years. Beverley helped save historic Sydney buildings and icons and successfully lobbied for street closures to provide a safe play area for local children. In 1988 Sydney City council presented her with an Australia Day award for her volunteer services to the community, especially for the aged. At the age of 38 Beverley became a JP as a service to her neighbours who found it difficult to get to the courthouse for JP services. Fifty years on she continues as a JP and a valued member of our community at Long Jetty, where she moved 30 years ago. Since moving to the Central Coast, Beverley trained and worked as a nurse's aide at Nareen Gardens, a retirement village and nursing home. To this day she is relied upon to take elderly residents and friends to their medical appointments. I am sure that the House joins me in commending Beverley for her continued service to the community. I thank her for all she does and for choosing Long Jetty as her home.

#### **ROSEBANK CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE SERVICE**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (21:06):** On Wednesday 10 July 2024, I visited the Rosebank Child Sexual Abuse Service at Liverpool to announce and congratulate the team on their success in the Community Building Partnership grant program. Rosebank is one of the oldest sexual abuse support services in New South Wales. It was established in 1985. Its expertise, experience and specialised service has grown over the years, with a strong focus on building trust and breaking down the barriers created by sexual abuse. Rosebank has created a safe and non-judgemental space where children and young people can shape for themselves the way they are supported in their healing process. Some of the services provided include counselling, group work, advocacy and support. Rosebank also works closely with other services to aid the wellbeing of Sydney's children, young people and their families. It actively works to raise awareness about child sexual abuse and the vision of a community free of harm. I thank the whole team at Rosebank, namely Amanda Pardy and Nicole Soto.

#### **STRATHFIELD HARVEST HELPERS**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (21:07):** This morning 116 people turned up in the winter rain to the St Paul's parish pantry in Burwood. As the cost-of-living crisis bites, many in my community and across Australia are turning to food banks and charities for help. What began as extra tins of food on the shelf of the church office has grown to become a service that helps hundreds of people in my electorate every week. The need has certainly grown. Recently, local Woolworths stores began partnering with the parish pantry to supply excess food that would otherwise be wasted. We call it Strathfield Harvest Helpers. I thank Abhi Dharwarker, Liz McGrath and local store managers for their collaboration and community-mindedness. I acknowledge the Strathfield Harvest Helpers and all the local volunteers who help collect and transport food, notably Aruna Chandrala, KK, Ruth Pilkinton, Paulina Bezzina and Alex Yang. Finally, I recognise Father James Collins, Rosemary King and the St Paul's team for their generosity and for being a light on Burwood Road for those who are in need.

#### **KICKABILITY**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (21:08):** I congratulate the Pittwater Tigers Junior Australian Football League Club on launching the first Kickability program on the Northern Beaches. Kickability is modified AFL for those who identify as living with disability or need additional support playing. I recently attended a Kickability match at North Narrabeen Reserve. It was fantastic to see so many young people enjoying AFL. I thank the program's supporters: Tom O'Leary from AFLKids, AFL NSW/ACT, AAMI, Pam Platt, Sabine Blakeman, Scott Lockhart and Michelle Sym. Well done to president Chris Davison, club secretary Skye and all the volunteers: Nirvana Bryant, Harry Carlyon, Ashton Crosby, Elizabeth Ford, Archer Gertler, Harrison Mahony, Cooper Moane, Kayla Moane, Craig Nicholas, Luke Osborne, Jack Patterson, Jett Porter, Hamish Robertson, Kurtley Rose, Chase Roughly, Xander Scott, Charlie Stead, Coby Stewart, Keira, Madeline, Stewart, Fred Tickle, Kobie Thiele, Will Berthalot, Jules Nicholas, Miles Nicholas, Oscar Nuttall, Owen Murone— [*Time expired.*]

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I remind members to keep their community recognition statements to the one-minute time limit or other members may miss out on making a contribution.

#### **PROFESSOR ROGER SMITH, AM**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (21:10):** I congratulate Professor Roger Smith, AM, an internationally recognised researcher who has been named the nineteenth Freeman of the City of Newcastle.

Professor Smith has called Newcastle home for the past 40 years. In that time he has changed the face of medical research in New South Wales and Australia. His work has advanced our understanding of human birth, aiding families worldwide with his research into pregnancy, premature birth and stillbirth. Professor Smith helped the Hunter Medical Research Institute in 1990, as well as the Gomeroi Gaaynggal project across northern New South Wales, endeavouring to close the gap in Aboriginal health care. Among his incredible list of achievements, Professor Smith and his team of researchers discovered the biological clock within the human placenta that determines the length of human pregnancy. I congratulate Roger and thank him for his inspirational contributions to the Newcastle community and beyond.

#### **CENTRAL COAST WATERCOLOUR SOCIETY**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (21:11):** I had the great pleasure of attending the Central Coast Watercolour Society's opening winter exhibition on Friday night and officially opening the event. I acknowledge all of the incredible volunteers led by the society's president, Sue Marshall. It was an amazing exhibition held at the Gosford Regional Gallery, where 28 artists provided an amazing array of incredible watercolours, with over 80 paintings on display. I encourage anyone on the Central Coast who wants to see some truly amazing watercolour artwork to attend the Central Coast Watercolour Society's winter exhibition. I thank all the incredible volunteers. It is because of their hard work that events like the winter exhibition are able to take place. I congratulate all the incredible local artists who have put on another fantastic display. Again I thank the Central Coast Watercolour Society and president Sue Marshall for arranging an outstanding exhibition.

#### **NETBALL NSW PREMIER LEAGUE GRAND FINAL**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:12):** I am thrilled to share the outcome of the Netball NSW Premier League Grand Final, which I was privileged to attend on Sunday at Netball Central. In a hard-fought battle, the South West Mounties MAGIC emerged victorious, defeating North Shore United with a final score of 59 to 52. During a first quarter blitz, the MAGIC shot out to a double-figure lead and never looked back. Spurred on by an army of supporters in green, the MAGIC's determination and teamwork was on full display. Its inaugural season has been nothing short of extraordinary, from finishing fourth in the regular season to winning the championship. While the grand final's most valuable player, Gina Crampton, deserves a special mention, I congratulate all the players, coaches, staff and everyone involved with the Liverpool City Netball Association and Mounties Care. They have made south-west Sydney immensely proud and have also set a high bar for future seasons. I wish them continued success and more silverware in the future. Go the MAGIC!

#### **TRIBUTE TO BETTY GEMMELL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (21:13):** Today I acknowledge the sad passing of much-loved Mosman resident Betty Gemmell. Betty lived until the incredible age of 107 and was believed to be the oldest woman living in New South Wales. Betty's life was defined by her incredible sense of independence and her good-natured, warm and earnest character. She was beloved as the eldest of seven children and she lived independently in Mosman until just a few weeks before she passed away. She told me her secret to longevity was small meals, regular whiskey, and being happy and cheerful. I have a few of those things to work on. Betty lived through many major historical events, including both world wars, the Great Depression and the moon landing, and she saw 27 Prime Ministers come and go—and that is not just in recent years. Last year, to mark her 106th birthday, *Mosman Collective* editor Anna Usher organised birthday cards from across the entire community—many hundreds of birthday wishes—and Betty told me she was simply overwhelmed by the love from her community. The outpouring of grief from Mosman locals highlights what an incredible woman Betty was and how much she was loved by friends, family and the community. I extend my condolences to all of them. Vale, Betty Gemmell.

#### **GEOFF AND KARYN'S SANDWICH SHOP**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (21:14):** Geoff and Karyn's Sandwich Shop has been a mainstay of the Engadine community and, after 30 years, Geoff and Karyn have closed the shutters to retire. Their shop had the old-school charm that only veterans of three decades in the industry can offer. Prices of sandwiches were engraved in chalk on a blackboard that sat above a stainless steel and glass refrigerated cabinet. Behind the counter were Geoff and Karyn, warmly greeting each customer and providing exceptional and quick service. Their shop managed to stave off the significant financial burden of the COVID pandemic and lockdown, and they employed locals to serve the steady stream of customers lined up out the door at lunchtime. Many in the community are going to miss their fresh homemade sandwiches, burgers and excellent coffee. Geoff and Karyn, we wish you both the very best in your retirement and thank you for feeding the Engadine community for three decades.

*Private Members' Statements***AUDLEY WEIR**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (21:15):** For 12 years the Bundeena and Maianbar communities in the Royal National Park faced forever promises from the previous Liberal-Nationals Government on solutions to Audley Weir. The weir is of critical importance to the residents of Bundeena, Maianbar and the broader Heathcote electorate. A vital thoroughfare nestled within the Royal National Park, it serves as a crucial link between communities, enabling the movement of people, goods and services. Yet it has been repeatedly compromised by flooding, leading to frequent and prolonged closures that disrupt the daily lives of my constituents. With historic levels of rain this year, the weir has been closed for more than three weeks.

For years the former Government was aware of the significant impact those closures have on our community. It announced it was taking action, yet it did nothing. Where is the engineering report commissioned by the former Government in 2022 that stated, "There are no possible improvements able to be made which won't impact the structural integrity of the weir"? Where is the former Government's business case for a precast concrete bridge solution on top of the existing causeway? What happened to the \$2.3 million worth of funding announced by the former Government in 2022 to address the problem? Its negligence has left residents feeling isolated and frustrated as they are forced to endure extended detours and delays that affect their ability to work, attend school and access essential services. The economic and social fabric of Bundeena and Maianbar has been strained under the weight of that inaction. Businesses have suffered, emergency services have been delayed, and the simple act of commuting has become a burden for many.

The former Government's failure to address those issues is unacceptable, and today I reaffirm my commitment to ensuring that the situation does not continue. I am fully committed to finding a lasting solution to the challenges posed by Audley Weir. I have already begun engaging with local Bundeena residents, community groups, experts and government agencies to explore all viable options. Whether it is through infrastructure upgrades, improved flood management strategies or alternative routes, I will not rest until we have a plan in place that ensures the safety and accessibility of the community.

The Minns Labor Government has already made improvements to open or close response times at Audley Weir and is working on further safety and operational improvements in the event of flooding. McKell Avenue, which serves as the alternative route into Bundeena and Maianbar, was also damaged in significant weather events in 2021. This Government completed the significant repair works to McKell Avenue on schedule, despite multiple setbacks and challenging weather conditions. This Government delivers, and I am committed to working with the Minister for Roads and the local community to find short- and long-term solutions for Audley Weir, and to clean up the mess left behind by the former Government. The people of Bundeena and Maianbar deserve better, and I will continue to fight for their interests in this Chamber. Together, we will address the issues surrounding Audley Weir and build a more resilient and connected Heathcote and New South Wales.

**MILOS MAKSIMOVIC**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (21:19):** I acknowledge Milos Maksimovic from Oyster Bay in my electorate for the incredible performance he gave as a member of the Aussie Sharks men's water polo team at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. What an incredible Olympics we just witnessed. Australia recorded its best Olympic result in history. Our athletes won a total of 53 medals—18 gold, 19 silver and 16 bronze—just five shy of when we hosted the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Milos and the Sharks were just one of the many incredible stories of the Olympic Games. They became the first men's water polo team from Australia to qualify for the quarterfinals since the London Games in 2012.

This evening I put on record the story of our one Olympian from the Miranda electorate. Born in Serbia, Milos started playing water polo at just 10 years old after being inspired by Serbia's gold medal win at the 2005 World Aquatics Championships. He began his professional career at the age of 18 and played for various European clubs, including a stint in France, before returning to his Serbian team. By way of background, Milos moved to Sydney in 2022 when he joined the Australian Catholic University Cronulla Sharks in the Australian Water Polo League. He also became a coach at Scots College in Bellevue Hill. In 2023 Milos became a citizen and debuted for Australia in a test series against Japan. This year Milos played in his first major international tournament at the World Aquatics Championships in Doha, before heading to Paris as one of 10 Olympic debutants on the team. Before the games began, Sharks coach Tim Hamill said his team would "surprise the world", and they most certainly did.

Milos kicked off the Australian campaign with a bang, scoring the first goal in the opening preliminary round against world number one ranked team, Spain. Despite losing the match, the Sharks regrouped to produce a surprise victory against reigning Olympic champions, Serbia. It was the first time in 18 matches that an

Australian side had beaten Serbia in a men's competition. Winning 8-3, it was during this match that the Sharks' incredible defence was on full display, with keeper Nic Porter knocking back nine saves with a whopping 75 per cent accuracy, leading to one of the greatest upsets of the Paris games. The Shark attack did not stop there. The boys went on to defeat host nation France in a neck-and-neck fight. Milos was one of the standouts in the pool during this game, pulling off a hat-trick to keep the Sharks in contention until the very end.

With a heart-stopping finish, the winning goal for the Aussies was scored by Chaz Foot, with just 24 seconds remaining on the clock. Following that game, the Sharks then took on Hungary in a thrilling match that came down to the wire. The Hungarians took an early lead, but the Aussies were able to keep up. Milos was among the goalscorers who helped Australia to achieve a 9-8 victory. Despite a loss to Japan in their final preliminary game, the Sharks made history by being the first men's side to qualify for the quarterfinals in over a decade. In a thrilling match against the United States, both teams were neck and neck until the game went to a penalty shootout at the end of play. Unfortunately, Team USA won by a single point, bringing the Aussie Sharks' Olympic water polo campaign to a heartbreaking finish.

Entering the tournament as underdogs, the Sharks showed remarkable determination and skill throughout the Olympic tournament. As with all our Olympic athletes, the Sharks have demonstrated their grit, determination and skill, and have inspired so many people across our country. They have shouldered the hopes of our nation and made us all so incredibly proud. I congratulate our amazing Aussie Sharks on their gallant Olympic campaign. I recognise Nathan Power, Blake Edwards, Lachy Edwards, Nic Porter, Marcus Berehulak, John Hedges, Luke Pavillard, Angus Lambie, Charlie Negus, Chaz Poot, Jacob Mercep and Matthew Byrnes for their outstanding efforts.

Once again, I congratulate Milos Maksimovic on his outstanding efforts at the Paris Olympics. I watched the Aussie Sharks enthusiastically as our sole Olympian from the Miranda electorate not only competed but shone. To Milos and the Aussie Sharks, our community could not be more proud. Our Olympic athletes have uplifted, united and inspired our nation. They are everyone's champions. They have made our nation proud. I thank them for their efforts.

#### NEWCASTLE ELECTORATE OLYMPIANS

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (21:23):** The summer Olympics come around every four years to incite a sense of joy, excitement and patriotism in every Australian—and in people across the world. Paris 2024 was no different. This Olympics we saw Australia's best performance yet, breaking the record with 18 gold, 19 silver and 19 bronze, and finishing fourth on the medal tally. While I congratulate all 462 Australian Olympians, I particularly take this time to recognise the 10 athletes with ties to my electorate of Newcastle.

Newcomer Jess Hull is coming back to Newcastle with a medal around her neck after winning silver in the women's 1,500 metres race. She not only is the first Australian to win a medal in this discipline but also smashed the Australian record by over five seconds. Earlier this year she broke the world record time for 2,000 metres. To put it simply, she is an absolute legend. While she has not been a Novocastrian for very long, we are all so proud of Jess and this fantastic achievement. I am sure there will be many more to come. On the track we also saw 24-year-old Rose Davies place eleventh in the 5,000 metres final. Born and raised in Newcastle, she is Australia's fastest woman in her discipline after running five kilometres in 14 minutes and 41 seconds. I cannot wait to keep seeing Rose break records and shine bright on the international stage.

The Matildas are Australia's darlings and although they did not get past the group stage at this Olympics, we are all very proud of them. I am particularly proud of Newcastle's own Emily van Egmond, who marked her third Olympics, and of Clare Wheeler, a former Adamstown Rosebud, in her debut Olympics. Newcastle has long produced some of Australia's best hockey players. The 2024 team included three Newcastle juniors: Ky Willott and Matthew Dawson in the Kookaburras, and Mariah Williams in the Hockeyroos. Unfortunately, both teams exited the competition after losses in the quarter finals, but not without first having some huge wins in the group stages. One of those wins was against New Zealand, which I watched alongside Newcastle's hockey community at the Newcastle Hockey Club watch party. The atmosphere at the watch party was electric, especially when Ky Willott scored his first Olympic goal. It was an honour to share such a fantastic moment with the community. That is what the Olympics is all about. I congratulate all three of our hockey players who have made Newcastle proud.

I now turn my attention to the water, which is an area that all Australians excel in. Of our 53 medals, 30 came from the pool and other water sports. My favourite sport, and certainly a favourite of many other Novocastrians, is surfing. It was great to see a former Newcastle resident Tyler Wright out on the waves in Tahiti. She did a great job getting through to the quarterfinal even after multiple postponements. Unfortunately, she could not lock in a second wave and lost to the eventual gold medallist. It was a solid effort, and she had a great campaign. I congratulate Spencer Turrin, who is originally from Dungog but is now a proud Novocastrian. He

rowed in the men's eight, who placed sixth in the final. While he was not able to take home a medal like he did in Tokyo and Rio, Spencer and his seven teammates gave it their all and performed brilliantly.

Last, but certainly not least, I congratulate Merewether High School alumnus and captain of the men's water polo team, Nathan Power. He led a strong team that made it through to the quarterfinal and even beat the world champions and eventual gold medallists, Serbia, in the group stage. It was a great result. Nathan and the Aussie Sharks should be very proud of their performance. I cannot wait to see Newcastle represented again at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Before that we have the Paralympic Games coming up on 28 August, with Newcastle superstars Luke Bailey and Rheed McCracken. I hope we see Australia bring home even more medals and continue to break records at the Paralympics. I wish all the athletes the best of luck.

## RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (21:28):** The healthcare system in rural and regional New South Wales is in crisis and has been for years. This is a blight on both sides of politics and on both the State and Federal governments over the past 20 to 30 years. Unfortunately, all of us who live in the bush have become accustomed to not being able to get in to see a GP at all. When our condition is bad enough to go to the local hospital, we are used to sitting in the waiting room for anywhere up to a day just to see a doctor. The main issue is staffing. In the bush, we are struggling to attract medical professionals such as doctors and nurses. The lack of qualified staff is ultimately the root of all our problems in rural and regional health care. Our nurses and GPs in regional New South Wales are brilliant professionals who do an amazing job looking after us, but their patient loads and overall workloads are too high, which is causing them to burn out. Our old-fashioned healthcare system needs to be turned urgently on its head to ensure that country people receive the medical care we deserve.

As the former Premier said last week in his valedictory speech, why is the Federal Government responsible for GPs while the State Government runs and staffs the hospitals? It is time for significant policy change and an overhaul of the system. The economic viability and attractiveness of country practice and the humble GP in the bush has eroded across Australia for decades. We have lost hundreds of GPs in the bush in the past decade, and many communities—sadly, quite a few in my electorate—do not have a single GP. Throughout my by-election campaign I heard from people, often the elderly, who were fed up because they could not see a GP or a nurse practitioner for a routine check-up. Every day I receive at least 20 emails from people in my electorate who are distressed and upset because they cannot get in to see a doctor.

Our emergency departments should not be required to pick up the slack left to us by the Federal Government abandoning its responsibility to ensure that every community has access to GPs. The GP single-employer model is a good start but is only part of the solution. The Federal Government needs to step up. So what do we do? How do we attract and retain professional medical staff in the regions? In my opinion, coming to this place fresh, it is about time that both tiers of government start to come together to find solutions to this crisis. In my opinion, the Federal Government can do the most. The Federal Government should wipe university debts for all medical professionals who work for a minimum period in regional and remote areas, not only doctors and nurses but also pharmacists, speech pathologists and physiotherapists.

The Federal Government should seriously consider offering tax incentives such as a top income tax rate of, say, 10 per cent across the board for all medical professionals—doctors, nurses, physios and so on—who live and work in the regions for a minimum period. At a State level, let us be creative and look at wiping payroll tax for all medical and health businesses in regional New South Wales. Working as a medical professional in the regions needs to be so financially attractive that doctors, nurses, physios, dentists and so on will not be able to refuse. To get to that point, we need the State and Federal governments to acknowledge that in the bush we are in a crisis. We have no doctors or nurses. We are struggling. It is not the fault of the State Government; it is a blight on both levels of government, both sides of politics. It is time for joint action. I call on the State Government and the Federal Government to start working together. Let us collectively fix this crisis.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I thank the member for Northern Tablelands. As a regional healthcare provider who has had difficulties recruiting health professionals to the bush, I appreciate the spotlight he has just shone on that issue.

## TASCOTT STATION UPGRADE

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:32):** I was thrilled to announce this week that the Tascott train station will be the next Central Coast station to receive a much-needed accessibility upgrade, with design and investigation work funded under the Government's Safe Accessible Transport program. I commend the Minister and her team for their incredible work getting on with upgrading stations across the metropolis and regional New South Wales. It is not just an accessibility upgrade; it is a safety upgrade as well. It is a holistic look at the

station and the area around the station, which is really appreciated by communities who are receiving these upgrades, as opposed to things that happened in the past.

I have long campaigned to see the much-needed accessibility and safety upgrade at Tascott station, alongside the community, who have been pushing for some time, and so I am excited to see the beginning of the design phase of this project. I see the member for Kiama opposite me. He more than any other member in this House knows that everybody should be able to access public transport. Our stations should be accessible, safe and secure, allowing the freedom that public transport provides for our community. The upgrade of the Tascott station will consider the installation of a new lift, stairs, ramps and footbridges to improve access to the station. There will be tactile ground surface indicators for those with vision access needs, and accessible car parking, kiss-and-ride zones and bus stop upgrades. Lighting upgrades and CCTV will boost security. There is also consideration of the need for a platform extension, as the community of Tascott grows.

The accessibility upgrades will provide an important link across the railway line. The line runs in between the community of Tascott and the shores of Brisbane Water. The huge steps at the train station are the highway to heaven, the way to get across from Tascott to beautiful Brisbane Water, but instead they act as a barrier. Many people from the Tascott community have to travel by car to get across the line. Having a lift up and over the railway line will be a game changer for the Tascott community. The community has provided comments on the impacts of the lack of accessibility at Tascott train station. One local mum said:

Once becoming a mum, I realised that there's absolutely no way for me to cross railways with a pram and a baby on my hands. I can't even use trains which go to Sydney. I have to get to another train station which is accessible.

Another mum said she lives just 100 metres from Tascott train station but is forced to get a taxi to an accessible station to be able to take her son, who is in a wheelchair, to Sydney for medical appointments. I know that family and can understand the frustration of having a train station so near, yet so far. When I went out into the community yesterday with the Minister for the Central Coast to announce these upgrades, some seniors said to us, "I can no longer do stairs." We sometimes forget about those with increased mobility challenges who can no longer climb stairs and so cannot participate in the community in the same way that they used to. These upgrades are a game changer for them, as well as for those people who want to take their bikes over to the other side to cycle along the waterfront.

