



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday 18 September 2024**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 18 September 2024**

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

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

*[Notices of motions given.]*

## *Bills*

### **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (CERTIFICATION) BILL 2024**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Paul Scully, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (10:19):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I introduce the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Certification) Bill 2024, which will make sure that the essential work of building certification can continue in some of the most important areas of our State. The bill permanently reintroduces powers for essential specialist building certification services that were inadvertently removed by amendments to the Act in 2018 and that have since been maintained through savings and transitional provisions.

Specialist building certification services are essential to manage the land and waters in some of our State's most cherished places, such as the alpine region and Sydney Harbour. The bill will allow these services to continue unimpeded by re-establishing a permanent pathway for them in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The ski resort areas of the alpine region are a unique part of our State. They present unique challenges to ensure effective land use control. Following independent recommendations in the aftermath of the Thredbo landslide tragedy in 1998, the planning Minister has served as the sole consent authority within the ski resort areas, responsible for all development matters in those areas. This responsibility includes a wide range of building certification functions, which are usually the responsibility of local councils.

For more than two decades, this arrangement has meant that a specialist team from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has overseen development in the ski resort areas to make sure they are constructed according to the relevant building and planning frameworks. The alpine region is not the only place where specialist building certification services need to be provided. In key maritime and waterway areas of the State, such as Sydney Harbour and the State's three ports, Transport for NSW, the Port Authority and port operators need to issue certificates to enable the leases that control how these areas are used.

These certification services I have just outlined are essential to the good governance of New South Wales. However, amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act in 2018 removed the authority for these certification services to occur. This was an oversight, which was rectified with temporary savings provisions. However, the temporary fix will formally end on 1 December 2024. With the bill, the Government is putting the power to do these certification services back in the Act, where they ought to have been, so that our certifiers can get on with the job.

I now turn to the bill's provisions and each of its key elements. Schedule 1, item [2] amends the definition of certifier in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to include the Minister in relation to development for which the Minister was the consent authority. As the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is the consent authority for all developments in the alpine region, this adjusted definition will allow the Minister's delegates to undertake all necessary certification work in this area. This can range from certifying code compliance for something as minor as a driveway to something more significant, such as a ski lift.

Schedule 2.1 amends the Building and Development Certifiers Act 2018 to clarify that the Minister and delegates do not fall under the registration framework for private certifiers. This exemption maintains the status quo, recognising the department's expertise in the field and the unique service being offered. Schedule 1, item [3] amends the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to establish a power for the regulations to prescribe

persons to issue subdivision certificates in specified circumstances. It also makes sure that the planning secretary will have oversight of the issuance of any certificates under this power.

Schedule 2.2 specifies those circumstances and amends the regulations to prescribe Transport for NSW, Newcastle Port Corporation and the port operators of the ports of Botany Bay, Newcastle and Port Kembla to issue subdivision certificates in relation to subdivisions carried out by, or on behalf of, those authorities. Such subdivision is typically undertaken in the usual course of their land management functions, such as facilitating domestic or commercial leases, disposing of or transferring land, or providing for separate use or occupation of specific areas via subdivision. In such instances, these authorities already have the power to carry out the subdivision under part 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 but need to issue a subdivision certificate to complete the final procedural step of registering the subdivision with the NSW Land Registry Services.

Schedule 2.2 also amends the regulations to prescribe Transport for NSW as a person who has the function to issue subdivision certificates to development for which it granted development consent. Transport for NSW is the consent authority for unincorporated waterway areas—such as Sydney Harbour—which are outside of any local government area. Here, Transport for NSW issues development consents to manage long-term wetland leases. Again, a subdivision certificate is required to enable the final procedural step of registering the lease with the NSW Land Registry Services. Without this step, there is no way to put the lease into effect.

Schedule 1 item [7] retroactively validates, to the extent of any invalidity, four occupation certificates issued by the Minister's delegates between 2020 and 2023. This is necessary because they may have been impacted by limitations in the drafting of the temporary savings provisions that the bill will replace. Schedule 1, item [5] reinstates the power to regulate fees and charges for building information certificates. Building information certificates are a specialist type of certificate that can only be provided by local councils in relation to unauthorised works and are typically sought by buyers when transacting property. The power to regulate building information certificate fees is another provision that was inadvertently removed in the rewrite of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. Reinstating it will allow those fees to be aligned with other fixed planning system fees for government services.

Schedule 2.3 removes the current savings provisions in the Environmental Planning and Assessment (Savings, Transitional and Other Provisions) Regulation 2017 that are due to lapse on 1 December 2024 and will be replaced by the bill's proposed provisions. The bill before the House provides a straightforward and simple fix for an inadvertent issue in the operation of the Act. By permanently re-establishing the necessary powers via the bill, the Government will be able to continue to deliver specialist certification services and permanently settle previous transitional and savings provisions that are due to expire at the end of the year. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **POLICE AMENDMENT (POLICE OFFICER SUPPORT SCHEME) 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) (10:27):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce into Parliament the Police Amendment (Police Officer Support Scheme) Bill 2024, which amends the Police Act 1990 and the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020. The bill enables a comprehensive police officer support scheme for police officers who die or become permanently or temporarily incapacitated for work. Put simply, the bill provides a safety net of payments for police officers who need it most. New South Wales police officers will be covered for on- and off-duty injuries, with the scheme ensuring that support will be provided when officers need it most.

The House is all too aware of the courageous and often dangerous work that police officers undertake in the course of their duties. Sometimes that work can have fatal or catastrophic consequences. When you and I run away from danger, they run towards it—sometimes with catastrophic consequences. That is why it is imperative that we have an enhanced workers compensation support scheme that looks after officers if they have been hurt. The introduction of this bill provides the legislative change needed to modernise the current Police Blue Ribbon Insurance Scheme [PBRI]. The bill amends part 9B, "death and disability", of the Police Act 1990. Currently, police officers contribute 1.8 per cent of their remuneration towards the PBRI, which consists of a nine-month

waiting period on full pay, followed by up to seven years of income protection at 75 per cent of salary, with offsetting for other income, including workers compensation for on-duty injury; two years income protection for an off-duty injury; and death, total and permanent disability, and terminal illness cover.

The scheme is over a decade old and is no longer fit for purpose. The intent of this bill is to allow for modernisation of the scheme. One of the reasons we must modernise this scheme is to fix the concessional superannuation cap problem for New South Wales police officers. Firstly, I acknowledge the tenacious advocacy of the Police Association of New South Wales, which has continued to raise the issue of concessional caps with me, my colleagues and Federal parliamentarians—a multi-year campaign on behalf of their members, some 16,000 police officers in this State.

Under the current PBRI, insurance premiums to protect officers if they get sick or injured at work are paid by the Government, alongside a small officer contribution of 1.8 per cent of their salary. The amount is paid into each officer's superannuation account, which is immediately transferred out to the insurer. When the Australian Tax Office [ATO] looks at each officer's income, they count the extra super contributions made for their insurance as income. This has meant that police officers' incomes are consistently artificially inflated, making them look higher than their actual income. In fact, many police officers end up breaching high-income thresholds that cut them off from benefits that they may be entitled to, including loss of means-tested Commonwealth benefits, such as health rebates, childcare rebates and parental leave—entitlements shared by every other Australian dependent on income—and loss of family tax benefits.

Officers receiving child support payments from a former partner are severely penalised, as the level of child support is set according to inflated income which counts contributions for the PBRI. Officers' superannuation accounts are inflated by PBRI contributions so that they breach the cap on concessional superannuation tax rates. This means that their normal super contributions are taxable at a higher rate. Officers receive large tax bills from the ATO for just doing their job and receiving normal employer super contributions. Officers are unable to save for retirement by making additional super contributions, making New South Wales police the only workers in Australia denied the right to do this at the tax rate shared by all other Australians.

The new police officer support scheme, to be known as the Enhanced Police Support Scheme, will fix these critical problems for New South Wales police officers and ensure that our system is best structured to support injured workers. By moving away from an insurance product arrangement, there is now a unique opportunity for a new and positive approach that supports police officers to recover after they have been injured. It also allows for closer involvement with the NSW Police Force to facilitate return-to-work outcomes and support early intervention. Taking care of sick and injured officers is my—and the NSW Police Force's—top priority, and this new scheme is a critical step towards that.

The amendments included in the bill will enable the PBRI products to be replaced by a new scheme. Importantly, the bill will enable the income protection insurance product to be replaced by one that does not have adverse tax implications for New South Wales police officers. It will also allow officers to salary sacrifice more to superannuation without administrative burden or impacting access to government benefits. The new scheme will also streamline support for all injury management claims, improve support for recovery and return to work, and provide an improved safety net to support officers and their families. This bill is intended to enable on- and off-duty payments and death cover for officers who die or become temporarily or permanently incapacitated for work. It is expected that the associated regulations will provide a similar income protection benefit to the PBRI by providing a weekly compensation top-up payment to officers to specified levels over different benefit periods. The benefit periods will include a payment of 100 per cent of a police officer's ordinary rate of pay for the first nine months and up to 75 per cent of salary, as well as a 17 per cent loading for non-commissioned officers, for up to 7 years.

Additionally, there will be a provision for a catastrophic or exceptional extension payment [CEEP] in certain circumstances that provides up to an additional three years of payments, providing benefits of 75 per cent of the officer's salary, as well as a 17 per cent loading for non-commissioned officers. Officers who suffer the most catastrophic or exceptional injuries will be covered by the CEEP. Parameters for the CEEP payment, including definitions of "catastrophic" and "exceptional", will be set out in the regulations. Furthermore, the current off-duty income protection is intended to be enhanced from two years to three years, with death benefits continuing on current policy terms, paid via Aware Super.

I turn to the details of the bill. Most significantly, the bill amends part 9B of the Police Act, enabling the creation of the police officer support scheme. It outlines the provisions for the scheme, which include providing payments to or in relation to police officers who die or become incapacitated for work, and provides that the police officer support scheme is approved by the Minister with the concurrence of the Treasurer, set out in proposed section 199B. These payments will be top-up payments to workers compensation, aligned to workers

compensation determinations. As with the PBRI, the scheme requires contributions from police officers to partly fund the scheme, outlined under proposed section 199C.

Proposed section 199D allows for regulations to be created in relation to the support scheme, including requirements for its structure, eligibility for payments and contributions, dispute resolution procedures, sharing of information, monitoring and reporting. It also provides for regulations regarding the obligations of the commissioner, police officers and former police officers in relation to the rehabilitation, retraining and redeployment of incapacitated police officers and former police officers. The bill will also enable regulations to allow for the Auditor-General to monitor and report on the success of the scheme to ensure that it delivers for injured officers and supports officers to return to work, wherever possible.

Section 199E of the proposed part outlines that the scheme does not apply to a police officer who is a contributor to certain superannuation funds or a police officer who is not a contributor to the scheme. Proposed section 199F provides additional functions for icare NSW under section 10 of the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 to include conducting reviews of decisions made under regulations under this part. Division 4 of the bill also confers jurisdiction and functions on the Personal Injury Commission to hear and determine applications regarding disputes and appoint medical assessors. This enables review by an independent umpire who has expertise for disputes regarding weekly compensation payments. Disputes may be appealed to a presidential member and then to the Court of Appeal. Schedule 2 to the bill accordingly amends the Personal Injury Commission Act 2020 to create a new Police Officer Support Scheme Division, which sets out the composition of the division along with its functions.

Division 5 of the bill proposes section 199K. For the scheme to be operable, it needs to ensure that information can be shared between the parties that need to process and administer claims and payments, including icare, its agents, police, the Personal Injury Commission and medical practitioners. That moves us towards a scheme where the Government can work more closely with injured workers to assist in their rehabilitation. That is a vast improvement on the current PBRI scheme. Transitional arrangements will mean that a police officer's injury will be covered by one of the schemes, but not both. Schedule 4 provides that, if a police officer receives a payment as a result of the former insurance policy and under the police officer support scheme in relation to the same injury, the police officer must repay the amount of the payment under the police officer support scheme.

There has been extensive consultation with the Police Association of New South Wales over the past 12 months on the redesign of the PBRI scheme. I thank the association for its hard work, expertise and collaboration. I particularly thank President Kevin Morton, as well as Tony Bear, Pat Gooley, Kirsty Membreno and Tony Howell. They have fought long and hard to take this support scheme out of superannuation. I look forward to continuing to work closely on the scheme as it is implemented in the coming days, weeks and months.

The bill has also been informed by feedback from a government steering committee, including representatives from Treasury, the Cabinet Office, icare, the NSW Police Force and the State Insurance Regulation Authority. Further consultation has taken place with the Premier's Department, the Personal Injury Commission and Aware Super. Additionally, Aware Super has issued a significant event notice outlining the changes to its members' coverage as required by law. Crucially, the bill will enable a sustainable, fit-for-purpose scheme that can continue to meet the needs of injured police officers. It is a scheme for now and the future. The NSW Police Force will continue to communicate with its members about the transition and the new scheme. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ROAD TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SPEED CAMERA DETECTION) BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Jenny Aitchison, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (10:42):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Transport Legislation Amendment (Speed Camera Detection) Bill 2024. The bill will deliver on a key action announced by the New South Wales Government as an outcome of the Road Safety Forum we held in February this year. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Road Transport Act 2013 and its regulations so that the current legislative framework for average speed camera enforcement for heavy vehicles will now apply to all vehicles. It will allow evidence of the average speed of a vehicle recorded between detection points to be used as evidence of the actual speed of the vehicle for the purposes of speed offences. The New South Wales Government's 2026 Road Safety Action Plan includes our goal, consistent with the National Road Safety

Strategy 2021-30, for zero trauma on New South Wales roads by 2050. The plan outlines our ambitious target on the road to zero, which is for 50 per cent fewer deaths and 30 per cent fewer serious injuries by 2030, compared with our average over 2018 to 2020.

After three consecutive years of meaningful reductions in road fatalities in New South Wales, fatal crashes and fatalities increased significantly in 2023. Up to 31 December last year there were 351 fatalities on New South Wales roads, which is 70 more fatalities than in 2022. That equates to 4.17 deaths per 100,000 people compared with 3.41 in 2022. As at today, we have lost 239 people on our roads in New South Wales, or 339 over the past 12 months, and hundreds more have been seriously injured. In the past 12 months, 243 people died in regional New South Wales, which is nearly 2.5 times the number of people who died in metropolitan areas over the same period. These are not just statistics. We are talking about mums, dads, brothers, sisters, nans, pops, friends and colleagues we have lost. Every person who dies is one too many. That is why our goal is towards zero.

As a first step to addressing the increase in road deaths, we hosted the Road Safety Forum in February this year. It was attended by over 150 experts and stakeholders from around Australia and the world to discuss ways to improve road safety in New South Wales. The forum provided a platform to discuss research, best practice and initiatives to help New South Wales meet its road safety targets. It also provided an opportunity to hear about experiences from countries that have low levels of road trauma. A clear theme from the forum, supported by safety experts and practitioners, was that New South Wales, by restricting average speed camera enforcement only to heavy vehicles, may be failing to maximise safety benefits from this proven road safety measure. New South Wales is the only jurisdiction in the world known to systematically limit average speed enforcement detection to a subset of vehicles, rather than applying to all vehicles. While our network of average speed camera lengths in New South Wales has been selected with a focus on heavy vehicle trauma, 79 per cent of all fatalities and serious injuries across the State's existing 31 average speed camera enforcement lengths over the period from 2018 to 2022 did not involve any heavy vehicles.

Following the forum, the New South Wales Government committed to examining the benefits and challenges of using average speed cameras to also enforce speeding by light vehicles. Many European countries with leading road safety results, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway, use average speed cameras to monitor the speed of all vehicles as part of their automated enforcement strategies. Studies clearly show that average speed enforcement for all vehicles leads to significant reductions in traffic-related injuries and fatalities. This evidence has grown since the introduction of average speed cameras for heavy vehicles in New South Wales in 2009. For example, a 2015 study in Norway found that average speed cameras cut deaths and serious injuries by 49 per cent. Similarly, a 2016 study in the United Kingdom showed a 36 per cent reduction in fatal and serious injury crashes with average speed camera systems. In New South Wales, in the 25 regional locations where average speed cameras are operational, there has been a 53 per cent reduction in fatalities from crashes involving heavy vehicles.

Average speed programs across Australia vary in size and maturity and cover a mix of regional and urban locations. Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory all have average speed camera programs that enforce both light and heavy vehicles. Enforcement of average speed is also generally considered a fair form of enforcement because drivers demonstrate intentional speeding behaviour over a long length of road or time, not just at a single point. Research conducted in New South Wales in 2024 found that 68 per cent of respondents thought that average speed cameras were important in making New South Wales roads safer.

I now turn to the bill. The legislative changes in the bill are needed to adequately explore the opportunities of the technology to improve safety. The bill will amend provisions within the Road Transport Act 2013 and regulations to allow the use of average speed camera technology to prove a speeding offence by any vehicle. Currently, average speed camera related parts of the Road Transport Act 2013 apply to a heavy vehicle, which is defined in the Act as a motor vehicle or trailer that has a gross vehicle mass of more than 4.5 tonnes. The amendment will enable the enforcement to apply to what we typically describe as a light vehicle: cars, motorcycles and small trucks with a gross vehicle mass not exceeding 4.5 tonnes.

The legal framework for average speed cameras has been in place since 2009. The provisions have proven robust over time and are fit to apply to all vehicle types. However, I am aware that the legislation and how the technology actually operates may not be understood by the broader community. In making this significant change, the New South Wales Government is committed to clearly explaining how the provisions operate. Average speed enforcement works by measuring the amount of time it takes a vehicle to drive the length of two surveyed points and then calculating the average speed of the vehicle. If the vehicle's average speed exceeds the average speed limit for the length of road, the responsible person of the vehicle receives the penalty for speeding.

Photographs of vehicles are taken as a vehicle passes the start and end points of an enforcement length. The cameras also record information, including the licence plate of the vehicle and the time and location that the

camera took the photograph. All cameras and enforcement devices used are approved under the Act for this purpose. As required under the Act, all average speed enforcement lengths are certified by a registered land surveyor to ensure the accuracy of average speed calculations. The distance used when calculating a vehicle's average speed across an average speed enforcement length is required under the Act to be the shortest practicable distance a driver could have used to travel between the points without contravening any applicable road rules, which ensures that there is no possibility that a driver's speed can be overestimated. Where there are multiple speed limits along an average speed enforcement length, the Act provides a formula for the calculation of an average speed limit.

The average speed limit is calculated from the part of the average speed camera length to which each speed limit applied. Drivers receive a penalty if their average speed is above this average speed limit calculation. Evidence of a driver's average speed that is calculated in accordance with part 5.3, division 3 of the Act can be used in proceedings for a speeding offence and is prima facie evidence of a driver's actual speed. Consistent with any other camera-detected speeding offence, the responsible person for a vehicle that is detected speeding by an average speed camera is deemed responsible for the offence. This is typically the registered operator. However, if the responsible person was not driving at the time of the offence, they can nominate the person who was in charge of the vehicle at the time, as occurs with other camera-detected traffic offences.

The New South Wales average speed camera program covers over 750 kilometres of the New South Wales road network. Currently, there are 25 average speed enforcement lengths in regional New South Wales and six average speed enforcement lengths in the Sydney metropolitan area. These average speed enforcement lengths are on key heavy vehicle routes that have an over-representation of heavy vehicle crashes. The New South Wales Government will implement a trial to expand the use of average speed cameras to include light vehicles. The trial will provide the opportunity to explore the safety impact of the technology in the New South Wales context and understand community feedback, which will help inform decisions about the ongoing role of average speed cameras, alongside other enforcement.

The amendments in the bill will enable the issue of infringements for offences committed during the trial. This is important to obtain a true measure of the effect that the enforcement can have on driver behaviour and trauma. It is proposed that the trial will operate in two locations out of the current 31 average speed camera locations across New South Wales: along the Pacific Highway, between Kew and Port Macquarie, and the Hume Highway, between Coolac and Gundagai. The proposed locations are both established sites that have enforced heavy vehicle average speeds since 2011 and have a history of fatal and serious injury crashes involving light vehicles.

Between 2018 and 2022, 753 crashes that did not involve heavy vehicles occurred within the 31 current average speed camera lengths in New South Wales. These included 25 fatal and 151 serious injury crashes. We acknowledge the trial will be a change for motorists in New South Wales, especially those who travel along the routes regularly. The trial will be supported by community and stakeholder communications. All average speed camera locations have warning signs installed, and signage will clearly show that enforcement is for all vehicles, not just heavy vehicles. In addition, consistent with current policy when new average speed cameras have been installed for heavy vehicles, the trial will operate with a 60-day warning letter period for light vehicles prior to infringements being issued for the period. Penalties for average speed offences committed in the trial will align with penalties for existing light vehicle speeding offences.

Fines from light vehicle average speed camera-detected offences, like all other camera-detected road safety offences, must be paid into the Community Road Safety Fund. The Community Road Safety Fund commenced in 2013 and is established under the Transport Administration Act 1988. Under existing provisions of that Act, fines from camera-detected speeding, red light, mobile phone use and seatbelt offences are paid into the fund and can only be used to deliver Transport for NSW road safety measures. The Community Road Safety Fund, which includes both road safety camera fine revenue and additional investment by the New South Wales Government, is used to deliver a broad range of road safety initiatives, as outlined in the 2026 Road Safety Action Plan. This includes life-saving infrastructure safety upgrades and treatments across the network, testing and rating of child restraints, police road safety operations, road safety education programs, school crossing supervisors, and the Driver Licensing Access Program. The trial is just one part of our multi-pronged approach to ending and reducing deaths on our regional roads.