I also talk briefly about the Tuggerah station upgrade. The member for The Entrance, who is in the Chamber this evening, has been campaigning for it for a long time. The previous Government put it on hold, but under the Minns Labor Government accessibility work has reached 60 per cent completion. The new accessible footbridge will open to the public in late 2024, ahead of work coming to an end in mid-2025. The roof over the footbridge is complete and the installation of new lifts has now begun. The works also include upgrades to the station office and concourse, new accessible parking spaces and new footpaths to the station. When I drive past it, even though it is not in my electorate, I am really proud to be part of a Labor government that is making our train stations accessible for all.

I also note the learning that has come from an upgrade at Point Clare station that happened under the previous Government. The station had a step-free pathway running under the train line, from one side to the other. The previous Government, in its wisdom, managed to put in a series of four stairways going from one side of the platform to the other—admittedly, it was connected by three separate lifts, but the pathway was no longer step-free. There has been a significant amount of learning from that. But I encourage everyone in the Tascott community to get involved in the community consultation process, especially those with disability and mobility needs, so that we get the best possible outcome for all.

#### SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (21:37):** I did not want to have to give this speech, but I simply have no choice. When people in powerful positions deliberately ignore the people and their representatives, I have an obligation to act. Last Thursday I wrote to Shoalhaven City Council's CEO, Robyn Stevens. In that email I raised a couple of matters. I will not go into all of them today. But an issue I do wish to highlight is Ms Stevens' decision to restructure Shoalhaven City Council on the eve of a council election. I thank the Minister for Local Government for providing the opportunity to discuss this matter with him.

I acknowledge that councillors are taking this matter into their own hands, with a notice of motion being considered tomorrow night to defer the restructure proposal until after the council elections. One of the most important decisions for councillors is the structure of the council. To propose a restructure on the eve of a council election means that it will be the will of the CEO and a mayor who has announced her retirement, rather than the electors of the City of Shoalhaven who pay their wages, that will leave an indelible mark on this process. This is highly inappropriate and unprofessional. This process should start in the next council term. Again, I reiterate my calls to the CEO to pause this process. A council media release of 8 August states:

A proposed restructure of the Council's organisation has been put forward by the CEO, Robyn Stevens for consultation with staff, to achieve a high performing and efficient operation. ... Under the proposal, some positions would be disestablished from various departments in the organisation and the vast majority of these are currently vacant under the recruitment review process. None of these are outdoor workers. Annual savings would be in the order of \$1.3 million.

I believe that statement could be misleading. If it is simply consultation, as the CEO contends, why has one director taken extended leave, with rumours of another being told they will have their marching orders? Whilst I appreciate a restructure is required and I support a reduction in middle management, I do not understand the proposal itself. There is a glaringly obvious conflict created by combining risk and audit with finance, and the combination of development services with the management of parks, reserves and swimming pools is bizarre. At a time when Shoalhaven City Council is facing a financial crisis, the same new CEO rejected the help and input of experienced, qualified and independent locals who offered to serve on a budget committee, free of charge, to help improve the council's financial position.

I enjoy a positive working relationship with all my council CEOs and I want to work collaboratively with Ms Stevens. Trust arrives on foot but leaves on horseback. Ms Stevens owes me nothing, but half of my electorate covers the Shoalhaven, including my own home. As the member for Kiama, I respectfully advise that it is unwise for her to ignore me and the people I represent. As I have previously outlined, the community is concerned with the financial performance of Shoalhaven City Council. The 44 per cent rates rise proposal, the removal of landowners' right to remove dangerous trees that are overhanging homes and the bungled Bioelektra project are just some of the legitimate concerns of the community. But it appears there is another failed council project that the public deserve to know about that could be even worse than Bioelektra. Once again, ratepayers are forced to pick up the tab.

Tonight, I expose yet another example of the council not being able to deliver waste projects. Unbeknownst to some Shoalhaven city ratepayers, the council is currently funding the construction of a materials recovery facility to deal with the city's recyclables, despite ratepayers still having no option for green waste like all other neighbouring councils. In 2019 the business case for the project was approved and in 2020 it received council approval. However, the council's website states that this project is "on hold", and in spite of massive city investment tied up in the project, the site still stands idle. The project cost for the facility was originally \$15 million, and the amount of funding available for this budget round was approximately \$5 million. Now the forecast final project cost is \$37 million.

The cost blowout on this project is more than \$10 million of hard-earned ratepayer money. The \$2 million wasted on Bioelektra was bad enough. This is yet another shocking example of the Greens-Labor council failing to deliver its projects. That \$10 million could be spent on roads that are falling apart. It could have stopped the council cutbacks on operating hours for pools, libraries and other services, or allowed the council to avoid jacking up fees and charges on water. This impacts pensioners, self-funded retirees, the vulnerable, small businesses and every Shoalhaven household. I am often asked how I will be voting at the next council election. My quick response is that I will be putting The Greens last. Voters should put The Greens last because that is where they have put us.

### **SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (21:42):** I discuss the Minns Labor Government's response to the housing crisis and what it is doing to help first home buyers and those living in public housing. I will also touch on the Government's campaign to ensure that new homes are of the highest quality. This Government inherited a complete mess from the previous Liberal-Nationals Government when it comes to housing. The good news is that unlike members opposite, we actually have a plan for housing in this State. One of the main issues with housing in the Illawarra is affordability, especially for first home buyers. The Minns Labor Government is waiving or reducing stamp duty for first home buyers purchasing homes for up to \$1 million. More than 33,000 first home buyers in New South Wales have already received an exemption or a concession on stamp duty thanks to the First Home Buyers Assistance scheme from the Minns Labor Government. It is the most generous first home buyer support scheme in Australia and represents an average saving of \$20,479. This program is helping people all over the Shellharbour electorate and beyond to buy their first homes.

In Shellharbour, there are numerous areas with median house prices under \$1 million, so first home buyers in those areas get the full benefit of this fantastic scheme. To increase the supply of public housing, the Minns Labor Government has also allocated \$5.1 billion to build 8,400 new homes. Half of those houses will be for survivors of domestic violence. That initiative will save lives and allow more victim-survivors of family and domestic violence to leave abusive relationships. The positive impact will also extend to the children of those victim-survivors. I thank the Premier and the Minister for Housing for their unwavering support of victim-survivors across this State.

The Minns Labor Government has announced numerous housing reforms over the past year aimed at delivering more homes as fast as possible, but there is no point in increasing supply if the new homes are of poor



quality or fall apart within a few years. One of the major initiatives relevant to my community in the Illawarra is the recent establishment of the Illawarra-based office of the Building Commissioner. I am grateful to the Minister for Building for establishing the office and the Deputy Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Councillor Tania Brown, for her unwavering advocacy for an office to be set up in the Illawarra. That advocacy has already paid off, with residents of Shell Cove telling me how good it is to have somebody on their side in their ongoing battle to rectify faulty homes built by Frasers Property. Frasers Property has held back for so long and been uninterested in assisting anybody to rectify its bungalows.

The statistics of the Shell Cove homes built by Frasers Property are grim, with a staggering 92 per cent of homes affected, mainly with poor waterproofing. The stories that I have heard from residents of Shell Cove impacted by poor design and workmanship are heartbreaking. Those people bought into a dream of a marina-style development, with slick brochures and promises of architecturally designed dream homes. What they got was a nightmare. Significant defects in the design of facades and rooftops, as well as inadequate waterproofing, have resulted in leaking roofs and external walls. The water damage has caused all manner of issues for residents, including cracking and mould, impacting not only the physical health of residents but also their mental health. It is totally unfair that those residents have to go up against a heartless builder that only cares about cutting costs and maintaining its profit margin. They cannot fully enjoy their homes, and many cannot even sell and move elsewhere as the houses are covered with scaffolding while repairs are undertaken.

That is why the Building Commissioner's new powers to assist home owners are crucial and welcomed by the community. The Minns Labor Government takes housing seriously and, as the local member, I will always be there to support residents in my electorate as they take on dodgy builders. I acknowledge the fantastic work of Assistant Building Commissioner Matt Press, who has done an amazing job at Shell Cove in holding to account Frasers Property and Shellharbour City Council.

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (21:47):** There were sighs of relief last Tuesday across the electorate of The Entrance and, I am sure, the whole nation from those who hold residential or business loans, when the Reserve Bank board maintained the official interest rate at 4.35 per cent, meaning that mortgage rates would, for the time being, remain at their current level. But it is cold comfort for working people in my community and other communities throughout this State. Interest rates are hurting people at the moment. There are still people in the economic commentariat calling for further interest rate increases, but my view is that any further increase in interest rates will do little to assist the Reserve Bank in its battle against inflation. In fact, it will do the opposite.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] released some interesting figures on 7 August—specifically, the living cost index, which is a set of figures that separates the community into different income groups. The living cost index is different to the consumer price index because it includes mortgage interest charges in its calculation. The ABS found that for employees—working people—the living cost increase over the past 12 months has been the highest of all the groups. It was an increase of over 6 per cent compared with the other groups in the analysis, self-funded retirees and pensioners, who over the past 12 months have had the lowest increase in their living costs because members of those groups are generally not holders of mortgages.

At the moment self-funded retirees are doing quite well out of high interest rates. Pensioners get several rebates from the Government and have their income protected under their arrangements. By and large, employees, many of whom hold mortgages over their homes, have suffered the highest impact of the inflation pressures built into our economy. Any further increase will only push that group over the edge and benefit the groups that are currently not experiencing the full impact of inflation. Self-funded retirees would see an increase in their ability to keep spending. Pension groups will be protected because of the rebates they receive. The employee group needs interest rate relief—and they need it sooner rather than later.

A whole bunch of other indicators in the economy build the case for an interest rate cut sooner rather than later. Building approvals across the whole economy are down overall, except for home alterations. That again speaks to my proposition that some groups are doing quite well. Members of those groups have equity in their home and are spending to get alterations done to it. That group has seen building approvals for alterations go up 10 per cent over the past 12 months. They are doing okay, but overall building approvals across the economy are down. Retail turnover is down. Business turnover across the economy is up only a small amount, but in the May to June quarter it went down across the country. We need an interest rate cut now.

There has been a lot of talk among the commentariat about the role of government in adding to inflationary pressure in the economy. I reassure my constituents that the Minns Labor Government is doing all it can to put downward pressure on inflation. We inherited a government budget with expenses in the forward estimates trending at 5 per cent plus. We have brought that back to 1.7 per cent over the forward estimates, well below the Reserve Bank board's inflation target of 2 per cent to 3 per cent. We have revenue growth trending at 3 per cent.

That is a sustainable path to non-inflationary budget repair in this State, which will continue to improve and deliver the essential services our community expects and deserves. But to get the economy moving, we need an interest rate cut sooner rather than later.

### CLUBGRANTS PROGRAM

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (21:52):** The ClubGRANTS program is a funding initiative designed to support community-based projects and services across New South Wales. The program was established in 1998 to assist not-for-profit organisations. It allocates funds raised by local clubs to local projects that benefit local communities, addressing specific needs such as health, education and social welfare—things only those living there would be aware of and fully understand. Clubs participating in the program are required to allocate a portion of their gaming machine profits to charitable and community causes. Those funds are then distributed through a competitive grants process to eligible organisations that provide vital services or undertake projects with significant community impact. The program targets a broad range of projects, including those focused on improving mental health, supporting youth development, enhancing community safety and providing services for the elderly and disadvantaged.

By directing financial resources into local initiatives, the ClubGRANTS program helps strengthen community networks. It fosters local engagement and ensures that funding reaches grassroots organisations that directly benefit the people they serve. This initiative underscores the commitment of the Government to enhancing community wellbeing and supporting the diverse needs of its residents. Recently I attended a ClubGRANTS ceremony and saw firsthand the impact this funding has and continues to have on the local community of Bathurst. Over \$100,000 was handed out by both the Bathurst RSL Club and the Panthers Bathurst Leagues Club.

The successful recipients that were acknowledged included Miracle Babies Foundation, for supporting families of premature and sick babies in the Bathurst hospital; CareFlight, for rapid response helicopter missions in Bathurst; Cancer Patients Foundation, for its Look Good Feel Better program; the Bathurst Local Aboriginal Lands Council, for its Youth Yarns program; the Western Region Academy of Sport, for financial assistance for disadvantaged athletes in the Western Region Academy of Sport program; Epilepsy Action Australia, for Ted-E-Bears and support for children living with epilepsy in Bathurst; Royal Life Saving NSW, for a preschool and primary school water safety project; Stewart House, for support for vulnerable schoolchildren in Bathurst to go to Stewart House; HopeCare, for additions to its community cafe and HopeCare community pantry; Lifeline Central West, for volunteer crisis supporter training; and Solve-TAD Limited, to continue the joy of cycling for people with disabilities in the Bathurst region.

Other successful recipients were the Bathurst Community Transport Group, to fund a bus from Bathurst to Orange to transport patients receiving radiation treatment; The Shepherd Centre for deaf children, for early intervention for children with hearing loss; the Family of League Foundation, for wellbeing support for men, women and children of rugby league; Bathurst Remembers, for a Bathurst Remembers project of preserving education and event history; Assistance Dogs Australia, for its Assistance Dogs Unleashed program that empowers people to retain their dogs; the Defence Bank Foundation, for its Defence Community Dogs program that trains veteran assistance dogs; and the Central West Brain Injury Action Group Inc., for a Bathurst kids' support activity program in 2025. All these groups have received grants for incredibly moving and worthy causes—and that is just one community in New South Wales.

The clubs behind these grants see patrons from all walks of life on a daily basis, whether it is for an affordable meal, a warm place in which to sit, a family celebration, a community event or a meeting of the many small organisations and social groups that use the RSL or Panthers Bathurst Leagues Club as their meeting place and their second home. The staff who serve them are very aware of the challenges that may be facing these loyal local people. ClubGRANTS has proven so successful for the past 26 years for communities across New South Wales—in particular those in regional, rural and remote areas—because it is giving the clubs an avenue to see a need and do something about it. I implore the members of this House to continue supporting this fantastic program and to visit the recipients and clubs in their local electorates to hear how these grants are profoundly impacting their constituents who need that support.

### CAMDEN LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (21:57):** The Camden Local Business Awards have been finalised. This month I was honoured to present the Camden Local Business Awards to the deserving entrepreneurs of our area. These prestigious awards celebrate the innovation, resilience and dedication of businesses across the Camden local government area, including Hamper Culture, which won Outstanding Antiques, Arts, Crafts and Gifts; MSC Mechanical Repairs, which won Outstanding Automotive Services; Creations by Tink, which won Outstanding Bakery/Cake Business; Evolution Laser Clinic in Narellan Town Centre, which won Outstanding Beauty Services; and MP Lash Artistry, which won Outstanding Beauty Services—Brows and Lashes.

I believe that in the recipient's acceptance speech, that 20-year-old said she has two businesses. Tidsley's Butchery, which is one of Camden's oldest businesses, won Outstanding Butcher; and Brookfield House Camden won Outstanding Cafe. Awards were also given to RM Super Services Cleaning Specialists, which won Outstanding Cleaning Business; and Jenny's Kindergarten Early Learning, which won Outstanding Early Childhood Centre. They were sitting at my table on the night. Local businesses are the backbone of our community because they drive economic growth by creating jobs and keeping our communities strong and resilient. Camden would not be the town it is without the support and hard work of local businesses.

It is important to have these awards to recognise the incredible effort that is invested into each business, and therefore in our community also. This includes Love2Learn Tutoring and Early Learning, which won Outstanding Education Service; Demfings, which won Fashion; GKR Karate Narellan Prime, which won Outstanding Fitness Service; Oak and Blossom, which won Outstanding Florist; Grima Bros Wholesale Produce, which won Outstanding Fruit and Vegetable Shop; Lux Hair Lounge, which won Outstanding Hairdresser; Beyond Limits Paediatric Therapy, which won Outstanding Health Improvement Service; Splendour Interiors—run by my beautiful friend Marilyne—which won Outstanding Home Furniture Store; and Diamond World Fine Jewellery, which won Outstanding Jewellery Store.

Finalists for the Camden Local Business Awards are selected based on the number of nominations they receive from the public. From that pool, finalists are judged against specific criteria that include information provided by each finalist and their online presence, including store foot traffic, customer service and community involvement. We heard from Gregory Hills Hotel, which was awarded Most Inclusive Employer; Taylor'd Funerals, which won Outstanding New Business; Prodigy Performing Arts, which received the Outstanding Performing Arts award; Kayla Prince Photography, which won Outstanding Photography Business; Renee Roumanos Legal, which won Outstanding Professional Service; Murray Kennedy Real Estate, which received Outstanding Real Estate Agency; CREA, winner of most Outstanding Restaurant; and Politech Air Conditioning Services, which was awarded Outstanding Service and Trade.

Each and every nominee, finalist and winner is integral to our local area, and they should all be congratulated on their incredible efforts. This year the award pool was massive, with a whopping 33 businesses receiving awards in a variety of categories, showcasing an incredible diversity in business. We finished off the evening with some final awards, such as Patches the Twister Mister, which won Outstanding Sole Operator, which is who one gets if a balloon twister is needed for a party; X-Golf and Hey Caddy Macarthur, which won Outstanding Specialised Business; Leo Games, which was Outstanding Specialised Retail Business and happens to be around the corner from my office, and whom I congratulate on winning an award six months into their business's life; Helloworld, which won Outstanding Tourism and Accommodation; my very good friend Louise at Pineapple Marketing and Promotions, who won Business Person of the Year; and PNP Constructions, which won the Youth Award.

A very big congratulations goes to Chicken Empire, which won Outstanding Fast Food/Takeaway and Business of the Year Award. Chicken Empire also put on free breakfast the following morning for anyone who was at the awards—unfortunately I was in Parliament. I thank all businesses for what they do. From essential to leisure services and more, this list of winners highlights everything Camden has to offer and everything we do well. I thank these stars of business for everything they do and the lasting positive impact they bring to our community.

## REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (22:02):** The chair's foreword by the Hon. Greg Donnelly from the report entitled *Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales*, dated May 2022, states:

Overall, the committee has found that residents of rural, regional and remote New South Wales have poorer health outcomes and inferior access to health and hospital services, and face significant financial challenges in accessing these services, compared to their metropolitan counterparts.

...

The issues faced by the doctor and clinician workforce are undoubtedly complicated by the shared responsibilities between the Commonwealth and State governments, and their inability to achieve effective structural reform.

That report, though not surprising, underscores a troubling reality for country New South Wales: Despite medical advancements, the gap between rural and metropolitan health outcomes remains wider than ever. Local communities are increasingly frustrated by the challenges in accessing basic health services. The contraction of the health workforce has led to a reduction of services, as evidenced by the closure of Parkes Hospital's maternity unit. The complexity of multi-jurisdictional administration further complicates workforce planning and retention strategies.

Local councils have had to invest in infrastructure and incentives to attract and retain doctors, including medical and residential facilities. Such is the case for both Forbes and Parkes shires, which have invested heavily into incentive strategies. While those efforts are commendable, they are not a sustainable long-term solution. The establishment of the Charles Sturt University School of Rural Medicine at Orange marks a visionary step toward addressing the long-term needs of the rural healthcare workforce, with the first graduates expected in 2025. There is hope that those regionally trained doctors will stay in rural areas to provide essential services.

Recently I had the honour of hosting the Minister for Health on a tour of the Orange electorate. During his visit, we met Dr Kerrie Stewart and a group of medical students and junior medical officers. Our discussion highlighted the success that could be achieved through collaborating with Commonwealth, State and local governments, as well as key stakeholders such as the local health districts, universities and service providers. Dr Stewart, whose extensive credentials include roles as co-director of medical services at the Lachlan Health Service, head of campus at Charles Sturt University Central West Clinical Campus and various other significant positions, provided invaluable insights. Her expertise in training and retention strategies is crucial to the success of the Lachlan Health Service and the broader Central West.

During the meeting Dr Stewart conveyed the positive impact of programs like the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network, which has facilitated the creation of the Charles Sturt University School of Rural Medicine. The program trains rural students within their communities, embedding them in local health services. In addition, the Assistant in Medicine Program employs final-year medical students as assistants, which will enhance the workforce in a cost-effective way and equip students with relevant local skills. The programs require ongoing support to ensure their long-term success. I must commend the advocacy of Parkes mayor, Councillor Neil Westcott, his predecessor, Councillor Ken Keith, OAM, and Parkes Shire Council general manager, Kent Boyd, whose efforts have led to the development of a practical plan to address the doctor shortage in Parkes.

The Parkes Shire Council health precinct master plan aims to acquire and use Crown land, to develop facilities for doctor training and to trial a new care model that includes the use of virtual health technology. That is all on the doorstep of Parkes Hospital. The plan includes creating facilities such as a training doctors surgery near the hospital, accommodation and other training resources. The infrastructure is crucial to implementing the plan effectively. The proposal also includes developing and testing new care models overseen by an expert committee, which may involve virtual health technology and other approaches.

To support the project, Parkes seeks initial funding and support for doctor recruitment, and the development of new care models and training programs. The facilities will integrate with university programs for doctor and nurse training, with accommodation playing a vital role in supporting training and service delivery. I will continue to advocate for government support for those and similar initiatives to address the decline in the medical workforce and improve health service delivery in rural, regional and remote New South Wales. Our country communities deserve access to the same level of health care as communities in the city.

### WESTERN SYDNEY CREATIVE COMMUNITY

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (22:07):** Last weekend Vikki Champion wrote in *The Daily Telegraph*:

Going to Garma and believing it gives you meaningful insights into the everyday life of Aboriginal Territorians is like going to the Sydney Opera House and believing it gives you meaningful insight into living in Granville.

What a ridiculously snobby and condescending analogy. Obviously Ms Champion has not noticed that every year students from Granville schools perform in the Sydney Opera House at Our Spectacular, and their parents and the school communities come along to watch. Everyone is filled with pride at the talent on display on Australia's most famous stage. I have been there many times and talked to the kids, their parents and teachers. And, absolutely, you can get an insight into life in Granville watching the amazingly talented Granville kids performing at the Sydney Opera House. For many local families, seeing their kids perform at the Opera House sends a positive message that anything is possible and that Sydney Opera House belongs to all of us.

It is not just students from Granville performing at the Opera House. Last year A.Girl performed a sold-out, headline show blending R'n'B, hip-hop and dub at the Opera House during Vivid. A.Girl is a proud product of Granville and Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School. This year at Vivid, Barkaa performed her first headline show at the Opera House. Barkaa is a Malyangapa and Barkindji rapper who grew up in Merrylands. She joined rap battles in Blacktown as a teenager and still lives in Western Sydney. Last weekend Barkaa was awarded Artist of the Year at the National Indigenous Music Awards in Darwin.

The Opera House is relevant to us and it is a huge aspiration for Western Sydney performers. It belongs to all of us and is a space for our most talented to perform, not limited by musical genre or postcode. Art is not irrelevant to communities experiencing disadvantage, either in Granville or East Arnhem Land. On the contrary, often the biggest barrier to success for kids from Granville is the assumption that they have nothing to offer and

that they are uncultured. Another barrier is having great cultural institutions that are 20 kilometres away, on the other side of Sydney, as are the commercial opportunities in the arts. For well over a century, the main investment and recurrent expenditure on cultural facilities have been within walking distance of this Chamber. This has been changing in recent years and we need it to change more.

It is fantastic that Sara Mansour was appointed last year as a trustee of the Sydney Opera House—the youngest person ever appointed. Sara is the co-founder and director of the incredibly successful Bankstown Poetry Slam, which has grown since 2013 to be the largest live poetry event in Australia. She brings a different perspective, reflecting young creatives and the diversity of all of Sydney. Just as we deserve access to and representation within our State's great cultural institutions, Western Sydney needs and deserves more investment in our creative communities and more and better local creative spaces. The Western Sydney Arts Alliance has been championing that for years.

It was a Labor government that built Parramatta's Riverside Theatres and this Labor Government is supporting the City of Parramatta Council to redevelop and grow the theatre to finally be large enough to host big Broadway shows. The Government is also supporting bigger and better facilities at Blacktown Arts centre and Campbelltown Arts Centre. This is not about bringing art to the uncultured masses; it is about allowing us to perform, display and tell our stories close to home. We have great stories to tell. We have stories and artforms from across the world and from people living now in the most multicultural part of one of the most multicultural cities on earth. Culture is something we share. When we in Western Sydney miss out on telling or hearing our stories, we all miss out.

Last week I hosted a reception at Parliament House for one of our most successful contemporary cultural exports: Dhee. Members may not have heard of Dhee but she is one of the most streamed Australian artists, with about 5.7 million listeners every month on Spotify. Her biggest hit *Enjoy Enjaami* has over a billion streams. These days Dhee is based in Chennai and is one of the most sought-after singers for Tamil and Telugu blockbuster soundtracks. She is a household name in South Asian households around the world. Dhee is the stepdaughter of Indian music composer Santhosh Narayanan and began her singing career by performing songs on two of his albums as a teenager. Dhee was born in Jaffna in Sri Lanka and grew up in Parramatta and Pendle Hill. She studied at Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School.

Ten years into her career, she is back in Sydney launching her English language singles *I Wear My Roots Like a Medal* and *Can't You Stay a Little Longer*. She is performing on Thursday at the Sydney Cricket Ground as part of Indian Independence Day celebrations. It is a really fitting occasion to perform *I Wear My Roots Like a Medal*, which is a song about growing up between two cultures and coming to terms with that over time, with lyrics like, "I was caught in the middle, spent way too long feeling lost and refused, now I got my foot on the pedal so I wear my roots like a medal." To me, "feeling refused" sums up how it feels to be on the receiving end of attitudes that suggest the Sydney Opera House is irrelevant to people in Granville and Western Sydney. Thankfully, attitudes are changing, and this Government is supporting the arts in Western Sydney so that many more artists and creatives from the region can wear their roots like a medal on Australia's and the world's biggest stages.

### LURNEA HIGH SCHOOL

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (22:12):** Tonight I discuss the concerns that I have received from many parents and carers in my community regarding the school community culture at Lurnea High School. Quality public education is non-negotiable for many families, particularly for those living in low socio-economic areas such as Lurnea. However, last week's headlines in the media have not come as a shock to many in that local community, who have spoken up about concerns with the school's culture. Bombshell allegations emerged that a teacher at Lurnea High School had an inappropriate sexual relationship with a 17-year-old student, who was under their special care. This would terrify most parents, who rightly expect a safe learning space for their children, which was allegedly not the case at the school.

During my time as a member of this place, I have received multiple complaints from several parents and carers about the conduct of staff and its impact on the school's culture. I have heard of worrisome allegations that include cases of negligence by school staff. One incident I will mention is when a student being treated for epilepsy was forced to participate in sport despite advice from the parents not to do so. Parents have also expressed dismay over a culture where concerns are consistently dismissed by school staff and where the school fails in its duty to protect vulnerable students, with many recorded cases of violence in the playground. This includes a pattern of persistent and unresolved bullying incidents where matters were disregarded by staff and put in the too-hard basket. There have also been instances where the school has allegedly failed to respond to serious safety complaints from parents, leaving them in the lurch.

Finally, and probably most alarming, is a complaint of alleged sexual assault and harassment of a child with autism that was disregarded by the school. In receipt of those concerns, I passed on the allegations to the Minister for Education and Early Learning and called on the Government to investigate and start an inquiry to ensure the highest levels of integrity and safety at Lurnea High School. In two letters that I sent to the education Minister in November 2023, I urged the Government to act. However, it unfortunately fell on deaf ears. In a response received from the Government in late December 2023, not once was my call for an inquiry acknowledged. The dismissal of my concerns, despite previous media relating to the culture at Lurnea High School, was a cause of distress to those in my local community. Not only were their concerns dismissed but they also lost confidence in the education system to keep their children safe.

Their concerns are backed by statistics and data. Information presented to me outlined an increase in student suspensions in 2023 compared with the year before. In a question on notice to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, I requested data on the nature of police call-outs by year per high school within the Holsworthy electorate. Lurnea High School has had a consistently high number of police call-outs since 2018. During that time, there were 17 call-outs as a result of assault cases—significantly higher than any other high school in Holsworthy. Additionally, six instances of brawls at Lurnea High School required the police's attention. In a joint letter addressed to the Department of Education, 31 parents and carers from Lurnea High School expressed many matters of concern. However, they were also largely dismissed by the department.

I thank those who reached out to me to bring this to my attention and share their experiences at Lurnea High School. Those parents have tried to raise their voice, but to no avail. In an SBS Arabic article from 2022, parents claimed that their fears were being diminished by the school. That is simply not good enough. No parent or carer of a child should feel like that. I encourage anyone who has information to come forward to ensure the integrity of the educational standards at Lurnea High School. All concerns of parents and carers should be addressed appropriately. Once again, I call on the Labor Government to conduct a full and thorough inquiry into the school. There is a miasma surrounding Lurnea High School, and I believe this Labor Government can do more. Despite that, I acknowledge the hardworking staff who educate and inspire. A much-needed inquiry would ensure the highest quality of education, integrity, safety and wellbeing for all. I thank the House.

#### COOGEE ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (22:17):** I again speak about an issue that is close to my community's heart—that is, the region 9 buses in my area. From the outset, I say to my community that I feel their frustration and anger on that. I know that they want changes to be made now, but undoing the damage of the previous Government is extremely hard, particularly unscrambling the scrambled egg of privatisation. Numerous articles have been written about the contracts that the previous Government signed the State up to. Those contracts did not put the interests of the community at the heart. Working through that contract with the private provider to make sure that the community gets the best services is one of the many things that the Government is working on.

We know that services have been reduced and that there are not enough bus drivers. When privatisation came in, bus drivers who loved being public servants stopped working for the Government so there is now a shortage of bus drivers. From the last reports that I was given, it is now at 40. That number has stabilised—the first time that bus driver numbers in region 9 have done so. The number needs to increase so that the number of services and routes can be increased and the Government can fulfil its election commitments. I call on my community to have more patience as we continue to resolve those recruitment issues.

Another solution that we are looking at for our area is bringing in more articulated buses—the big, bendy buses. An additional failure of the previous Government is that it did not purchase or test any electric articulated buses at all. My community is committed to our electric vehicle and net zero commitments. We are now starting the process of testing articulated e-buses to be able to buy them and get them into the system. In the meantime, Transport for NSW is looking at where there is an excess of articulated buses across New South Wales that could potentially come into region 9 to fix some of the capacity issues.

As I said, in the absence of having the needed number of bus drivers, having bigger buses on routes where we do not have enough buses is one of the many solutions the Government is looking at. I know that my office and that of the member for Maroubra are getting complaints every day from people left behind and not being picked up, and that is not good enough. We are working to try to untangle the mess that the previous Government left behind.

I say to our community to continue to reach out to us and tell us what their problems are. We are logging this issue with Transport for NSW so that the providers know what they are doing wrong and what they need to change. The final report for the Bus Industry Taskforce is coming out imminently. That is our blueprint going forward as to how we will secure more buses and what the route numbers will look like. I know that people are frustrated and angry. I also catch a bus to work, so I feel it and I know what it is like to stand there and see packed

buses go past. I know what it is like to want to go to work and do the right thing—when you are not in a car but you cannot get there. We are working constantly to try to undo the damage that the previous Liberal-Nationals Government caused. I ask the community to continue to engage with us, and I thank them.

### **SOUTHERN CROSS SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (22:22):** Before I begin, I acknowledge the Minister for Emergency Services. There are some nervous residents in my electorate tonight because of flooding and heavy rain. I acknowledge the emergency services, including the SES volunteers, who are no doubt on duty tonight keeping a close eye on things. Let us hope tomorrow is not too bad—fingers crossed.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** And toes.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** Fingers and toes and everything. Tonight I bring to the attention of the House the lack of distance education in Clarence and more broadly across the Northern Rivers. Until recently, Southern Cross School of Distance Education delivered specialised distance education in my electorate from Coffs Harbour to the Queensland border and west to Glen Innes. This highly specialised service with dedicated teachers has now been dismantled, putting vulnerable children's education at risk. The school was highly valued by parents, caregivers and teachers, and achieved outstanding results in areas that are the most disadvantaged in New South Wales. The former distance education model ran for years and had remarkable results in very difficult environments for students. These students are the most vulnerable and at-risk students in New South Wales.

Until recently, the schools were serviced by a school system with 40 teachers doing one-on-one education with students, and the results were outstanding. To put it simply, education is not the perfect fit for everyone. This place understands that. Distance education can be difficult—there is no doubt. But simply turning the tap off and expecting students to go to an online model simply does not work, particularly in my electorate. I will tell members why. Not everyone in my electorate has the internet. Not everyone in my electorate has an iPad, computer or smart TV. Not every student is connected online in an educational setting. Online learning works perfectly in a perfect world, but we need to acknowledge that some students are not living in a perfect world.

The services provided by the Southern Cross School of Distance Education included outreach services to Aboriginal communities. There were hubs in my electorate in Casino, Coraki and Grafton delivering one-on-one home visits to engage students in a system from which they were disengaged. Sadly, they are now falling completely between the cracks. Parents are telling me that there was little to no communication about why the school suddenly stopped and how their kids would get educated. Some feel let down by the system and are very worried about their children's education. One parent told me:

I am writing to you in regards to the closure of the Grafton Distant Education Hub at Head Space. My daughter attends the hub and has been thriving after a few very hard years of struggling to engage and learning difficulties and struggling with her diagnosis of Autism. ... My child is going to struggle and most likely give up as she cannot manage without her one on one.

Another parent who contacted me said her twin sons went to the Southern Cross School of Distance Education and are now doing science degrees at the Southern Cross University. Another child was attending distance education and was fully engaged in the education system for the first time. I implore the Government, the Minister for Education and Early Learning, and the Premier to do more to get the school back open and delivering great outcomes for the most disadvantaged children and students in the Northern Rivers. I fear that without an intervention the kids will completely withdraw from education. The parents and caregivers are demanding that the Government take control of the situation and deliver the services that they so vitally need.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (22:27):** I acknowledge the member for Clarence. He is a very decent human being who has done a lot of work, particularly in the emergency services space. The member for Clarence touched on some of the issues that he and his colleagues the member for Lismore and the member for Tweed are worried about. We are concerned about the rain that is falling in the Northern Rivers area. We know that it could be in the vicinity of 100 millimetres. I do not need to remind anyone in this Chamber of the terrible rain event in 2022 and the trauma it caused the community. The SES have been pre-deploying as much as possible. We will get the communication out. I thank all SES volunteers and the local governments working together.

One of the great things I have seen since taking on my role as Minister for Emergency Services, and even as a shadow Minister, is the way the three members in that local community work together. They put their political differences aside for their communities. We have fingers, toes and everything crossed and are doing everything we possibly can to make sure that there will not be a repeat of the flooding we have seen. We are confident that we will get there. I remind everyone to keep checking the Hazards Near Me app.

## GENEVA CONVENTIONS SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (22:28):** Tonight I commemorate a significant milestone in the history of international humanitarian law: the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. Those landmark treaties have created a standard for humanity in a world too often scarred by the horrors of war. They have laid the groundwork for the protection of those who suffer the most in conflict, especially civilians, and have shaped the way the international community responds to the challenges of warfare. Following the horrific and unimaginable atrocities of the Second World War, the international community recognised the need for a more comprehensive legal framework to protect human dignity during armed conflict. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which I recognise tonight, addressed the protection of the wounded and sick in armed forces, prisoners of war and civilians.

For 75 years they have been the cornerstone of international efforts to safeguard basic standards of human rights, even during conflict. They have been ratified by nearly every country in the world, a testament to their universal acceptance and importance. One of the most significant achievements of the Geneva Conventions is the establishment of common article 3, which extends the protections to civil wars and internal strife. Before its adoption, there was a general reluctance to apply international law to internal conflicts, as they were seen as domestic issues. This article recognises that the suffering of civilians and combatants in internal conflicts is no less severe. Similarly, article 4 outlines a scope of protections offered to individuals during conflicts or occupations. By defining who qualifies as a protected person, the convention ensures that the most vulnerable, such as civilians and non-combatants, receive legal safeguards against mistreatment by combatants. This protection is fundamental in upholding humanitarian principles during times of war.

The Geneva Conventions have also provided the foundations for the development of additional protocols and treaties such as the 1977 additional protocols, which further enhanced protections for civilians and expanded the legal framework to address the realities of modern warfare. However, the nature of warfare has changed dramatically since both the original 1949 conventions and the 1977 additional protocols. Cyberwarfare, autonomous weapons and other technological advancements pose new challenges that the drafters of the Geneva Conventions could not have anticipated. The principles of the Geneva Conventions must be upheld. They must also be updated to ensure that they remain effective and relevant in protecting those who suffer the most in modern conflicts. That includes clarifying the application of existing laws to new technologies and ensuring that all parties are held accountable for violations.

Two contemporary high-profile examples that highlight the urgent need to both enforce and review the conventions are the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and in Gaza. Russia's actions in Ukraine blatantly violate the Geneva Conventions, with documented examples including the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, forced displacement of populations and the inhumane treatment of prisoners of war. The United Nations commission of inquiry on Ukraine has confirmed ongoing war crimes and human rights violations by Russian forces, including attacks on civilians, torture and sexual violence. These violations undermine global peace and highlight the urgent need for accountability and justice for the victims.

The Occupied Palestinian Territory has also seen repeated breaches of international humanitarian law over many years. Ongoing settlements, military operations in densely populated areas and the blockade affect the lives of millions and are potentially in breach of the Geneva Conventions. Breaches against Palestinian civilians have only escalated since the horrific attacks on Israel by Hamas on 7 October. Just this week an Israeli air strike on a school resulted in over 100 Palestinians killed, including many children. The school was sheltering displaced families at the time of the strike. Equally disturbing are allegations of torture and sexual abuse of Palestinian detainees at Israeli military facilities. These acts have shocked the international community, and the United States has labelled them as horrific.

The actions in Ukraine and Palestine continue despite international condemnation. The protection of civilians—particularly children—the humane treatment of detainees and the provision of humanitarian aid are not negotiable. They are fundamental rights that must be upheld. As we mark this important anniversary, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that all states adhere to international law and that the principles of the Geneva Conventions are respected in every single corner of the world.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (22:33):** I thank the member for Leppington for such an important and incredible speech on the Geneva Conventions. He touched on some of the local issues that we are seeing around the world at the moment. I have spoken about a number of those issues of late. I particularly note the point raised by the member for Leppington about what it means to sign up to the Geneva Conventions. The conventions are an international set of rules that we all agree on about how to treat people during times of conflict.



Obviously the preference is not to have any conflict but, if there is one, there is an expectation that people are treated in a humane, respectful and dignified manner. We have seen and we cannot continue to see fundamental human rights being walked all over. Young children are constantly being killed. They need to be protected. Aid needs to be provided. It is also a responsibility of all nations and the United Nations to continue to enforce the fact that all nations must follow the Geneva Conventions. If we want to build a better world, then we must hold people to account and call them out when they breach these international laws.

### TOBACCO LICENSING SCHEME

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (22:34):** It is alarming that by the end of this year New South Wales will be the only State in Australia without a tobacco licensing scheme. The sale of illicit tobacco, including e-cigarettes or vapes, is a growing concern across rural and regional New South Wales, including in my electorate of Albury. Under-the-counter cigarettes are being sold tax-free for between \$15 and \$26, while legitimate versions typically cost between \$40 and \$60 a packet. Illegal vapes, packed with the equivalent nicotine level of 50 cigarettes, cost around \$30. In early July officers from Strike Force Cecum conducted a two-day operation across Albury, Lavington and Howlong, targeting the alleged ongoing supply of prohibited drugs and illicit tobacco. Police charged 23 people with 48 offences; 12 search warrants were executed; and 92,250 cigarettes were seized, which had an estimated street value of just over \$142,000, along with 505 vapes worth an estimated \$30,000.

Becky Freeman is an Associate Professor of Public Health at the University of Sydney and she has acknowledged that the only reason people buy black market cigarettes is because cigarettes are expensive. She says the answer lies in enforcing existing laws and controlling the supply to make illegal cigarettes harder to come by. We cannot just put our hands over our eyes and our fingers in our ears and pretend the problem does not exist. The solution is not to reduce the price; it is to manage the supply chain. To sell cigarettes or vapes in New South Wales, all someone needs is a Tobacco Retailer Notification number to let the health department know that they intend to sell cigarettes. Getting a number is a straightforward process; it takes less than 20 minutes online.

In a world where many complain about red tape, it is concerning that if a person wants to sell cigarettes in New South Wales, red tape is not something they need to worry about. In comparison, if they want to operate a pub in New South Wales, they need a police check to pass a fit and proper person test to prove they are of good character, and they must pay licensing fees to sell alcohol and operate gambling facilities. New South Wales should not only enforce tobacco licensing but also introduce stricter penalties for illicit tobacco sales—including e-cigarettes and vapes—including jail time for repeat offenders to serve as a more powerful deterrent.

In a letter to the Minister for Health earlier this year, I wrote that I acknowledged and appreciated the ongoing efforts of NSW Health and the NSW Police Force in conducting compliance checks to curb the sale of illicit tobacco. However, many establishments found to have violated the laws quickly resumed selling illicit products shortly after those checks. That raises concerns about the effectiveness of the current penalties as a deterrent. For those stores caught selling cigarettes without a notification, the fine is just \$360—or the cost of around half a carton of legitimate cigarettes. Shops caught selling under-the-counter cigarettes cop an on-the-spot fine of between \$1,100 and \$5,500, which many say is so low that it is hardly a deterrent for dodgy operators. Many establishments that violated the law quickly resumed selling black market products shortly after being raided and having the products seized, due to its low risk for high reward.

Last week the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety tabled its report entitled *E-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales*. Graham Baxter, a tobacco control officer for NSW Health, told the committee that the current framework is not fit for purpose and fails to take into account the active involvement of organised crime in the illicit tobacco and e-cigarette market. Among the 13 recommendations, the committee called for the Government to consider introducing a positive licensing scheme for tobacco retailers; for New South Wales to review its tobacco legislation to ensure it is aligned with new Federal legislation; and for the Ministry of Health to commence the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 as a matter of priority to support more robust enforcement.

Speaking to the media in September 2023, the Minister for Health called the rise of vaping among teens and young people an epidemic. It is an epidemic and more action is needed. We must do everything in our power to ensure the health and safety of our community, especially our teens and young people. Ensuring the health and safety of our community, along with supporting ethical business practices, must remain a priority. I am confident that with increased focus we can significantly reduce the prevalence of illicit tobacco sales in our region.

### AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (22:39):** I acknowledge the extraordinary work of an organisation known to all members of this place and one that has made a huge contribution in Liverpool over

many years. Its symbol is recognised around the world, but most Australians do not look for a red cross until the darkest moments of their lives. On 13 August 1914, nine days after the outbreak of the First World War, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, the wife of the then Governor-General, formed the first Australian Red Cross branch. Today marks 110 years since the establishment of the Australian Red Cross. Many years later, the Australian Red Cross continues to act locally and connect globally to deliver what is needed when and where it is needed most.

Over more than a century, the Red Cross has been at the forefront of responding to crises and people who are most in need to achieve its goal of reducing human suffering. Just some of its achievements over that period include supporting people during war; focusing on rehabilitation for ex-servicepeople and their families, and supporting prisoners of war; working with the Federal Government to establish an asylum seeker assistance scheme in 1993; and responding to the worst disasters on record such as Cyclone Tracy in 1974, the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983, the devastating Indian Ocean tsunamis in 2004 and the Queensland and New South Wales floods in 2022.

The Australian Red Cross has also been at the heart of proactive responses to a range of issues. In 2016 it launched the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, a new partnership between emergency management organisations. More recently, the migration support team delivered the Support for Trafficked People Program, meeting health and welfare needs for those recovering from a trafficking experience. That is part of a broader spectrum of support for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who are often unable to access support elsewhere. That was the case for several constituents of mine. One woman initially contacted me very soon after I was elected to this place last year. She was incredibly disheartened because she had a PhD in a health area but was unable to get meaningful work within Sydney. I connected her with the Red Cross team and now she has resettled in a regional area and is able to utilise her extensive skill set to support that community.

The migrant support program also has a range of other services, including restoring family links, forced-marriage support and community conversations to enable acclimatisation to a new environment. However, the Red Cross is probably most known for its blood and plasma donation program, which has saved countless lives over the years. What began as a blood transfusion service in Victoria in 1929 was then expanded into a national service following Commonwealth financial support in 1955. It is a testament to the commitment and energy of its workers and volunteers, who talk about the importance of blood donation everywhere they go, and who try to encourage people more broadly within our community to donate blood and plasma as much as possible.