We have held the State's first road safety forum—as we said, this was a recommendation that came out of that. We held the State's first wildlife strike symposium. We have just announced more than \$200 million for regional road safety upgrades as part of Towards Zero Safer Roads Program round two. We are upgrading safety at 23 level crossings, and we have upgraded our speed adviser app and open data to highlight to drivers where level crossings are. We are doubling mobile speed-camera-approved sites and encouraging communities to nominate problem areas. We are investing \$30 million in the Cudal Future Mobility Testing and Research Centre

to provide a test track for heavy vehicle safety features. We have switched on mobile phone detection cameras so they can detect people who are not wearing seatbelts, and we have pioneered the demerit point scheme and extended it into its second year, with 1.2 million drivers rewarded for improving driving behaviour. We are investing in more heavy vehicle rest stops in the regions, and we have rolled out more seatbelts across the regional school bus fleet.

The bill will commence on assent. However, there will be a necessary development period to finalise the sites and complete technical updates to support the trial. The trial is expected to start in mid-2025, with the commencement date to be clearly publicised in a future announcement. Transport for NSW, together with the NRMA, will closely monitor the trial, and an independent review will be commissioned to clearly document the outcomes. This will include the measurable effect on drivers' speeding behaviour and analysis of offences. The review will help inform any decisions about the future of average speed cameras post-trial.

I take this opportunity to thank the many people who deal with trauma on our roads. I especially thank first responders like the police, paramedics, fire brigades from Fire and Rescue NSW and the Rural Fire Service, VRA Rescue NSW, the SES, local councillors and council staff, traffic controllers and Transport for NSW teams who are often amongst the first on site at the scene of a crash. What they observe in those moments is harrowing enough, and their courage in facing the unthinkable horrors of road trauma means the difference between life and death for many people. I also thank the many medical staff, the doctors and nurses and ancillary staff in emergency departments and on the wards and GPs in community, who work to save lives and help victims of road trauma survive into the future, and those in community—the occupational therapists, disability support providers, mental health professionals and physiotherapists amongst them—who work with victims of road trauma to help them heal, sometimes over months and years, and sometimes they are never the same after that crash.

I thank and console the families and friends who support the victims or who spend the rest of their lives grieving the loss of a loved one. Many of them become some of our strongest advocates to try to stop this senseless loss of life from happening to anyone else. I thank those road users who drive responsibly—who do not speed or take alcohol or other drugs before they drive, who do not drive when they are fatigued, who wear a seatbelt, and who put their phone away and do not drive distracted. They take the privilege of driving seriously, responsibly and courteously, and they care for and save the lives of other road users. Finally, I thank the other road safety advocates. I met with the Road Safety Advisory Council last week, and I am thankful for its support. I thank the NRMA for its leadership on this issue. I thank the many advocates, like members of the Road Trauma Support Group, Di McMurtrie from Hannah's Blue Butterflies and Peter Frazer from Safer Australian Roads and Highways, who in the depths of their personal loss continue to advocate for safer standards so that others may live.

With only a third of the population of our State living in regional New South Wales yet experiencing more than two-thirds of the deaths on our country roads, in this Rural Road Safety Month I reiterate the Government's commitment to doing everything we can to save lives in the bush. This trial is yet another initiative we are taking to do just that. The impact of road trauma is real for so many in our communities. The introduction of the bill reflects the commitment of the New South Wales Government to listening to expert evidence, trialling road safety measures hand in hand with the community, and taking more action to meet the targets in our 2026 Road Safety Action Plan to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Visitors*

#### VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome everybody in the gallery today, but I wish to acknowledge some people individually. I extend a welcome to the guests of the member for Campbelltown, Callun and Glenn Rowan. I also welcome guests of the member for Macquarie Fields, students of Saint Mark's Coptic Orthodox College and their teacher, Mrs Armanyous. I also welcome a guest of the member for Wakehurst, Sue Fairless, one of the first female bus drivers in the State. I congratulate Sue, who has been driving since 1964 and is still driving. That is fantastic. I welcome guests of the member for Blue Mountains, whom I met earlier: teacher Mr Richard Engel and students from Katoomba High School, Springwood High School, Winmalee High School, Blaxland High School and Korowal School. It was lovely to meet them. I also welcome a guest of the member for Goulburn, Elisha Martin. Finally, I acknowledge guests of the member for Lake Macquarie in partnership with the member for Swansea, being some gentlemen from the Belmont Men's Probus Club. I welcome them.



*Announcements***PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS OF RUGBY LEAGUE**

**The SPEAKER (11:03):** It has been brought to my attention that there is a NSW Parliamentary Friends of Rugby League, and this morning it held the inaugural touch football competition between country and city members.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** It was not the inaugural competition.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** It is the first trophy.

**The SPEAKER:** Well, I am holding the inaugural trophy, which was won by the country team, captained by the member for Tamworth. I offer my condolences to the member for Campbelltown, who captained the city team. Because I do not intend to set a precedent by using props in the House, I order that the trophy be removed from the Chamber. I will hand it to the attendant.

*Question Time***STATE BUDGET AND HEALTH**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:06):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. With fewer than 55 per cent of patients leaving emergency departments within four hours—the worst since Labor was last in government—how does the Minister justify cutting total health spending after inflation for two years in a row?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:06):** Those in the gallery should ignore that, and I will tell them why. First, it was said by a gentleman who sat around a Cabinet table that, guess what, two or so months ago would have seen 1,112 nurses cut and lose their jobs. But—like in those TV ads—wait, there's more. Secondly, in relation to the budget—I acknowledge the students in the gallery and the education Minister sitting behind me, and I am assuming that this is probably year 7 or so maths—our health budget is \$35.1 billion. That is—wait for it—the largest budget for health ever committed. Thirdly, we have said very clearly that the Commonwealth Government needs to do its share of the bargain in relation to the provision of GPs. Because—this may surprise some people—when you cannot get access to a GP or it is not bulk-billed, where do you go?

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat while I hear the point of order from the member for Vaucluse.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** I am happy to get the Minister a calculator.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. I call the member for Vaucluse to order for the first time.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Let me be clear. If you cannot access primary care through regularly attending an accessible GP, you have virtually no other option than to—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was not about what else is going on; the question was about how the Minister can justify cutting total health spending in real terms for two years in a row.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I answered the question in about 1½ minutes.

**The SPEAKER:** I have ruled that the Minister has not been directly relevant to the question.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I took a lot less time than the Opposition did to put in applications for the local government elections.

**HEALTH WORKFORCE**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:09):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales health system is responding to record pressure on the State's emergency departments?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:10):** I thank the member for Granville for that very good question and for her work around Western Sydney, particularly around Granville. There are a number of hospitals in and around

that area that the member shares with other MPs. Westmead has seen a big increase in on-time treatments. Auburn Hospital is also in and around the member's area, and it is the best of its peer group.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Well done to the member for Granville for her advocacy. Let me be very clear about today's data: We have seen from the independent Bureau of Health Information a number of significant inclusions in its report. I will go through them very clearly. The first is that our emergency department [ED] presentations have increased by 3 per cent compared with the same time last year. We now have around 800,000 people presenting every quarter. The report highlighted that, for the first time in the reporting of independent bureau data—and we all know this is the case in our communities—the number of people accessing GPs and GP appointments has fallen by an incredible 15 per cent. Our primary care system is in freefall at the moment. That is doing two things.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** It means that people are not able to access a GP in their community, so they are using an emergency department as an alternative and as their quasi medical centre.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Secondly, because they are not accessing a GP regularly, they are turning up to our hospitals sicker. Proof of that—

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Categories one, two and three—all of those most serious presentations—have skyrocketed to the highest ever rate. Let us be clear: We have a two-funded system and one funder—us—is doing the heavy lifting at the moment. We cannot continue to do this without the Commonwealth putting its shoulder to the wheel. We are not going to stand by—and I hope that no member in this Chamber will stand by—while GPs are taken out of our communities with, at the same time, big increases in presentations to our hospitals. That is not a sustainable system. It is not fair on patients, it is not fair on their families and it is not fair on the staff in our hospital system.

**Ms Julia Finn:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I call the member for Granville.

**Ms Julia Finn:** I seek additional information.

**The SPEAKER:** I grant an extension of two minutes.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** We have a two-funded system, and it only works if both ends of that system do their job. Let us be clear on what the Government is doing: There is over \$500 million invested in services that are traditionally not the responsibility of the New South Wales Government. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on urgent care services to open up more primary care for people to access so they do not have to go to an emergency department. There are more virtual care services, including virtual kids services that are designed specifically for parents to allow children to access care out of hours without having to go to our busy emergency departments or children's hospitals. We are expanding the scope of practice for pharmacies to allow pharmacists to treat many medical conditions that were previously the responsibility of the State.

For the first time in the history of a State government, we have invested directly in bulk-billing support initiatives, which the former Government failed to do for many years. The Government is doing this to ensure that GPs remain in practice and so continue to be bulk-billed. This is the first time that a State government has done that. I will tell members what the Government will not do: We will not defend the other arm of the government, the Federal Government, which is responsible for health care in this system, when it is not putting its shoulder to the wheel to the extent that we need it to. There is not a member in this Chamber or in the community right now, if they are fair dinkum, who has not said to one of us that it is hard to access a GP, particularly a bulk-billing GP.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Until we get that situation sorted, we are going to continue to have pressure on our EDs. I say very clearly to Opposition members that they should join us in lobbying Canberra to do its job.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** I cannot give the member for Vacluse the call until Opposition members settle down, including the member for Wahroonga and the Leader of the Opposition. I expect more from Opposition members for the rest of question time.

**HEALTH WORKFORCE**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (11:15):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. In the latest data, Blacktown Hospital's emergency department went backwards on every key metric. With media exposing that patients are sleeping on the floor, will the Minister admit that our health system has hit rock bottom under Labor?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:15):** What I know—

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I say to the member and to those in the gallery that Vaucluse is quite far away from Blacktown. I am sure the member is a frequent visitor to Blacktown!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Hawkesbury to remove herself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the conclusion of the Minister's answer.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Hawkesbury left the Chamber at 11:16.]*

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Let me talk about Blacktown. Many members whose electorates are in and around that area would know general manager Brad Ceely and speak to him regularly. Blacktown Hospital has been under unprecedented demand and pressure. I have had multiple discussions with the member for Blacktown about this matter. He has helped to set up a foundation in that area, the Better Foundation. Brad Ceely and his team have worked to significantly improve Blacktown over a period of time, while still facing unprecedented measures. I say well done to those staff, including Brad Ceely and his team. That team faces demands on its hospital the likes of which many hospitals have never seen before. We are backing them in a number of ways: We have substantially increased their nursing, we have substantially increased their registrars, we have increased and are rolling out their short stays, and we will be continuing to invest in ratios through our emergency departments.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Point of order—

**Mr RYAN PARK:** This is not irrelevant; this is directly relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat. Members will come to order. I call the member for Vaucluse.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** This patronising behaviour by Labor—

*[A Government member interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Vaucluse will resume her seat. I do not know which member interjected, but I will have them removed from the Chamber if it happens again. All members will come to order. I need to hear the member for Vaucluse. I will not tolerate further interjections today. The member for Vaucluse has the call.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The metrics are going backwards in Blacktown on every key measure. The Minister must address that.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I will talk about one measure. Do members know how many nurses Western Sydney would have lost had Labor not come to government? If the Opposition was in government, do members know how many nurses people like Brad Ceely would have lost? Close to 100 nurses would have been moved from Western Sydney if it was not for the Labor Government coming to power and ensuring it saved their jobs.

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

**PUBLIC PRESCHOOLS**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (11:19):** I like your new look, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you. I think your suit looks good too.

**Mr TRI VO:** My question is addressed to the brilliant Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is delivering the largest expansion of public preschools in history?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:20):** I thank the very hardworking member for Cabramatta for asking a really important question that goes to the heart of ensuring that our children get the very best start in life and in their

education journey. Of course, we have spoken a lot in public as well as in this Chamber about the cruel irony that while children from disadvantaged backgrounds stand to benefit the most from high-quality early childhood education, they are, unfortunately, the least likely to have access to it—not by choice in any way and not because families do not want to access these services, but because these services have been out of reach.

This Government is intervening to ensure that these early childhood education services, particularly preschool education, are accessible to more families across New South Wales by investing in the largest expansion of public preschools in the history of New South Wales. We are particularly proud of this one. An independent assessment of where the need was most great advised the Government of where those 100 public preschools would be built. I hazard to say that they are places the Opposition probably could not find on a map. The Minns Labor Government is proud to be investing in these public preschools. The sites were independently chosen.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Cabramatta will have preschools in Cabramatta West, Edensor Park and Mount Pritchard. The member for Mount Druitt will have preschools in Hebersham, Shalvey and Blackett.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Port Macquarie to order for the second time. The member for Goulburn will come to order.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I would really counsel the Opposition against opposing public preschools being built in Shalvey and Blackett, in whose communities it never invested one cent.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** That is not true.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** That is absolutely true. The member for Fairfield will have preschools in Fairfield West and Villawood. This will be life changing for communities, to give our littlest learners the early intervention they need so that when they transition to kindergarten they are not starting from behind one day one. We do so much work in education from kindergarten to year 12, but we must get them to the start line in a fairer way, and this is what we are doing through the provision of public preschools. These communities were just ignored from day one, where language skills when they started kindergarten— [*Extension of time*]

In so many of these communities chosen for the sites of public preschools, children start kindergarten—that early, crucial phase—with things like language skills not where they should be, which means they are already starting behind with the early foundational skills of numeracy and literacy. This is an ambitious program. We are rolling out 100 public preschools in the first term. To do this by the end of the year, tenders for 85 of these will be released. That is on top of the work that the planning Minister has done to accelerate the planning process, with exempt and complying developments, to ensure that we speed up this process. We are building these preschools on existing school sites or on brand-new school sites to cut through that unnecessary red tape and to speed up the process of delivery, because these communities cannot wait one day longer for the public preschools they have waited generations to see built at their schools.

The first tranche of these tenders will be released later this month. The member for South Coast will be pleased about public preschools at Greenwell Point and Sanctuary Point. There will be public preschools at Bomaderry, Lake Illawarra, Lake Heights and Cringila. These tenders are a huge step forward in making this a reality. This is ensuring that those no-fee public preschools that help our kids transition to kindergarten are one step forward. This is something that really sets us apart from those opposite when they were in government. They did not build one public preschool in 12 years. At the very end, they said they would try to build a million preschools or whatever the silly number was. But at the end of the first term of this Government we will be able to say proudly that we have delivered 100 public preschools for communities who really need them.

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

#### TOBACCO INDUSTRY

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (11:25):** My question is directed to the Premier. With organised crime peddling illegal tobacco, and noting the firebombing of businesses in Queensland and Victoria and, most recently, on the Central Coast, will the Premier support an inquiry by this Parliament to better regulate the tobacco trade?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:25):** I will take the question on notice.

#### HEALTH SERVICES

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (11:26):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the New South Wales Government is rebuilding our health services, including on the northern beaches?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:26):** I thank the member for Bega for his question. I was intrigued by a question asked yesterday in the House of the Minister for Lands and Property by the member for Manly, who is not a particularly prominent member of this Parliament. I do not hear often from the member for Manly. He is reasonably quiet. But as soon as there is a by-election on, he asks a question. He asked a question about Mona Vale Hospital.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for North Shore will be removed from the Chamber if she continues to interject.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He said, "With the property audit in relation to the lands Minister, we want to know whether the New South Wales Government is in the process of selling off Mona Vale Hospital." We said, "That's interesting." I must admit I did not know the ins and outs of where the land audit was up to.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Obviously, we wanted to make as many inquiries as we possibly could. The Minister was honest about his answer. Having looked at it closely, it is important to note—and members of the House need to note—that the Mona Vale Hospital site is at the moment an urgent care clinic, which was seen by 2,000 patients in July 2024 and by 25,000 patients in the financial year 2023-24. It is an active site. It is, in fact, not part of the Government's property audit at all because it is an active health site. So in the midst of the by-election campaign, the Opposition comes into the Parliament—it gets better—we might say genuinely seeking information. But, at the end of the day, we looked at a quote from—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

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

**Mr Ryan Park:** Is that the only number you know?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** You keep breaching it. The Premier was asked to update the House on how the Government is rebuilding health services, including on the northern beaches. To answer that question—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I will get to it. I just say, Mr Speaker, after question time yesterday—

**The SPEAKER:** Premier—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** No. It is a deliberate attempt to disrupt question time.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat until I make a determination. The clock has been stopped. He is not losing any time.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** If the Premier is to update the House on northern beaches health services, he should be addressing why Northern Beaches Hospital is going backwards on every key metric. They are cutting health spending. It is going backwards on every key metric.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** After question time, the Leader of the Opposition jumped on social media and said:

Land and Property Minister Steve Kamper contemplates selling off part of the Mona Vale Hospital site as part of the Government's land audit.

That is a complete and utter mistruth, spreading misinformation in the community, hoping to whip up community opposition to a plan the Government has not contemplated, has not executed and has no plans of implementing under any circumstances, all with a view to misleading voters in the upcoming Pittwater by-election.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Tamworth to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A for two minutes.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Tamworth left the Chamber at 11:29.]*

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** You can expect more of that in the weeks ahead. In addition to that, the member for Manly did not disclose that under the previous Government Mona Vale Hospital—the same site referenced in the question to the Minister for Lands and Property—had its emergency department, paediatric services, gastroenterology and maternity services taken away. All of those services were taken away from Mona Vale Hospital. Opposition members come into the Chamber to whip up a dishonest campaign about the Government selling off a site, which it will not do and is not part of the property audit. They do not disclose that over that period, all of those services were withdrawn by the previous Government. *[Extension of time]*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Tamworth has left the Chamber, as directed under Standing Order 249A, until the Premier concludes his answer. If necessary, I will direct other members to follow him.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Those services were re-established at the Northern Beaches Hospital, which was a public-private partnership. Members may not know—this is for residents of the northern beaches and is directly relevant to voters in the Pittwater by-election—that the Northern Beaches Hospital has a \$600 million annual contract from New South Wales taxpayers to the private operator, Healthscope, for 250 public patients until 2038. The *Australian Financial Review* reports that Healthscope is now controlled by a Canadian private equity firm based in the Cayman Islands and is burdened with \$1.6 billion worth of debt. Within hours of the hospital opening, anaesthetists threatened to cancel all elective surgery over concerns about staffing shortages, equipment shortages and systemic problems. In addition to that, the previous Government promised that it was a Trojan Horse and that other hospitals in New South Wales would be next on the chopping block.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** They include Maitland, Wyong, Goulburn, Shellharbour and Bowral. To give credit to the previous health Minister, all of those plans were yanked back. They said, "We're not going to pursue privatisation on those five sites, but we will keep it in the northern beaches." This tells people everything they need to know about members of the New South Wales Opposition. They relay dishonest information during question time and then spew it onto social media, all with a view to disrupt the Pittwater by-election with misinformation. There is no other word for it. That is what we are going to get from the New South Wales Opposition as we get into the by-election. If people vote Liberal or return a Liberal government in New South Wales, they can expect more privatisation in this State, whether it is for electricity, roads or health care in New South Wales.

#### CONSTRUCTION, FORESTRY AND MARITIME EMPLOYEES UNION

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (11:32):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Last night Labor voted with The Greens to guarantee a division of the two CFMEU positions on the Maritime Advisory Council. With all the industrial chaos, why is the Minister giving the disgraced CFMEU more influence over her Government's policies?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:32):** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order and allow the Minister to answer the question. I direct the member for Oatley to leave the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the Minister concludes her answer.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Oatley left the Chamber at 11:33.]*

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I am very pleased that the member for Castle Hill asked this question, but I do think he might be a little bit confused. I appreciate that he is from Castle Hill and there is no water nearby. The maritime environment is the responsibility of Transport for NSW. As the Minister for Transport, I am responsible for the regulation and safe operation of our maritime environment. Of course that includes reviewing and updating legislation around the safe operation of ports, for example. Who helps us operate our ports? Seafarers and line workers, who tie up our ships, are hardworking men and women. They ensure the safe operation of the entranceway to our country.

We have strong, safe and operational ports in Sydney. Those workers are, in fact, critical to make sure we have an ongoing supply chain of the goods that everybody needs, including fruit and vegetables, consumables and toilet paper—do members remember when we could not get any of that? Supply chains are really important. Working with that workforce is really important to the people of New South Wales. It helps make sure that the goods they need every day are affordable.

**Mr Mark Hodges:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The Minister has not gone anywhere near giving an answer yet.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister may not be using the words that the member wants to hear, but she is certainly being relevant—I would say directly relevant.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I am happy to continue my explanation for the member for Castle Hill and all members. That workforce is represented by the Maritime Union of Australia. They are hardworking men and women who ensure that we have, for example, safe, effective and productive port operations up and down our coast. I do not know why members of the Opposition are scared to talk to the workforce, but since day one of being the Minister I have said it is something I would always do. That is how we ensure that we do not have what those opposite provided to the people of New South Wales, which was a workforce at war with the Government. As a result, we have strike action.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 and relates to direct relevance. The question focused on the link with the Maritime Union, which is a division of the CFMEU. Why is the Minister evading the connection?

**The SPEAKER:** I have already dealt with the point of order. There is no point of order. Members will come to order.

### HOUSING SUPPLY

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (11:36):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister please update the House on the Productivity and Equality Commission report findings on the challenges of construction material cost pressures on the supply of housing?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:37):** I thank the member for Mount Druitt for his question. He understands that the only way to ensure we keep young people in communities like his is by expanding housing supply and increasing housing choice. His support for the planning reforms has been most helpful. The Premier asked the Productivity and Equality Commission to report on a number of non-planning issues affecting housing supply in New South Wales. That report made 32 recommendations along four major themes. The first is to free up construction capacity to build more homes more quickly. The second is to streamline the development process. The third is to help the construction sector in its delivery of more housing supply. Finally, the fourth is to deliver a diverse and equitable supply of houses across the State.