Early last year I happened to meet Megan and Jess from the Liverpool Red Cross Lifeblood, who spoke to me about some of the work that they were doing. I donated blood once when I was 18 but I was subsequently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and believed I could no longer donate blood. But it was only after that conversation with Megan and Jess that I was told that I could, in fact, donate blood. The technology had improved. The restrictions on type 1 diabetics donating blood had relaxed such that I could donate blood, and I donated blood for the second time in my life just a couple of months ago.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** You're due for another donation.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** I am, indeed; the Minister is correct. We know that the goal to reduce human suffering can be achieved by providing emergency services and disaster relief, supporting local communities in need or tackling international crises. We often see the role of the Red Cross in war zones such as, most recently, the Ukraine and Gaza through the Red Crescent society. It is a testament to the work and the commitment of the many volunteers and workers who have the goal of putting humanity first, reducing the suffering of their fellow human beings and ensuring that they have people that they can turn to in times of need. I commend the work of the Red Cross and I thank it for all it does.

### MOSS VALE HIGH SCHOOL

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (22:44):** I raise the issue of the urgent need to replace and upgrade Moss Vale High School's hall, and I note the vibrancy of community and academic success of Moss Vale High School, despite it not having access to adequate facilities. The school has experienced an increase in student enrolments recently due in part to the rapid growth within the Southern Highlands but also, I have no doubt, to the incredible school environment that has been actualised by the school's leadership team. Moss Vale High School embraces a collaborative partnership between educators and parents preparing young people for the future. The teachers understand the need for a diversity of learning materials and a diversity of interests in preparation for students to enter the constantly changing world.

Prior to the 2023 election I visited to view the school hall, as I had been working with members of the Moss Vale High School Parents and Friends Association, who reached out to me as their local member to raise the issue of the need for a new school hall to accommodate school activities. Moss Vale High School has a current

enrolment of approximately 800 students, including a special needs department that has more than 30 students. For many years the current school hall has not been able to accommodate all students at the one time. Therefore, whole-of-school assemblies need to be split into two sessions due to occupational health and safety regulations. I refer to the NSW Department of Education's *School Excellence Framework Version Three*, dated November 2023, which says of school resources:

The school's physical resources and facilities are well-maintained, accessible and provide a safe environment that is inclusive of all students.

I draw the urgent attention of the House to the fact that the Moss Vale High School hall is 61 years old and is no longer fit for purpose. The school has seven demountable buildings, which are used for full-time lessons, and antiquated change rooms with only one room and one toilet for each entire year group. The school is in dire need of a multipurpose space that can provide a safe and accessible environment to hold assemblies, drama and music performances, and classroom activities, including adequate change room facilities and toilets.

Prior to the 2023 election the Coalition committed to the delivery of a brand-new, multimillion-dollar hall at Moss Vale High School. The prioritisation of a new hall complemented the investment in not only public education infrastructure but also the broader community, offering a natural gathering point for the many pursuits of students. A new school hall would provide the opportunity for the rapidly growing local community to make use of the facilities, and facilitate collaboration with local community service providers which, in turn, would deliver benefits to students.

I reached out to the Minister in May last year to reiterate the extensive growth within the Southern Highlands and the increasing enrolment numbers at Moss Vale High School. I raised the issue of the school having to spend its precious funds to hire equipment, transport students and hire external venues for co-curricular activities such as music and sport. The Moss Vale High School community is a proud and well-respected community within the Southern Highlands. That can be attributed to the dedicated work of the staff, students and community. That respect has been demonstrated through the school moving 200 places higher in the Higher School Certificate rankings. This saw the Moss Vale High School placed 125th against all schools in the State, including independent and selective schools.

The school ranked fourteenth in the State for HSC achievement and, when compared to all comprehensive public high schools across New South Wales, it was the only rural-regional comprehensive public school in the top 20. That is an enormous achievement, which should be rewarded. I again highlight the need for priority funding for the construction of a new school hall at Moss Vale High School to continue the commendable successes of the whole school community. The New South Wales Government must urgently provide the investment for future growth. The education department must ensure that our students are resourced and the physical learning spaces meet the needs of our students.

#### TINA RAHIMI

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (22:48):** As our athletes return from the Olympics, we will hear amazing stories about wonderful individuals. Tonight I recognise and celebrate the remarkable journey of an extraordinary athlete and inspiring individual, Tina Rahimi. Tina is the first ever Muslim female boxer to participate in a Commonwealth Games. Additionally, she wears a hijab to demonstrate once again that there are no limitations except those that one places upon oneself. Tina made her international debut at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 2022, where she won a bronze medal. It is a privilege and duty to recognise the achievements of those who embody the spirit of perseverance and excellence, and Tina is a shining example of both.

A while ago I joined with Tina for some training and her fitness and skill left me floundering—to say the least. I will not be taking up boxing as a career. Tina hails from humble beginnings. Born in the multicultural community of Canterbury-Bankstown, she discovered her passion for boxing at a young age. Tina began her boxing journey in local gyms, including under coach Keefe Yatin at Brotherhood Boxn in Chullora, where she honed her skills and found solace and strength in the sport. Tina only started boxing to improve her fitness, but she trained tirelessly, often facing challenges that would deter many and showing a fierce determination to succeed. She learnt the art of self-discipline and developed a fighting spirit that will make her a formidable competitor in the ring.

Tina's dedication and commitment to her goals continued to propel her forward. As she progressed through the ranks, Tina made her mark in the featherweight division, where her speed, agility and tenacity garnered attention from coaches and fans alike. Her dedication and hard work paid off as she competed in and won numerous national and international tournaments, consistently demonstrating her talent and resilience. Tina's journey has not been without its obstacles, but each setback has only fuelled her drive to further succeed. Hers is

an inspirational story. The pinnacle of Tina's career came when she was selected to represent Australia at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. That achievement is a testament not only to her skill as a boxer but also to her role as a trailblazer for young athletes, particularly for women, especially those from diverse backgrounds.

Tina's success in making it to round 16 at the games reflects her dedication and the support of her coaches, family and the wider sporting community, which has rallied behind her. The Paris Olympic Games stands as Australia's most successful games, with a total of 53 medals, and 13 of our 18 gold medals were won by women across a range of individual and team sports. While these are incredible achievements, being selected to represent one's country is a metaphoric Everest in itself. While Tina did not win a medal, her achievements are in no way diminished by the end result. That is the story that must be told. These amazing athletes who won medals have represented Australia with such great success, but so did the team of individuals who made it to the Olympics and demonstrated everything it means to embody that spirit.

The community of Canterbury-Bankstown is filled with pride and admiration for Tina's selection on the world stage and the determination of many other aspiring athletes across our nation. Her story serves to inspire us all to pursue our dreams relentlessly, regardless of the challenges we face. I congratulate Tina Rahimi on not only her achievements in the boxing ring but also the values of resilience, hard work and integrity that she embodies. May Tina continue to inspire future generations of athletes. May her journey remind us of the power of tenacity, the pursuit of excellence and the spirit of never giving up, which burns deep within each and every one of us. We are so proud of Tina. Let us keep going.

### **NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (22:52):** My community relies heavily on an extensive bus network that connects them with the broader Sydney area. Whether it is getting to work or school or simply to run errands, buses are a major part of our community's public transport system, and we need them to be reliable. However, Labor's recent overhaul of bus routes has left many of our residents stranded, with longer commute times, inconvenient transfers and reduced access. Last Monday a raft of bus changes came into effect that were meant to coincide with the opening of the Sydney Metro but, unfortunately, the Sydney Metro City and Southwest line remains unopened due to ongoing union disputes—yet the bus changes were still brought in by this Labor Government. It was not enough for Labor to fail to open Sydney Metro on the date that it set; it has continued to cut our bus services without any transport alternatives.

The recent bus changes to the north and north-west regions include many buses that pass through my local community. Two routes were removed completely: the 200 between Bondi Junction and Gore Hill, which goes via the North Sydney CBD; and the 602X. Timetable changes have been made to a whole suite of services, including the 115, 202, 203, 207, 208, 209, 252, 265, 275, 286, 287, 290, N90 and N91. Those are not just a few timetable changes but a significant raft of changes to bus services in my community. The changes were touted as bringing more reliability and certainty for commuters, but that is not the experience on the ground. Our commuters are being failed by the changes that Labor has made to the bus network.

There has also been a number of route path changes, most notably to the 252 and 261, which will no longer operate between Lane Cove, North Sydney and the Sydney CBD. The 269 will operate between North Sydney and Kirribilli only. It will no longer operate between McMahons Point and North Sydney Station. I am all for interchange. I know that Sydney has had issues with interchanging in the past—when the Liberal-Nationals were in government, we introduced a number of changes around interchange. But it is impossible to interchange if there is no service to join. This Government has proceeded with changing and removing bus routes without the Sydney Metro operating to enable people to get where they need to go. The decision should have been made to retain these bus services until there was an alternative route with the opening of the Sydney Metro.

Countless constituents have reached out to me. You can see that these changes have had an effect on many in my community just by reading some of the comments among our local community social media groups from people who are stranded, confused and lost. It is on their behalf that I bring this issue to the attention of the House. I have reached out to the Minister for Transport and am advocating for her to restore reliable local bus services to my community. Disruption to the morning commute is the theme that we are running with here, and I am looking forward to the Sydney Metro line opening. We all are—it was highly anticipated in my community.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Didn't you have a fundraiser organised for that night?

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** That was not me. I am sure it was a wonderful evening and would have been even better if the metro had been opened by Labor.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** We'll put safety first.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** The Minister will have an opportunity to reply if he wishes. I am not sure whether Labor is still trying to find the scissors to cut the ribbon. I am hopeful that these bus changes will improve the commuter experience once the metro line is open, but we do not know when that will be, and people are still being left stranded in the interim. It is not only the western side of my electorate that is feeling the pain when it comes to buses. Time and again, full buses from the northern beaches travelling down Military Road are unable to pick up passengers from Spit Junction, Cremorne, Neutral Bay Junction and the Watson Street bus stop. This means we see—as we did this morning, in fact—long lines of commuters stretching for blocks, waiting and waiting. They are unable to get to work, get their kids to school or go about their day.

This year the Labor Government overhauled the bus timetable on northern beaches routes that go through my community. This meant cutting services so that at least commuters could be certain there were no last-minute bus cancellations or phantom buses. There was a goal to have more reliability in the timetabling, but that required a reduction in the number of services timetabled. It was meant to provide commuters with certainty but, unfortunately, that did not happen. We still see cancelled services and phantom buses appearing on our apps. I have sat at bus stops with my children watching a bus pass on the app but not in front of me. These phantom buses are obviously not picking up any passengers. What my community—and every community—needs and expects is reliable and convenient bus services and public transport. This Government needs to review its decisions and, where appropriate, reverse these detrimental changes.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (22:57):** There was an invitation to reply, so I thought I would take it up. I will clarify a couple of things that the member for North Shore said in error about the metro. The member has walked out of the Chamber and is not paying me the respect of listening to me. That is what those opposite do: throw around allegations and then walk away.

**Ms Felicity Wilson:** Point of order—

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The Minister will resume his seat. The member for North Shore rises on a point of order.

**Ms Felicity Wilson:** The Minister was not called to order for interjecting during my contribution. I did not complain at the time, but I ask that the Minister withdraw any comments criticising me for choosing to go home at 10.59 p.m. after making factual references to bus service cancellations in my community.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The member for North Shore has requested that the Minister withdraw his comment.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** The Government has made it very clear that, while we apologise for the delay in the metro, we will be making safety a priority. I will make another thing quite clear. I know that, as the Minister announced today, the sign-off of the metro is now with the independent National Rail Safety Regulator. When that happens, as the Minister indicated, the metro will open. We will place a priority on the safety of the metro, rather than just a date that might be convenient for other people.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 22:59 until  
Wednesday 14 August 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

#### **ST ALOYSIUS CATHOLIC PARISH CRONULLA CENTENARY**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—**It was a pleasure to join with the St Aloysius Catholic Parish community to celebrate its centenary in late June. More than 600 people from across generations came together to celebrate, with Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP leading a Pontifical Mass and blessing a recently installed pipe organ that was played for the first time, followed by an anniversary feast. The pioneering Giddings family hosted a small home gathering in the early 1900s before donating land for construction of a small church in the name of St Aloysius Gonzaga, a youthful Jesuit saint. In 1915 mass was celebrated in the new building and as the area grew Cronulla became a parish in 1924. Over time the parish established churches at Kurnell, Caringbah and Bundeena and primary and high schools, along with a conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society that continues to care for people in need today. The Parish today has a range of other ministries serving both the church and wider community, including playgroup, its social justice group and special religious education in schools. I congratulate the Parish on 100 years of being part of and serving the Cronulla community.

### CRONULLA SEAGULLS STATE CUP CHAMPIONS

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Cronulla Seagulls who've won back-to-back Football NSW All Age Men State Cup titles. The final was a big occasion for football in the Shire with the seasoned Seagulls outfit facing local Shire Premier League rivals Caringbah Redbacks in the final. The Seagulls side showed their class against the up-and-coming Redbacks outfit, winning 3-nil thanks to a hat-trick of goals by striker Thomas Nunn. It is a huge achievement to be crowned the best side in the State, but for a club to do it two years in a row is testament to the skill and teamwork of the Seagulls Premier League men's side. I recognise the winning squad: Benjamin Andrews, Benjamin Raatz, Benjamin Harrington, Tristan Maher, Ben Riach, Kobi Sharp, Thomas Nunn, Jai Mellor, Thomas Stretton, Jeremy Lopez, Ryan Hay, Andrew Banning, Jack Scott, Joshua Auld, Adam Hristodoulou, Fabio Carvalho, along with coaches Michael Harrington and Warren Banning. I also congratulate the Caringbah Redbacks side for making the State Cup final in their first year as a team in the Shire Premier League.

### CAITLIN SCHNEIDER

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise Caitlin Schneider of Miranda who was named School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year at the Southern and Southwest Sydney Training Awards. The awards recognise the region's most outstanding people and organisations working and learning in the vocational education and training sector. As a school-based trainee, Caitlin is completing a TAFE Certificate III in Health Services Assistance as part of her HSC Vocational Education and Training studies at St Aloysius College Cronulla, while working and training part-time at Kareena Private Hospital. Caitlin is receiving training in infection control and first aid, transporting patients, supporting nursing staff and communication in a health workplace. After completing her HSC and leaving school, Caitlin could go on to work directly in hospitals or health services or go on to an enrolled nurse training course. Caitlin's interest in nursing was sparked by helping her mum take stitches out of her dad's arm and that school-based study has given her the opportunity to realise her dreams early. I join with St Aloysius College in congratulating Caitlin on winning this award and wish her the best as she completes her studies and embarks on a career in health care.

### SHWETA DOKE

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—I would like to recognise a valuable member of my community, Shweta Doke. Shweta lives in Rockdale and as if being a mother of three, having a full-time job, and assisting her parents in their grocery business at Kogarah isn't enough, Shweta continues to make time to be there for the community. Shweta is also the Treasurer of South Sydney Indian Association [SSIA], a non-profit organisation whose vision aligns with that of her own – to Care, Celebrate, Connect and Collaborate. Shweta, being a pivotal part of this organisation, always reaches out to help new migrants, students and families who find themselves in a vulnerable position. The amount of time and dedication Shweta puts towards helping them is phenomenal. Recently, a couple of unfortunate events shattered our community, one being the Carlton station tragedy. Shweta was one of the first people to take the initiative by getting the whole community together and help the struggling mum. Shweta is true pioneer and a pillar of strength to many. She is a role model to one and all. I would like to express my deep appreciation for her selfless service and hope Shweta continues to inspire others.

### ST BERNADETTE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, CASTLE HILL. VINNIES SLEEPOUT

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Vinnies School Sleepout provides the opportunity to highlight homelessness with the aim to help those experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. On 8 August 2024 seventy students from St Bernadette's Primary School participated in the Sleepout. The students spent a few hours sleeping outside with only the clothes they had on to keep them warm. Some had a piece of cardboard or a sleeping bag for comfort. Throughout the night, some were given a cup of noodles or a butter and vegemite sandwich, while others had to wait their turn. Leslie Blanch, who is an advocate and volunteer for the homeless, shared his insights on the challenges faced by people sleeping rough in our community. A fantastic total of \$3,393.00 was raised which will assist Vinnies in providing essential support to those in our community who need it the most. I congratulate the Principal Mrs Cooke, Assistant Principal Mrs Floody and teachers Miss El-Hage, Mrs Thorpe, Mr Eid, Mr Bamford, Mrs Glebatsis who also were part of the Vinnies Sleepout. Lastly, I recognise and congratulate all students for your achievement in raising awareness of homelessness in our community. Thank you to all students.

### HILLS COMMUNITY KINDERGARTEN EARLY LEARNING MATTERS WEEK 2024

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—Our early childhood education and childcare teachers perform a vital part of the development of our children. Early Learning Matters Week aims to recognise and raise the profile

of high-quality early childhood education and care and all the ways it supports children to thrive. It is an opportunity to celebrate the importance of early learning and the difference it makes to children's learning, development, and wellbeing. The Hills Community Kindergarten celebrated throughout the week with displays at the entrance highlighting how learning through play promotes children's development, and how this learning is communicated from an educator's perspective and child's perspective. The kindergarten displayed information along the fence line for our community members to read as they walked by. Children are not 'just' playing they are learning to problem solve, communicate, explore with their senses, create, imagine, and develop relationships. We know the first five years are crucial, as this is a rapid period of brain development. The brain responds to experiences; therefore, it is imperative these experiences are high quality to set the foundations for future learning. I express my appreciation to Allison McCartney and the team at the Hills Community Kindergarten.

#### **KENTHURST PRE-SCHOOL FETE, 11 AUGUST 2024**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Kenthurst Pre-School Fete was held this year on 11 August 2024. The Pre-School Fete is always well attended with the Kenthurst community enjoyed the day. The fete included music, a magnificent variety of stalls including a white elephant stall, kid crafts, face painting, cake decorating, gift baskets, homemade cakes, and much more. The fete is a historic annual event which has its own special spirit. There were pony rides, pirate ship rides and train rides. There was even an appearance this year by Bluey, Dora and Bingo. The Fete raises important funds every year. This year the funds will be used to purchase new shade structures for the garden and to create an indigenous rainforest garden with Dharug artwork. The Kenthurst Pre-school commenced operation in Kenthurst on Monday, 3rd April 1967 and has been serving the needs of the Kenthurst community for over fifty-seven years. The committee are to be commended for the work undertaken to organise another great fete. I especially recognise and acknowledge the Pre-School Director, Leanne Murray, the Parent Management Committee President Christine O'Brien, and the Fete Coordinator Candice Rapp.

#### **JIM HENRY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Billabong High School student Jim Henry on his recent selection in the NSW Under 21 Boys Squad by the Polocrosse Association of NSW. Jim, who hails from Holbrook, competed at the nation's pinnacle event the Australian Polocrosse Nationals, in Chincilla QLD from June 24th to 30th. Polocrosse is a hybrid of polo and lacrosse and is often described as rugby union on horseback. Jim, I wish you all the best as you continue to pursue your endeavours in horsemanship, athleticism, and incredible teamwork. Congratulations!

#### **64TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAMESE RANGERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I had the pleasure of attending the 64th Anniversary of the establishment of the Vietnamese Rangers of the Republic of Vietnam, held at Crystal Palace in Canley Heights on the 5th of July 2024. The Vietnamese Rangers played a crucial role in defending South Vietnam. Their valour continues to be remembered by veterans, their families, allies, and the Vietnamese refugee community. The anniversary serves as an occasion to preserve their history, heritage and culture. In addition to commemoration, the event was a vibrant multicultural celebration, featuring military music, songs, and especially a fashion parade showcasing traditional Vietnamese costumes "Áo Dài" and conical leaf hats "Nón Lá", blended with modern Australian fashion. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Mr Van Xem Huynh and the Executive Committee of the Veterans of the Vietnamese Rangers of the Republic of Vietnam for their kind invitation. I also want to express my gratitude to everyone involved in organising this culture-rich event.

#### **BOSSLEY PARK HIGH SCHOOL VISIT 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the 20th of May 2024, I had the privilege of visiting Bossley Park High School to discuss the positive and negative impacts that social media has on our younger generations especially high school students. I met Mr Chris Hollis, the Principal of Bossley Park High School and he spoke about witnessing youths being reliant on social media and the risks it presented to their mental health, including social anxiety and increased isolation at school. We also spoke directly to students to discuss how social media use could be regulated to provide a more positive experience for young people on digital platforms. I was part of a discussion group with the Premier, Deputy Premier, and Minister for Youth & Mental Health, and we discussed how students have interacted with social media and their personal experiences. The students were aware of the variety of benefits, including the increased connectivity offered by social media, but also the various dangers that it can present. I look forward to returning to Bossley Park High School in future events and to visit the teachers and the students.

#### **CO-PILOT PROGRAM- FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 24th April 2024, I had the pleasure of visiting Fairfield Hospital to discuss the expansion of urgent care services for elderly people across South-Western Sydney, including my

electorate of Cabramatta. The Community Older Persons Intervention and Liaison Outreach Team [COPILOT] program is crucial in reducing medical wait times in the emergency department by addressing the medical concerns of elderly members of the community who face non-life-threatening conditions. I accompanied my local parliamentary colleagues and the Minister for Health to listen to various community members, patients, and medical professionals and discuss some issues facing our medical system. The CO-PILOT program is an essential service that would undoubtedly reduce pressure on our medical system. I would like to thank Sonia Marshall Chief Executive of South Western Sydney Local Health District, Paul Crowe the General Manager and all the nurses, doctors, and other medical staff at Fairfield Hospital who provide vital medical care, especially to vulnerable members of the elderly community. These medical professionals have responded to the medical and physical needs of the most vulnerable individuals in our community, and I am so grateful for their exemplary service to our local community.

#### **BRETT BLACKLER**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Brett Blackler, a SES Shellharbour unit volunteer, for receiving the National Emergency Medal on Wednesday 19 June 2024. The National Emergency Medal is awarded to persons who rendered sustained or significant service during nationally significant emergencies in Australia. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Brett for this award and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

#### **NGAIRE MCCARTHY**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Ngaire McCarthy, an SES Shellharbour unit volunteer, for receiving the National Emergency Medal on Wednesday 19 June 2024. The National Emergency Medal is awarded to persons who rendered sustained or significant service during nationally significant emergencies in Australia. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Ngaire for this award and wish her well in all her future endeavours.

#### **RAY MERZ**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Ray Merz, a SES Shellharbour unit volunteer, for receiving the Commissioner's Commendation for Courage on Wednesday 19 June 2024. The Eugowra flood in November 2022 took lives and livelihoods and Ray Merz has been honoured for his bravery in saving scores of people. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Ray for his amazing act of bravery and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

#### **END OF AN ERA FOR TENTERFIELD'S PREMIER MEATS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to congratulate Tenterfield couple Tim and Carmel Rose who have retired after 38 years owning and operating Premier Meats butchery in High Street. It is the end of an era for this family business with the reins handed over to new owners Rory and Emily Smith on July 1. Originally meant to have been a five-year project, the Roses have provided great customer service to the Tenterfield community for almost four decades. Along the way, they and successive teams of employees have won many awards for their products and retail activity at local, regional, state and national level. They have also trained 11 apprentices, several of whom are still working in the trade and gone on to forge careers. Two current staff, Teena and Floyd, who have been with Premier Meats for the past 10 years, are continuing with the new owners. The Roses on Facebook thanked their wonderful customers: "Obviously, a business is nothing without loyal supporters and everything we have achieved over the years is shared with you. "No words can describe the gratitude we feel towards our customers and the friendships forged over the counter," they posted.