The Government welcomes the report. It will consider its recommendations and develop an action plan to prioritise the recommendations that will unlock bottlenecks and support increased housing supply. This Government is about making sure there is the supply of housing that young people need. That action plan will build on the planning reforms that the Government has announced, grow housing supply and reform the system we inherited after 12 years of the Coalition Government. We have created fairer housing targets. We are rebalancing population growth across Greater Sydney and New South Wales, with a focus on well-located homes closer to existing infrastructure and people's jobs, which is sensible planning. The Government will continue to overhaul the planning system, which, under those opposites, ended up confused and confusing. That started the long-term decline of housing supply in this State, which has led to more young people packing up and moving out of New South Wales than moving in. The previous Government's decision-making process can be best and rightly described as a stuff-up spiral when it came to planning.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Not only was that their approach in the recent local government elections and their failure to nominate candidates but it has been their perpetual approach to decision-making in this State for more than a decade. We are now feeling the consequences of that. This Government started the largest rezoning in the State's history and is delivering the largest ever investment in social and affordable housing.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The member for Wahroonga is chirping away over there. If anyone ever hates housing more than that bloke, I hate to see them. He has never seen a house except for his own that he likes—perhaps his investment properties, who knows. We have an international pattern book design competition underway to support new low- and mid-rise housing, and that will come with fast-tracked approved designs so we deliver those homes more quickly. [*Extension of time*]

We are investing \$2.2 billion in infrastructure to deliver the key infrastructure at the same time as we are building houses. There is no disconnect. We are doing that so communities do not have to wait decades for water upgrades, new roads, community facilities and open space. We have set new benchmarks for council performance and we have released league tables to closely monitor that performance. While the Government has been busy confronting the housing crisis, members opposite have done everything in their power to try to block those efforts. They failed miserably in the upper House and were defeated 25 to 12. That is not the Dragons' last margin; that is what the Opposition was defeated by. I remind the House of the scorching editorial published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in June entitled "Sydney's housing crisis no place for low-rent politics". It is worth quoting its conclusion. It said:

While the Liberals plot to overthrow the legislation—  
and that is referring to their bill that we defeated 25 to 12—

they should consider facing the political reality that any party without a credible plan to deal with the biggest issue facing Sydney does not deserve to be anywhere near government, let alone be taken seriously.

We must act, and the Minns Government is acting to make sure that we are building a better future for New South Wales and a better future across the State so more people have a place to call home, including poor people, health workers who care for our sick, people who teach our kids and people in our communities who keep us safe. The Minns Government is on the side of workers getting a shot at decent housing in this State, and we always will be. The Opposition is not.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** That is the key difference between our views on the future of this great State. They want people to be out of housing; we want people to be in housing. We welcome the Productivity Commissioner's report and suggest that Opposition members have a good hard look at themselves and that report.

**The SPEAKER:** We have Oliver Whitmore in the gallery, who is a guest of the President of the Legislative Council. He is one of Gibraltar's two Commonwealth Youth Parliament delegates who recently attended the twelfth Commonwealth Youth Parliament in Wellington, New Zealand. I welcome Oliver and hope he appreciates the difference between the Legislative Council and the true representative Parliament, the Legislative Assembly. Bear that in mind.

### RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:43):** My question is directed to the Minister for Small Business. Last week Albury electrician Robert Boschetti and his family business suffered up to \$20,000 in losses when a project involving electricians was cancelled at the last minute because of the Electrical Trades Union's protected industrial action. As the Minister responsible for family businesses such as Mr Boschetti's, what is he doing to persuade the industrial relations Minister to apply under the Fair Work Act for an order to stop the industrial chaos?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:43):** I thank the member for the question. While I understand and empathise with those impacts, it is not my role to intervene in the industrial relations process as the small business Minister. The Government is closely monitoring the instance and impact of protected industrial action being undertaken by unions in the energy sector.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** As the Minister for Small Business, my focus is on ensuring this action does not adversely impact small businesses, especially during this tough economic climate. I thank the Minister for Industrial Relations for keeping my office up to date with proceedings and the path ahead. The New South Wales Government has ongoing engagement with major energy companies, including Transgrid, Endeavour Energy, Ausgrid and Essential Energy to ensure that they have effective mitigation strategies in place for industrial action.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

You asked what we are doing; how about you just listen. I am advised that Transgrid has already made an application to suspend or terminate industrial action, which the Fair Work Commissioner has agreed to, and Endeavour Energy is currently seeking to terminate industrial action through an appeals process. I understand Essential Energy and Ausgrid are early in the bargaining process. I urge all involved in the disputes to engage in good faith and be mindful of the impacts on third parties, especially our small business community.

### SAFework DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE WORKSHOPS

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (11:45):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is expanding the delivery of workshops for employers across the State to help prevent domestic and family violence as part of New South Wales' first primary prevention strategy?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (11:45):** The very hardworking member for Heathcote is a very strong advocate in the area of work health and safety. On behalf of her community she has been in my office raising many issues. All members in this House really care about this very important issue. Over recent weeks and months we have all read some shocking allegations of completely unacceptable and even criminal behaviour in different industries, most recently the hospitality industry. Just as family and domestic violence is all too tragically prevalent across our society, it is also an unfortunate fact that workplace sexual harassment occurs in all industries across New South Wales, and it is unacceptable in any workplace. I know that all members in this place absolutely agree with that.

The Minns Labor Government is committed to continuing to work to create a safer New South Wales and address sexual, domestic and family violence in communities, with the State's first standalone primary prevention



strategy launched last Friday. I acknowledge Minister Jodie Harrison and the Premier for taking the lead on the prevention strategy. It is the first one and it is very important. The Pathways to Prevention strategy sets out the framework to address the underlying beliefs and cultures that tolerate and, in too many cases, condone the use of violence against women and children. As part of the strategy, I am extremely pleased that SafeWork NSW has secured \$921,000 over four years commencing this financial year to drive forward the focus of the Respect at Work Taskforce on preventing workplace gendered violence. Minister Harrison and I are on the taskforce committee.

I acknowledge that the former Government initiated Respect at Work in SafeWork NSW. We have launched the plan and we are doing some very important work. This is the first time that the Respect at Work Taskforce has partnered with the Department of Communities and Justice. It is a terrific partnership. I am proud to share with the House that SafeWork NSW will be contributing to the primary prevention strategy for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence. SafeWork NSW will focus on addressing sexual harassment across New South Wales workplaces. Every worker has a right to a safe and healthy workplace in New South Wales free from sexual harassment. We all hear that, particularly with young workers— [*Extension of time*]

We hear that in our offices from a lot of young people who work in particular industries. We are being very proactive and we are determined to work together with everyone to stamp it out. On 28 June New South Wales became one of the first Australian jurisdictions to adopt the Model Code of Practice: Sexual and gender-based harassment. The code offers practical guidance to businesses on how to eliminate or reduce the risk of sexual or gender-based harassment in workplaces. SafeWork NSW supports workplaces across New South Wales and takes a strategic focus on specific industries based on evidence, risk of harm and regulatory impact. Currently these industries include retail, hospitality, and the healthcare and social assistance sector. As I mentioned earlier, workplace sexual harassment happens across all industries and SafeWork NSW is currently implementing its four-year Respect at Work Strategy, which was published in October 2023.

The strategy highlights four key action areas that SafeWork NSW will focus on: raising awareness of sexual harassment as a work health and safety harm, assisting New South Wales workplaces to take effective and systemic actions to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment, improving the capability of workplaces to address workplace sexual harassment, and improving SafeWork NSW regulation of workplace sexual harassment. Starting this financial year, SafeWork NSW will be funded by the Department of Communities and Justice [DCJ]. That funding is very welcome. We will be delivering face-to-face workshops, together with DCJ, across New South Wales. This will be supported by an online tool kit for employers and will provide a learning opportunity for leaders to question harmful gender-based harassment.

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (11:51):** I will try to speak loud enough to be heard over the unions outside Parliament House, who are clearly looking for their Minister. My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. The rail union has blamed work on the—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The member for Miranda expects to be heard in silence, but her introductory comment was inflammatory. She will ask her question.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS:** Government members should be delighted the question is not directed to that Minister. The rail union has banned work on the Bankstown line and is also asking for a 32 per cent pay rise and a 35-hour week. When will the Minister finally call out those union paymasters of Labor and undo the industrial chaos that the Government has created?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister does not require assistance from the Premier or the member for Wollongong.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:52):** I thank the member for Miranda for her question. I am a little perplexed about her characterisation of the rail services, bus services, light rail services, ferry services and metro services that are currently operating in Sydney and across New South Wales, because those services are predominantly running well. They are running efficiently and more people are choosing public transport more often. From the very first day I became Minister for Transport, I said in this House that I would engage with the transport workforce in a constructive way. That is what I have done and will continue to do. The difference is that the former Government did the exact opposite.

What happened under that approach? Under that approach passengers were left on platforms or on the side of the road, and passengers did not have certainty or confidence in public transport because those opposite treated the workforce with complete disrespect. In fact, it resulted in a total shutdown of the train network while the former Minister—bless his soul—was asleep. Members on this side of the House we are well and truly awake, and well and truly engaged because we care about the public. We care about public transport and we care about

the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. We are taking a responsible approach not only to the delivery of current services but also to the delivery of future services. We have seen that in the delivery of Sydney Metro City and we will see that in the delivery of Southwest metro as well.

For the information of members, we are bargaining in good faith because the rail enterprise agreement has expired. My role as Minister for Transport is to ensure that those negotiations take place in good faith and to do everything I can to minimise disruption to passengers, keep services running and make sure that we build confidence in public transport. That is exactly what I will continue to do, despite the politicking of members opposite.

### CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (11:55):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Families and Communities. Will the Minister update the House on action taken by the New South Wales Government to get vulnerable children in the child protection system out of hotels and motels?

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (11:55):** I thank the member for Auburn for her important question. When we came to government we inherited a broken child protection system that was spiralling out of control—I note the appalling giggles from members opposite.

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

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** The worst part of that system saw kids at risk being placed in hotels, motels and caravan parks with 24/7 shift workers being delivered by unaccredited providers. Do you think that is funny? You thought it was funny before; suddenly it is not funny now. It is not funny.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will direct her remarks through the Chair.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** Under the former Government these became the go-to placements for children in crisis, not because it was the best option but because it was the only option left in the broken system. I have met with children who have been holed up in hotels, motels and caravan parks. They have told me they felt afraid, unsafe and terribly lonely. One young woman described being denied contact with her own siblings when they were living upstairs from each other in the same hotel. Not only are these arrangements awful for kids but also they cost upwards of \$2 million per child per year. Over the last six years this has cost taxpayers a staggering half a billion dollars. When I became Minister I could not have been clearer: Vulnerable children do not belong in hotels, motels and caravan parks with 24/7 shift workers. These kids have already seen too much trauma in their young lives and they need foster carers, not shift workers. They need real relationships with people who care about them in safe and loving homes.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Minns Labor Government is banning the use of unaccredited emergency accommodation for vulnerable children in the foster care system. That means that unaccredited providers of so-called alternative care arrangements—or ACAs, as they were called—will have no place in the child protection system in the future. Many of those providers were allowed into the system by the former Government to pocket profits on the back of vulnerable kids. While those opposite walked away from their responsibilities and denied there was even a problem, our Government has taken a very different approach. Since coming into office we have reduced the number of children in ACAs by 72 per cent. In just 10 months we have driven down the number from 139 kids to 39. For those 39 kids who remain in these arrangements, we are working tirelessly to transition them to a safe and stable home. It is because we have been doing the difficult work that we are now in a position to ban ACAs within the next six months. If we can do it sooner, we will. [*Extension of time*]

To be really clear, under a Minns Labor Government ACAs will become a thing of the past. To backup our ban on the worst type of care arrangements, we are recruiting more carers, something the former Government did not do for 10 years—a decade. So far we have recruited more than 200 emergency foster carers. That has already seen 760 children not go into hotels, motels and caravan parks, and instead they are finding safety with people who care about them. But that is not all. Since November last year we have been laser focused on delivering a significant reduction of children in all types of high-cost emergency arrangements. That number has reduced from 506 to 376, which is a drop of 26 per cent. We are pulling out all the stops to start recruiting longer term foster carers too. In a nation first, we are extending paid parental leave to foster and kinship carers working in the New South Wales public sector, sending a strong signal to the private sector to do the same. I thank the hardworking Minister for Industrial Relations for working closely with us on that plan.

Everyone who has anything to do with the child protection system knows that we have a long road of reform ahead. Foster carers, caseworkers and vulnerable children are all struggling because of the system itself. Since coming to government we have been working hard, laying foundations for significant reform to build a

stronger and more compassionate child protection system that values foster carers, supports caseworkers and gives kids the care, love and support that they need to be truly safe. Our ban on ACAs is a critical step towards restoring humanity to a system that seems to have lost its own. We are delivering on a promise to create a system so that every child knows that they have someone in their corner. To the kids who have been brave enough to share their stories with me and to others: Our ACA ban is for you and for the kids who follow.

#### CALLAN PARK KIRKBRIDE PRECINCT

**Ms Kobi Shetty (Balmain) (12:00):** My question is directed to the Premier. The historic Kirkbride precinct in Callan Park has been sitting idle for more than five years, since the Sydney College of the Arts moved out. The former Government failed to find a new tenant through its expression of interest process and Kirkbride is now being used as a backdrop by a television production studio. The iconic heritage site risks falling into disrepair. What are the Government plans for the future of Kirkbride in Callan Park?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:00):** I thank the member for Balmain for her question. The Kirkbride precinct in Callan Park is historically significant for New South Wales and Sydney. There are 30 buildings on the site, which is listed in a State Heritage register—members may not have known that. It was constructed in 1885 and, as a result of it being so old, there are a lot of heritage and safety issues associated with the site. This is new information and I do not think it has been publicly revealed. It is estimated that the cost to bring the site back up to standard is \$70 million and ongoing maintenance would be \$4½ million annually. In all candour, given the pressures on the New South Wales budget—the \$180 million left to us by the previous Government, which is the largest debt ever recorded from one government to another in the history of New South Wales—we have to be cognisant of where we spend taxpayer funds because it is so precious when it goes out the door.

I am pleased to report to the House, as the member for Balmain indicated, that the precinct is being used as a film site for productions. I have not seen a lot of those productions, but sometimes you can draw something about the content of those films or miniseries by the title. One of the films is called *The Artful Dodger*, which is about a cunning, ruthless, juvenile pickpocket who is constantly undermining his boss. It could be anyone. I reckon we cast Mark Coure in that role. There is another TV show—

**Ms Kobi Shetty:** Point of order—

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

**Ms Kobi Shetty:** My point of order relates to direct relevance. We have a minute to hear what the Government plans to do with Kirkbride. I am not interested in *The Artful Dodger*.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier addressed the question directly.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The member for Balmain might not like the answer, but it is honestly held. It is \$70 million, and we do not have the immediate funds to put into it. We are happy to work with the member for Balmain. I would love to have a giant novelty cheque I could wheel in and sign today, but we have to be honest about where the money can go. Another show that can be put in there is *The Correspondent*. Has anyone seen that? It might be the correspondence between the member for Lane Cove and the member for Wahroonga with 2GB recently. The last show is called *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, which is a biopic about the Liberal Party's quest to pick up the Pittwater electorate. We do not need to binge on Netflix. If we want to see a circus, we can watch the New South Wales Opposition.

#### CANOE CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (12:04):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Sport. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is supporting Paddle Australia to host the International Canoe Federation Canoe Slalom World Championships in New South Wales at the Penrith Whitewater Stadium?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:04):** That is a great question from a fantastic member. Like me, I think the member is still on a high from the great performances of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes. We all watched as the Fox family made history. Jess became the first person to win both the K1 and C1 gold medals, and then Noemie Fox won the inaugural kayak cross gold medal. It is a fantastic achievement and a real family effort. Myriam and Richard Fox have been long-time coaches, not just for their daughters but for many paddlers in the Australian team, and they are passionate advocates for the sport. That is why the New South Wales Government was so pleased to join the Federal Government to deliver \$2 million of the \$3.2 million in funding for the Canoe Slalom World Championships.

This will be a fantastic event. It will bring the excitement of the Olympics to Western Sydney. We are putting Penrith back on the map for global sporting competitions. Between 1 and 6 October 2025 approximately 300 competitors from 50 nations will compete in the World Championships across 10 events. They will be supported by 100 coaches, officials and staff, with an estimated 20,000 spectators expected to attend the championships. Among those competitors, you will be able to see the Fox family in action. What an event this will be for our city, for Western Sydney and especially for Penrith. It provides us with a fantastic opportunity to showcase the beauty of Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains to a global audience. It will attract tourists and boost activity in the local economy.

With the Western Sydney airport scheduled to open in 2026, our Government is ready to back Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains as a tourist destination. We are determined to attract events to Western Sydney, because we understand just how much Western Sydney has to offer. Utilising our venues to bring exciting content is exactly what we plan to do. Penrith Whitewater Stadium is an exciting venue. I recently got the chance to take to the rapids with the Premier and the Fox sisters. In many ways politics is a bit like whitewater rapids. We have to ride the bumps and fight our way through challenges. As the Premier now knows, you need to paddle all the time, not just when the cameras are on you. [*Extension of time*]

Our time on the rapids also gave us a great insight into the Opposition. It was a shemozzle! The member for Wahroonga and the member for Cronulla were both trying to steer the boat. The member for Willoughby said it was all a conspiracy—the water was not actually moving. The member for Oatley was paddling in the wrong direction. But, lo and behold, they weren't actually moving, because Don Harwin was dragging them down. Thankfully, the show ended when the Federal Opposition Leader put them out of their misery by blowing a hole in the raft.

#### *Committees*

### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr GREG WARREN:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety has resolved to conduct an inquiry into religious exemptions for the wearing of helmets, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

#### *Petitions*

### **PETITIONS RECEIVED**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following ePetitions signed by fewer than 500 persons have been lodged for presentation:

#### **Water Buybacks**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to forbid any buybacks by the Commonwealth Government until a report into the expected impact of any Commonwealth buybacks is completed, received from **Mrs Helen Dalton**.

#### **Lake Macquarie Electorate Sewerage Services**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to advocate for the reinstatement of sewerage services by Lake Macquarie City Council and Hunter Water at Blackalls Park, Awaba, Wyee, West Wallsend, Seahampton and surrounding areas, received from **Mr Greg Piper**.

#### **Puddledock Road, Armidale**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to create a northbound turning bay for Puddledock Road, Armidale; conduct a review of speed limits; and provide advance warnings with increased signage, received from **Mr Brendan Moylan**.

#### **Grose View Public School Bus Services**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to establish a designated school bus from Bowen Mountain to Grose View Public School that will arrive at the school by 8.40 a.m., received from **Ms Robyn Preston**.

#### **Minmi Development Proposal**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to ask Winten Property Group to revise a housing development proposal at Woodford Road, Minmi, in accordance with contemporary planning expectations and instruments, received from **Ms Sonia Hornery**.

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

#### **Speeding Penalties**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to implement harsher penalties for excessive speeding offences, including vehicle confiscation and longer licence suspensions, received from **Ms Jenny Aitchison**.

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

#### **Minmi Development Proposal**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to ask Winten Property Group to revise a housing development proposal at Woodford Road, Minmi, in accordance with contemporary planning expectations and instruments, received from **Ms Sonia Hornery**.

#### **RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following Ministers have lodged responses to ePetitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Stephen Kamper—New Lambton Proposed Basketball Complex—lodged 6 August 2024 (Ms Sonia Hornery)

The Hon. Stephen Kamper—Don Hearn's Cabins—lodged 6 August 2024 (Ms Liza Butler)

The Hon. Ron Hoenig—Tree Vandalism—lodged 6 August 2024 (Ms Trish Doyle)

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following Minister has lodged a response to a paper petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Yasmin Catley—Moruya Police Station—lodged 6 August June 2024 (Dr Michael Holland)

#### *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 1684 to 1713 will lapse tomorrow.

#### **WITHDRAWAL OF BUSINESS**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** I withdraw general business notice of motion (for bills) No. 3 [Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Amendment (Further Chemicals and Products) Bill 2024].

#### *Bills*

#### **STRATA MANAGING AGENTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 14 August 2024.**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (12:11):** I make a contribution to debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, which amends the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 [the strata Act], the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002 [the PSA Act] and related regulations to strengthen strata managing agents' disclosure obligations, increase transparency for consumers and improve NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers. The bill also amends the Community Land Management Act 2021 [the CLM Act] and related regulations so that it is consistent with the strata Act. Strata managing agents' current disclosure obligations about potential conflicts of interest are limited. Recent cases involving a small number of managing agents have damaged public confidence in the fairness of strata management and, consequently, the attractiveness of living in and investing in strata schemes. The bill will ensure that consumers have the information they need to make informed decisions about the management of their scheme and improve owners' confidence that their agent is acting in the owners' corporation's best interest.

I have met with owners in my area who have outlined significant issues with the lack of transparency required by strata management schemes, and I have heard of the distress that can be caused. The bill will increase how often and how much information agents must disclose to owners' corporations about potential conflicts of interest. In addition to the current disclosure obligations in the strata Act, agents managing a strata scheme will have to provide owners' corporations with itemised insurance quotes that clearly set out key information, such as the commission amounts and broker fee amounts, as well as who those fees are ultimately paid to. That will ensure that owners' corporations can easily identify the payments that their agent may receive in such transactions and make informed decisions about their preferred insurance policies. It will also give owners' corporations more specific information about commissions or training services. It will give written notice to the owners' corporation about potential conflicts of interest as close to the time that they arise as possible and disclose more information at the annual general meeting, such as their related suppliers or if they have become connected to the original owner of the strata scheme.

The bill will require agents to disclose more pertinent information to owners' corporations before they are appointed as the managing agent. This includes if the agent routinely uses related suppliers when managing strata schemes or has given the original owner advice on strata plans or community plans in the past two years. The bill will stop agents from being paid insurance commissions where the owners' corporations independently obtain their own insurance quotes and arrange for the purchase without their agent's help. The bill will substantially increase the maximum penalties and penalty infringement notices. Higher penalties are needed to deter agents from taking advantage of consumers. Agents' disclosure obligations will have maximum penalties of 500 penalty units for corporations and 100 penalty units otherwise. That may sound relatively basic and straightforward, so it is an utter travesty that such provisions are not already in place. We often forget that many of the owners who buy into strata schemes are either mum-and-dad investors or people looking to enter the property market and are particularly vulnerable to making such decisions without the transparent information that should be available. The bill will redress that.