#### **ELTHAM HOTEL SECURES CREATENSW SOUNDPROOFING GRANT**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Congratulations to Eltham Hotel owners The Mosey On Inn Group on securing a \$57,378 Soundproofing Grant under CreateNSW's Venues Unlocked program. Hopefully this will allow the pub to keep its reputation as a key regional live music venue and reduce any noise complaints. The proposed noise mitigation works, to which Eltham Hotel will make a co-contribution, include: Removal of existing roll down blind system and replace with sliding acoustic rated transparent barriers; Install acoustic insulation under existing roof sheeting and enclose an open area of roof; Install new door frames, solid core door and pelmet with soundproofing seals around doors; Replace existing glass awning with sealed, double-glazed glass; Supply and install a noise limiter. Owners on Facebook say they are working towards better balance outcomes for all concerned. "By all, we mean affected neighbours, overwhelmingly supportive neighbours, regular performers, visiting performers, our employees and the wider community," they posted. "We've done this by sticking to a strict programming schedule, keeping the 9.30pm curfew and maintained an open communication regarding upcoming shows." They described the Soundproofing Grant as another great step towards the pub's efforts to keep regular live music performances for years to come.



### LISMORE BUSINESS AWARDS

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Congratulations to Joel Jensen Constructions on winning five Lismore Business Awards, including Business of the Year. JJC won Excellence in Trade Construction & Manufacturing; Outstanding Business Leader – under 20 employees; Outstanding Employer of Choice – under 20 employees; and Excellence in Small Business. Congratulations to finalists and these category winners: Excellence in Retail & Personal Services - Mel's Melting Moments Gift Shop; Excellence in Business & Professional Services - Connect Business Solutions; Excellence in Health, Care & Wellness Industries - Lismore Discount Drug Store and Stepz Fitness Lismore; Excellence in Tourism, Recreation & Visitor Experience - Lismore Lantern Parade; Outstanding Employee - Gavin Mulcahy - Bridge Knowledge; Outstanding Business Leader – over 21 employees - Damian Chapelle - Newton Denny Chapelle; Outstanding Employer of Choice – over 21 employees - Newton Denny Chapelle; Excellence in Innovation - Local Sounds Radio; Excellence in Sustainability- Cleanaway Pty Ltd and Summerland Bank; Outstanding Community Organisation - Our House and Women Up North; Outstanding Visitor Experience - Invercauld House; Outstanding New Business - 187 Cantina; Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion - Social Futures; Excellence in Micro Business – Jim's Termite and Pest Control and Flourish Gallery/Studio; and Excellence in Large Business - Connect Business Solutions.

### ARMIDALE LOCAL WINS THE QUEEN'S SCOUT AWARD

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Armidale local Archie Todd for being bestowed the prestigious Queen's Scout Award, presented to him by the NSW Governor and Chief Scout Margaret Beazley, at a ceremony at Government House in Sydney recently. This award is given to a Venturer Scout who has achieved over a broad range of disciplines, with the aim of the award to widen participants interests, knowledge and to extend their personal limitations. I congratulate Archie for adding this accolade to his bow, being an accomplished musician and finalist in the triple j's 'Unearthed' competition, as well as being an advocate for the LGBTQIA community and having served on the State Youth Council. I commend Archie for the hard work and commitment to Venturer Scouts and for giving back to the community through many pursuits. Special thanks also to the 2nd Armidale Venturer Scouting group, Venturer Leader Sophie Warner, Scout Leader Bruce Myers and to all Scout volunteers and members, for giving of their time and tireless effort for the benefit of others.

### INVERELL STUDENT JAMES PAYTON

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Inverell local James Payton for being chosen for the prestigious 2024 National Art School intensive HSC Studio Practice Program, Black and White Photography course. James is one of eight students to be selected to attend the program later this year in Sydney. I congratulate James on this impressive selection, as well as for taking opportunities, which saw his work recognised when he joined the Dobell Drawing School program earlier in the year. I commend James for the hard work, commitment and passion shown to his art and specifically to photography. Special thanks also Principal Sally Chapple of Macintyre High School and Art teacher Sharon Gilmour for their support and encouragement given to James to achieve this wonderful accolade.

### URALLA SHIRE COUNCIL PUTS URALLA ON THE MAP

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Uralla Shire Council for their initiative to put Uralla on the map as a must see destination. The council has provided four public spaces for visitors and locals alike to gather and enjoy, whilst preserving the town's historic architecture and enhancing amenities. These spaces include a series of new sculptures known as The Constellations of the South; the Fibonacci Installation at Pioneer Park; the transformation of Rotary Park and refurbishment of the Uralla Court House. I congratulate Mayor Robert Bell and fellow Councillors, General Manager Toni Averay and council staff for their foresight and implementation of each of these projects. The council also used the recent opening of the Court House as an opportunity to raise money for a very worthy local facility, being the McMaugh Gardens Aged Care. I commend all involved in each of these projects, with special thanks to the artists: Guy Crosley and Uralla locals Andrew Parker, Christine Ball and Garry Eades. The hard work and commitment to improve Uralla has been a team effort and will be enjoyed for many years to come.

### NEW POLICE RECRUITS

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—I was pleased to see The Tweed/Byron Police Area Command welcome two new recruits from the June attestation, commencing 12 months on-the-job training as Probationary Constables. New recruits must complete eight months of training – four months in-person at the Goulburn Police Academy and four months of online study – before being sworn into the Force and starting duties at their new home station. I commend these new Probationary Constables for embarking on a career with the NSW Police

Force. A career in policing is like no other, it takes a special person, dedication and commitment. A Police Officer's commitment to fostering a safe and thriving environment is invaluable, and I want each and every officer to know that their efforts are deeply appreciated. I look forward to seeing the new recruits in and around the Tweed.

#### **JACK MCVEIGH**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Kingscliff Public School Alumni Jack McVeigh made the Tweed extremely proud as he joined the Australian Mens Basketball team, the Boomers, in their history-making run at the 2024 Paris Olympics. The Boomers won their first-ever Olympic medal, taking home Bronze for Australia. Jack has also recently signed a two-way deal with the Houston Rockets, officially joining the NBA in America. Jack was a member of the Kingscliff Public School basketball team that won the state Primary School Sports Association [PSSA] championships in 2008, a sign of what Jack would go on to achieve. Well done to Jack on these incredible achievements and for representing Australia, and Kingscliff, at the Olympic Games!

#### **CHLOE COVELL**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Congratulations to Tweed Heads local Chloe Covell on representing Australia in the final of the women's street skateboarding event at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Aged just 14 years old and the youngest competitor in the Australian Olympic team, Chloe is one of Australia's best skateboarders and everyone in the Tweed Electorate is incredibly proud of Chloe and her Olympic achievements. As noted by Olympic commentators, Chloe doesn't play it safe when competing and this tenacity, bravery and determination will see Chloe achieve continued greatness in her sporting career. I sincerely commend Chloe on reaching the highest level of representative sport in the world. Chloe has inspired young skaters and athletes not only in the Tweed, but around Australia and I'm sure the rest of the world, sparking more Olympic dreams. Well done Chloe, you should be incredibly proud of what you've achieved and the Tweed will be cheering you on as you continue to accomplish your goals.

#### **MR ALAN STONEHAM**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—It was a privilege to join the Penrith City Council leadership team, Deputy Mayor Mark Davies, staff, community leaders, family and friends of Mr Alan Stoneham last Friday evening as Alan Stoneham was honoured with a Citizen Reception having been bestowed the Civic Recognition of Honoured Citizen of the City of Penrith. Alan Stoneham had dedicated his working life to the people of Penrith City, with 46 years of dedicated service in delivering vision for our region, building an enviable and strong culture in a growing organisation and maintaining humility in leadership. It was so fitting for Alan to have been bestowed the civic Recognition of Honoured Citizen of the City of Penrith and to also have the contribution and support of his family made clear in the speeches that occurred throughout the evening. On behalf of all the residents, business owners, and people yet to call Penrith home, thank you for what you have achieved and built for us to enjoy and prosper from.

#### **SUMMER KNOWLES**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate Nepean Hockey Association Junior Representative and Caroline Chisholm Catholic College student Summer Knowles for having been selected for the All-Australian Girls Hockey team. Summer's national selection followed her outstanding performances representing NSW as Vice Captain at the 2024 School Sport Australia Hockey Championships as part of the NSW 15 Years and Under Girls team, where NSW went on to win the Bronze medal with a 4-2 victory over ACT. What a bright future Summer has ahead of her. I congratulate Summer on her remarkable achievements and wish her the very best as she represents our country.

#### **MR SATHYAN ILANKO**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate and commend Mr Sathyan Ilanko on his extraordinary rise and success as a musician, songwriter and independent artist. Mr Ilanko focuses his work on English and Tamil songs. He debuted as a playback singer in the Indian Kollywood industry in 2019 at the age of 16. Due to COVID-19 restrictions he couldn't return for a period although completed songs in Australia which were continuously broadcast on the Indian News 7 channel. During this time, Mr Ilanko developed his skills in song writing and started collaborating with international artists, predominantly from Europe and India. He also started creating his own songs. Mr Ilanko's success hit new heights this year with the release in India of his debut song as a Tamil songwriter, titled 'Aasa Kooda', composed and sung by Sai Abhayannkar, a musician from India. The song has become a global sensation, with over 64 million views on YouTube and growing. It is trending on numerous platforms and across the charts of multiple countries. I congratulate Mr Ilanko on his achievements and wish him continued success.

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - FATIMA ALI**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Fatima Ali a joyous 33rd birthday! Their husband, Mohammed, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "I love, I miss you and I hate every moment we are apart." It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Fatima's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Fatima!

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - VANI SARADHI MOTAMARRI**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Vani Saradhi Motamarri a joyous 60th birthday! Their husband, Saradhi, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "It is a great honour to record my beloved wife's special 60th birthday in the NSW Parliament Register. In the Indian tradition, 60th birthday marks a major milestone in a person's life. As per the Hindu Calendar the birth year (in a 60-Year Cycle) repeats itself, and it is considered as the second life cycle of the person.." It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Vani Saradhi's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Vani Saradhi!

**BIRTHDAY MESSAGE - ANGELA DENG**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in wishing Angela Deng a joyous 9th birthday! Their friend, Ming, asked me to share these heartfelt words in the Parliament: "Happy Birthday Angela! Hooray! It's your special day, filled with fun, laughter, and all things bright and colourful, just like you! Wishing you a day filled with magical moments, sweet treats, and lots of smiles. May your birthday be as awesome as you are, with all your dreams coming true. Happy Birthday, little superstar!" It truly is a wonderful thing to celebrate a birthday with the love and support of those closest to you, and I am humbled to be able to play a small role in making Angela's day a little extra special. May this birthday be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments that can be taken forward on life's journey. Wishing you continued happiness and prosperity in the years ahead. Happy birthday Angela!

**75 YEARS OF THE BOWLS CLUB**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Maintaining a sports or community organisation for the benefit of its members and the community is not always easy, but the Nambucca Bowls Club has every right to be proud of its 75 years of existence. Located close to the banks of the Nambucca River, the famous bowls club has been offering social interaction and athletic occasions to the local community for many years, 75 to be precise. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Nambucca Bowls Club for their continuing contributions to our community as we celebrate this amazing milestone. Their outstanding history of accessibility, community involvement, and sportsmanship serves as an example to all of us. Cheers to 75 years of incredible accomplishments and many more years of growth, success, and enrichment of the community. They embodied the resilient and kind spirit that makes our little communities unique. Thank you, Nambucca. Seventy-five years is a remarkable achievement with many more years of bowling to come. Congratulations and well-done on a remarkable 75 years.

**DARBY LANCASTER REACHES NEW CAREER MILESTONE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Darby Lancaster has hit another exciting milestone with a debut for the wallabies in their 40-29 victory over Georgia. The 21-year-old, former Kempsey Cannonballs junior earned his call-up to represent his country in Sydney on Saturday the 20th of July, following a standout performance in the 2022/23 HSBC Sevens World Series and last year's World Rugby Under-20 Championships with the Junior Wallabies. From a young age, Lancaster has excelled in sports, winning championships in athletics and numerous other sports teams throughout the years. Since he was a small child growing up in the Macleay, Lancaster has always been recognised for his Sporting abilities. After a spectacular World Series season, last year, Darby secured a two-year contract with the Melbourne Rebels last year. In his Super Rugby Pacific debut against the Waratahs in the sixth round, Lancaster displayed positive attributes that suggested he would not be unfamiliar with the big athletic stage. Darby's future is bright, and he will never forget where he came from in the first place—the Cannonballs and the entire Macleay community will always be by his side.

**4 KIDS, ONE MISSION**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Keely, Brooklyn, Sarah, and Pat Lawrence have all embraced the opportunity to raise awareness of bowel cancer. Every year in June, the 4 Amazing Kids host a fundraiser to raise awareness of a subject that is far too frequently ignored. Their late mother, Karen, served as the motivation for

this occasion. At the age of 39, Karen was brought in for an urgent surgery to remove a tumour that was close to rupturing in her colon. Before this, Karen had been questioning her health issues for two years with her doctors, but they had dismissed her concerns as "too young". The yearly fundraiser, which features a raffle, bake sale, and 100s club, demonstrated how dedicated the Lawrence family and the community are to helping a cause that is extremely important to everyone. With the goal to assist raise awareness and provide care for those impacted, all earnings were contributed directly to Bowel Cancer Australia and our local Mid North Coast Cancer Institute. These four little children should be immensely proud of their efforts and the daily steps they take to honour their late mother.

#### **NATIONAL MEDAL RECIPIENTS – MACMASTERS BEACH SLSC**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the dedicated Surf Life Saving volunteers from MacMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club who have recently been recognized with the prestigious National Medal. This medal, a cornerstone of Australia's honours system, celebrates long and diligent service by individuals who risk their lives or safety to protect or assist the community in times of emergency. Today, we honour Stephen Kleppen, Bruce Staples, Graham Johnston, Nerida Powell, Peter Roden and Alan Blackman for their 25 years and Matthew Hingerty for 15 years of unwavering commitment to our community. Their dedication to Surf Life Saving has made a lasting impact, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of countless individuals who enjoy our beaches. The National Medal is Australia's most recognised civilian award, celebrating those who have shown exceptional dedication in critical roles, both in government and voluntary organisations. These volunteers embody the spirit of service, and their contributions are invaluable to the Surf Life Saving movement and our community. Congratulations to each of you on this remarkable accomplishment. We deeply appreciate your many years of service and thank you for the positive impact you continue to make in our community.

#### **NATIONAL MEDAL RECIPIENTS – COPACABANA SLSC**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is with great pride that I stand before you today to acknowledge and congratulate the dedicated Surf Life Saving volunteers from the Copacabana Surf Life Saving Club who have recently been recognized with the prestigious National Medal. This medal, a cornerstone of Australia's honours system, celebrates long and diligent service by individuals who risk their lives or safety to protect or assist the community in times of emergency. Today, we honour Gay Langbridge, Robert Milne and Hannah Langbridge for their 15 years of unwavering commitment to our community. Their dedication to Surf Life Saving has made a lasting impact, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of countless individuals who enjoy our beautiful beaches. The National Medal is Australia's most recognized civilian award, celebrating those who have shown exceptional dedication in critical roles, both in government and voluntary organisations. These volunteers embody the spirit of service, and their contributions are invaluable to the Surf Life Saving movement and our community. Congratulations to each of you on this remarkable accomplishment. We deeply appreciate your many years of service and thank you for the positive impact you continue to make in our community.

#### **NATIONAL MEDAL RECIPIENTS – TERRIGAL SLSC**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is with great pride that I stand before you today to acknowledge and congratulate the dedicated Surf Life Saving volunteers from the Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club who have recently been recognized with the prestigious National Medal. This medal, a cornerstone of Australia's honours system, celebrates long and diligent service by individuals who risk their lives or safety to protect or assist the community in times of emergency. Today, we honour David Smith, Stuart Bennett, Marc Gunasinghe, and Glen Bowles for their 15 years of unwavering commitment to our community. Their dedication to Surf Life Saving has made a lasting impact, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of countless individuals who enjoy our beautiful beaches. The National Medal is Australia's most recognized civilian award, celebrating those who have shown exceptional dedication in critical roles, both in government and voluntary organisations. These volunteers embody the spirit of service, and their contributions are invaluable to the Surf Life Saving movement and our community. Congratulations to each of you on this remarkable accomplishment. We deeply appreciate your many years of service and thank you for the positive impact you continue to make in our community.

#### **MORTGAGE CHOICE - AWARD**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—Last month, the annual Mt Druitt St Marys Local Business Awards took place, celebrating exceptional businesses within our community. I am pleased to announce that several businesses from my electorate have been honoured with these prestigious awards. My heartfelt congratulations go to Mortgage Choice – St Marys Town Centre for providing excellent professional services to our community. Your commitment to delivering high-quality financial guidance and support has greatly contributed to the financial well-being of our residents. Receiving one of these awards is a significant accolade, recognising the dedication

and hard work of these businesses and their employees in serving our community. I am proud to be part of a community that values and supports its local enterprises. Congratulations to Mortgage choices, St Marys—keep up the excellent work!

#### **METALLUM LASER CUTTING AND MANUFACTURING - AWARD**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—Last month, the annual Mt Druitt St Marys Local Business Awards took place, celebrating exceptional businesses within our community. I am pleased to announce that several businesses from my electorate have been honoured with these prestigious awards. My heartfelt congratulations go to Metallum Laser Cutting & Manufacturing for being recognised in the category of most inclusive employer. This accolade reflects your commitment to fostering a diverse workplace where every individual is valued. Your dedication to excellence in your service and trade, along with a genuine focus on inclusivity, sets a benchmark in our community. Receiving one of these awards is a significant accolade, recognising the dedication and hard work of these businesses and their employees in serving our community. I am proud to be part of a community that values and supports its local enterprises. Congratulations to Metallum Laser Cutting and Manufacturing—keep up the excellent work!

#### **YAMBA TRIATHLON 2023**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Well done to all participants who competed in the 2023 Yamba Triathlon, which was held in November in perfect weather conditions. In the highly competitive Men's Open division, Yamba local Keanu Staader secured the victory coming in first place ahead of Ben Russell in second place and Jake Russell in third place. In the Women's Open division, Sunshine Coast local Emma McInnes was victorious in a highly competitive time, closely followed by Sarah Harvey in second place. Well done to Jett Beck, who competed in the 14-15 years male division and finished ahead of Hayden Kelvin, who placed second and Angus Ogilvie in third position. The 14-15 years female division saw Amelia Atkinson win first place in a close contest with Coco Beck in second place, while Charlotte Strahan came in at third position. What a fantastic event which saw the largest number of entrants in the 300- competitor field, from first time competitors and children. Congratulations to all competitors and to the organisers, for a fantastic and successful local sporting event, and all the best for another outstanding event this year.

#### **DANIELLE ADAMS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to recognise Danielle Adams of Maclean who recently stepped down as CEO of the Clarence River Fishermen's Co-operative after investing 13 years in the role. Danielle was the first female manager appointed in the Co-operative's long history and quickly gained the trust and respect of a male-dominated industry through her astute thinking, confident direction and strong work ethic. Under her leadership and vision, Danielle effectively navigated the Co-operative through some challenging times – economic downturns, multiple natural disasters, a government restructure, a pandemic and more recently a biosecurity outbreak, while still achieving significant milestones. Danielle's energies and focus were always on the core business of the Co-operative - selling quality, fresh, great-tasting seafood, increasing the Clarence River's profile within the seafood industry and getting excellent returns for both the Co-operative and its members. Danielle's ability to steer the Co-operative through successive challenges with strategic insight has ensured stability and resilience in an unpredictable industry. Her dedication and leadership have been instrumental in the continued success of the Co-operative. I know Danielle has left an indelible mark on those who have worked with her and wish her all the best in the next chapter of her career.

#### **THE REVEREND AUNTY LENORE PARKER**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—Congratulations to one of Clarence Valley's best known First Nations leaders, The Reverend Aunty Lenore Parker, as she has been made an honorary Canon of Christ Church Anglican Cathedral Grafton. The Reverend Aunty Lenore Parker, a much-loved Elder of the Yaegl people of the Northern Rivers is a lifetime member of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council [NATSIAC] who has made a significant contribution to the life of the national church. Many travelled from afar for a special service held in the Cathedral on Sunday July 7, which was a highlight of NAIDOC Week. The special service featured ecumenical partners in Aboriginal ministry as well as Anglican clergy from throughout Grafton Diocese. Dr Murray Harvey, Bishop of Grafton, admitted Aunty Lenore as an honorary Canon of the Cathedral to assist the Dean of the Cathedral, The Very Rev. Naomi Cooke, with pastoral and missional work. The role of Cathedral Canon, within the Anglican Church is a senior one involving both clergy and lay people. They have a particular responsibility for activities within the Cathedral and the Diocese. Aunty Lenore is a highly respected First Nations leader within the Clarence Valley and beyond.

**JODY TOWNEY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate Jody Towney of Narromine who has been selected by healthcare not for profit organisation Nurses in Action [NIA] to travel to Nepal as part of their program to provide unique and immersive experiences for nurses and allied health professionals. Jody will be volunteering for three weeks, working as part of a team assisting local medical clinics, hospitals, community outreach programs and medical camps alongside local staff and community members. Making an already rewarding trip, extra special, is the fact that Jody will be following in her father, Larry Towney's footsteps. Larry travelled to Nepal after a devastating earthquake several years ago. Not only will this be a fantastic opportunity for Jody to use her nursing skills, but it will also be an invaluable learning experience working in a healthcare system that is extremely different from our own. As a mum of two teenage daughters, Jody is certainly a great role model, proving that that hard work is rewarded! Safe travels Jody, enjoy this incredible trip and the insights that will come from it!

**GRAEME NICHOLLS AND CHARLIE BURROWS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate Graeme Nicholls and Charlie Burrows of the Narromine Lions Club who were recently recognised with the Melvin Jones Award and Progressive Melvin Jones Award respectively at their recent 71st Change Over. Melvin Jones was the founder of Lions, and the award is used to recognise outstanding Lions or members of the public who have made a significant contribution to Lionism. These are the highest awards that members can receive. Both Graeme and Charlie have been active members of the Narromine Lions club for numerous years, continuing to make significant contributions to fundraising, events and projects that the club participates in. Being recognised with these prestigious awards is testament to their commitment and unwavering dedication to serving others. The Narromine Lions Club has a rich and successful history in Narromine, made possible by dedicated and hardworking volunteers like Graeme and Charlie. Narromine is extremely fortunate to have two such hard working, civic minded individuals working for the betterment of the community. Congratulations Graeme and Charlie on this well-deserved recognition!

**JENNIFER CORDEROY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate Jennifer Corderoy from Narromine who was recently awarded the John White Memorial Scholarship at the NSW Farmers Conference. The John White Memorial Scholarship was introduced in 2007 in honour of the former NSW Farmers Association Chief Executive John White, who passed away in 2006. Scholarship applicants are assessed on their commitment to agriculture and rural communities, leadership qualities, communication skills and academic record. Jennifer studies Rural Science at the University of New England [UNE]. When she's not studying, she is an active member of the local Narromine community. In 2022 she was the Ag Shows NSW Narromine Young Woman Competition Runner-Up. With a genuine passion and interest in rural communities, farming, and improving farming futures, Jennifer is a well-deserved recipient of this scholarship. Congratulations Jennifer on being awarded this prestigious honour. I look forward to seeing what you are able to achieve through the assistance of the scholarship and into the future!

**JOHN CRITTENDEN - JERILDERIE**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today, I wish to recognise John Crittenden, a devoted member of the Jerilderie Fire Brigade who recently retired after an impressive 49 years of service. Since joining in 1976, John has been a vital part of the community, contributing to countless emergency responses and showing solid leadership as the brigade's captain for the last decade. John's career highlights include responding to major events such as the Black Saturday fires and the 2020/2021 bushfires, demonstrating bravery and dedication. His commitment to the community extended beyond the fire station, as he fostered a sense of unity and support among his fellow firefighters. John has always been there, ready to help, even when it meant answering calls in the middle of the night. As John steps down, we acknowledge his immense contributions and the positive impact he has had on the lives of many. I would once again like to thank John Crittenden for his unwavering service and wish him all the best in his future endeavours. His legacy will be remembered, and he leaves behind big shoes to fill.

**GEORGINA MUDGE - WENTWORTH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I would like to recognise Georgina Mudge, currently of Wentworth, formerly of Gol Gol, for her commitment to her community. Georgina is the manager of the Wentworth Rotary Community Op Shop, opening six days a week, where she manages twenty volunteers. Earlier this year Rotary Op Shop was able to donate \$45,000 back to the local community through the Rotary funding program. Georgina's enthusiasm in encouraging and maintaining a further twenty-four volunteers

for both the Wentworth Rotary Pioneer Museum and Wentworth Goal ensures these iconic attractions for Wentworth can open seven days, supporting tourism within the region. I congratulate Georgina on her commitment to the people of Wentworth for her inclusiveness and positive engagement within the community.

#### **VALE ARISTOMENIS SPYROPOULOS OF ATHENA'S CAKE SHOP**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Aristomenis Spyropoulos was a much-loved member of our Marrickville community. Aristomenis was the man behind Athena Cake Shop, alongside his wife Athena, they together ran the iconic cake shop in Marrickville for the past several decades. At 12 years old, Aristomenis discovered his love for pastries, working at a cake shop in Patras. Aristomenis and his wife Athena went on to own their own cake shop called Astoria in Nafpaktos. They would later leave Greece for Australia with their two children Efy and Kosmos and start their own cake shop, Athena Cake Shop, in Marrickville. Aristomenis and Athena's cake shop brought an abundance of Greek pastries, sweets and an enthusiastic energy, quickly becoming a cornerstone of the Marrickville community. Aristomenis' legacy goes beyond Athena's cake shop, with his community spirit, generosity, and unwavering commitment to serve the Marrickville community contributing so much to all of us over many years. I extend my deepest condolences to Efy and Kosmos, their families and his many friends. Vale Aristomenis.

#### **ASHFIELD BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I wish to congratulate the whole Ashfield Boys High School community on their success in achieving significant improvements in their Higher School Certificate results since 2019. A recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald highlighted Ashfield Boys High as being amongst the most improved schools for average HSC results. I have seen firsthand the dedication of students and their teachers at Ashfield Boys High and it is wonderful to see their hard work paying off in outstanding results and wider recognition. Key to these results is a significant focus on literacy from year 7 onwards across the whole school community, with teachers, students and parents and carers all playing a significant role in setting high expectations. Congratulations to Principal Dwayne Hopwood, all the teachers and families of the boys. Without your support and guidance these results would not be possible. Importantly these results are setting a lifelong strong foundation of skills for each of the boys that will set them up for long-term success. Congratulations to all!

#### **THOMAS TAILORING**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I am very sad to see Thomas Tailoring leave our Summer Hill community after nearly 30 years as a staple on Smith Street. Thomas Maksielias has been a well-known and much-loved face for generations of Summer Hill residents and many locals have worn his creations with pride. In his 30 years in business, he has certainly seen the changing face of Summer Hill. From a small set of shops that catered for local families, to today's bustling and vibrant Inner West suburb full of restaurants, bars and a wide variety of shops. But it's not only Summer Hill village that Thomas has seen change, he says he's seen his fair share of interesting fashion changes over the years! I wish Thomas all the very best as he shifts to working from his home in Croydon Park where he will continue to specialise in made-to-measure garments, whilst still doing plenty of alterations. Summer Hill's loss is Croydon Park's gain.

#### **KOGARAH COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Ms Shelly Ross on her retirement as CEO of Kogarah Community Services. Ms Ross served as the CEO for 24 years and leaves behind a legacy of exceptional leadership, dedication and guidance which have been fundamental in making KSC what it is today. KCS is a non-for-profit organisation that provides essential services for children to seniors in Southern Sydney. They provide services of In-Home Aged Care, Before and After School Care, Social Programs for Seniors and Community Engagement Activities. Thank you, Ms Ross, for your hard work and dedication. I wish you the very best for your retirement. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms Marisa Turcinski on her appointment as the new CEO of KCS. Ms Turcinski was promoted from within the KCS organisation where over the past 4 years she has shown her own dedication, leadership skills and strong work ethic through her role as the Operations Manager. Ms Turcinski has been acting CEO for the last 12 months, where she has proven herself within the role and I wish her all the very best for her future endeavours as CEO of KCS.

#### **BAYSIDE WOMEN'S SHELTER**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—I would like to acknowledge the outstanding effort and support that the Bayside Women's Shelter provides around our great community. The

Bayside Women's Shelter has been providing a safe and secure environment for domestic and family violence survivors since 2018. The Bayside Women's Shelters vision is to create a safe and secure space for survivors of domestic and family violence. They provide services of supplying food, shelter, and safe refuge for those who need it. They additionally provide emotional support as well as connecting them with other services such as legal support, medical care, education, and financial aid which then gives these survivors the tools, independence, and confidence to begin rebuilding their lives. The Bayside Women's Shelter has created an inclusive environment, providing support for women of any age group, sexuality, cultural and linguistic diversity, disability, or mental illness. I commend the Bayside Women's Shelter for their amazing services and the wonderful work they do for our community and would like to express my thanks to the Bayside Women's Shelter for the wonderful work they have accomplished and will continue to accomplish in the future.

#### THE FLOTILLA

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Well done to the team at The Flotilla on taking home two awards at the inaugural Newcastle Bar Awards for Best Restaurant Cocktail Menu and Best Wine List. The Flotilla is one of Newcastle's best fine dining restaurants, and part of what makes it so special is their ability to compliment their delicious food menu with a matching beverage. The team at The Flotilla have mastered the art of concocting a delicious cocktail that matches the meal as well as offering an extensive and curated wine list. This is a great achievement for a very worthy recipient. Congratulations to The Flotilla.

#### THE STAG AND HUNTER HOTEL

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—I would like to wish a big congratulations to The Stag & Hunter Hotel on being recognised as the Best Live Music Venue at the inaugural Newcastle Bar Awards. With Newcastle's legendary live music scene, I truly feel for the judges' that had to pick just one to give this award to. However, I cannot fault their decision to give it to The Stag. Every weekend offers live gigs by local and touring artists from a range of genres. If you're wondering what's coming up, all you've got to do is wander past the iconic Mayfield pub and check out the marquee sign on their roof, which is changed out every week. It is also a venue that prides itself on giving new talent a great stage to perform on. The Stag truly lives by their motto – Food. Beer. Music. Repeat. – And that's why they are so deserving of this recognition.

#### PYMBLE TURRAMURRA PRE-SCHOOL

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Sunday 18 August 2024 I am proudly attending the Pymble Turramurra Pre-School 62nd annual community fete. The Pymble Turramurra Pre-School is a community centric organisation that helps pre-schoolers reach their full potential in the years leading up to primary school. They have a wonderful philosophy, "where play is the business of childhood". It's with excitement that in 2024 I will proudly announce a \$12,000 NSW Government grant under the Community Building Partnership program to help replace the flooring. Credit to the pre-school for submitting this grant, as it will be of great benefit for the children and parents who use these facilities. I recognise Pymble Turramurra Pre-School President Angus Dockrill, Director Tori Dyson, and all the staff, parents and students who go above and beyond in the service of our local community. I am very proud to represent you and our community in the Parliament of NSW.

#### DREAMSPIRE THERAPY IN GORDON

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Saturday 17 August 2024 Dreamspire Therapy in Gordon held their 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Gala Ball. The purpose of the night is to raise funds that will assist over 30 families to access essential speech therapy services. The work of Dreamspire Therapy is to positively impact client growth and development through a range of therapies. They help individuals of all ages to overcome challenges and reach their full potential by assisting them with skills, behaviours, emotions and independence. I recognise Dreamspire Therapy founder Shazia Kimatrai, who is a certified practicing speech and language pathologist. She has a wonderful passion to help bring out the best in individuals and for them to reach their full potential in life. Shazia leads a dedicated and professional team that includes Tahnee Burns, Abbie Ingham, Rachel Canny, Lara Fong, Angus French, Aaron Oo and Emily Edwards. Thank you for the work that you do!

#### KU BRADFIELD PARK IN WEST LINDFIELD

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Friday 16 August I look forward to visiting KU Bradfield Park Children's Centre in West Lindfield to meet with the staff, families and children. KU Bradfield Park provides a vital service to our local families, catering over 50 children with a holistic approach to teaching and learning. They recognise that children's physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural and cognitive development are all linked and are of equal importance. In particular on Friday, I am looking forward to announcing a NSW Government grant of \$5,792 to enable KU Bradfield Park to purchase a hydraulic nappy change table. This grant is made possible due to the Community Building Partnership program. The table will be a welcomed addition to the centre.



I recognise KU Bradfield Park Director Vinsensia Christanto who leads a dedicated team of professionals that value a strong connection with our local community. I look forward to visiting again in the near future.

#### **THE BHUTANESE THREE SOCCER TEAM OF ALBURY WODONGA**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate the Bhutanese Three Star Soccer Team of Albury-Wodonga for their remarkable victory at the 11th Interstate Australian National Bhutanese Soccer Championship 2024 in Cairns, Queensland. This year marks a decade since the team first secured the national trophy. The 16-man squad is now eagerly preparing to host the 2025 event in Albury-Wodonga, a testament to their continued dedication and passion for the sport. Congratulations to this exceptional group of athletes, led by coach Indra Paudel and captain Ram Subedi, for exemplifying teamwork, commitment, and sportsmanship. A special thank you goes out to the team's major sponsors—BYS Mortgage, Startts Albury Wodonga, and the Bhutanese Australian Community Support Group in Albury-Wodonga—for their generous support, which made the journey to Far North Queensland possible. Well done Bhutanese Three Star Soccer Team, I look forward to celebrating more of your future achievements on the field.

#### **SHARYN HILL 40 YEARS SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Sharyn Hill's extraordinary milestone, with 2024 marking the 40th anniversary of her School of Performing Arts and Creative Expression. For four decades, Sharyn Hill has been facilitating a variety of programs, from theatre and acting classes to individual exam preparation, corporate communication training, and community festival involvement. Established in 1984, the school has flourished from a small group of eager learners to a vibrant community of over 200 aspiring performers, each nurturing their own theatrical dreams. With a passionate team of teachers, including Nikki Strauss, Tara Suidgeest, Fenn Dawson, Chantelle Hutchins, Helen Ryan, and Victoria Ellis, the school continues to evolve, incorporating various aspects of performing arts into its curriculum. Sharyn's artistic vision and commitment have opened countless doors for young performers, guiding them on their journey and helping them discover who they are. Thank you Sharyn, for your passion for drama, and for enriching so many young lives. May the school continue to nurture creativity and self-expression in the Albury-Wodonga region.

#### **FOOTBALL NSW STATE CUP - BELROSE-TERREY HILLS RAIDERS**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to attend the 2024 Football NSW State Cup finals. The northern beaches community love sport and it was wonderful to see 30 of New South Wales top community football teams come together to enjoy a day at Cromer Park. Thank you to the Manly Warringah Football Association for hosting the event. Pittwater is very proud of the Belrose-Terrey Hills Raiders, who brought home three State Cup titles. Congratulations to the Belrose-Terrey Hills Under 13 Girls, who defeated Bulli Junior Football Club with an impressive 6 – 0 final score. Congratulations to the Belrose-Terrey Hills Under 14 Boys, who defeated the Kellyville Kolts Soccer Club 5 – 0. And congratulations to the Belrose Terrey Hills Under 17 Boys who defeated Northern Sydney United 3 -1. The Belrose Terrey Hills Raiders are a fantastic, community-centred club, and it is great to see them succeed at the state level.

#### **KIERAN GALLAGHER AND JACK LAMROCK - WHALE BEACH SLSC**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—Congratulations to Whale Beach Surf Life Saving Club on a successful 2023-23 season. Thank you to the 477 members who worked hard to foster a thriving club and keep our community safe. I particularly acknowledge outgoing Club President, Kieran Gallagher. Whale Beach SLSC is a better club for Kieran's leadership. His dedication to bringing the club together as a unified team is unparalleled. Regardless of what's on his plate, Kieran has remained committed to ensuring the club lives out its purpose of keeping people safe. Kieran, thank you for the countless hours you have sacrificed over the years to see people enjoy our beautiful Whale Beach. Over the past year, I have personally enjoyed your humour, wit, passion for your Club and heart for its people. Your spirit of gratitude will permeate Whale Beach SLSC for decades to come. I acknowledge outgoing Club Captain, Jack Lamrock. Under Jack's leadership, the Whale Beach patrol teams have gone from strength to strength, displaying a steadfast commitment to excellence in lifesaving. Jack, thank you for your commitment to bringing people together to overcome all challenges. Our community is richer, and safer, for your service.

#### **MICHAELA DOUGLAS – BOATING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—Congratulations to Newport local, Michaela Douglas on being named the Boating Industry Association's Apprentice of the Year for 2024. A third generation boating industry member and apprentice Marine Mechanic at Douglas Marine, Pittwater, Michaela is a testament to excellence among our local boating industry. At just 22, Michaela has already demonstrated remarkable dedication and skill. Having recently completed her Marine Mechanical Apprenticeship, she is now pursuing a second trade qualification in Automotive Electrical Technologies. This commitment to continuous learning and professional growth reflects

Michaela's passion for her craft and her drive to excel in every aspect of her career. Presented at the recent Sydney International Boat Show, the Apprentice of the Year Award recognises Michaela's enthusiasm and outstanding achievements in a highly competitive field. The Award also includes a trip to the Australian Wooden Boat Festival in Tasmania. Michaela, thank you for your passionate service of our local boating community, and congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!

#### TRILOGY FOUNDATION TRIVIA NIGHT

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—A heartfelt congratulations and an enormous thank you to Trilogy Foundation Canterbury Bankstown for raising an impressive \$5,600 at their recent trivia night. The funds will support their work advancing education for children with special needs. This achievement was made possible thanks to the generous support of sponsors and the enthusiastic participation of attendees. A special mention must go to Panania Diggers for their incredible generosity in donating the venue room and contributing some of the raffle prizes, adding to the night's success. The overwhelming support the event received from a wide array of organisations, local businesses, and individuals is a true testament to the strong community spirit of East Hills and the outstanding work being done by the Trilogy Foundation. Although I was unable to attend on this occasion, I am inspired by the dedication and passion of everyone involved. I look forward to catching up with the Trilogy Foundation in the near future to witness firsthand the incredible work you do. Once again, thank you for your unwavering commitment to our community and for making such a meaningful difference in the lives of children with special needs.

#### ZEST AWARDS

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—I was privileged to attend the ZEST Awards, held on 30 May at Accor Stadium in Sydney Olympic Park. These awards are a key event celebrating the incredible contributions of community groups and leaders in Western Sydney. Organised by the Western Sydney Community Forum, the awards highlight the achievements in regions such those within the Leppington electorate. This year's event continued to showcase the region's diversity, creativity, and innovation, challenging negative stereotypes by promoting positive contributions. Recognising unsung heroes and community champions, the ZEST Awards emphasise the vital role of community service. A huge congratulations to the nominees, finalists and especially the winners. This special event demonstrates the strong support and engagement from the community, celebrating the dedication, hard work and spirit that make Western Sydney a vibrant and thriving region. It is always my pleasure to attend an event that promotes the innovative and creative work being done in communities across Western Sydney.

#### LIVERPOOL SES MUSTER

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On 11 June I spent time with our NSW SES Liverpool team during their muster alongside Member for Liverpool Charishma Kaliyanda. It was a great experience to join in and witness firsthand the remarkable and necessary skills and dedication of our volunteers. The camaraderie and professionalism of our SES volunteers was evident throughout the night and the facility itself shows the commitment and hard work that goes into ensuring our community is safe during emergencies. These volunteers are the backbone of our communities safety and whether its responding to floods, storms, bushfires or other emergencies, our SES team is ready to respond at a moments notice. I want to thank each and every one of our SES volunteers and know that your efforts to not go unnoticed or unappreciated. You make our community stronger and safer and we will always support and recognise your invaluable work.

#### LEPPINGTON GURKHAS RECREATIONAL CLUB

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On 24 June, I popped down to Leppington Oval, to celebrate with local sporting organisation the Leppington Gurkhas Recreational Club after they secured a grant through the Local Sport Grant Program. The fast growing club received \$4,500 which will go to their Kids Soccer Training Program. this program will not only provide more opportunities for local kids to enhance their skills, but also continue to grow a sense of community and teamwork. A big congratulations to President Nirmal and Treasurer Ravi on being awarded the grant. Your vision for the club is coming to fruition and it's great to see your efforts are paying off. Its initiatives like this that make communities stronger and I'm excited to see the positive impact it creates. Congratulations again and I wish the club all the best into the future.

#### ASYLUM SEEKERS CENTRE

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate the Asylum Seekers Centre for their successful 2023 Community Building Partnership grant and thank them for their outstanding work making a positive difference in the lives of thousands of people who arrive in Australia seeking freedom and safety. The Asylum Seekers Centre will use this grant to increase efficiency and safety of service to members of the community who are needing support and assistance – including a new intake room, upgraded

air-conditioning, kitchen layout and duress buttons for the safety and comfort of all centre users. The Asylum Seekers Centre is underpinned by humanitarian values and works to empower and connect individuals to support and services, engage the community, and influence policy in the interests of the rights and dignity of refugees and asylum seekers. I cannot stress enough the importance of supporting organisations like the Asylum Seeker Centre, and thank their staff and many volunteers for their tireless work.

#### **MUDGIN-GAL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation for their successful 2023 Community Building Partnership grant for refurbishments and repairs. Mudgin-Gal, meaning "women's place", traces its beginnings to the South Sydney Women's Centre in the early 1990s. Since then, it has become an essential meeting place, support point and advocacy centre for Aboriginal women in the heart of the Redfern-Waterloo area. Mudgin-Gal's award-winning mentoring and education programs, and their groundbreaking work to address family violence, have gained national recognition. Its 'Black Out Violence' campaign won the Violence Against Women Prevention Award in 2004 and has since been rolled out to communities across regional NSW. Having given more than 20 years of service to our local community, this grant is so well-deserved and will go towards ensuring Mudgin-Gal remains a safe and accessible space for Aboriginal women in our community. I want to give thanks to the staunch staff and volunteers at Mudgin-Gal, and I hope that with the support from our community they can continue to achieve their vision.

#### **NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOL P AND C ASSOCIATION**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate the Newtown Public School P&C Association for their successful 2023 Community Building Partnership grant. This grant will be used to build a new covered outdoor learning area, remove and replace unsafe playground equipment, and refresh garden landscaping on the campus. The passionate and hard-working members of Newtown Public School P&C Association do such important work for the school community and our Newtown electorate. We acknowledge and thank the parents, carers and school community of Newtown Public School for their continued hard work and significant contribution to the education and wellbeing of the next generation of Newtown kids.

#### **JASON HAMLING**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to add my congratulations to those being heaped on Cr Jason Hamling, who is standing down after 20 years serving his community on Orange City Council, the last three as mayor. Born and bred in Orange and educated at Glenroi Public School and Canobolas High, Cr Hamling was elected to council in 2004. In that time he completed several terms as deputy mayor before being publicly elected mayor in 2020. Under the wing of former mayor the late John Davis, Cr Hamling was elected from number three on Mr Davis' ticket and at the time described himself as an 'accidental councillor'. Yet he has committed fully to the role for two decades. During that time, big ticket developments like the Orange Health Service, Northern Distributor Road, PCYC and Indoor Aquatic Centre have all been completed. With the unwavering support of wife Mel, Jason has approached not only the last three years as mayor but the 17 previous years with good humour, empathy and an unwavering commitment to the betterment of Orange. I thank him for his service and will miss his presence on the local government scene.

#### **ASHLEA PRITCHARD**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, the excitement of representing Australia at an Olympics is not restricted to our athletes and I extend my best wishes to Orange's Ashlea Pritchard who will travel to France as a volunteer for Paris 2024. Ms Pritchard is a part of a volunteer workforce of 45,000 people from around the globe who have paid their own way to support the athletes, spectators, officials, media and others at the many venues around France. Her assignment is based at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium, northwest of Paris which hosted the hockey tournaments, one of Ms Pritchard's favourite sports. It is a unique venue, being the only one to have hosted events from France's previous Olympics one hundred years ago. The venue hosted around 16,000 people meaning Ms Pritchard's duties as an usher were hectic but her 'whatever happens, it's going to be great' attitude sums up her positivity and enthusiasm for the role. Mr Speaker, it's no secret volunteers are dwindling in numbers but without them, society would grind to a halt. I commend Ms Pritchard on embracing this life-altering experience on the world stage.