New South Wales has over 85,000 strata schemes, housing more than 1.2 million residents. That number is expected to increase under the Government's comprehensive plan to build more affordable and trustworthy homes across New South Wales. With medium- and high-density housing options being an essential part of the Government's housing delivery plan, the Government is committed to enhancing trust in the strata industry as part of its work to ensure that home owners and renters have confidence in the buildings they own and live in. Owners' corporations make important decisions about maintaining and managing their strata schemes. Many owners' corporations rely on strata managing agents to oversee services for the strata scheme and manage finances, levies and records.

In New South Wales strata managing agents have duties to act in the best interest of the owners' corporations. However, a recent investigation conducted by and aired on the ABC *Four Corners* program revealed shocking evidence of questionable charges, phantom fees and suspect deals with contractors, and even situations where the developer retains control of the owners' corporation to avoid responsibility for building rectification works where defects have been identified. While agents have those duties in the legislation, the evidence shows that commercial interests often win out, as managing agents are conscious of currying favour with developers for future projects that may be in the pipeline. That is why the Government is introducing the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

The bill will also enhance NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers so that it can swiftly and effectively respond to agent misconduct. The bill will increase transparency obligations imposed on strata managers to ensure that owners' corporations can make fully informed decisions about the management of their scheme. I have previously spoken in this place about the lack of trading requirements and the lack of recourse available to those who occupy leadership positions or positions on owners' corporations or strata management committees. That is an area that needs to be addressed, and the Owners Corporation Network has raised that in meetings with me. It has also been raised with me by people who serve on strata management committees and on owners' corporations committees within the Liverpool electorate.

It was brought to my attention that the current penalty amounts specified in strata laws have remained unchanged for many years, and they are typically significantly lower than the commissions received by agents. Therefore, an agent may just take away any penalty out of the commission received and still make a profit. It is a situation that beggars belief. It must change and will change, thanks to the bill and the increase in the penalty. Firstly, the bill makes the maximum penalty for breaches of the disclosure obligations in the Strata Schemes Management Act and the Community Land Management Act up to \$55,000 for corporations and \$11,000 for individuals—a much more significant deterrent. Secondly, the bill doubles the on-the-spot penalty infringement notice amounts to \$1,100 for individuals and \$2,200 for corporations. The bill also increases the maximum penalty for agents not complying with rules of conduct under the property and stock agent laws to \$110,000 for corporations and \$22,000 otherwise. That applies to agents not acting honestly, fairly and in the best interests of

their clients, which is their obligation under the legislation but, as we have recently found, may not be what they are doing in practice.

The revised penalty framework clearly communicates zero tolerance for agent misconduct and discourages such behaviour, and ultimately enhances consumer protection and consumer confidence in strata schemes so that people can enter these arrangements with the confidence that, if something untoward happens, there are penalties in place that will deter such behaviour and enable them to receive justice. It is crucial for a regulator to have robust enforcement and compliance capabilities to address misconduct and noncompliance with strata laws. The bill strengthens NSW Fair Trading's powers, including broadening the available enforceable undertaking power in the Property and Stock Agents Act, giving NSW Fair Trading more flexibility and power to address noncompliance. It also enables residents or owners who find themselves in this situation to seek investigation and compliance powers through these mechanisms.

I recognise the work of the Minister and his office. They have been working very hard to take on the feedback received from many residents, owners and stakeholders across New South Wales. The bill reflects that feedback. The *Four Corners* program received over 2,000 submissions, and I imagine that the Minister's office and the department received many more when preparing this legislation. I understand that other stakeholders include the National Insurance Brokers Association, Australian Apartment Advocacy and Australian Consumers Insurance Lobby, as well as a range of others. I commend their work, and the work of the Minister and his staff. I hope that this will result in a fairer strata system for all. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (12:21):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I indicate at the outset that the Liberals and The Nationals will support the bill. The Coalition has always been a leader in advocating for fairness, transparency and accountability in the strata management sector. Our commitment to improving governance in strata communities is well documented, and the groundwork for the bill should rightly be originally credited to the previous Coalition Government. Under the Coalition's leadership, we passed the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015—a piece of legislation that continues to shape strata management across New South Wales. The bill builds on the work that the Coalition initiated during its time in government, incorporating updates from the 2021 statutory review of the Strata Schemes Development Act 2015 and the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015. The review, which resulted in 139 recommendations, was tabled by the Coalition, and this bill reflects many of those crucial reforms.

Strata living is a growing reality for a significant portion of the population in our great State. Today New South Wales has one of the highest concentrations of strata title properties in Australia, with over 80,000 schemes accommodating hundreds of thousands of residents. Those strata properties are not limited to residential apartments but also include townhouses, commercial buildings, mixed-use developments and retirement villages, reflecting the increasing complexity, variety and importance of strata management. The bill proposes several amendments that will strengthen transparency, governance and compliance within strata schemes. A key provision of the bill includes commission and disclosure requirements.

The bill introduces a clear definition of "commission" to include insurance broker fees and mandates that any approval for commissions or training services received by strata managing agents must be supported by detailed documentation and approved by resolution at a general meeting. That ensures transparency in financial transactions and discourages conflicts of interest. Another key provision is transparency in financial transactions. Strata managing agents will be required to disclose detailed information about insurance quotations, including breakdowns of charges and any connections with providers. That is crucial to ensure that owners are fully informed before entering into contracts for goods or services, particularly where commissions are involved.

An increase in penalties and enforcement is another key provision in the bill. The bill introduces new penalty provisions for failures to comply with financial disclosures, conflicts of interest and other key obligations. It also expands the enforcement authority of the Fair Trading Commissioner, allowing the commissioner to seek orders from the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal for undisclosed commissions or training services. Furthermore, I note the provision of conflict of interest management in the bill. Strata managing agents will now be required to disclose any interests they have with suppliers or their prior roles as advisors to the original owner. This provision enhances transparency and prevents potential conflicts that could negatively impact owners' corporations.

Those are just a few of the many important measures that the bill seeks to introduce. The Coalition believes those updates will significantly enhance the governance and management of strata schemes, ensuring fairness and accountability for all stakeholders. I acknowledge the contributions of key stakeholders, including the Strata Community Association NSW and the Owners Corporation Network, which have engaged actively with the Government and with Opposition on these matters. While concerns have been raised about certain aspects of the bill, neither stakeholder has sought amendments at this time. However, I encourage the Government to continue working closely with these representative organisations to address outstanding and ongoing concerns.

I respectfully point out that the bill only goes some way towards addressing the variety of risks, failures and problems in strata that have recently been the subject of a number of media stories—some with a very significant profile. I urge the Government to act more widely, deeply and expeditiously to make our State's strata schemes as effective, modern and positive as they can be. I am happy to work with the Government towards that aim. Finally, I thank the Minister, his team and all those involved in Fair Trading and other arms of government for their efforts in bringing the bill forward. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (12:26):** The Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 amends the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 and the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002 to strengthen the disclosure obligations of strata managing agents, increase transparency for strata owners and bolster NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers. Complementary changes are also proposed to ensure that the Community Land Management Act 2021 remains consistent with the Strata Schemes Management Act. Currently, New South Wales has over 85,000 strata schemes housing more than 1.2 million residents. The current legislation relating to strata impacts an enormous percentage of the population in the Parramatta electorate. Single dwellings on the old quarter-acre block are becoming as rare as hen's teeth in the Parramatta area, where census data shows that 70 per cent of occupied private dwellings are flats or apartments.

Under the Minns Labor Government's comprehensive plan to build more affordable and sustainable homes across New South Wales, this number will rise as medium- and high-density housing options become an essential part of the plan. The Minns Labor Government is committed to enhancing trust in the strata industry as part of its work to ensure home owners and renters have confidence in the buildings that they own and live in. Many owners' corporations rely on strata managing agents to oversee services for the strata scheme and manage finances, levies and records. In New South Wales, strata managing agents have duties to act in the best interests of the owners' corporations. However, recent concerns have surfaced about some strata managing agents exploiting their authority and taking advantage of owners' corporations. That is why the Minns Labor Government is introducing the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

The bill aims to strengthen disclosure obligations for strata managing agents, ensuring that they operate with the utmost transparency in their dealings. By increasing transparency, owners will have better access to information, empowering them to make informed decisions about their properties. The bill will also enhance NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers so that it can respond swiftly and effectively to agent misconduct. In order to strengthen disclosure obligations of strata managing agents to increase transparency for consumers, the proposed reforms will require increases to how often and how much information agents must disclose to owners' corporations about potential conflicts of interests, as well as require strata managing agents to provide itemised insurance quotes that clearly set out information, provide information about commissions or training services, give written notice about potential conflicts of interests as close to the time they arise as possible, and disclose more pertinent information to owners before they are appointed as managing agent.

In order to prioritise fairness and consumer protection, as well as empowering owners' corporations, the proposed reforms will stop agents from being paid insurance commissions for work they did not perform. The proposed revised penalties will increase the maximum penalties and penalty infringement amounts for existing and new disclosure obligations, communicating zero tolerance for agent misconduct and enhancing consumer protection. In a similar manner, the bill will also strengthen NSW Fair Trading's enforcement and compliance powers so that noncompliance is addressed.

I chose to speak on this bill today because it is one of the levers our Government is pulling to address the housing shortage that has reached crisis levels across the State. To solve it, we need people to have confidence to invest and live in higher density housing that relies on strata schemes. The majority of new housing in the Parramatta electorate relies on those strata and community land schemes, and I want to be sure that new home owners have faith that the system works in the best interests of all involved, not just a few. The bill will benefit residents living in strata and community land schemes by imposing stronger and more frequent disclosure requirements on agents; banning agents from receiving a commission for insurance products that an owners' corporation secures independently; increasing the maximum penalties and penalty infringement notice amounts for agents' disclosure obligations; and, as I have mentioned previously, strengthening NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers, including introducing a broader enforceable undertaking power.

Currently two suburbs in the Parramatta electorate, Westmead and Parramatta, are in the top 10 suburbs for First Home Buyers Assistance scheme take-up, with over 1,000 first home buyers benefiting in those suburbs alone. These new home owners are purchasing apartments, and our Government understands how critical it is that one of the most important investments people make in their lives is accompanied by robust legislation that protects and supports their rights within the strata and community land schemes they have bought into. I thank all those in my community who have raised their concerns about strata with me during my time as both a councillor and as a State member of Parliament. The issues are significant, and it has taken a Minns Labor Government to finally take



the steps necessary to improve protections and functionality of the strata and community land schemes across the State. I also thank Minister Chanthivong and his team for all their work and those advocates across New South Wales, who have unfortunately seen things get worse before they get better. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:32):** I contribute to debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Over 80 percent of homes in the Sydney electorate are apartments. Medium- to high-density housing has so long been the dominant form of living in the inner city, but as we try to house more people close to infrastructure, jobs and services, more and more of the wider population will live in apartments governed by strata laws. Strata is a fantastic way to live and the Sydney electorate is a shining example of the benefits of medium- to high-density living. There are strong and supportive communities in many buildings, and apartment-dense neighbourhoods like Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay and Pyrmont are vibrant, bustling areas with constant street activation and socialisation. However, strata living has challenges and costs that owners of detached homes do not have. Those challenges can become so great that homes that were affordable to buy can become unaffordable to own.

Right now strata costs are ballooning, particularly in insurance, fire safety compliance, and maintenance and repairs. There are ever-increasing complexities in managing strata schemes, with committees bombarded with invoices every day. Committee members are volunteers and the demands on them are increasing, many reporting feeling overwhelmed. Overworked committees do not have the time or the skills to understand whether quotes are reasonable. It is difficult to get comparative quotes because most invoices lack the information to provide meaningful comparisons, and service providers are often unresponsive due to the high demand or reluctance to provide quotes purely for comparison purposes. It is difficult for strata committees to do anything but accept the quotes they are presented with, making the system rife for exploitation.

Owners' corporations and strata committees need support in accessing services to prevent them getting ripped off, which is a job they outsource to strata managers. But the law does not assure strata managers' duty to owners paying for their services because it permits them to take commissions from service providers for securing contracts. It also permits them to engage service providers that they hold a financial stake in. Strata insurance, in particular, is a minefield for conflicts of interest. While owners pay strata managers and insurance brokers to find them good deals in insurance, the insurers pay the managers and brokers commissions to help them profit from owners. There are also complex connections between insurers, brokers and strata management companies. Constituents regularly tell me that their brokers only provide a handful of quotes and show no evidence of having undertaken a comprehensive search from large numbers of insurers.

I share their concern that brokers are limiting their work to insurers they have financial relationships with. I am increasingly hearing from constituents who tell me their buildings are being refused insurance from all but one insurer, with that one insurer demanding an elevated premium. Criteria for refusal often appear unreasonable, like having a defects report even when the defects are cosmetic, or having retail premises in a building. A recent *Four Corners* investigation exposed brokers hiding competitive quotes from owners to secure higher premiums for insurers, which of course means higher commissions for them. There is very little competition among brokers, with most coming under a few umbrella companies. The ABC report found that one group covered 40 per cent of brokers writing 55 per cent of Australia's strata policies. This group provides kickbacks to strata management companies.

Insurance costs for strata have soared and have become a major drain on funds and levies and, in many cases, put buildings and owners at risk of bankruptcy. Owners' corporations have a statutory duty to insure their building and many insurers will not deal with owners or committees directly, making it difficult to get insurance without a broker. The law should ensure that brokers and strata managers work solely for owners. The Owners Corporation Network has long advocated for the abolishment of strata manager commissions because there is a clear and inappropriate conflict of interest that can disadvantage owners. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission told *Four Corners* that commissions should be banned. However, the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill does not ban commissions that create a conflict of interest.

Instead, the bill attempts to ban insurance commissions only in circumstances where the owners' corporation did the work to get the quotes and engage an insurer, with the focus on strengthening disclosure provisions. There are also more enforcement powers and higher penalties, which are welcome, although I share the concern of strata owners and advocates that focusing on disclosures will entrench the practice of taking commissions and strengthen transactional relationships with suppliers. Commissions and financial relationships appear to be on the rise and have become the business model for most agents. The existing disclosure provisions have not helped and compliance with them is low. Owners are paying the price for this model. It is unfair, and it is adding to housing unaffordability.

As the Government pushes ahead with an urban density agenda and touts the benefits that apartment living will bring to the State, it needs to increase support and protections for apartment owners, who are being exploited

and often feel powerless. As more members of this House live in apartments themselves and represent apartment dwellers in their communities, I hope we will see more reform. The Government has promised further strata reform, and I ask the Minister to commit to prioritising bans on commissions as part of that work in his speech in reply. Strata manager commissions and relationships with suppliers are seeing owners overcharged, and we need to put an end to the kickbacks taking owners for a ride. I hope the Government delivers more meaningful reform. I obviously support the bill, and I am grateful to the many volunteers across the Sydney electorate who work hard representing their apartment communities on strata committees.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:39):** On behalf of people from the Heathcote electorate and across New South Wales, I speak in debate on an important piece of legislation, the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. New South Wales is home to over 85,000 strata schemes, housing more than 1.2 million residents. As our State grows and our Government continues to work towards delivering affordable and trustworthy homes, strata living will play an increasingly vital role in housing our communities. Medium- and high-density housing is essential to our State's future. That is why this Government is committed to strengthening the strata industry, ensuring that home owners, who make the biggest investment in their lives, and renters alike have confidence in the buildings in which they live. Trust and transparency must form the foundation of this growing sector.

Owners' corporations, representing home owners within strata schemes, make critical decisions about the management and upkeep of their properties. Many owners' corporations turn to strata managing agents to help oversee services, manage finances and handle records. Those agents play a crucial role in ensuring that strata schemes run smoothly, and they have a duty to act in the best interests of the owners' corporations that they serve. Unfortunately, there have been concerns about some agents misusing their authority, putting their own interests above those of the people they are meant to serve. We cannot allow such misconduct to erode trust in the system. That is why the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 is so important. Many residents have raised such issues with me before.

The bill is focused on strengthening disclosure obligations for strata managing agents, which will increase transparency and allow owners' corporations to make informed decisions about their properties. They deserve nothing less. Some of the key reforms include stronger disclosure obligations to ensure that owners' corporations are fully informed when agents receive commissions or provide training services. Agents will be required to provide detailed documentation explaining why certain decisions are in the owners' corporations' best interests and whether they have any conflicts of interest.

Agents must provide itemised insurance quotes, allowing owners to clearly see any commissions or fees paid out. The changes will empower owners' corporations to make better choices when managing their strata schemes and ensure that agents are held accountable for their actions. Another vital reform involves limiting when agents can receive commissions. Currently, agents may charge commissions for insurance work even when they did not perform any work. That is both unfair and misaligned with consumer expectations. The bill addresses that by ensuring that agents can only be paid for work they have actually completed, giving owners' corporations more control over how their funds are spent.

The penalty amounts under current strata laws have not been updated for many years. They are often significantly lower than the commissions agents can earn through misconduct. As a result, penalties can be viewed as just a cost of doing business. The Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 will substantially increase penalties. Fines for corporations could reach up to \$55,000, while individuals could face penalties of up to \$11,000. On-the-spot fines for breaches will also double to ensure stronger deterrence. Tougher penalties send a clear message: The Government has zero tolerance for agent misconduct. It prioritises fairness, consumer protection and accountability. In addition to those reforms, the bill strengthens NSW Fair Trading's powers to swiftly and effectively address misconduct by agents. By broadening enforceable undertaking powers, Fair Trading will have more flexibility to deal with noncompliance.

In conclusion, the bill demonstrates the Minns Labor Government's unwavering commitment to supporting strata living as a viable and trustworthy option for the people of New South Wales. By strengthening disclosure requirements, improving transparency and ensuring fairness and accountability in the strata industry, we are ensuring that New South Wales residents can trust the agents managing their homes. The reforms will ensure that, as our State grows, so too will our confidence in strata living, delivering homes that are both affordable and secure. I commend the bill to the House. I thank the Minister, his team and the department on behalf of residents in Heathcote who have called for better regulation and access to the information they need to make informed decisions.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (12:44):** I contribute to debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill is incredibly important for the 40 per cent of people in the Granville electorate who live in strata buildings. For too long people have suffered from conflicts of interest and convoluted

arrangements that have been incredibly costly to them and beyond their control. I have dealt with many complaints over many years. While I have tried to help people with their individual complaints, today we are structurally addressing the causes that can lead to people being ripped off over and over again.

The Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill amends the Strata Schemes Management Act and the Property and Stock Agents Act to strengthen the disclosure obligations of strata managing agents, increase transparency for strata owners and bolster NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers. Complementary changes are also proposed to ensure that the Community Land Management Act remains consistent with the Strata Schemes Management Act. The bill will benefit residents living in strata and community land schemes by imposing stronger and more frequent disclosure requirements on agents, banning agents from receiving a commission for insurance products that an owners' corporation secures independently, and increasing the maximum penalties.

There are a number of key provisions in the bill. Stronger disclosure obligations will increase transparency for consumers and ensure that owners' corporations can make fully informed decisions about the management of their scheme. The bill clarifies that, when an owners' corporation approves a commission or training service for the strata managing agent, it must do so through a resolution at a general meeting. The resolution must also be accompanied by a document prepared by the agent. The bill will require agents to give owners' corporations itemised insurance quotes that clearly set out key information. It will ensure that owners' corporations can easily identify the payments their agent may receive in such transactions and make informed decisions about their preferred insurance policies. Increased transparency under the bill means that agents will have to give owners' corporations more information about perceived conflicts of interest far more often.

Another significant reform introduced by the bill involves limiting the circumstances under which agents can receive commissions. It is common practice for agents to require commissions to be paid to them even if they did not obtain the insurance quote for the customer. This practice is widely perceived as unfair and does not align with consumer expectations. The reforms prioritise fairness and consumer protection, and empower owners' corporations. To improve compliance, the crucial changes implemented by the bill are underpinned by an enhanced penalty framework. The bill substantially increases the maximum penalties and penalty infringement notice amounts for existing and new disclosure obligations. Firstly, the bill makes the maximum penalty for breaches of the disclosure obligations in the Strata Schemes Management Act and Community Land Management Act up to \$55,000 for corporations and \$11,000 for individuals.

Secondly, the bill doubles the on-the-spot penalty infringement notice amounts to \$1,100 for individuals and \$2,200 for corporations. The bill also increases the maximum penalty for agents not complying with rules of conduct under the property and stock agent laws to \$110,000 for corporations and \$22,000 otherwise. It applies to agents not acting honestly, fairly and in the best interests of their clients. The revised penalty framework clearly communicates zero tolerance for agent misconduct, discourages such behaviour and ultimately enhances consumer protection. It is crucial for a regulator to have robust enforcement and compliance capabilities to address misconduct and noncompliance with strata laws. The bill strengthens NSW Fair Trading's powers, including broadening the available enforceable undertaking power in the Property and Stock Agents Act, giving NSW Fair Trading more flexibility and power to address noncompliance.

I have received numerous complaints from strata residents in my electorate over the years, including one resident in Merrylands who was charged \$220 by their strata managing agent for entering information into the Strata Hub portal. Several residents of a strata in Westmead raised concerns about the way NCAT investigates strata matters, especially where an owners' corporation has not undertaken necessary repairs to a common area. Another resident in Westmead had different concerns about NCAT. When the agent did not win at NCAT for a no-grounds termination, they went back and made numerous additional applications. A strata resident in Granville complained about the long delays they experienced until their strata manager arranged necessary maintenance works on a retaining wall. Another resident brought to my attention his experience of the power that strata committees yield by intimidating, bullying and harassing any tenant who does not agree with their particular agenda. He told me:

Eighteen months ago, when I moved into my apartment and considering our 5 Kg adult dog as being suitable for apartment living, the Committee failed to provide me clarity in relation to a by-law that allowed pets, subject to certain conditions and completely ignored any mediation, requests to clarify the by-law or even engage in dialogue to provide any conditions whatsoever.

If the by-law prohibited pets I would never have moved in; however that is not what the by-law states.

After 18 months of occupation, and a week after the Horizon decision from NCAT appeal panel, I was issued with a by-law breach notice.

The Committee has taken it upon themselves to now evict all pets without cause. The Committee communicated to all Owners that they were limited to \$3,000 (although the legislation allows \$15,000) so they Proxy Farmed votes and passed a resolution to now increase the legal fees they can allocate to evicting my pet to \$43,000; a bully through and through.

With my limited funds, and scare tactics of being hit with a costs order, I was left with no option but to seek alternative arrangements with my fiancée and pet within the 28 day timeframe I was instructed to comply with.

That is a heartbreaking story. Numerous residents in strata schemes in the Granville electorate have complained about being signed up to embedded electricity networks. They complained about difficulties with moving to cheaper suppliers of electricity. Customers in embedded networks have limited access to retail competition and competitive market forces that put downward pressure on electricity bills. Most consumers within embedded networks are locked into a contract with the supplier at their site. In the case of people living in strata, they are locked into a contract by the strata managing agent. There are few limits on the prices they can be charged and they are unable to shop around for a better deal. In the face of the growth of the embedded network industry, in 2017 the Australian Energy Market Commission found that the regulatory framework for embedded networks is no longer fit for purpose.

Recently the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, or IPART, completed its review of *The Future of Embedded Networks in NSW*, and the Government is currently considering IPART's recommendations as part of its *NSW Embedded Network Action Plan*. The housing crisis in New South Wales demands a robust response. We must ensure that people trust and invest in strata living, which is crucial to meet our housing supply targets. By enhancing transparency and accountability, the Government can help to rebuild trust and support a thriving strata community. I thank the Minister for bringing forward this long-overdue reform and commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (12:52):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill will amend the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 and the Property Stock Agents Act 2002 for the purpose of strengthening the disclosure obligations of strata managing agents, increasing transparency for strata owners and bolstering NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers. The bill will also propose complementary changes to the Community Land Management Act 2021 to ensure that legislation remains consistent with the Strata Schemes Management Act. The bill increases transparency for owners' corporations so that they have all the necessary information they need in real time to make informed decisions regarding the management of their schemes.

The bill clarifies that the owners' corporation's approval of a commission or training service must be by resolution at a general meeting. This is currently the law. However, amendments to the Act serve to emphasise that requirement. An agent will be required to provide important information to the owners' corporation at the relevant meeting to ensure that it can make an informed decision. This important information includes details regarding the commission or training service, such as details concerning the specific nature of the relationship between the agent and the person providing the commission or training service, as if they are related companies. The information also includes details about why the contract is in the best interest of the owners' corporation, as well as a statement about why the agent believes that they are not violating their obligations under the Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022.

The obligation is that an agent is not to accept an appointment to act or continue to act for a client if the agent's and client's interests conflict with one another. This requirement will ensure that agents are aware of and consider their obligations. It also serves to provide owners' corporations with the information they need to decide if they agree with the agent or need to take a different course of action. The Strata Schemes Management Act will be amended to require that agents disclose more relevant information to the owners' corporation on a more frequent basis. In circumstances where an allowable commission or training service is provided under the contract, or if the contract is with a person connected to the agent, the strata managing agent will have to provide written notice to the owners' corporation regarding what may be perceived as a conflict of interest before entering into a contract for the purchasing of goods and services.

The bill requires that, under the Strata Schemes Management Act, when people are "connected" to each other for the purpose of the Act they must include parent companies and their related entities. Further, the bill makes amendments to the Strata Schemes Management Regulation 2022 to expand the definition of "connected persons". This ensures that any relationship that could preference the agent towards another party must be disclosed. For example, an agent who is a trustee will be considered to be connected to the trust's beneficiaries. Agents will be required to provide that written notice to the owners' corporation as soon as possible, once they discover that they are connected to a supplier of goods and services for the strata scheme. Agents will also be required to consolidate and report that information at the annual general meeting.

Further, agents will be required to report any details regarding their connections with the suppliers and the original owner, including any connections that were formed within the past 12 months. The bill will make amendments to the Strata Schemes Management Act to require agents to provide more relevant information to the owners' corporation before they are appointed as an agent of a strata scheme. This is inclusive of suppliers who may be related to the agent or suppliers that the agent may frequently use with other strata schemes they manage,

such as a cleaning business that is owned by an agent's relative. This keeps the owners' corporation more informed and allows them to better consider an agent to manage their strata schemes.

The bill amends the Strata Schemes Management Act to introduce more thorough disclosure requirements for insurance quotes that agents obtain for owners' corporations. The Act requires that an agent must provide at least three insurance quotes to the owners' corporation. If the agent is unable to do that, they must give a written explanation about why they were unable to provide the quotes. Those quotes will be required to provide additional information such as a specific breakdown of charges, including the base premium amount, which is not to include any commission amount, along with the commission amount and any broker fee amount. Those quotes must also outline who the commission and broker fee is ultimately being paid to and must disclose if the agent is connected to the person who provides the quote. The bill clarifies that, for the purpose of the Act, broker fees are considered commissions to ensure that those fees are disclosed under the new disclosure obligations. These amendments to the Strata Schemes Management Act will also be applied to the Community Land Management Act to ensure that the legislation remains consistent.

The bill will make amendments to restrict when an agent is permitted to get a commission. Strata management agency agreements that allow insurance commissions to be paid to the agent when the owners' corporation itself obtained the quote and purchased the insurance will be banned. This change will be reflected in community land management laws. The maximum penalties and penalty infringement notice amounts will be significantly increased for agents' key obligations. The bill increases the maximum penalty for breaches of disclosure obligations in both the Strata Schemes Management Act and the Community Land Management Act to 500 penalty units for a corporation and 100 penalty units for any other case. Penalty infringement notice amounts will also double, to \$2,200 for corporations and \$1,100 for individuals. Fair Trading will be permitted to issue on-the-spot fines for breaches. A person who has been issued a penalty infringement notice may pay the amount specified in the notice as an alternative to court proceedings.

The bill will also increase the maximum penalty amount for agents found not complying with the rules of conduct under the Property and Stock Agents Act to 1,000 penalty units. These higher penalties will be accompanied by stronger enforcement powers for NSW Fair Trading, and will enable it to take the appropriate action to investigate and respond to noncompliance. The bill will make various amendments to legislation concerning strata, community land and property agents. There are currently more than 85,000 strata schemes in New South Wales, with over 1.2 million people already living in strata communities in our State. The housing shortage in New South Wales has reached extreme levels. The amendments in this bill will serve to strengthen confidence within the communities who live in strata-managed properties. They will provide clarity to pre-existing legislation and introduce safeguards for owners' corporations when choosing strata managing agents. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (13:02):** Today I contribute to debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Currently in New South Wales there are over 85,000 strata schemes, housing more than 1.2 million residents. This number is expected to increase under the New South Wales Government's comprehensive plan to build more affordable and trustworthy homes across New South Wales. To have the sufficient supplies of homes in New South Wales for our current population, our Government has committed to building 377,000 new homes within the next five years, by mid-2029. Under part 1 of the Transport Oriented Development Program, about 47,800 high- and mid-rise houses will be built within 1,200 metres of eight rail and metro stations. Under part 2 of the program, it is expected that 138,000 mid-rise housing and mixed-use developments will be built within 400 metres of 31 well-located transport hubs and town centres.

The Government is always looking for new ways and places to build more new homes for the people of New South Wales. Therefore, with medium- and high-density housing options being an essential part of the Government's housing delivery plan, the Government is committed to enhancing trust in the strata industry as part of its work to ensure that home owners and renters have confidence in the buildings they own and live in. However, there are recent concerns of some managing agents exploiting their authority and taking advantage of owners' corporations. That is why the Government is introducing this bill, which aims to strengthen disclosure obligations for strata managing agents, ensuring that they operate with the necessary transparency in their dealings.

This bill will also enhance NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers so that it can efficiently and effectively respond to agent misconduct. The Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 already imposes certain duties and responsibilities on strata managing agents, but a number of reforms are needed. The bill clarifies that, when an owners' corporation approves a commission or training service for the agent, it must do so through a resolution at a general meeting, which means it must be approved by the members, the owners or the representatives of the owners. The resolution must also be accompanied by a document prepared by the agent. The bill will require agents to give owners' corporations itemised insurance quotes that clearly set out key information such as the premium amount, the commission amount and stamp duty.

Under the bill, agents will have to give owners' corporations more information about perceived conflicts of interest more often. The agent will have to give written notice to the owners' corporation before entering a contract to buy goods or services if the agent will get a commission or training service under the contract or is connected to the supplier. The written notice will need to include information about relevant matters, such as the nature of the agent's relationship with the supplier and whether the contract is in the owners' corporation's best interest. The bill will also require agents to disclose more information at annual general meetings, such as all of their related suppliers and the services or goods they provide, and their connections to the original owner of the strata scheme, such as if the developer of the strata scheme has employed the agent. Similar disclosure requirements will apply before the appointment of strata managers so that owners' corporations are better informed when choosing agents to manage their schemes.

The definition of connected persons in section 7 of the Strata Schemes Management Act determines the relationships that agents must disclose information about to owners' corporations. The bill will add new categories of connected persons into the Strata Schemes Management Regulation 2016, which includes when an agent is a trustee. In these circumstances, an agent will be considered connected to the trust's beneficiaries. The current penalty amounts specified in strata laws have remained unchanged for many years and are typically significantly lower than the commissions received by agents.

Currently, section 60 of the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015, relating to disclosure of commissions and training services, and section 61 of the Community Land Management Act 2021, relating to breaches by managing agents, both state that the maximum penalty is 20 penalty units, which is equivalent to only \$2,200. Therefore these fines, if ever imposed, are usually seen as merely a cost of doing business. The bill makes the maximum penalty for breaches of the disclosure obligations in the Strata Schemes Management Act and Community Land Management Act up to 500 penalty units, equivalent to \$55,000 for corporations, and 100 penalty units, equivalent to \$11,000, for individuals. The bill also doubles the on-the-spot penalty infringement notice amounts to \$1,100 for individuals and \$2,200 for corporations. These revised penalties have the clear objective of discouraging behaviours that damage public confidence in strata managing agents and will ultimately enhance consumer protection.

The bill strengthens NSW Fair Trading's powers, including broadening the available enforceable undertaking power in the Property and Stock Agents Act, giving Fair Trading more flexibility and power to address noncompliance. Many external stakeholders have been consulted on the bill. These include the Strata Community Association (NSW), the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales, the Owners Corporation Network, Australian Apartment Advocacy, the Australian Consumers Insurance Lobby, the National Insurance Brokers Association, the Law Society of New South Wales, the Australian College of Strata Lawyers, strata academic Professor Cathy Sherry, insurance expert John Trowbridge, Steadfast Group, Marrickville Legal Centre, Financial Counselling Australia and Financial Rights Legal Centre.

This bill demonstrates the Government's commitment to strata living as a realistic and great option for the people of New South Wales. The bill will revise and update the disclosure requirements, the penalty framework and Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers. Those are the changes we now need as we embrace the necessary increase to the housing supply in our State and in our denser cities, just like New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong and many other major cities across the world. I thank Minister Chanthivong and his team for their wonderful work. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (13:09):** On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to the debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The Greens do not support the bill. Last year the New South Wales Government introduced and passed, with The Greens' support, legislation that implemented 31 of the 139 recommendations of the 2021 statutory review of the regulation of strata schemes. This bill partially acts on one of the remaining 108 recommendations of that review, which pertains to the disclosure obligations of strata managing agents and building managers acting as intermediaries.

Government members have talked about the long list of stakeholders that have been consulted on the bill. But it is very important that they explain the views of those stakeholders and whether they support the reform or believe there is a whole range of other priorities and issues that also need to be addressed. It is not enough to just list the organisations and groups that have been consulted. That implies that they are supportive of the legislation. What needs to be detailed is not only the fact that they have been consulted but also their views in relation to the legislation before us. Otherwise, those members risk misrepresenting the views of some of those stakeholders by making it sound like they are 100 per cent supportive of the reform occurring in this way when that may not be the case.

Currently, agents managing a strata scheme are required to disclose a number of matters to the owners' corporation, including any connections to the original owner or developer of a strata scheme or any direct or indirect monetary interests they may have in the scheme. The bill expands those obligations to include the

provision of itemised insurance quotes and information about any commissions or training services received by the managing agent in the course of purchasing an insurance product. In June this year the Minister announced plans to ban agents from receiving commissions on insurance products when they have not played a role in finding the best deal for residents. That announcement followed revelations by the ABC that Netstrata, one of the biggest strata management firms in the country, was charging owners exorbitant insurance fees and taking thousands of dollars in industry kickbacks.

To be clear, the bill does absolutely nothing to prevent a strata managing agent from receiving a kickback or commission. In effect, it legitimises a commission by permitting it as long as the agent discloses to the owners' corporation the amount of the commission, how it was calculated and the nature of the relationship they have with the person providing the commission. That is some distance from what the Minister promised back in June. Last week a *Four Corners* investigation revealed the severity of conflict-of-interest issues within the strata landscape, with the now stood-down Strata and Property Services Commissioner John Minns acknowledging the space had been "under-regulated for a very long time". In the same story David Hampton, the former chief executive of insurance company CHU, said that up to 40 per cent of insurance costs are "allocated to reward the people who sell and service the product".

The head of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Gina Cass-Gottlieb, told the ABC that commissions need to be banned outright. As she put it, "Enhanced disclosure obligations don't get to the root of the problem, which is the financial incentive." If the New South Wales Government is serious about improving transparency and confidence for people living in strata schemes, we need real reforms, not just window dressing designed to pander to certain stakeholders with deep pockets and vested interests. The Greens understand that of those consulted by the Government in developing this legislation, the only stakeholders to support the bill were those with a vested interest, including potentially—we can draw conclusions—Steadfast, the insurance giant at the centre of the *Four Corners* investigation. Steadfast was listed as one of the stakeholders consulted.

The Greens understand that the Owners Corporation Network and leading experts in strata law who were also consulted are opposed to this legislation because it does not go to the root of the problem. Why is the Government progressing with the bill? In New South Wales more and more people are living in apartments under strata schemes, whether they rent or own. It is becoming increasingly common. More than 1.2 million people currently live in buildings managed under a strata scheme. They are at the mercy of an industry that is woefully unregulated. Yet again, the problems with strata are not isolated cases of a few bad apples. They are the result of an entire ecosystem that is designed to maximise profits and considers consumer protections as a mere afterthought.

The recommendations from the 2021 statutory review that are yet to be implemented include a number of more urgent reforms that arguably should have taken precedent over this bill, which does little beyond tinkering around the edges. That list of recommendations includes banning embedded networks other than those that use renewable energy, defining the duties of office bearers more clearly and prohibiting unfair terms in standard form contracts. Indeed, we had hoped there would be a suite of measures brought forward to actually deliver for those living in strata buildings. Instead, once again, the Minns Labor Government is moving forward with a tiny reform that will not address the root cause of the problem.

Against that backdrop, it is difficult to see the bill as anything other than a kneejerk reaction to make the Government look like it is doing something in the wake of a prime-time television investigation. In fact, it is taking its sweet time on reforms that will better protect residents and the 1.2 million people currently living in buildings managed under strata schemes. Accordingly, The Greens do not offer support for this legislation. We do look forward to the Government bringing in the next tranche of promised strata reforms. We will support a bill that contains the positive, substantive changes that this current bill is lacking.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (13:16):** I speak in support of the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. More than 1.2 million people live in strata communities across New South Wales, as has already been said during the debate. That is nearly 15 per cent of the State's population. That number is set to rise as the housing mix across the State changes. I am proud to be part of a government that is tackling the housing affordability crisis head on with a comprehensive plan to build quality homes of many different types. As the Minister said in his second reading speech, critical to the success of that plan is public confidence in strata living.

The reforms included in the bill are aimed at achieving precisely that. By strengthening the disclosure obligations of strata managing agents, increasing transparency for strata owners and improving on Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers, the bill provides a new level of clarity and confidence in the administration of strata. In my electorate of Charlestown, where a number of train stations have been identified as part of the Government's groundbreaking transport oriented development strategy, strata living—which is already a fact of

life for many of my constituents—will become more common. I am so proud to stand behind our housing strategy in my role as both a local member and Minister. I have seen firsthand the impact of the protracted housing crisis, which those opposite allowed to fester during 12 long years in government.

With this bill, the Government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that strata living becomes an attractive option for many across the State, including in Charlestown. The bill brings much-needed reform to the State's strata laws. We know why those reforms are necessary. The *Four Corners* report aired on Monday 9 September exposed the deep flaws in the way the strata industry is managed. It is important to make clear that the Government's action in this space was not motivated by that broadcast. The proposals outlined in the bill were first announced back in June.

The Government's action has been motivated by nearly a thousand complaints over a five-year period relating to the actions of strata managers. It is important to make clear that the vast majority of strata managers are upstanding professionals who deliver for their clients. This legislation is aimed at helping managers to achieve higher levels of effectiveness, efficiency and transparency. This legislation will strengthen trust in the strata system and resolve problems. As the Minister said in his second reading speech, "To solve the housing crisis, we need people to have confidence to invest and live in higher density housing that relies on strata schemes." I acknowledge the many stakeholders who had input on this bill, who have already been identified in previous contributions to this debate. The level of engagement reflects the importance of the legislation and the willingness of all stakeholders to produce practical solutions. That is reflective of this Government's commitment to hear from all interested parties.

I turn my attention to the provisions of the bill and what they will mean. Crucially, the bill will benefit not only future residents but also those currently living in strata and community land schemes. The bill represents another step forward in the Government's work to modernise our State's housing system. The bill will make strata and community land laws fit for purpose in 2024 and bring the system into line with community expectations by filling in accountability gaps. By strengthening enforcement against those who breach their obligations, the bill will limit wrongdoing in the sector and help ensure that those impacted by any wrongdoing are properly redressed.

As I have mentioned, one of the key elements of the bill is an increase in transparency for owners' corporations. The existing disclosure requirements are not adequate to equip owners' corporations with the information they need to make informed decisions about the management of their schemes. The proposed amendment to section 60 of the Strata Schemes Management Act will go some way to address those concerns, requiring agents to disclose more relevant information more often. For example, under certain circumstances, the strata managing agent will have to give written notice to the owners' corporation about perceived conflicts of interest before entering into a contract for the purchase of goods or services.

The bill also adjusts the Strata Schemes Management Regulation 2022 to expand the definition of who connected persons are for the purposes of perceived or actual conflicts of interest. Section 7 of the Act sets out who is considered to be connected with whom for the purposes of the Act, including parent companies and related entities. The bill will also require agents to give written notices to the owners' corporation as soon as possible after they learn of a connection or that they might benefit from a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the strata scheme. All told, the reforms mean that owners' corporations will have more up-to-date disclosures about an agent, including where there is a connection with the original owner of the strata or a connection with a supplier of goods or services to the scheme.

Under the provisions of the Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022, agents are obligated to refuse an appointment to act for a client if their interests conflict with their client's. As we know, interests change over time. To reflect that, the obligation extends to any conflicts that may emerge over the course of a relationship between client and agent. Should a conflict of interest emerge, the agent must not continue to act for their client. The bill will make agents acting for owners' corporations actively consider their obligations and make positive determinations about whether or not they are acting properly. Agents will also be required to consolidate and report all of the information captured by the reforms I outlined previously at the strata scheme's annual general meeting, including the identification of connections that formed over the course of the preceding 12 months.

The provisions make clear the purpose of this bill: the empowerment of strata residents, the clarification of agents' responsibilities and the strengthening of trust between the parties involved in a strata scheme. Under the bill, the strengthening of trust starts even before the appointment of the strata manager. The decision of who should act as strata manager is one of the most important an owners' corporation will make. That decision, as the Minister said, holds significant implications for owners' corporations and the financial health of residents. The proposed amendments to section 71 require prospective agents to provide more relevant information before appointment, including their connections with suppliers with whom they have prior relationships.



One particular important area that strata managers have a great deal of control over is the purchasing of insurance. We have seen owners' corporations charged excessive fees when securing needed insurance, with agents at times being induced to purchase certain products over others with the promise of commissions. To address this, the bill implements higher disclosure standards for insurance quotes that agents source for owners' corporations. An agent is required to source three insurance quotes or supply a written reason to the owners' corporation why this could not be achieved. The bill requires the quotes to include specific information breaking down the cost of the policy, including the premium separate to any commission; the commission; and any broker fees. Crucially, the quotes will also need to show where the commission and broker fees are actually going and disclose if the agent is connected to the provider of the quote. Tightening disclosure requirements allows owners' corporations to make better, more informed decisions, and the revised framework in the bill ensures that the regulator has the capacity to effectively enforce the Act.

The bill adjusts the maximum penalty for breaches of the disclosure obligations in the Strata Schemes Management Act and the Community Land Management Act to 500 penalty units for a corporation and 100 penalty units in any other case. That is necessary because the current penalty amounts have fallen far below market value, encouraging bad actors to potentially factor in penalties as the cost of doing business. The penalty infringement notice amounts are also doubling to \$2,200 for corporations and \$1,100 for individuals, allowing Fair Trading to issue on-the-spot fines. The higher penalties will be complemented by stronger enforcement powers for NSW Fair Trading to investigate and respond to identified noncompliance. In all, that will create a strong disincentive against misconduct and send a powerful message to strata residents that the New South Wales Government has their backs. I am pleased to be part of a government delivering real change for more than a million residents across the State, and I know that this legislation will have positive benefits for more and more of my constituents in years to come. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (13:26):** I support the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I commend the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading for his work in this space. The bill seeks to amend the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015, herein known as the Strata Act; the Property Stock Agents Act 2002, herein known as the PSA Act; as well as related regulations. The main purpose of the bill is to strengthen strata managing agents' disclosure obligations, increase transparency for consumers, and improve compliance and enforcement powers of NSW Fair Trading.