#### **AGE OF FISHES MUSEUM**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to again recognise the great work the Age of Fishes Museum is doing to educate constituents and tourists alike about our district's prehistoric past. I recently enjoyed another visit to this remarkable, award-winning museum and I'm always blown away by what's on offer. Established in its Canowindra home in 2001, the Age of Fishes Museum provides an amazing insight into the

creatures that inhabited the area almost 360 million years ago. Unspoiled fossils show rivers and billabongs which teemed with life, fantastic fish species that feature armoured shells, crocodile-like jaws and some with lungs. These fossils are the real thing, unearthed from the local district, and give a true insight into life in the Devonian era, known as the 'Age of Fishes' and are part of permanent exhibitions, an education hub, picnic area and geological time-walk through the gardens. The museum had its origins when a roadworker found an almost complete fossil in the late 1950s and lent it against a fencing post. From there it has developed into a real gem of the west. I encourage everyone visiting my electorate to visit this amazing resource, you won't be disappointed.

#### **MOSMAN RUGBY LADIES DAY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—One of the best days out in Mosman will see you enjoy a gourmet lunch, drinks, live music, entry to an exclusive after party at the much loved The Buena, an action packed day of rugby all the while raising money for the Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation. I am of course talking about the Mosman Rugby Club Ladies Day. Rawson Oval played host to a full fixture of games against Drummoyne, and the Whales put on a show winning five out of the six games. Not only is this an enjoyable day out for the ladies of Mosman, but it's an opportunity to raise much needed funds for the Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation who do an incredible amount of work to improve the early detection of breast cancer and the quality of life and survival rates of breast cancer patients. I would like to acknowledge the committee of Mosman Rugby Club and all the incredible work they do, Sam Walker, Luke Phillips, Tom Cocks, Matt Psaltis, Ben Hodgkinson and Bryn Pritchard. Good luck for the rest of the season, and go Whales.

#### **NORTH SHORE LOCALS SHINE IN PARIS OLYMPICS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—The Olympics stand as one of the most prestigious and revered sporting events in the world, embodying the pinnacle of human athletic achievement. They provide a stage where athletes can showcase their talents and extraordinary feats of strength, speed, skill and endurance. The 2024 Paris Olympics has now come to an end and this was the most successful games in Australian history. Locally in my community we have been represented by four female Olympians and I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge their incredible efforts. Congratulations to Neutral Bay local Michelle Bromley who competed in the team table tennis but was unfortunately knocked out in a match against Chinese Taipei. Congratulations to Mosman local Rowena Meredith, who claimed a bronze medal in Tokyo, finished eighth in Paris as part of the Rowsellas women's quad sculls. A huge congratulations to our entire Australian Olympic team whether they were swimming, running, riding a horse, shooting, diving, cycling or taking part in the myriad of sporting events. We're looking forward to LA 2028 and even more excited when the Olympics will be on home soil in Brisbane in 2032.

#### **NORTH SHORE TO WELCOME REDDAM HOUSE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—A new campus for Reddam House will be opening in North Sydney with Dave and Dee Pictairn announced as the first and founding heads of the institution's newest campus. Located at the 1972 historical Simsmetal House, the eight-storey building will accommodate more than 1350 students ranging from Kindergarten to year 12, and the school will be co-educational and non-denominational. Dave and Dee Pictairn have been the current principals of the original Reddam House Sydney campus in Woollahra for more than fifteen years, and also help set up the first Reddam school in South Africa more than 20 years ago. The new campus in North Sydney will include outdoor terraces with play areas, multiple libraries, music studios, dance studios, multipurpose breakout spaces, a gym, sports hall, and auditorium. I would like to wish Dave and Dee and all the first cohort of students who will be starting at Reddam House from Term 1 next year all the very best for this exciting time ahead.

#### **GREATER BLACKTOWN BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Thursday 18th April, I was pleased to meet with local business owners, operators and volunteers at the Business After 5 Networking event from the Greater Blacktown Business Chamber, hosted by Foodbank NSW & ACT. GBBC helps establish local business connections and build a sense of community spirit in the greater Blacktown area, including in our local Prospect Electorate. By teaming up with Foodbank for a networking event and factory tour, GBBC highlighted to our local business and community leaders about Foodbank's amazing journey, including their sourcing enough food for 92 million meals nationwide in 2023. Foodbank provides food and grocery relief to more than 2,800 front-line charities and over 3,300 school breakfast programs across the country. This includes their Breakfast 4 Health program in partnership with the NSW Government, which has seen over 2 million breakfast meals provided to students from 1,000 schools across our State. My thanks go out to good friend and former Blacktown MP, John Robertson, CEO, Foodbank NSW & ACT, Trevor Oldfield AM, President, Greater Blacktown Business Chamber, all the Board and team for hosting an amazing evening. I look forward to the next GBBC Business After 5 Networking event.

### PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Friday 9th August, I was pleased to congratulate teachers and students at Prairiewood High School, and join them in their 40th Anniversary celebrations. Established in 1984, Prairiewood High School has been home to thousands of students from our local Electorate of Prospect and across Western Sydney. This year, Prairiewood has an enrolment of 1300 students, with a great diversity of cultural backgrounds, serving our local community as a co-educational and partially selective high school. Catering for each student's needs and supporting their growth, Prairiewood High school values excellence in teaching and learning, with a proud record of success. I was delighted to attend the celebratory assembly, listen to the student leadership team, view a presentation of the school's history, acknowledge long serving staff and even engage in an interactive Kahoot with students. It was great to be joined by Murat Dizdar PSM, Secretary, NSW Department of Education, in celebrating the occasion with our Prairiewood students and teachers. My thanks and congratulations go out to Diana Kelly, Acting Principal, student leaders, and all students and academic staff at Prairiewood High School for an amazing 40th Anniversary, and their continued academic excellence in our local community.

### WEST CUMBERLAND MEN'S SHED

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday 5th August, I was pleased to meet with committee, volunteers and members from the West Cumberland Men's Shed, to present them with a Prospect Electorate Community Building Partnership grant. Men's sheds are non-profit community organisations that provide a vital space for craftwork and social interaction, helping men of all ages to lead positive lifestyles while strengthening communities. Today one of more than 1,300 sheds across Australia, the West Cumberland Men's Shed, Greystanes was established in 2018 and has 36 members. Like a growing number of Men's sheds, West Cumberland has both male and female members, and is welcoming to people of all ages and from all walks of life. I was delighted to present West Cumberland Men's Shed with a Grant of \$24,687, for the fit-out of new metalworking benches, racking, LCD lighting and power outlets. These workshop upgrades will help to strengthen their place as a genuine community hub for all in our local Prospect Electorate. My thanks and congratulations go out to Rob Gray, President, Alan Youngman, Vice-President, and all committee, volunteers and members at West Cumberland Men's Shed for their continued dedication to our local community.

### BETTY MACKINNON

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Betty MacKinnon who recently passed away on the 25th June at the age of 102. Betty was an inaugural member of Great Lakes Art Society [GLAS] in Forster and was a member of the committee for most of the ensuring years. She served as President for 5 of those years and was actively involved as a joint committee member for the planning and building of Forster Gallery in conjunction with the Bridge Club. Betty painted in oils, acrylics, water colour and pastel. Her love of arts reflected in her dedication to the GLAS. In later years, after she retired from the committee, she supported the Arts Society with a yearly sponsorship towards the Gallery's open exhibition. I commend Betty on her achievements and her commitment to the Great Lakes Art Society and Forster Gallery over the years.

### CHARLOTTE BENNETT

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Charlotte Bennett from Taree, the inaugural recipient of my Kick Start Scholarship. This scholarship is designed to support and celebrate the ambitions of young students in Myall Lakes who demonstrate not only academic or athletic excellence but also a drive to excel beyond the classroom. As part of the scholarship, I had the pleasure of hosting Charlotte at Parliament House. During her visit, she received a tour of the premises, attended Question Time in the Legislative Assembly, and met with other Members of Parliament. Charlotte aspires to go to university and study Marine Biology; this scholarship will provide her with a head start. I congratulate Charlotte, who is a truly deserving recipient, I look forward to seeing her achieve her goals.

### LUCAS GUINEY

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Lucas Guiney, who was awarded Youth Lifesaver of the Year at the Surf Life Saving Lower North Coast Awards of Excellence. At 16, Lucas has already earned 45 SLS awards, including the Bronze Medallion, Age Manager certification, Provide First Aid, and an IRB Crew Certificate. He is also an Assistant Age Manager for U12 Age Nippers. Lucas volunteers at events such as carnivals and the State Youth Development Program, helping with gear management, beach setup, and organising the weekly BBQ. In 2023, Lucas completed 45 patrol hours with a perfect attendance record. I congratulate Lucas on this well-deserved recognition, his enthusiasm and skills make him a valuable member of the Surf Life Saving community.

### CHARLIE POTTS SWIMMING CHAMPION

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Maitland's Charlie Potts and Valley Aquatic Swim Club for their recent meet success. Charlie is part of the Valley Aquatic Swim Club based in Maitland. And while the whole team had an historic meet recently, coming home with 74 medals and smashing four district records at the Coast and Valley Swimming Association [CVSA] winter championships, Charlie was the standout success. Over the three-day event, 13-year-old Charlie swam 13 events and walked away with 11 personal best times and four Coast and Valley records. Charlie broke CVSA records for the 200M backstroke, 100M individual medley, 100M backstroke and the 50M backstroke. Charlie's dad, Luke Potts is the coach of the Valley Aquatic Club and said it was the most successful team the club had ever sent to the Coast and Valley Swimming Association winter championships. The Valley Aquatic team won 26 gold medals, 24 silver medals and 24 bronze medals. Congratulations to the whole Valley Aquatic team and well-done Charlie.

### CODY HOPGOOD AUSTRALIAN TEAM SELECTION

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to All Saints College student Cody Hopgood who has received his second All Australian Schoolboys jersey. Cody earned his place to play on the Australian Schoolboys Rugby team with an incredible performance as a Front Rower for the NSW Combined Catholic Colleges team at the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League Final in Coffs Harbour on Friday the 7th of July. At the event, Hopgood was named player of the Tournament, and his team – in which he was joined by schoolmates Jack Thompson and Jack Hilliar- won against the NSW Combined High Schools team 40-12 in the Final. Cody who currently also plays as a Prop for the under 21s Newcastle Knights Jersey Flegg side, and is contracted to the Newcastle Knights top 30, will soon fly to training camp for two weeks before playing France in Papua New Guinea. A West Maitland Wallaroos Junior, Hopwood has had an incredible year as he has also represented NSW Under-19s in their win against Queensland in the Under-19 State of Origin. Congratulations Cody, and all the best for your international appearance!

### MAITLAND LANDCARE

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I would like to recognise the amazing ongoing work of Maitland Landcare. Last week was Landcare Week, where we celebrated the incredible work of Landcare groups right across Australia. This year's theme is Landcare Is For Everyone [LIFE], celebrating the diversity of Landcare volunteers, and acknowledging that we all rely upon a healthy environment. In my community, Maitland Landcare have been working to actively regenerate three sites. Including a Bolwarra site, with a growing community of kangaroos and birdlife who call the new 1500 shrubs and trees home, since volunteers started planting 2 years ago. They also work on a diverse Rutherford recreational reserve, with attractive gullies and watercourses, open parkland, and mature trees for nesting birds. And, most recently they have been undertaking regenerative works at their East Maitland site since November last year. This site protects 12 hectares of Lower Hunter Spotted Gum Ironbark Forest, an endangered ecological community. Thank you to all the entire Maitland Landcare team for your ongoing and tireless work in protecting our local environment.

### BANKSTOWN CITY NETBALL ASSOCIATION

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to congratulate the Bankstown City Netball Association [BCNA] for their incredible achievements at the Junior State Titles on 6 – 8 July. BCNA teams displayed a masterclass at the Junior State Titles, coming away with first, fourth and 10th place. The BCNA 12s showed incredible talent, skill and determination as well as the Bankstown spirit throughout the weekend, coming 4th in division 2. The prowess of the 14s' 1st placing shone through and showed our community why they were chosen to represent Bankstown. Their dominance was evident in their first placing in defence with the least number of goals scored against them and 10th overall. BNCAs 13s were the division 2 champions after achieving 18 wins out of 19 games. Hard work and dedication go a long way, and all teams should be extremely proud of themselves. I would also like to acknowledge all the Bankstown coaches, managers and supporters who have put in such hard work to ensure the girls were able to perform to the best of their ability. Congratulations once again to the Bankstown City Netball Association for all their amazing achievements at the Junior State Titles.

### MERCY CONNECT VOLUNTEERS AIDING YOUNG REFUGEES

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—In a world that often feels divided and tumultuous, the work being done by Mercy Connects volunteers stands as a beacon of hope and compassion. These dedicated individuals are not just providing aid, they are creating a nurturing environment for young refugees who have

faced unimaginable challenges. Mercy Connect has assisted thousands of students since it started in 2008 in Sydney, including providing mentorship to refugee students at four schools in Bankstown including Bankstown Senior College. Run by volunteers, the program helps newcomers build English and Maths skills as well as supporting students' wellbeing. The dedication shown by Mercy Connects volunteers deserves recognition for its immediate impact and for its long-term benefits to our community. By investing time and energy into supporting young refugees, these volunteers contribute to building resilient communities that embrace diversity and inclusivity. Their selflessness exemplifies what it means to be a part of a community – one where we uplift each other regardless of our origins or circumstances. To all the volunteers at Mercy Connects: a huge thank you. Your unwavering dedication makes an immeasurable difference to the lives of young refugees every day.

#### **NITRIXX CHULLORA FITNESS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to offer my congratulations to four juniors from Nitrixx Chullora Fitness who will represent Australia at the International Federation of Muaythai Association's Youth World Championships [IFMA] later this year. Jordan Simmons, 10, Aria Challita, 12, Joseph Rizkallah, 12 and Antonio Taouk, 11, will head to the championships in Thailand on September 11. It is an incredible achievement for all four juniors to be selected to represent Australia at such a young age. Their commitment to excellence and relentless pursuit of their goals are exceptional. I would also like to acknowledge Nitrixx Fitness coach Wahib Baki who has played a key role in this achievement. The club's junior program has developed a strong and dominant juniors fight team in Muay Thai, kickboxing and boxing. The program helps build confidence, assists in personal development, anti-bullying, building social skills and most importantly teaches respect. Representing Australia at the IFMA is a testament to their hard work, dedication, and relentless pursuit of excellence. I wish them well as they prepare to compete and remind them that they are not just representing themselves but also their families, teammates, coaches, and supporters who believe in them.

#### **TRYSTAN AUDDINO**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Trystan Auddino for being awarded the Highly Commended Award for Outstanding Young Business Leader at the 2024 Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards. The Outstanding Young Business Leader Award highlights the achievements of young entrepreneurs who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and dedication within their industry. This is true for Trystan and his company Lakes Custom Computers. Trystan founded Lakes Custom Computers in 2017 at 16 and has since become a key figure in the Catherine Hill Bay community and beyond. Specialising in high-performance custom computing solutions, Trystan manages every aspect of the business, from strategic planning to product development and customer relations. Under his leadership, the company has seen remarkable growth, with sales increasing by approximately 220 per cent annually and gaining national recognition. Trystan's dedication to sustainability is reflected through initiatives like refurbishing computers to reduce electronic waste and providing affordable technology solutions to underserved communities. Congratulations Trystan, you are a worthy recipient of the Outstanding Young Business Leader Award, and I look forward to seeing your future success in the industry.

#### **ANDERSEN PEST SERVICES**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Andersen Pest Services for being awarded Excellence in Micro Business at the 2024 Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards. The annual Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of local businesses in Lake Macquarie. These awards aim to highlight the innovative practices, exceptional services, and contributions that businesses make to the local economy and community. Andersen Pest Services is a highly esteemed pest control company dedicated to providing exceptional pest management solutions for both residential and commercial clients. Since its establishment in 2020, the company has built a reputation for trusted, innovative services delivered by a team of highly trained professionals. As a family-owned business, Andersen Pest Services takes immense pride in supporting and fostering the growth of the local community. They create employment opportunities for residents and contribute significantly to the economy of the Hunter region and beyond. Their active involvement in community initiatives and commitment to helping local people thrive distinguishes them in the industry. Congratulations Andersen Pest Services, you are a worthy recipient of the Excellence in Micro Business Award, and I look forward to seeing your continued dedication to pest management in the community.

#### **AWARE**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—The Social Design Project Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Aware... The Social Design Project for being awarded Excellence in Sustainability at the 2024 Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards. The annual Lake Mac

Business Excellence Awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of local businesses in Lake Macquarie. These awards aim to highlight the innovative practices, exceptional services and contributions that businesses make to the local economy and community. Aware is a pioneer in ethical fashion for Lake Macquarie and the broader community. Through partnerships with 12 endorsed fair traders and social enterprises, Aware have championed microfinancing initiatives that empower communities and foster economic independence. Their influence is far-reaching, with participation in global forums, as they share insights and strategies for sustainable fashion practices. Locally, Aware offers guidance and support to emerging businesses to integrate ethical standards into their operations. Aware sets a benchmark for waste reduction in the fashion industry by using certified organic cotton and upcycled materials. Their dedication to sustainability not only reduces environmental impact but sets an example for others to follow. Congratulations Aware, you are a worthy recipient of the Excellence in Sustainability Award, and I look forward to seeing your influence and business expand.

#### **JANE ROBERTSON**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—What do you do when you can't find durable, stylish shoes to fit your children? You create them yourself! This is the innovative approach that Jane Robertson from Coolamon took. Recognising the need for affordable, durable, leather, and comfortable shoes for children, she set out to fill this gap in the market and created Millwoods Shoes. However, her shoes were so stylish and well-made that parents wanted them not just for their children but themselves as well. Jane's journey took a significant turn when she launched her first adult leopard linden loafer in 2019. The shoes were an instant hit, gaining widespread attention and selling out in record time. The success was so overwhelming that 50 percent of the forward stock for the next shipment was pre-ordered. This was just the beginning of the success story for Millwoods shoes. Jane's line of shoes started with just two pairs in 2019 to now there are 22 variations for this season. Within the next 12 to 18 months, Jane is hoping to take her business to the US market. Congratulations Jane on this remarkable achievement for Millwoods and best of luck cracking the overseas market.

#### **KEEPING COWRA WARM**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Lisa Toohey-Bott has recognised the need for affordable, warm, and accessible clothing in Cowra and has, as such, opened a pop-up store called Evergreen Clothing Co. in the former Bryant's Packaging building at the rear of Silly Solly's in Cowra. As the owner of Silly Solly's, Lisa has always been attuned to the needs of the Cowra community. In response to numerous comments and concerns about the lack of winter clothing and workwear stores in town, Lisa acted. She opened Evergreen Clothing Co., a pop-up store that will remain accessible throughout the winter months, demonstrating her commitment to serving the community. Lisa is waiting to see if the pop-up store is a success during winter 2024. If it is, Lisa is looking to potentially run the business on and off for a period of time. Not only has Lisa been able to meet the demands of the town, but she is also able to bring new job opportunities and growth to the Cowra community. I congratulate Lisa on her fantastic work for her local community, and I hope to visit Evergreen Clothing Co very soon.

#### **NATIONAL DELIVERY STANDARD RECOGNISED**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—It's a source of immense pride for our community when staff like Nita Seton and Kim Murdoch of The Junee District Co-operative are recognised for their national standard in delivery to customers. Having already been awarded the State winners back in March, the ladies recently made the trip north to the Gold Coast, where they put Junee on the map. The collective efforts of these ladies were acknowledged when they were awarded Runner-up for the medium-sized dairy and freezer department at the National IGA Awards of Excellence. Nita and Kim, two seasoned professionals, have dedicated 15 years of their lives to The Junee Co-Op. Their unwavering commitment and passion for their roles are not just inspiring, but also a testament to their exceptional qualities. It is lovely to see a little country town store from the seat of small communities up against some larger city stores recognised for their efforts. Nita, Kim, and the entire team at The Junee Co-Op, I extend my heartfelt congratulations. Your remarkable achievement fills me with immense pride and respect, just as it does for the entire community.

#### **KIENNA CLEGG**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I would like to acknowledge Whitebridge High School HSC student Kienna Clegg, who was recognised with a Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement at the 2024 NSW Public Education Awards. The Public Education Awards are an important opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the amazing work of our teachers, school communities and other staff who each day work together to bring out the best in our students. Kienna achieved a Band 6 result in her accelerated HSC course last year and is on track for an outstanding HSC result. She is also a representative netballer, an elected school captain and engages with our local community—in April, she ran 150km raising money for children living with cancer in support of the wonderful charity, Charlie's Run for Kids. According to



her award citation, Kienna is a student others aspire to be like and teachers want to have in their class. I have no trouble believing that! Congratulations, Kienna—I wish you all the best for your HSC and your future studies!

#### **LAKE MAC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TEAM**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Congratulations to the Environmental Health Team at Lake Macquarie City Council on receiving the 2024 Environmental Health Australia National Team Award. The National Environmental Health Team of the Year Award is for teams that have excelled in their roles or projects which have demonstrated outstanding service in the field of environmental health. The Lake Mac Environmental Health Team have developed innovative Hoarding and Squalor Framework, which addresses complex community issues with compassion—something which is all the more important since the pandemic saw cases of hoarding and squalor rise sharply and have remained higher ever since. Council's typical strategies for dealing with these sorts of issues, such as the issuing of fines and warnings, meet with limited success. Instead, the new strategy involves providing pathways for individuals to seek long-term solutions with health professionals, psychological services and community groups. Once again, congratulations to Manager Environmental Regulation and Compliance at Council Derek Poulton and his team on this fantastic award and helping to lead the way for other councils—more than fifty LGAs across have developed similar strategies. Bravo!

#### **JAZMINE O'BRIEN**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I would like to acknowledge Warners Bay High school captain student Jazmine O'Brien, who was recognised with a Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement at the 2024 NSW Public Education Awards. The Public Education Awards are an important opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the amazing work of our teachers, school communities and other staff who each day work together to bring out the best in our students. Jazmine has demonstrated commitment, passion and dedication to her studies and school community. Having represented Warners Bay High in a number of sports across various levels, and putting up her hand for a leadership role as school captain. Alongside her fellow Warners Bay High recipient and captain, Logan Romani, Jazmine spoke at the awards ceremony, highlighting what she has gained from her role as school captain. In her words, this includes "Connecting with different year groups, acting as a role model, being able to share her ideas and support others to achieve their goals through encouragement and connection." Bravo, Jazmine. What a worthy recipient—I wish you all the best for your HSC and your future studies!