The current disclosure obligations for strata managing agents' potential conflicts of interest are limited. The bill adds to the current disclosure obligations in the Strata Act. Schedule 1 requires that the strata managing agent itemise insurance quotes to clearly disclose a breakdown of charges, including to whom the commission and broker fee will ultimately be paid. It also requires the strata managing agent to provide written notice to the owners' corporations about potential conflicts of interest as close to the time they arise as possible, as well as disclose more information at the annual general meeting, including any related suppliers or connections with the original owner of the strata scheme building.

The maximum penalties and infringement notices are increased by the bill to deter agents from taking advantage of consumers, and Fair Trading's enforcement and compliance powers are strengthened by broadening the available enforceable undertaking power in the PSA Act. The bill increases consumer confidence by ensuring the information needed to make informed decisions about the management of strata schemes is available and improves owners' confidence that managing agents are acting in the best interests of the owners' corporation. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

#### **Returned**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments. I order that consideration of the Legislative Council amendments be set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

*Committees***JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES****Extension of Reporting Date**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I report receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

- (1) That the reporting date of the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training in New South Wales be extended to 13 December 2024.
- (2) That a message be sent acquainting the Legislative Assembly with the resolution.

I order that the Legislative Council message be taken into consideration at a later time.

I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I acknowledge students from the University of Sydney—with whom I have a connection—completing their Parliament and Democracy course with Professor Rodney Smith. Welcome to New South Wales Parliament.

*Bills***PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

**Second Reading Speech**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (14:31):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is great to see the students from the University of Sydney. This is a fantastic topic. Good luck to all of you on your studies. I am pleased to introduce the Portable Long Service Leave Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Each year thousands of New South Wales building, construction and cleaning workers are working on site at Commonwealth places in New South Wales. At the new Western Sydney International Airport alone there have been thousands of workers since the project broke ground in 2018. As well as airports, Commonwealth places include military bases and other sites that the Commonwealth has proprietary rights over. Construction workers and cleaners who work at Commonwealth places make significant economic and social contributions in New South Wales, delivering critical infrastructure and ensuring the smooth running of existing services.

Despite these workers performing exactly the same job as workers on sites that are not Commonwealth places, the New South Wales Government's advice is that these workers cannot currently receive recognition for their work at a Commonwealth place in the form of credits, either through the New South Wales Building and Construction Industry Portable Long Service Leave Scheme or the Contract Cleaning Industry Long Service Leave Scheme. This is because the New South Wales building and cleaning Acts cannot apply their own force to Commonwealth places in New South Wales. There is a constitutional prohibition on the ability to impose a levy to pay entitlements under both schemes.

In practice, the New South Wales Government's advice is that a constitutional barrier means that otherwise eligible work at a Commonwealth place is not recognised as service under the New South Wales Acts. This also means that new workers who first start building or cleaning work at a Commonwealth place cannot register in a portable scheme until they carry out work on non-Commonwealth place worksites. The practical effect of this is that many workers who do not stay with the same employer in the construction or cleaning industry and work at a Commonwealth place are placed at risk of losing access to the State's portable long service leave scheme. Today we seek to provide some relief to this issue for cleaners and construction workers at Commonwealth places by making some practical amendments to their respective portable long service leave schemes. These amendments together will ensure that service of a worker at a Commonwealth place does not count towards the four-year

threshold of non-service and so does not trigger a cancellation of a registration of the worker under the respective long service leave scheme.

The amendment will clarify that the Long Service Corporation can restore cancelled registrations of a worker when the registration was cancelled due to work at a Commonwealth place and ensures that restoring the cancelled registration of a worker under the Building and Construction Industry Long Service Payments Act 1986 will also restore prior service credits of eligible work as though cancellation had not occurred, similar to an existing provision in the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave Scheme) Act 2010. While the New South Wales Government is committed to fully resolving this issue for all workers, including ensuring that they are able to register, record service and receive entitlements, the Commonwealth has exclusive power to make laws with respect to Commonwealth places. As such, there are limits on what New South Wales can do to address the core problem unilaterally.

I make it very clear to members and to students in the public gallery that this matter was brought to the attention of the previous Government, which sought advice about the constitutional issue. Since I became the Minister responsible for this Act, when it was brought to my attention I have been working with the industry and the unions trying to resolve this issue and find solutions. As I indicated earlier, this is part of a solution. This is so workers do not lose their service while working at Commonwealth sites. It also restores service credits retrospectively. It is annoying that the former Government left this in the too-hard basket, although it had a couple of years to clear the decks. I am annoyed that we have spent a lot of resources and exhausted all avenues to get to this point. I put that on the record. I thank our officials and staff. At every meeting and briefing I have continued to ask questions to try to find a solution to make sure that workers in the cleaning and construction industries at Commonwealth sites are able to accrue their long service leave.

The bill does not seek to resolve the broader issue, which is the constitutional prohibition of an otherwise eligible developer or cleaning business paying a levy to either portable long service leave scheme for work undertaken at a Commonwealth place. That work will require the cooperation of the Commonwealth Government. Rather, the bill addresses an immediate and impending risk that this particular cohort of workers face. Under the current laws, the Long Service Corporation is required to cancel a worker's registration in the circumstance where there is a prescribed break in service. This is used to capture circumstances where a person has left the industry, and is not intended to capture those who are carrying out work that would be eligible if it were not on Commonwealth land that is outside the ambit of the New South Wales schemes.

For building workers, a break of four years with no service triggers cancellation if they have less than five years of service accrued. For contract cleaners, a break of four years triggers cancellation regardless of the amount of prior service. The effect of cancellation is that any accrued service is forfeited. Worse still is the fact that any worker who has their registration cancelled for this reason would currently not have any remedy available—it is like they never worked for that period, and that is just not fair. To illustrate the point, a cleaner may have worked really hard to accrue eight years of service credits, just two years shy of reaching their entitlement, which is at 10 years. If this worker then completes a four-year contract to work on the Sydney Airport, the Long Service Corporation would be forced to cancel their registration and the eight years of service would be forfeited. This is in terms of equitable entitlement, but for cleaners and building and construction workers, this is so wrong and unfair—I do not think it would be controversial in the least to say that.

As I said, hardworking people in the construction, building and cleaning industries should not risk losing their service credits through no fault of their own. It is simply for working on a site that the Commonwealth has rights over. Unless anybody raises this issue with my office or with the Long Service Corporation, I can confirm at this stage there are no instances that have been identified where a registration has been cancelled due to working exclusively at Commonwealth places. Nevertheless, this risk grows closer to becoming realised, given the duration of work at some Commonwealth places, such as Western Sydney airport. The bill directly addresses this risk by ensuring that workers cannot lose their registration and pre-existing service credits for working at Commonwealth places.

I now turn to the key details of the bill. First, the bill will ensure that a worker's registration cannot be cancelled because they work solely at a Commonwealth place. Schedule 1.2 and 2.2 of the bill will achieve this by adding work at a Commonwealth place in New South Wales as a day that does not count towards the four-year cancellation threshold. In the cleaning scheme, a single day of work at a Commonwealth place will effectively reset the four-year threshold. This exemption is already used in both schemes to recognise that there are many situations where a worker remains in the sector and yet cannot accrue service. For example, in the building Act and the cleaning Act, other recognised days include volunteer work in New South Wales and interstate, such as during emergencies. The bill expands on these exemptions to include work at a Commonwealth place in New South Wales.

Second, the bill will clarify that a registration can be restored if it has been cancelled due to work at a Commonwealth place in New South Wales. As I mentioned, although there are no confirmed instances of this happening, this is an important safeguard to ensure that the Long Service Corporation has appropriate remedial powers if the situation arises. Item [2] in schedule 1.1 and schedule 2.1 will achieve this by explicitly allowing the Long Service Corporation to reinstate a registration if it has already been cancelled. A restoration must occur within six years of the cancellation. The intent is that the power to restore a restoration is an added safeguard in the event that the Long Service Corporation identifies that a worker has already faced cancellation.

Finally, the bill will also make one minor consequential change to put beyond doubt that restoration of a registration also restores any prior service credits. The credits that will be restored are for work on other places before the worker first started at the Commonwealth place. It will not provide for restoration of any service credits granted in error for work at a Commonwealth place. Schedule 1.1, item [1] achieves this by amending the building and construction Act to clarify that restoring a cancelled registration has the effect of the Act applying to that worker as if the registration had not been cancelled. In other words, all service credits previously accrued at non-Commonwealth places would be restored. The contract cleaning Act already has an equivalent provision and, as such, does not require amendment.

These amendments are as sensible as they are necessary to address the impending risk looming over these workers. During targeted consultation on the bill with key unions and key sector peaks on the industry committees, most stakeholders did not oppose the bill. They understood the policy intent as both an interim and urgent step to protect workers. Understandably, several called for Government to find an enduring solution; I agree with them. We are working very hard. We have written to the Federal Government, previously to Minister Burke. The officials at the Long Service Corporation and the Commonwealth officials have met a number of times. I thank the new Minister, Minister Watt, who has taken an interest. I have raised this strongly with him that this is very important and urgent. I have also raised this issue with Minister Stephen Jones, who I understand has carriage of the mirror tax Act, which would be the Act that would need to be amended to fix the situation.

I also acknowledge the number of contractors who have raised this issue with me. They have written to the Commonwealth and have also raised these issues in public forums. They want to pay the levy. There are a number of them who have begged me, but I have said it is a constitutional issue. We would love to accept their levy but we are not allowed to because it is illegal. It is hard to understand that; it has been difficult for me to understand. We have taken advice. We are rectifying this situation, but we need support from the Commonwealth Government. We urge it to make those changes as quickly as possible.

I thank my hardworking staff and officials. This has been technical and it has been challenging to get to this point. I also acknowledge Unions NSW and its affiliates, who have been involved over a number of months through round tables and our engagements. I acknowledge their cooperation in providing their feedback on the bill, as well as those of the industry and the National Electrical Contractors Association. There is still much work to do. The Government believes that every building, construction and cleaning worker in New South Wales should have access to the portable entitlements intended for them. Whether they work at a Commonwealth site or not, they should be treated equally and have access to the scheme. Their work prior to working at a Commonwealth site is not recognised, and that is unfair. We are fixing that today. They should receive recognition for their work. The bill will minimise the harm to affected workers and protect their service credits while this Government works toward an enduring solution. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **MARINE SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Jo Haylen, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (14:49):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Marine Safety Amendment Bill 2024. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Marine Safety Act 1998 to strengthen and streamline the State's marine legislation and to provide a head of power that will enable regulatory changes that will follow on from Transport for NSW's statutory review of the Marine Safety Regulation 2016. Our pristine waterways are one of the State's major drawcards for tourists and locals alike. They are also key to the State's economic prosperity and create thousands of jobs and flow-on economic opportunities. The amendments in the bill aim to make a day out on the water safer for everyone.

The Marine Safety Act 1998, or the Act, is the primary legislation that oversees the safety of navigation on our waterways. The objects of the Act are to ensure the safe operation of vessels in ports and other waterways; promote the responsible operation of vessels in those waters to protect the safety and amenity of other users of those waters and the amenity of occupiers of adjoining land; provide an effective framework for the enforcement of marine legislation; provide for the investigation of marine accidents and for appropriate action following any such investigation; and consolidate the marine safety legislation.

The Marine Safety Regulation is a subordinate instrument of the Act and the key instrument in regulating recreational boating and port safety in New South Wales. Together, the Act and the regulation support the safe and efficient management of New South Wales waterways and the vessels that operate on them. Transport is responsible for the management of over 2,000 kilometres of coastline and nearly 13,000 kilometres of navigable waterways. These include rivers, lakes, dams and coastal waters. In the 2023-24 financial year, New South Wales waterways hosted approximately 215,000 registered recreational vessels. In addition to this, there is also a significant and increasing number of vessels, such as canoes, kayaks, surf skis and stand-up paddleboards, using the waterways.

Commercial shipping is also an important feature of New South Wales waterways. There are over 5,000 visits from trade and cruise vessels each year, with the ports of New South Wales supporting countless businesses and employing thousands of people across the State. Under the Marine Safety Act, the Port Authority of New South Wales, through the appointed harbour master, has the responsibility for the safe navigation of commercial shipping. The amendments in the bill are designed to ensure the safe operation of all vessels on our waterways and ports, to promote the responsible operation and ownership of vessels and to provide an effective framework for the enforcement of marine safety legislation. These amendments contribute to the New South Wales Government's aims to have zero fatalities or serious injuries on waterways in the State by 2056.

I now explain the key amendments outlined in the bill. The bill will introduce amendments to improve the safety of the State's port operations. Trading ports in New South Wales are vital to the community and the economy, contributing more than \$15 billion to the State's economy each year. In New South Wales, pilotage is compulsory for all commercial vessels over 30 metres while operating in a pilotage port. In this bill, the Government has taken the opportunity to harmonise the State's legislative framework with other States and Territories where compulsory pilotage is regulated to vessels of 35 metres and above. The bill will therefore increase the minimum length of a vessel requiring pilotage from 30 metres to 35 metres, making the State's maritime safety laws more consistent with others across the country.

This change will facilitate an amendment to the regulation that will remove the existing exemption from the compulsory pilotage requirements that currently apply to recreational vessels of 35 metres or above. When this exemption is removed, all recreational vessels of at least 35 metres will require compulsory pilotage. This will improve the safety of our waterways by ensuring that large recreational vessels, such as superyachts, are subject to compulsory pilotage. It will also ensure that the rules for these vessels are consistent with those in other Australian jurisdictions.

In jurisdictions such as Victoria, recreational vessels whose masters hold a pilot exemption certificate or local knowledge certificate are exempt from pilotage. To allow a similar exemption for recreational vessels over 35 metres from compulsory pilotage in New South Wales, the bill introduces a special recreational vessel permit, which is classed as a marine safety licence. This new marine safety licence is the recreational equivalent of the existing certificate of local knowledge, which is a marine safety licence that exempts a commercial vessel from compulsory pilotage under the Act, subject to conditions such as training and medical fitness. A vessel whose master holds a special recreational vessel permit at the time of being in the port will be exempt from compulsory pilotage.

Another important aspect of the legislation covers pilotage and marine pilot licences. Currently, in New South Wales, a marine pilot licence does not expire, even after the pilot retires or leaves the industry. As a preventative measure against potential safety risks, the bill will introduce the cancellation of a licence two years after a marine pilot retires or ceases the provision of pilotage services in New South Wales pilotage ports. This provision will work in tandem with the Marine Pilotage Code to ensure that health standards and high performance by marine pilots are maintained, while enhancing confidence in the marine pilot licensing framework.

To ensure procedural fairness, both the Port Authority and impacted pilots will be required to give notice so that both parties are aware of an upcoming licence cancellation. The Port Authority will be required to notify a marine pilot licence holder of a proposed cancellation to give the holder a reasonable opportunity to make submissions and to consider any submissions received. Likewise, the holder of a marine pilot licence will be required to notify the Port Authority in writing when the licence holder retires or when they have not been employed by a pilotage service provider for a continuous period of two years.

The bill also improves safety in our ports and strengthens the protection of the environment by introducing a new offshore anchoring framework. When merchant vessels are at anchor, their large anchors and connecting chains may drag and scour the seabed. Due to their size and frequency at anchor, these anchored merchant vessels can cause cumulative seabed disturbance. That can include adverse impacts on sensitive seabed habitats, such as seagrasses, kelp, coral and sponges. With the increasing number of merchant vessel movements, there is a need for designated anchorage areas located away from sensitive habitats to manage sea floor impacts and limit the extent of disturbance. A recent study by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in Port Kembla estimates that new designated anchorages will reduce the sea floor impact area by over 45 per cent and possibly allow marine life outside these areas to recover.

To enhance protection of the sea floor and improve the safety of vessels waiting to enter New South Wales ports, the bill provides the Minister with the power to declare offshore anchorages and direct a person responsible for a vessel to anchor at or remove a vessel from the offshore anchorage location. I appreciate the importance of underwater cultural heritage items, including historic shipwrecks. Any existing heritage protections or legislative requirements that may apply to underwater objects will continue to apply. The bill includes a provision that clarifies that the Act is subject to the Heritage Act 1977 and includes a reference to the Commonwealth Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018. This makes clear that the Act does not override existing heritage protections for precious historical and cultural artefacts that may be found on the seabed.

I turn to the second set of key amendments in the bill, which strengthen regulatory powers for the effective management of unsafe vessels and former vessels. Across New South Wales, there are increasing numbers of ageing and derelict moored vessels. One of the contributing factors to this trend stems from the second-hand vessel purchase market. Buyers looking to acquire second-hand vessels often turn to online purchasing platforms, where the condition of a vessel can be easily misrepresented. In addition, there is currently no requirement for a vessel owner to disclose statutory notices they have received in relation to a vessel, such as a clean-up notice, unsafe vessel notice or a notice to remove an obstruction to navigation. As a result, a vessel owner may decide not to disclose to a potential buyer that the vessel is encumbered in some way, and there is no way, in the current set of circumstances, for the buyer to check. This has resulted in unsuspecting buyers not being fully aware of the repair or remedial works required for a vessel they wish to buy. Consequently, some buyers are unable or unwilling to complete these maintenance works after acquiring the vessel, leaving the vessel to deteriorate.

During the process of vessel ownership transfer, if a buyer fails to register a vessel, the seller may still have notionally absolved themselves of any responsibility in management of the vessel. This has led to numerous legal issues and conflicts between the seller, the buyer and Transport as the regulator. In most cases, Transport has been forced to assume possession of the vessel and to arrange for it to be scrapped at government expense. These issues were highlighted in an Ombudsman investigation into the scrapping of a derelict boat in 2021. The Ombudsman recommended that Transport amend the legislation to help deal with those issues. The bill will therefore amend the Act to further clarify vessel registration and transfer provisions. That will require sellers and buyers to complete their respective applications before a transfer of vessel registration can occur. The vessel will also remain in the seller's ownership until the transfer has been fully completed, ensuring a person is responsible for the vessel at all times.

The new amendments also provide an alignment between vessel registration and transfer provisions and similar provisions in the road transport legislation by giving Transport the ability to refuse the transfer of a vessel's registration or to rescind a transfer that was not genuine or was undertaken to avoid liability. Transport will also be authorised to make available a register of vessels subject to relevant statutory notices without divulging personal information, and to release relevant vessel information to any person conducting a search on such vessels.

There is also growing concern around the increasing number of vessels reaching or having reached the end of their useful lives. These vessels are also known as end-of-life vessels. End-of-life vessels may present navigational and safety hazards in waterways and cause adverse environmental impacts due to the leakage of harmful substances into the marine environment. Currently, vessels that are being operated require registration. However, end-of-life or substandard vessels that are not being operated have no registration and, therefore, no person on record for Transport to engage with to manage these issues. As many of these vessels are abandoned or have unidentified ownership, the responsibility of vessel salvaging and disposal rests with the Government. That includes bearing high associated costs that can amount to more than \$1 million each year.

The potential scale of derelict vessel abandonment and disposal in New South Wales presents a problem to the industry, the Government and the public. Without adequate policy intervention or vessel disposal options, the stock of derelict vessels will continue to grow and exacerbate the burden on the public, compromising the safety on our waterways. To address that problem, the bill introduces an amendment that requires any vessel on State waters to be registered, whether it is operated or not. This will ensure that most vessels over a certain size are registered and will enable Transport to be better equipped in dealing with derelict vessels.

In addition, the bill provides an amended definition of "unsafe vessel" to include derelict vessels and former vessels. The term "derelict vessel" is used instead of "end-of-life vessel" as it is commonly understood in the maritime and shipping context. It also has precedent in legislation, including in the Marine Pollution Act 2012 and the Commonwealth Navigation Act 2012. Former vessels are vessels that were used previously as a means of transportation on water that are no longer seaworthy or useable but are occupying New South Wales waters. These may include former commercial vessels that are no longer capable of being used as a means of transportation due to the removal of engines or other equipment. A head of power is also provided to direct the person responsible for such vessels to remove the vessel within a specified period. It will also authorise the removal or disposal of an unsafe vessel when a person responsible for it fails to comply with a direction and allow the recovery of reasonable costs incurred from the relevant owner as a debt in a court of competent jurisdiction.

The amended definition of "unsafe vessel" provides regulatory scope to track and account for previously registered vessels that are still used on water other than as a means of transportation. It will also enable the monitoring of unseaworthy vessels before they capsize, become partially submerged, or sink. This is expected to help prevent incidents such as the sinking of the MV *Baragoola* in Sydney Harbour in 2022, which cost an estimated \$5 million to remove, which is around three times the cost of recycling and disposing of the vessel. It is crucial that we ensure vessels of heritage value are protected in line with heritage legislation. The bill explicitly states that the Act is subject to the Heritage Act 1977 and makes reference to the Commonwealth Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018. This also ensures the Act does not override existing heritage protections that may apply to vessels.

Finally, the bill will allow for more flexibility in the duration of the aquatic licences that can be issued. The existing regulatory framework for managing commercial activities on New South Wales waterways is outdated and requires reform. Many existing commercial activities currently operate through ad hoc direction notices and exemption orders which create uncertainty for business owners and administrative burdens for Transport. This change will enable waterway commercial businesses in New South Wales to be better regulated under various time periods and conditions that best suit the nature of their businesses.