#### **WILLOUGHBY OLYMPIANS IN PARIS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Together with all Australians, I have taken great pride in the outstanding performance of our Olympic team in Paris this August. I especially take pride in the two athletes from the Willoughby community who have represented Australia, Ben Dowling and Henry Hutchison, each of whom competed in our rugby sevens. At just age 22, Ben already has a distinguished career in Rugby Union, having played in the Shute Shield before debuting for Australia in the Rugby Sevens in 2021. Ben played in the London Sevens tournament in 2022. His teammate, Henry, has a similarly impressive career competing on the world stage since 2016 when he debuted in the Rio 2016 Oceania qualifiers. Since then, Henry has played Rugby for the Melbourne Rebels, the Rugby World Cup Sevens in San Francisco 2018, and the Tokyo Olympics 2021. Most recently at Paris 2024, Henry played a part in the rugby sevens best-ever finish at an Olympic Games. Together, Ben Dowling and Henry Hutchison have done Australia and Willoughby proud.

#### **VALE PAT CLARKE**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I would like to pay tribute to the life of Pat Clarke who was a faithful, much-loved member of the Kooroora Tennis Club in Roseville. Pat joined Kooroora in 1964 where she became a member for 60 years. Pat contributed actively to her club, serving as Secretary, Vice-Captain (together with her husband Barry as Captain), and then as Captain. She was dedicated to Kooroora, encouraging many families to take up tennis at the club. The Clarke family led by example with her husband and three children all being regular comp players. Pat herself was an outstanding tennis player, holding A1 grade for many years. She was the Kooroora Tennis Club's Women's Singles Champion three times, most recently in 1983. Eager to play in as many comps as possible, Pat made a point of always entering the Women's and Mixed Doubles handicap events. Desiring to enrich Kooroora's social life, Pat devoted many hours to arranging a variety of social events for club members. I am so grateful for Pat Clarke's contribution to the Kooroora Tennis Club over six decades, her legacy leaves our community all the richer.

**VALE GEORGE ALTOMONTE**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Chatswood, who recently died aged 89. George was a renowned horse breeder and successful businessman who founded what became known as the Alto Group in 1956. Beginning as a modest workshop on the corner of Fullers Road and Pacific Highway Chatswood, George's enterprise became one of Sydney's leading car dealers, employing over 600 people, selling upwards of 12 000 vehicles each year, and servicing over 65 000 vehicles annually. Most notably, the Alto Group was instrumental in developing industry guidelines through the establishment of the Motor Traders Association of Australia. George served as inaugural President of the Association and was honoured in 2004 with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his leadership and service. In addition to his contribution to horse breeding and the motor industry, George was a generous supporter of charities, including the Humpty Dumpty Foundation. Donations to the Foundation in honour of George will be used to purchase medical equipment for sick kids in hospitals across Australia. I honour George Altomonte for his rich contribution and legacy.

**BELLAMBI NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE NAIDOC WEEK CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—Our community celebrated NAIDOC week at the Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre on 12 July, on the land of the Dharawal people. This year's theme of 'Keep the fire burning! Blak, loud and proud', was celebrated by the community. With hundreds in attendance, musical performances and many local organisations providing stalls. The day was a massive success in bringing the community together to celebrate the enduring strength and vitality of our First Nations people. Amazing events like this provide the opportunity to celebrate and embrace culture and connectiveness. I would like to thank the Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre staff, Cath Daly, Jen Mitchelson, and Kay Walker, as well as the wonderful volunteers for their hard work in organising and running the event. This Centre has been providing the community with a place to meet, share and grow for over 40 years. Although I could not attend the celebrations on the day, members of my staff were blown away by the success of the event and were able to witness the community standing together and celebrate our First Nations people.

**WILLIAM NICKL**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Today I acknowledge and congratulate William Nickl, a school-based apprentice at Bowral High School, for his extraordinary achievement in representing New South Wales at the prestigious National Excellence Baking Awards – and winning! William has baking in his blood, for his parents Tracy and Vicki are the owners of Gumnut Patisserie in my electorate. William has known since he was six that he wanted to be a pastry chef, and his potential was on full display at these awards. The recipe he developed for the competition was his lamb and rosemary pie with sweet potato mash. The fact that he has managed this achievement while preparing for his HSC makes it even more remarkable. The baking awards were held in Melbourne over two days in June and William competed against first, second, third- and fourth-year apprentices. In doing so, he showcased his passion and skills for the baking industry. His talent was on full display and this achievement brings pride to our community and sets a new standard for school-based apprentices right across Australia. All of us in the Wollondilly electorate are proud of William and his achievements, and we look forward to his rise in the baking industry.

**WOLLONDILLY PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Tuesday 30 July saw the opening of the multi-format Wollondilly Performing Arts Centre in Picton, which will provide a state-of-the-art local venue for music, theatre, exhibitions, and civic events. This centre's construction has seen the three levels of government talking and working together to achieve what will be a massive injection into the cultural life of Picton and the wider Wollondilly area. This project has been funded by grants, developer contributions, and building renewal funds. I am pleased to have been a part of the centre's conception. While serving as Mayor of Wollondilly, I was proud to work to get the Western City Deal Liveability Funding that resulted in this centre's opening, and I want to pay tribute to Hume MP Angus Taylor for collaborating with me for this funding. I also acknowledge the Hon. John Graham MLC, Minister for the Arts, Greg Warren MP, the member for Campbelltown, and Wollondilly Shire Councillors for attending the opening. I also acknowledge Aunty Glenda and Aunty Kazan for their Welcome to Country, and the Wollondilly Community Music Association for their brilliant performances. Long may this Performing Arts Centre be the home of brilliant performances for years to come.

**GREG DUFFY**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Monday 5 August marked a very special occasion, with Greg Duffy marking his 20th anniversary with Community Links Wellbeing, a not-for-profit organisation in my electorate that provides services for individuals, families, young people, and seniors. Greg started out as the team

leader of Community Links' case work team, and he has worked through the ranks to become general manager and now, the executive officer. For Greg, nothing is too much, and he is always willing to go out of his way to help the community and to give back to the community. He is very much an embodiment of the community. Greg's unassuming personality is evident as he goes about his work and his attitude sets him apart from others as his focus is always on the community. Greg is also well known for his honesty, which appeals to everybody with whom he comes into contact. It was my privilege to join Community Links on 5 August for the celebration of this extraordinary milestone, which is a testament to Greg's valuable contribution, loyalty, and dedication to Community Links. On behalf of the Wollondilly electorate, I congratulate Greg on reaching this milestone and wish him well for continued service.

#### **ROBERT EADIE – ART EXHIBITION**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Robert Eadie on his upcoming Strange Light art exhibition at the Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf. Robert has been practising for over sixty years, across multiple mediums, including drawing, sculpture and printmaking. He studied at the National Art School, graduating in 1966. He went on to teach there for 20 years, ultimately becoming Head of Drawing and Painting in 1985. Robert is a 12-time finalist in the Archibald Prize and has placed multiple times in the Wynne and the Sulman. In 1989, his world and work underwent a dramatic transformation when a near-fatal stroke left him partially paralysed, leading to a new, private, and prolific style of artmaking. Strange Light showcases key moments and motifs from Robert's evolving oeuvre, highlighting narratives of resilience, reinvention, and a profound sensitivity to the natural world. Good luck Robert, I can't wait to see the exhibition.

#### **NOAH HAVARD PARIS OLYMPICS**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate local constituent Noah Havard on his selection and achievements for Australia at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Getting selected for an Australian Olympic team is an incredible achievement. It is a testament to his skill, discipline, and determination that he was able to secure a spot in the Men's Canoe Sprint National Team. In Paris, he made us extremely proud. Noah and his team, set back-to-back Olympic records on the way to the final. They came away with a Silver, in a race that had everyone on the edge of their seat. I know the members at North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club were cheering you on every step of the way. Congratulations Noah. Our community, state and country are so proud of you.

#### **BAY ST INITIATIVE LAUNCH**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate Melissa Hoyer, John Keenan and everyone involved in the successful launch of the Bay St Initiative. Led by a coalition of entrepreneurs, community leaders, and city officials, the Bay St Initiative aims to bring vibrancy back to Double Bay. Central to its strategy is the creation of a supportive ecosystem for local businesses through investments in infrastructure, marketing initiatives, and collaborative events. Because of this vision and concerted effort, Double Bay is on track to emerge as a thriving urban centre, drawing visitors from across Sydney and beyond. Congratulations Melissa, John and all involved. I look forward to seeing the Initiative continue to grow.

#### **RITA EDGE**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I am often struck by the extraordinary people that are the backbone of my community. One of these is Rita Edge – a mother, wife, and teacher from Cecil Hills. She is also a beacon of strength, resilience and creativity as she navigates cancer diagnosis and treatment. While her diagnosis may have forced Rita into retirement, she has channelled her energy into a project that both sustains her spirit and fuels her fight against cancer. I first came across Rita's work while visiting Mili & Co cafe at Cecil Hills Shopping Village. Prominently featured on the wall was a collection of pieces by Rita that were for sale. I was fortunate enough to purchase two pieces by Rita that caught my eye. Making use of her boundless creativity for a very worthy cause, Rita has invited community members to bring beauty into their lives while also supporting her through her vital cancer treatment. Her artworks are on sale via her website, as well as at Mili & Co. I recognise Rita's remarkable strength on this journey and invite Liverpool residents to stand in solidarity with her as she confronts cancer head on.

#### **WPC GROUP**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Our growing community has many talented young people who deserve pathways to the many upcoming opportunities in our region. I recently had the opportunity to attend the Liverpool office launch for WPC Group and NextGen Jobs. WPC Group is a leading training organisation and one of the largest employers of apprentices and trainees in Australia. Over its 40 years, WPC group has supported more than 20,000 people through apprenticeship and trainee programs and has received numerous commendations for its important work. It was great to meet with apprentices and some of WPC Group's Liverpool affiliate employers, as well as local apprentices and trainees. Apprentices and trainees are vital to

Liverpool's local economy and youth employment, and I am thrilled to see more opportunities accessible to young people. I extend my congratulations to Frederick Maddern, Jim Lawrence, Nicholas Wyman and Andrew Sezonov for bringing WPC Group to Liverpool, and I look forward to seeing more new trainees and apprentices help fill the skill gaps in South West Sydney.

### **PLATE IT FORWARD**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Plate It Forward, a charity organisation, held a canape event at the Cobham Youth Justice Centre, which marked the conclusion of the Second Chance Kitchen program, which runs twice a year to provide young participants with hands-on experience in the hospitality industry under the guidance of industry experts. This year's guest chefs included John-Paul El Tom, Luke Powell, Ben Greeno, and Luke Bourke. Founded by Shaun Christie David in 2020, Plate It Forward has made strides in supporting vulnerable communities in Sydney, including refugees, asylum seekers, and people with disabilities. They have donated over 560,000 meals and ongoing employment to more than 200 individuals from marginalised backgrounds. Their mission is to create meaningful human connection through the universal love of sharing food. It was truly heartwarming to see the young people who participated in the program prepare and serve a sausage sizzle, kingfish ceviche, and butter cake, and to witness the support from their families. Food can be a powerful connector for building community, cultural exchange and creating opportunities for transformative change. I look forward to future progress by Shaun and his team to expand the program into other youth justice centres.

### **ALL HALLOWS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I congratulate students of All Hallows Catholic Primary School, Five Dock for their recent success at the Interschool Public Speaking Competition. The Interschool Public Speaking Competition saw students from our local area come together to speak on a range of topics important to them. I would like to sincerely congratulate Stage 1 competition winner Capri Nicolaou and Stage 3 winner Zach O'Donovan for their outstanding results at the event. I also sincerely congratulate Tom Looney who competed in the Stage 2 competition, achieving a personal best result. Public speaking is an essential life skill but is something that does not come easily to many. Capri, Zach and Tom have shown that with the guidance of their teachers, and with practice and preparation that they can achieve amazing results and improve their public speaking skills. I warmly congratulate Capri, Zac and Tom on a wonderful result. I know their friends, family, teachers and school are very proud of their achievement. It is wonderful to see students in our local community trying their best and I congratulate all students who participated at the Interschool Public Speaking Competition, you should be proud of your wonderful participation.

### **SYDNEY FINANCE SPECIALISTS**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to congratulate Abbotsford local business Sydney Finance Specialists on its recent 25th Year Anniversary. Sydney Finance Specialists are a team of dedicated brokers providing a wide range of financial services to clients in the local community, and across Sydney. With over 40 years of industry experience, over 200,000 loans approved, and over 350 clients served, this local business has a proud history of being a trusted family business. Since its inception, the business has grown to provide a range of services including individual and business loans, mortgage, and insurance products and has helped hundreds of customers achieve their financial goals. I offer my sincerest congratulations to father-and-son team, Brokers John Piras and Alexander Piras on this significant milestone occasion. I am always encouraged to hear of family-owned local businesses in our community and the story of Sydney Finance Specialists is a great success. I congratulate John and Alexander and their family. I wish you all the very best always.

### **BNP SECURITIES**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to congratulate Mortlake local business, BNP Securities Pty Ltd on its recent 40th Year Anniversary. BNP Securities has specialised in protecting people, property, and assets since their inception in 1983. The firm now services diverse clients both in our local community and beyond, providing services including guards, mobile patrols, next generation mobile solar powered CCTV trailers, remote solar security cameras, concierge, monitoring services and personal safety alarms. I wish to congratulate Director Frank Coslovich on this significant and special occasion. The long-term success of BNP Securities, which is a family business is a testament to Frank's commitment, hard work and dedication. I also congratulate all members of the BNP Securities staff, including General Manager Anthony Speciale and thank staff for their diligent and professional work in the industry. BNP Securities is an institution in our community. The organisation assists our local community in many ways –delivering security services in our suburbs, working with other local businesses, and supporting and sponsoring local schools and sports clubs. We are so grateful. I sincerely congratulate BNP Securities on its 40th Anniversary. I wish Frank, his family, and his staff all the very best.

### **SOUTH COAST SURF LIFESAVING BRANCH AWARDS NIGHT**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Surf Life Saving (NSW) South Coast Branch recipients of the 2023/2024 Awards of Excellence. Last Saturday, I joined my colleagues in congratulating the dedicated volunteers of South Coast Surf Life Saving Clubs throughout our region. The Surf Lifesaving South Coast branch comprises of nine Surf Clubs, has over 2000 members, and patrols beaches from Warilla-Barrack Point SLSC in the north all the way to Mollymook SLSC in the south. I take this opportunity to thank Steve Jones, President, Glenn Matthews, Director, and all the volunteers and lifesavers who keep our beaches safe. In particular, the Parliament acknowledges recipients from the Kiama Electorate. South Coast Branch Surf Life Saver of the Year, Simon Sadler from Gerringong SLSC. Youth Volunteer of the Year, Lily Gazzard, Kiama Downs SLSC. Administrator of the Year, Sally Darragh, Gerringong SLSC. Patrol Captain of the Year, Gary George, Gerringong SLSC. Junior Activities Volunteer of the Year, Tegan Ross, Gerringong SLSC. Junior Male Lifesaver of the Year, Archie Weir, Kiama Downs SLSC. Junior Female Lifesaver of the Year, Poppy Nelson, Kiama SLSC. Congratulations and thank you for your service.

### **165 YEARS OF KIAMA**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Kiama Municipality's one hundredth and sixty fifth birthday. On 11 August 1859 the Municipality proclaimed three wards: Jamberoo, Gerringong and Kiama with the first council meeting on 26 September at the Adams Hotel with James Colley elected as Mayor. In 1887 Kiama was described: "prettily situated, but it is one of the duller places conceivable. There is one attraction, however. Just outside the town, near the lighthouse, is a wonderful freak of nature, the Kiama Blowhole." I take this opportunity to thank all the staff at Kiama Municipal Council who are kept very busy servicing the Kiama LGA and the influx of visitors who visit this not-so-dull place every weekend. I acknowledge Mayor Neil Reilly and current Councillors who will celebrate this milestone with Chief Executive Officer Jane Stroud, and the Executive Team, Jessica Rippon, Director Environment, Planning and Communities, Joe Gaudiosi, Chief Operating Officer, Michael Malone, Director Infrastructure and Liveability, and Olena Tulubinska, Chief Financial Officer and the KMC team. This Parliament also acknowledges the community at large and 165 years of hardship and challenges, as well many moments of joy and celebration. Happy birthday Kiama.

### **SHOALHAVEN BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the 2024 Shoalhaven Business Awards Business Finalists for their excellence, innovation and sustainability. I acknowledge Finalists for Employer of Choice – 20 employees and under: Shoalhaven Occupational Therapy, Financial Dynamics and Activate Health and Movement. Employer of Choice – 21 employees and over: Health Staff Global and Alkath Group. Excellence in Large Business: Nursing Solutions Group, Bumpy Road Catering and Events, Lagom Bakery, Dynamic Tradies. Excellence in Small Business: Motatec, Jervis Bay Holiday Park, Hill to Air, Jetts Nowra, Shoalhaven Occupational Therapy, The Collective Beat, Worklife. Excellence in Micro Business: Delicious Vibrant Beauty, Sealed with a Kiss Weddings and Ceremonies, Supercalla, Shoalhaven Flowers, PROPPR, The Retreat, South Coast Property Styling, My Travel Expert. Outstanding New Business: Mollymook Motel, Eleven Eighty, Soul Skin and Laser, Berry Physiotherapy, Think Regional, Purely You Aesthetics. Excellence in Sustainability: Bomo Bulk, Flamingo Florist. Excellence in Innovation: Cupitt's Estate and Shoalhaven Occupational Therapy. Outstanding Visitor Experience: Kangaroo Valley Adventure Company, Supercalla, Cupitt's Estate, Events @ Sussex. The Parliament congratulates all Finalists and the Executive Committee President Jemma Tribe, Vice-President John Lamont, Treasurer Renee Schott, Secretary Hayley Byrne, and the Management Committee for their support and contributions.

### **SYDNEY ROAD TAILORS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Sydney Road Tailors are based in Seaforth in my electorate of Manly and are a boutique alteration service offering premium bridal alterations and bespoke tailoring. Today, I am pleased to recognise Sydney Road Tailors for being named an Outstanding Sole Operator as part of the Northern Beaches Local Business Awards. With experienced tailor Anthony Esposito at the helm, Sydney Road Tailors have established themselves as an exceptional local business that prides itself on professionalism, passion and outstanding customer service. Well done Sydney Road Tailors!

### **MANLY ORTHODONTICS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Today, I congratulate Manly Orthodontics on receiving a well-deserved Northern Beaches Local Business Award for Outstanding Medical Services. Located in the heart of Manly and boasting spectacular views out to the harbour, Manly Orthodontics has proven itself to be a trusted and results-driven practice that provides comprehensive and individualised orthodontic care for patients of all ages.

Manly Orthodontics is also the only female-owned orthodontic practice on the Northern Beaches. I wish commend Dr. Anél Blignaut and the team at Manly Orthodontics for all the great work they do and congratulate them once again on this fantastic recognition.

#### **THE PANTRY – MANLY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I wish to pass on a big congratulations to the entire team at The Pantry Manly for being awarded Outstanding Restaurant as part of the Northern Beaches Local Business Awards. Situated on the beachfront, The Pantry is without a doubt one of Manly's most iconic restaurants, drawing crowds of both tourists and locals all year round. Serving modern Australian dishes with an inspired Italian twist, this Manly institution offers breakfast, lunch, and dinner with a stunning view of North Steyne that most restaurants in the world would envy. I especially want to give a special shoutout to head chef Francesco Armillis and his hardworking team who will be launching an exciting new menu on Thursday 5th September. I urge anyone visiting the area to drop by and experience everything Francesco's new and improved menu has to offer, while soaking in views of the best beach in the world. Congratulations once again to The Pantry Manly.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber ("the Chamber") for winning the Outstanding Local Chamber category at 2024 Sydney Business Awards. The 2024 Sydney Business Awards celebrate our vibrant business community by honouring the ingenuity, resilience, and commitment exhibited by businesses throughout Greater Sydney. The Sutherland Shire Business Chamber are truly deserving of this honour as a dynamic not-for-profit organisation that seeks to boost economic growth, represent the voice of local businesses and help its members succeed. The Chamber does this by striving to foster an environment where business can thrive and hosting events such as their 'Shark Dive' to showcase the entrepreneurial spirit of our community and bring local businesses together. None of this would be possible without the hardworking Executive of the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber who strive to maximise the economic potential in the Sutherland Shire. I recognise President Jeanne Zweck, Vice President Kamen Tsonev, Secretary Joanne Costanzo, outgoing Treasurer Nathan Rigney, Treasurer Deborah Power and Board of Director Members Damien Vella, Pamela Wood, Terry Likidis, Tim Jenson and Robert Stanley-Jones. I thank the team behind the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber for their continued advocacy for local businesses in our area.

#### **SHARON XABREGAS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the inspiring Sharon Xabregas from Sign Hear in Miranda on winning Business Person of the Year at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Sharon, the amazing founder and managing director of Sign Hear, was born deaf and is a passionate advocate for the deaf and hard of hearing communities in the workplace and everyday life. Sign Hear is an incredible deaf-lead business that provides support to families and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and works with employers to give them the tools needed to make their workplaces more accessible, including the teaching of Auslan. This recognition of Sharon's achievements would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Sign Hear team. I recognise Andrew Xabregas, Christine Wilson, Lisa Sothern, Mark Hooper, Sally Bevan, Steph Hayes, Evan Donnelly, Gabi O'Sullivan, Michaela Pretorius, Anne Bajraszewski and Eleanor Hanlen for their efforts. Small businesses like Sign Hear are an important part of our local community as a key provider of goods, services, and jobs. I again congratulate Sharon on winning Business Person of the Year at the 2024 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards and extend my best wishes for the future.

#### **SMALL SCHOOL'S LEARNING ALLIANCE**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the amazing Small School's Learning Alliance on winning the Secretary's Award for an Outstanding School Initiative at the 2024 Public Education Awards. The Public Education Awards were held during Education Week and celebrate the best in public schools across our state. By way of background, the Small School's Learning Alliance is made up of several amazing public schools from the Sutherland Shire including Como, Jannali, Taren Point, Woronora River and Waterfall Public Schools. The Alliance was started by Como Public School, to pool resources and collaborate with other smaller public schools in our community to improve student outcomes. The Alliance also share extracurricular activities between their schools to give our little learners more choice than they would have at their school alone. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership of the principals of the schools involved in the Small School's Learning Alliance from the Miranda electorate. I recognise Nicole Gilmore, Narelle Chaplin and James Nobbs for their efforts. I again congratulate the Small School's Learning Alliance on winning the Secretary's Award at the 2024 Public Education Awards and extend my best wishes for the future.

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