Additionally, a regulation-making power is included to specify the circumstances in which an aquatic licence can be transferred. This will allow regulations to be made allowing the aquatic licence holder to transfer their aquatic licence to a subsequent owner of the business. The current framework of ad hoc direction notices does not allow for that. This change will provide them with greater business certainty, flexibility and security of tenure, thereby improving the regulation of waterway commercial activities. It should be noted that this modernisation of the licensing framework is not expected to impact the current operations and resourcing required to administer and enforce the licences. In conclusion, the bill will strengthen and streamline our marine safety legislation and bring us closer to achieving our goal of zero fatalities on our waterways by 2056. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **STRATA MANAGING AGENTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (15:07):** I strongly support the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. Strata living is of the utmost importance for the people of New South Wales. Currently, New South Wales has over 85,000 strata schemes, housing more than 1.2 million residents. With that number expected to grow, supporting confidence in investing and living in strata schemes is essential. Strata managing agents are an important contributor to the effective functioning of a strata scheme. Those licensed professionals offer specialised advice to owners' corporations about their responsibilities and oversee the provision of services to the strata scheme. Agents are also trusted advisors to the owners' corporations. They should be acting in their clients' best interests.

Recently, concerns have been raised about the transparency of strata managing agents. Those concerns include that agents are charging excessive fees and earning commissions when arranging strata insurance for the buildings they manage, potentially favouring products from specific companies due to the personal benefits they will receive, and engaging related entities for their services to gain financial advantage without the knowledge of owners' corporations. The bill addresses those concerns by strengthening the disclosure obligations of the strata industry.

Over the past decade, the strata industry has grown immensely and has become more complex. No longer are strata managing agencies simple suburban shopfronts that provide services to strata schemes. Many agencies are now large companies with subsidiaries providing services to the broader strata industry, whether that is

building maintenance services or insurance products. Some of those subsidiaries are even based overseas, reflecting how the industry's business model is evolving and growing in complexity.

The existing disclosure requirements in the Strata Schemes Management Act already provide owners' corporations with important information about the actions of strata managing agents. The reforms in the bill build on those requirements to ensure owners' corporations are better equipped with the right information in a more timely way, at the right time, to make informed decisions about the management of their scheme. Firstly, the bill amends the Strata Schemes Management Act to clarify that the owners' corporation's approval of a commission or training service is to be by a resolution at a general meeting.

Additionally, agents will be required to provide a document containing specific information about the commission or training service to the owners' corporation at the relevant meeting. This information includes why the contract is in the owners' corporation's best interest, and details about the relationship between the agent and the service provider. The agent must also provide a statement explaining why they believe that they are complying with their obligation not to act for a client if their interests conflict. These additional requirements will encourage agents to carefully consider their obligations while also providing owners' corporations with valuable information to assess the agent's actions.

The bill also requires agents to give owners' corporations itemised insurance quotes that clearly set out key information. This information includes the base premium amount, not including any commission amounts, the commission amounts, broker fee amounts and who those amounts are ultimately paid to, as well as levy amounts that must be paid to the Government. With this information, owners' corporations can easily identify commissions that their agent may receive in such transactions and determine their preferred insurance policy.

To further increase transparency, the bill requires agents to disclose perceived conflicts of interest more frequently and in greater detail. Agents will have to give written notice to the owners' corporation before entering a contract to buy goods or services if the agent will get a commission or training service under the contract or is connected to the supplier. The written notice will need to include information about relevant matters such as the nature of the agent's relationship with the supplier and if the contract is in the owners' corporation's best interest.

The bill will also require agents to disclose more information at the annual general meeting, such as all of their related suppliers and the services or goods they provide, and their connections to the "original owner" of the strata scheme, such as if the developer of the strata scheme has formed family ties with the agent. Section 7 of the Strata Schemes Management Act sets out when a supplier or original owner is connected to an agent. For example, an agent is considered to be connected to their relatives. The bill ensures that all relevant relationships are captured by adding new categories of "connected persons". This includes where an agent is a trustee. In those circumstances, an agent will be considered connected to the trust's beneficiaries. Similar disclosure requirements will apply before the appointment of a strata manager. This will enable the owners' corporation to make an informed decision about who is best suited to manage their scheme.

I point out that these important changes to the Strata Schemes Management Act will be applied to the Community Land Management Act. This will ensure residents in community land schemes receive the same benefits. The New South Wales Government is committed to facilitating transparency and enhancing trust in the strata industry. The improved disclosure obligations proposed by the bill are imperative to achieving this vision. I commend the Minister for bringing the bill to the House.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:13):** I speak in support of the Strata Managing Agent Amendment Legislation Bill 2024, which aims to strengthen the regulation of strata managing agents as well as promote greater transparency and accountability. The Central Coast is no stranger to strata living, with well over 4,500 strata schemes, which is only set to increase. The member for Wyong, and Minister for the Central Coast, is in the Chamber, and we both know that the number of strata and apartment dwellings on the Central Coast continues to rise quite rapidly. In Gosford, high-rise living has arrived in the CBD. Earlier this month the Premier visited our community to celebrate the topping out of the area's first high-rise housing precinct, the stunning new building of Archibald by ALAND. The project alone will introduce more than 323 new apartments to the Gosford housing market. With higher density housing comes a reliance on strata schemes.

Owners' corporations, which manage their strata scheme, often employ a strata managing agent to assist with responsibilities, including maintenance and repair of common property, financial management, and taking out insurance. The relationship between the owners' corporation and the managing agent is built on trust, with managing agents working in the best interests of their clients. However, it has been brought to the attention of the Minister and a number of members that unscrupulous strata managers have been acting unethically on behalf of their organisations, and the bill is designed to remove that unethical behaviour so that people cannot profit from managing strata buildings.



It is concerning and sad to hear that strata managing agents have been taking advantage of strata owners. This has included owners' corporations being charged excessive fees for insurance, and agents preferencing companies or using a related entity to obtain a benefit—often without the owners' corporation's knowledge. People who move into a strata scheme do not necessarily have complex legal capacities. It is an onerous burden for people to participate in the strata management of their facilities on top of dealing with their everyday lives. It is also a costly venture. It is disgusting that these strata managers are taking advantage of owners within strata facilities. The proposed amendments are designed to protect owners' corporations from potential exploitation from managing agents, ensure that managing agents are acting in the best interest of the owners' corporation, and restore public confidence in strata management and their schemes.

I acknowledge that the Strata Schemes Management Act imposes duties and responsibilities on managing agents, such as limitations on accepting gifts and benefits, as well as disclosure obligations. The bill will strengthen these transparency obligations by amending section 60 of the Act, which will increase how often and how much information managing agents must disclose to the owners' corporation. Further, in certain circumstances a managing agent must give written notice to the owners' corporation before entering into the contract for goods or services. Circumstances include if the agent is, under the contract, receiving a commission or training service or the contract is with a person connected to the managing agent.

Similar disclosure requirements will also apply to managing agents prior to their appointment. Amended section 71 of the Act will require agents to disclose to the owners' corporation if they use related suppliers when managing strata schemes or have given the original owner advice on the strata plans in the past two years. Those changes will not only increase transparency but also allow the owners' corporation to make informed decisions, as they have real-time relevant information. This will also improve the relationship between the owners' corporation and managing agents by showing that the managing agent is working in the owners' corporation's best interest.

The bill will amend the Property and Stock Agents Act to prevent managing agents from being paid insurance commissions where an owners' corporation has independently obtained their own insurance quotes and arranges the policy purchase without the managing agent. Penalties, compliance and enforcement powers will also be strengthened. Firstly, the bill will substantially increase the maximum penalty for breaches of the disclosure as well as doubling the on-the-spot penalty infringement notices. Agents found not acting in good faith and in the best interests of their clients will also be subject to increased maximum penalties. Secondly, Fair Trading's enforcement and compliance powers will be broadened under the Property and Stock Agents Act, giving Fair Trading the necessary tools to address noncompliance. The new penalty framework, along with improvements to Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers, is a strong deterrent against agent misconduct and will ultimately improve consumer protection and confidence.

Overall the bill is strengthening disclosure obligations of managing agents, increasing transparency for residents and creating a system that will allow owners' corporations to make informed decisions about the management of their schemes and homes. The bill is just another step that the New South Wales Government is taking to empower and improve the lives of those living in strata schemes. I thank the Minister and his team for putting this bill together and for their ongoing work to support our constituents who have complex challenges and questions about their strata arrangements, which is much appreciated. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:18):** I contribute to debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The purpose of the bill is to introduce a series of amendments aimed at improving the governance, transparency and accountability of strata managing agents in New South Wales. The bill incorporates additional updates based on 139 recommendations from the 2021 *Report on the statutory review of the Strata Schemes Development Act 2015 and Strata Schemes Management Act 2015*, which was tabled at the time by the Coalition Government. As we know, today New South Wales has one of the highest concentrations of strata title properties in Australia. Over 80,000 strata schemes are registered in the State, accommodating hundreds of thousands of residents. That prevalence underscores the critical role that strata schemes play in the housing market.

Strata schemes are not limited to residential apartments; they also include townhouses, commercial buildings, mixed-use developments and retirement villages. That versatility has further driven the adoption of strata titles across various sectors. The great electorate of Tweed has the greatest concentration in the State of people living in residential parks and caravan parks. That trend continues to grow and very much so. I agree with the member for Gosford's comment that a lot of the inquiries to our electoral offices are based on issues arising out of strata management—the different fees and so on. I represent a fairly different area, and I have raised many times in this House the inability of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to deal with rental properties and the like because, under the current legislation, NCAT can only do so if the owner lives within the State of

New South Wales. If they live just across the border, which could be just across the street in my electorate, NCAT is unable to deal with the matter.

The proposed reforms provide for commission and disclosure requirements. The bill inserts a definition of "commission" to include an insurance broker fee and increases maximum penalties for breaches by strata managing agents. It also requires that any approval for commissions or training services received by strata managing agents be supported by detailed documentation and approved by resolution at a general meeting. It includes mandatory disclosure of connections between strata managing agents and suppliers of goods or services for the strata scheme. In relation to transparency in financial transactions, the bill enhances transparency requirements by mandating that strata managing agents disclose detailed information about insurance quotations, including breakdowns of charges and connections with providers.

It also requires a strata managing agent to notify the owners' corporation before entering into contracts for goods or services if commissions or training services are involved, particularly if the supplier is connected with the agent. That is very important. I had the privilege a number of years ago in the previous Government to be on a committee that conducted a thorough investigation into embedded electricity networks. I know they are being addressed in certain areas, but it is still a major issue, particularly in caravan parks and retirement villages. I implore the Minister to keep focused on embedded electricity networks. They also apply to hot water, cold water and a whole raft of things. I think there are some unscrupulous developers out there that have used them to their own advantage; in fact, I am sure they have. I am sure the Minister will take that into consideration.

In relation to procedural requirements for strata schemes, the bill amends procedures for general meetings, requiring that approvals relating to commissions or training services be explicitly recorded and justified, and enhances the role of the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service in appointing accounts examiners to safeguard the compensation fund and enforce compliance with relevant Acts. The bill also introduces provisions prohibiting agents from charging commissions for insurance purchases that were not facilitated by them. It requires detailed disclosure of insurance-related financial transactions, including the breakdown of premiums, commissions and other related charges.

In relation to regulation and compliance, the bill ensures that the amendments are consistent across related Acts, including the Community Land Management Act 2021 and the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002, to maintain uniformity in regulations governing strata and community title management. It also extends reporting obligations. Strata managing agents must report any new connections with suppliers or original owners and disclose any pecuniary interests acquired in the strata scheme. The bill does go a long way. I thank the shadow Minister for Small Business, and shadow Minister for Fair Trading, Work Health and Safety and Building for his in-depth briefing to our shadow Cabinet. I support the bill.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (15:24):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Strata Managing Agents Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, particularly my colleagues the member for Liverpool, the shadow Minister and member for Willoughby, the member for Parramatta, the member for Sydney, the member for Heathcote, the member for Granville, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Newtown, the member for Charlestown, the member for Fairfield, the member for East Hills, the member for Gosford and the member for Tweed.

The bill marks an important step in the Government's commitment to modernise our strata laws in New South Wales. The Government's comprehensive plan to build more affordable and high-quality homes across the State will see a further increase in the number of strata residents. Hence, it is imperative that the people of New South Wales have the confidence to invest and live in strata schemes. For many strata schemes, strata managing agents play pivotal roles in assisting owners' corporations to manage those schemes. Agents should be acting in the best interests of their clients, owners' corporations, when performing their duties. The bill directly addresses recent concerns about agents exploiting their position of trust and authority to obtain financial benefits. In particular, it will close the gaps in the law that currently mean that agents do not have to inform owners' corporations about suppliers that are related entities.

The bill will require an agent to disclose more information to the owners' corporation about potential conflicts of interest more often; ban an agent from receiving a commission where the owners' corporation arranges insurance quotes and the purchase of insurance without the agent; increase the maximum penalties and penalty infringement notice amounts for breaches of agents' disclosure obligations; and strengthen NSW Fair Trading's compliance and enforcement powers, including by introducing a broader enforceable undertaking power. I acknowledge there is more work to be done to address the challenges in the strata industry, including the impact of commissions. However, the bill is a critical next step in the Government's plan. Further work is already currently underway to determine the best way to address concerns about agents continuing to receive commissions, while

keeping costs as low as possible for strata residents. The reforms in the bill promote transparency within the strata industry and will empower the people of New South Wales to continue to choose strata living as a great housing option.

I will now respond briefly to points made by members. Once again, I thank the shadow Minister, the member for Willoughby, for the Opposition's support of this important bill. I assure him and the Opposition that the Government is committed to listening to stakeholders to ensure that its reforms uphold consumer needs and support a better strata industry that can continue to deliver the essential services that owners' corporations need to effectively manage their schemes. We will certainly continue to work closely with key stakeholders, including the Strata Community Association and Owners Corporation Network. The shadow Minister mentioned the 2021 statutory review of the strata legislation and suggested that the bill stemmed from the work of the former Government on that review. I make it clear that the bill is in fact separate to the Government's work to implement the recommendations of the 2021 statutory review, which we will continue to do.

The bill is a result of the Government's quick and decisive work to address problematic practices by which some managing agents take advantage of owners. We have heard about strata managing agents charging excessive fees and commissions when buying strata insurance and using the services of subsidiary companies to obtain financial benefits without their clients' knowledge. The bill is the first step in the Government's response to those problematic strata management business practices and further work is underway. I acknowledge the calls of the member for Sydney and the member for Newtown for the Government to ban commissions. The Government is committed to protecting consumers. The poor behaviour of agents that has been reported in the media is unacceptable.

Let me be clear: Banning strata insurance commissions is absolutely on the table. The suggestion from the member for Newtown that the Government has pandered to vested interests by not immediately banning commissions is completely baseless. I have tasked NSW Fair Trading with consulting strata owners and industry on how that reform would work in practice. It is utterly appropriate for Fair Trading to undertake the consultation process on such a significant policy change. I am disappointed but unsurprised that The Greens are not supporting the bill. I am not sure why The Greens are against closing loopholes in the existing legislation to empower owners' corporations. I would have thought The Greens would welcome increased transparency to arm owners with information so that they can better question the practices of a strata managing agent who is not acting in the best interests of owners. In fact, the decision of The Greens to oppose the bill is quite shortsighted.

The bill will strengthen disclosure obligations on strata managing agents, particularly in relation to related parties. Under the current law, strata managing agents can still benefit from handing contracts to a related party, even if no commission is paid. The Government's bill will make it harder for agents to hide those relationships. Are The Greens really opposed to that? I have already made it clear that there is further work to be done regarding the payment of commissions. But we do not want to sit back and allow loopholes to continue when we can act quickly to close them. Overall, stakeholders supported the feedback the Government received during the targeted consultation process on the bill as a step in the right direction. I acknowledge the position of the Owners Corporation Network that the bill does not go far enough because it does not ban commissions outright. I have assured members that the Government is seriously considering that matter.

As I have said, the Government is committed to consulting with stakeholders to ensure the changes we make achieve the outcomes we want and will not have unintended detrimental impacts. As members know, last year the Government passed the Strata Legislation Amendment Act 2023 to implement 31 recommendations from the statutory review of strata laws. The Government expects to introduce the next tranche of reforms as soon as possible to implement most of the outstanding key statutory review recommendations. This tranche includes important reforms in relation to strata committee duties, unfair contract terms, the embedded networks that were mentioned by the member for Tweed, strata agents, building managers, and repairs and maintenance. Targeted consultation on the Government's next reform bill to implement the remaining statutory review recommendations is currently ongoing.

The Government is dedicated to taking meaningful action against behaviour that undermines confidence in strata living. By passing the bill, we are upholding fairness and transparency, which are essential for effective strata governance. I thank the key stakeholders who provided valuable input on the bill. Their input helped to ensure that the bill works effectively and achieves the intended goals. I thank NSW Fair Trading staff for their hard work to bring the bill to fruition so quickly. I especially thank Jasmin Chin, Katerina Pavlidis, Lachlan Malloch, Melanie Sun, Timothy Lohman, Melissa Pinto, David Byrne and Eric Bateman. Lastly, I thank my staff for their dedication to this important piece of work. I thank Alicia Sylvester and Brooke O'Rourke for their commitment and dedication to the bill. 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**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **UNIVERSITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 7 August 2024.**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:34):** I make a contribution to debate on the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 and thank the Minister for bringing the bill before the House. The Coalition acknowledges the vital role our public universities play in shaping the future of New South Wales and, indeed, the nation by educating over 420,000 students annually, providing a highly skilled workforce and creating jobs within their communities. Last month I had the privilege of meeting various academics at the National Press Club in Canberra as Charles Sturt University presented an address on biosecurity entitled *Biosecurity: Safeguarding our Nation*. The event addressed the significant challenges to protecting our nation's biosecurity. Drawing together Commonwealth and State agencies, industry partners, research organisations and producers, the address demonstrated that the university is a leader in an area of critical importance to our nation.

Recently I met with the University of Sydney's Professor of Materials Engineering, Gwénaëlle Proust. Academics like Gwénaëlle demonstrate not only that our universities are pillars of knowledge, innovation and community development but also that at the heart of it there are people who are passionate about making a difference. As the higher education sector evolves, so too must the legislative framework that underpins it. The Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 seeks to update several aspects of the Acts governing our public universities, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective in a rapidly changing environment. The bill is an important step forward in reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, promoting consistency in governance, and maintaining critical checks and balances on university land dealings.

With regard to the elements of the bill, firstly, schedules 1 [1], 3 [1], 4 [1], 5 [1] and 7 [1] amend the Charles Sturt University Act 1989, the Southern Cross University Act 1993, the University of New England Act 1993, the University of New South Wales Act 1989, and the University of Sydney Act 1989 respectively to allow the vice-chancellor to sub-delegate a function if it is authorised by the university's council. This is a sensible reform. Given that it is already permitted at the five other universities, it will provide greater governance consistency across universities. By allowing vice-chancellors to sub-delegate certain functions, the amendment will help reduce the administrative burden on university governing bodies and ensure smoother operational management.

Secondly, schedules 1 [2], 2, 3 [2], 4 [2] 5 [2], 6, 7 [2], 8, 9 and 10 replace the provisions relating to the relevant governing authority's powers regarding land and property to clarify the circumstances in which ministerial approval is required for transactions relating to land that the university acquired from the State at nominal or less than market value. This will remove the requirement for ministerial approval for certain routine land transactions, such as granting easements for utility infrastructure where leases are less than 99 years. Overall, the change will allow universities to manage their land more efficiently, reducing red tape and speeding up processes that are often hindered by the need for ministerial approval for minor land dealings.

The Opposition welcomes and highlights the importance of the existing requirement that ministerial approval for the sale or long-term lease of university land for other purposes remains unchanged, preserving the necessary oversight on more significant transactions. I note that both the Opposition and The Greens have sought a minor amendment to the wording in the schedule to improve clarity, and I thank the Government for foreshadowing a proposed amendment to attend to that. Thirdly, schedules 1 [2], 2, 3 [2], 4 [2], 5 [2], 6, 7 [2], 8, 9 and 10 also remove an existing provision that requires a lease of any lands of the university or any renewal of the lease to a residential college affiliated with a university to be at nominal rent.

In his second reading speech, the Minister stated that this requirement is "outdated and creates unnecessary confusion for universities in understanding their land responsibilities". In our discussions with various residential colleges, it became apparent that full consultation with the residential colleges of the various universities had not occurred. This raised a concern expressed by several colleges about whether the removal of this provision might have unintended consequences for existing residential colleges and their lease arrangements with universities. We called on the Government to engage in further consultation with residential colleges to address any concerns they may have and to consider whether additional safeguards may be necessary to protect their interests.

We appreciate that, after raising the issue with the Minister's office and with the Vice-Chancellors' Committee, further consultation with the residential colleges has now occurred. I understand that, as a result of the consultation, it has been identified that for two universities, Macquarie University and the University of Sydney, issues arise from the removal of the provision. We understand that the Government will move an amendment to retain the provision for those two universities, which we will support.

It is important to note that the bill has garnered support from key stakeholders within the university sector. We acknowledge and thank the Vice-Chancellors' Committee and, in particular, Catriona Reid for their work on the proposed amendments, recognising the benefits of streamlining administrative processes and enhancing governance consistency. The Coalition also welcomes the feedback from university residential colleges, including St John's College's Dr Mark Schembri, St Andrew's College's Dr Robert Leach, Dunmore Lang College's Dr Alasdair Murrie-West and Warrane College's Dean Alex Perrottet. Those institutions play an important role in the university ecosystem, providing students with not only accommodation but also a supportive and enriching living environment that complements their academic pursuits.

The Coalition supports the objectives of the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. We believe that the amendments proposed in the bill will provide greater consistency across public universities in New South Wales, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens and ensure that the Acts governing our universities remain relevant and effective. We welcome the amendments the Government will move to provide further clarity and respond to the need to mitigate any potential impact on residential colleges identified through further consultation. The proposed amendments are sensible and help to ensure that our universities can operate efficiently and effectively in today's dynamic environment. In doing so, it is important that we maintain a balanced approach.

The bill is a timely and necessary piece of legislation that will bring about important improvements to the governance and operational efficiency of our public universities. The Coalition supports the bill's objectives and recognises the benefits of the proposed amendments, particularly in reducing red tape and promoting consistency across the sector. The Coalition supports the bill as proposed to be amended by the Government and looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Government and all stakeholders to ensure that our public universities remain strong, vibrant and capable of meeting the challenges of the future.

I thank the Minister, the Minister's office and, in particular, Thomas Nikoloski for his work on the bill. I thank my team and the shadow Attorney General, who, as the previous Minister for Skills and Training, has provided his counsel on this matter. As I am responding on behalf of the Opposition as the shadow Minister, I must refrain from regaling the House with stories of my time at university. But I know that the shadow Attorney General will be regaling us with stories of his time at residential college. I support the bill.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:42):** I support the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Minister and his team for their work in bringing the bill to the House. Public universities currently require approval from the Minister to sell, or enter into long-term leases of, land they obtained from the State of New South Wales for a nominal value or less than market value. Routine transactions by universities with respect to utilities infrastructure such as electricity substations are caught by that requirement, which creates an unnecessary administrative burden.

Five public universities in New South Wales already have the power to sub-delegate vice-chancellor functions, and the bill will simply bring Charles Stuart University, Southern Cross University, the University of New England, the University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney in line with the rest of the public universities. Ministerial approval will no longer be required for university land dealings such as routine easements and leases for utilities infrastructure and student accommodation or services. The requirement to gain approval for sales of land and development proposals involving sale or long-term leases will be unchanged.

The bill further reinforces the importance of public universities in New South Wales. As the previous member said, 420,000 students annually attend public universities in New South Wales. Thanks to Gough Whitlam, I was one of those privileged few. If it were not for Gough Whitlam giving the opportunity to attend university for free, I would not be in this place, would not have become a public school teacher and would not have had the opportunity to live the life I have. To go to university is an important privilege.

As a graduate of the University of Newcastle, I could not be prouder of the work going on in Gosford. The Central Coast Research Institute is amazing—a clinical school teaching doctors and nurses on our hospital campus, with the hope that we will retain more of these professionals in our community. I am proud to be part of a team who visited the Gosford campus of the University of Newcastle last month, with the Minister for the Central Coast, to look at the development of the new Hansen Yuncken facility on the site of the old Mitre 10 building, opposite Gosford train station. It will be a game changer for Gosford.

Universities are so important. We have seen how the University of Newcastle's NUspace facility has reinvigorated the Newcastle town centre. I thank the Minister. We are looking forward to having him visit when the university campus opens. Hopefully, in the second part of 2025, it will be complete. It is a radical new six-star green-rating building, a massive timber construction and the first of its kind on the Central Coast. The importance of universities is not only in providing us with education but in providing the future thinking that, as a society, we rely on so much. They are the shapers of our future. The building itself is a real game changer, a shapeshifter for the Central Coast. The front of the building has a symbolic eroded sandstone design, which has been worked on closely with our local Darkinjung Indigenous people. It represents the foreshore and the collecting areas where there were so many interactions on the waterfront.

The building will have four storeys. The ground floor is already complete. The spruce timber is being shipped in, moulded and stored, ready to be put in place. We will have fantastic teaching and learning spaces. The Federal and State governments have each contributed \$18 million, and the balance of the \$67 million is coming from the University of Newcastle. Having the courses in our town centre will offer the kids and adults of the Central Coast, many of whom are first-in-family university attenders, access to education and, therefore, to different lives than previous generations. I thank the Minister for the bill, which allows the universities to use their land more efficiently, without unnecessary ministerial oversight. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:46):** I contribute to debate on the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I commend the member for Gosford on her sincere and heartfelt contribution about the transformative effect of tertiary education. I, too, benefitted from having a free tertiary education. Unfortunately, we all need to recognise, though, as Bob Hawke and Paul Keating did, that there are huge funding challenges for tertiary education. That is why the Labor Party reintroduced tertiary education fees. The funding of universities is such an important issue and something this bill indirectly deals with, which I will come to in a moment. I thank the member for Albury for the great job he is doing as the shadow Minister in this area.

When I was both the Minister for Skills and Training, with responsibilities for tertiary education, and the Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology, it was a great privilege to see firsthand the incredible work our university sector does. As the member for Gosford rightly identified, universities are incredibly important for the future of our nation, in training our young people and in the research they do to address the future needs of our nation. I must say, though, that recently too much focus has been placed on our universities as cash cows via international students, and not enough attention has been directed to how we as a nation can have a university sector that will effectively operate into the future.

Obviously, residential accommodation for our overseas students is an incredibly important issue, which this bill partly touches upon. But we are at a point in time when we need to seriously think about what the future of our tertiary education system looks like. When the Coalition was in government it commissioned the Gonski-Shergold report. I am happy to say that the previous Government implemented all the recommendations of the Gonski-Shergold report except for the one that the New South Wales Government does not have any control of, which dealt with having a HECS-style funding system for skills and training. Now we are experiencing the impacts of the shortages of tradies and the like from not having a much more beneficial system for people to gain skills through vocational education and training. That is an issue the Federal Government needs to look at, particularly in light of the recommendation of the Gonski-Shergold review that universities and vocational education need to come together.

We cannot have this strict demarcation between universities and skills and training. Of course, the previous Coalition Government created the first two institutes of applied technology in New South Wales for IT at Meadowbank and advanced construction at Kingswood—facilities at which both the Premier and the Prime Minister love taking photographs, but in which no new investments have been made. Those two institutes were both wholly funded by the previous New South Wales Coalition Government for both capital and operational expenditure. The Federal Government has not contributed one cent towards those institutes of applied technology. It is time to have a bit more vision for the provision of institutes of technology to create a much better tertiary training system, and have industry, the university sector and vocational training come together in the way they do at those two institutes.

We need a moment in our nation similar to the moment that Sir Robert Menzies described in one of his memoirs when he got a retired vice chancellor of either Oxford or Cambridge to complete a comprehensive report on tertiary education in Australia. That report led to Australia investing beyond our sandstone universities and in Monash University and the University of New South Wales and an expansion of our university sector. We are now at a moment of history when we need a similar pause, investigation and reinvestment in the sector. I am not going to take up the invitation of the member for Albury to regale the House with stories from university. That would be particularly unwise. But our university colleges are great facilitators for people who have to move out of their places of origin to study in another location. That can be for a multitude of reasons.

For the member for Albury, there were simply no veterinary science courses where he grew up. He had to come to Sydney to study veterinary science. When I finished high school the only law schools in New South Wales were in Sydney, so I had to come to Sydney to study law. University colleges provide such a supportive environment for people who are away from home and studying. They have an incredible ecosystem of extracurricular activities, including sport, music and so on. They have tutorial programs. Residential colleges are incredibly important within our universities. I congratulate the Minister on making minor amendments to retain the provisions that ensure that residential colleges affiliated with universities pay nominal rents to ensure their viability at Macquarie University and the University of Sydney. That is an incredibly important protection. It would be terrible for our tertiary education system if any of those colleges were inadvertently made financially unviable because of the amendments that were originally in the bill.

In conclusion, our university system is an incredibly important investment in the human capital of our nation. It is incredibly important for research and training and the skills of our nation. It is incredibly important that we continue to update the governance structures to make sure they are absolutely fit for purpose. The member for Terrigal has just wished into the Chamber, a little like Banquo's ghost. I suspect that he is probably going to talk about the University of Newcastle on the Central Coast—or maybe not. Many of my family members were educated at the University of Newcastle. It is a great institution doing great things on the Central Coast and on its Callaghan campus in Newcastle proper. I agree that further investment in the university and TAFE on the Central Coast is absolutely essential for the skills and training of our State.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:55):** I speak in support of the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education for introducing the bill to this House. I start by noting the comments of the member for Gosford and her passion and love for universities. Like many other members of this place, I have a very rich and deep history with universities in New South Wales, Australia and internationally. I have had the absolute privilege of being an academic at a number of Australian universities. I have been a welfare officer, undergraduate coordinator and postgraduate coordinator and led massive research projects. I know firsthand the transformative power of education and tertiary education. In particular, I have worked with a lot of first generation tertiary and university education students. I have witnessed the challenges that they face, but also how transformative university can be.

The Coogee electorate is home to the University of New South Wales [UNSW], a remarkable university, which I work very closely with on a day-to-day basis. A number of my siblings studied there as well. I know how critical universities are not only for the people who are studying and for the research, but also for our broader communities. The research that comes out of UNSW, particularly the health department, leads the way across our State. They are critical institutions. They are large and complex organisations that play a very wide variety of roles within our communities. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that university legislation is up to date and supports universities so they can effectively govern and meet the needs of the communities that they serve, which are increasingly complex and diverse.

I am pleased to support this bill, which makes some very sensible changes to the 10 Acts that deal with the New South Wales public universities that are accountable to the requirements of the New South Wales Government. The bill's main components are as follows. First, it modernises and streamlines the land requirements in the Acts. Currently, the 10 public universities require the approval of the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education to sell or long-term lease land that was obtained for the State of New South Wales for nominal or less-than-market value. While this is an important accountability measure, as currently worded it captures small and routine land dealings by universities around utilities and infrastructure. This includes things like easements, leases for stormwater drainage, laying pipes for water or gas, substation kiosks and electricity transformers. Seeking ministerial approval for leases for these small transactions is an unnecessary administrative burden for both universities and government.

New South Wales public universities put forward a proposal to update and modernise the language of the public university lands provisions, which relevantly reduces routine transactions that require ministerial approval where appropriate checks and balances already exist. The amendments will remove the requirement for ministerial approval for some routine university land dealings like granting easements, and ministerial approval for leases of up to 99 years for utilities infrastructure will no longer be required. The important existing requirement for universities to gain ministerial approval for any sale of land or long-term lease of land for other purposes remains unchanged.

The second component of this bill is that it will expand sub-delegation functions to vice-chancellors at all New South Wales universities. Currently, vice-chancellors at Macquarie University, the University of New England, the University of Newcastle, the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Wollongong all have sub-delegation functions. That sub-delegation function allows vice-chancellors to sub-delegate functions delegated by university governing bodies where this delegation includes the authority to

sub-delegate. As it stands, vice-chancellors at Charles Sturt University, the University of New South Wales, the University of New England, the University of Sydney and Southern Cross University do not have those powers. The bill will standardise the sub-delegation powers across New South Wales universities.

Examples of sub-delegated powers include approving certain commercial or financial transactions, and the authority to approve certain human resources functions. This is a very sensible change that standardises things across the State. It will mean greater consistency across universities in how their governing bodies work with their vice-chancellors and will reduce the administrative burden for governing bodies and university administrations alike. The change will help to ensure governing bodies do not become a bottleneck for functions that can be sub-delegated to and by the vice-chancellor.

The third section of the bill removes outdated, irrelevant requirements on residential college leases. The bill removes a provision that requires leases to a residential college affiliated with the university to be at nominal rent and containing a term that the lease not be assigned. That requirement creates unnecessary confusion for universities in understanding their land responsibilities around residential colleges. I understand that an amendment will be moved that will remove this provision for eight of the 10 universities rather than all 10, as appropriate for individual universities' current circumstances. The bill makes sensible changes that will allow universities to focus their energy on teaching and learning, research, and community outreach rather than on unnecessary administration. They can get on with doing their core business. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:02):** I contribute to debate on the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the member for Albury for working with the Government on the very sensible amendments that the Government is putting forward in the bill. I thank him for his good work in engaging with universities as stakeholders to make sure we get the right outcomes with this amending bill. Many members have said that our universities do such an amazing job in New South Wales. It would be remiss of me if I did not highlight the outstanding work done on the Central Coast by the University of Newcastle. It is an absolutely outstanding educational facility. Full disclosure: My late wife was a graduate of the university's Ourimbah campus, where she studied nursing.

I was exceptionally proud to be part of a State Liberal-Nationals government that delivered \$18 million worth of funding to the University of Newcastle but, more importantly, also provided the land at the old Mitre 10 site on Mann Street for that university campus to become a reality for the people of the Central Coast. I also thank the former Liberal-Nationals Federal Government that provided the additional \$18 million worth of Federal funding. It was effectively a tripartite agreement between the State Liberal-Nationals Government, the Federal Liberal-Nationals Government and the University of Newcastle to deliver a brand-new, state-of-the-art, purpose-built campus in Gosford. Because of all those parts working together, we are now seeing the construction powering ahead. It is absolutely beautiful and will become an iconic building.

I also thank the former Minister, who made multiple visits to the Central Coast during our time in government. He highlighted the need for a brand-new TAFE in Gosford to bookend the Central Coast CBD, with a university of up to 1,000 students at one end and a brand-new, state-of-the-art TAFE with 3,000 students at the other end. That is a fantastic campus. Sadly, we have seen no funding to date to help that project move forward, despite the council signing a conditional contract with TAFE to progress it. The University of Newcastle does a truly outstanding job. I also acknowledge Vice-Chancellor Alex Zelinsky. I have had the pleasure of working alongside him and his team for many years since being elected to this place. The University of Newcastle has put the Central Coast first. It is wonderful to see a fantastic facility, whether it be the Ourimbah campus or the new Gosford campus.

I correct the member for Gosford: The new Gosford campus will open in term 3 next year, weather dependent. It is great to see the building going ahead and that so many local tradespeople from the Central Coast are taking part in the delivery of this incredible project. I was at the site recently and it is going up quickly. It will be truly iconic. The amount of timber being used in the building is like nothing that has ever been seen on the Central Coast. It will also open doors for so many young people on the Central Coast so they do not have to leave the area to study additional courses like cybersecurity, law and others.

The new campus also works side by side with the delivery of a \$75 million medical research unit and medical school that was also delivered by the former Liberal-Nationals State Government on the Gosford Hospital site in partnership with the University of Newcastle. That world-class, state-of-the-art medical campus was delivered to the fifth largest hospital in New South Wales at Gosford because of the visionary work done collaboratively between the University of Newcastle and the former Liberal-Nationals State Government. It was the perfect opportunity. A hospital site was being rebuilt and running ahead of schedule and under budget. We were able to shift funds from that construction to help support the university's proposal for this medical research unit and medical school.



Nursing students are studying on site at Gosford Hospital across from where they are working. That is delivering additional nurses because they are creating those relationships with the staff. When they graduate, they walk across the yard to start their jobs in their brand-new hospital, which was a \$380 million upgrade by the former Liberal-Nationals State Government as well. That is a win-win for students going to university on the Central Coast because of the incredible collaboration between the wonderful team at University of Newcastle and the former Government. Vice-Chancellor Zelinsky should be very proud of the work he has done. I was delighted to help lead the charge to secure that funding. Most importantly, the site on Mann Street was transferred to the Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation and was part of the delivery of a university for the Central Coast in Gosford. That is how good governments work side by side with universities.

I note that the member for Gosford mentioned free universities under former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. I remind the member that it was former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, I think, who put the fees back onto universities. It is like taking with one hand and giving with the other, or vice versa. There is an opportunity for regional students. Regional students in the electorate of the member for Albury benefit greatly from having a university campus there. To have a campus at Gosford Hospital and now Gosford is incredibly important for education across our region. For years, thousands of students have had to commute to either Callaghan or down to Macquarie or Sydney to study. Our Government recognised that the Central Coast, especially Gosford, could be an educational hub and a centre of excellence for further education, whether it is TAFE, community college or a university. I was so proud to be part of a government that helped deliver the framework, the funding and the drive but also the vision to make that a reality.

It was long talked about by previous State and Federal governments but delivered by the former Liberal-Nationals State Government, in conjunction with the former Liberal-Nationals Federal Government. Hundreds of students on the Central Coast will benefit from this investment by all three arms. I have seen the University of Newcastle go from strength to strength. In fact, I think it is one of the top 10 universities in the world less than 50 years old. All credit to new Chancellor Patricia Forsythe, who takes over from Paul Jeans, and to the vice chancellor. Paul Jeans led the university through some very difficult times, especially during COVID. I have had the pleasure of meeting with Chancellor Patricia Forsythe, who is small in stature but enormous in character. It is great to have a fearsome advocate for the University of Newcastle. I saw the chancellor two weeks ago when she was on the Central Coast. It is great to see the highest levels of the university wanting to deliver this incredible piece of infrastructure to the hundreds, if not thousands, of students who will benefit from this investment.

This is all about the circle of education on the Central Coast. The other thing that will work in conjunction with the university, which is just as keen to see the rollout, is TAFE. Currently a TAFE site is located on the university campus at Ourimbah; it is shared with the community college. There is also a TAFE in Gosford, but that building has passed its use-by date. The former Minister came up to the site with me. The staff were itching to get a brand new TAFE. They knew it would complement the further education at the university down the road. The Government needs to hop to it and support investment in a brand new Gosford TAFE. Solid foundations were delivered by the former Government. The building and the site were locked in, and the council was willing to sell its old council chambers to TAFE. I have never seen TAFE move so quickly to be part of this. I acknowledge the strong leadership of the former Minister, but also Paul Anderson from TAFE. Paul saw the opportunity in the CBD with that additional education service, but also in providing a brand new state-of-the-art vertical TAFE in conjunction with the university. That is how you combine to deliver an education hub of excellence in a regional area like the Central Coast.

The bill does a lot of things to make it easier and simpler for vice chancellors—and that is important. Ten universities will benefit from the amendment. I again acknowledge the great work done by the member for Albury. I am pleased the Government has recognised that he did some of its work. That is a good thing. I acknowledge the incredible work done by the University of Newcastle on the Central Coast. I thank the team there for what they have done, and continue to do, for people on the Central Coast. They are greatly appreciated. We embrace them as the university in our region. Next year I am looking forward to seeing the final nail hammered into the wood of that brand new building in Gosford. That will be exciting for the thousands of students who will benefit from that investment by the former State and Federal Liberal-Nationals governments and the University of Newcastle. I commend the bill and the amendments to the House.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (16:13):** I am pleased to support the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I concur with many things said by the member for Central Coast about the wonders of the University of Newcastle, and its accomplishments and standing in the world. Our public universities are exceptionally important to many members of our communities across the State, including my community in Newcastle. The University of Newcastle is the beating heart of academic endeavour and innovation in the Hunter region. At its Newcastle city and Callaghan campuses, the University of Newcastle educates our future nurses, teachers, scientists and engineers.

More than 35,000 young people and lifelong learners study at the University of Newcastle every year, gaining valuable knowledge and skills to help make sure our State is a better place for all. As the member for Newcastle I am incredibly proud to represent a community that is home to such a valuable public institution. I firmly believe in the power of public universities to do good in our communities. New South Wales is home to some of the world's leading universities and we should be very proud of that fact. Universities are not only places to develop skills and prepare for careers, they are places that foster inquiry, debate and civic engagement. They are places where we can explore who we are and find our passions. Following a trip many years ago to South Africa during apartheid, while studying at Charles Sturt University, I became politically active and driven to represent my community in the fight for a better future.

The New South Wales Government has had a long and productive working relationship with public universities. Through collaboration and government relationships, universities can find solutions to some of the biggest challenges our societies face today in health, technology, the environment and more. It is important that the framework that governs this relationship reflects our modern society and the issues that we face. This is why I support the bill. It makes small but important amendments to each of the 10 public universities Acts to ensure that the legislation is up-to-date and fit for purpose. Universities have changed a lot since the first university Act was introduced in New South Wales. Once seen as exclusive institutions only available to an elite few, universities are now large and diverse communities that educate students from all walks of life. We have Gough Whitlam to thank for making universities free.

A bachelor degree is now the most popular pathway for a student leaving school. We will see more and more people pursuing a university education as our need for a highly skilled, highly educated workforce continues to grow. The Australian Government has flagged ambitious targets for tertiary attainment. New South Wales universities will play no small role in ensuring those targets are met. It is important that as universities change in our modern context, the legislation that governs them changes too. We, as government, have a responsibility to update and improve the universities Acts where needed. One of the things the bill will achieve is to reduce unnecessary red tape and administrative burden for both government and universities.

Under these Acts the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education must grant approval should a university wish to sell or long-term lease land that was obtained from the State for nominal or less than market value. That is a very important factor. While this is an important safeguard and oversight mechanism for assets provided to universities by the New South Wales Government, there are instances in which this requirement does create unnecessary delays and needless administration. The requirement for approval not only covers major transactions, but it also captures routine dealings around leases for utilities infrastructure on university campuses—things like powerlines, stormwater drains and gas pipelines.

Universities should be allowed to enter into such arrangements for utilities infrastructure without needing approval from government first. These requests chew up time in Ministers' offices and government departments and can only delay routine upgrades to vital infrastructure. The sensible amendments in the bill will remove the need for universities to wait for government approval for some routine land dealings, such as granting easements and entering into the leases for utilities infrastructure. The existing requirement for universities to gain ministerial approval for the sale of land or long-term lease of land for other purposes remains unchanged. This, again, is a very important governance and oversight mechanism.

The third section of the bill removes outdated, irrelevant requirements on residential college leases. The bill removes a provision that requires leases to a residential college affiliated with the university to be at nominal rent and containing a term that the lease not be assigned. This requirement creates unnecessary confusion for universities in understanding their land responsibilities around residential colleges, with the majority of universities not having any colleges that fit this description. I understand that an amendment will be moved to remove this provision for eight of the 10 universities, rather than removal for all 10, as appropriate for the current circumstances of individual universities.

Currently, five public universities have provisions whereby the respective vice-chancellors can sub-delegate functions delegated by university governing bodies, where the delegation includes that authority. The other five university Acts do not include this provision. These amendments will add the sub-delegation power to the Acts of Charles Sturt University, the University of New South Wales, the University of New England, the University of Sydney and Southern Cross University. This is a sensible change that will create consistency across the board. It will also reduce the administrative burden for governing bodies and university administrations, meaning they can have more time to focus on leading our universities during a time of great change and opportunity. I support the bill as it provides measured and sensible changes to university Acts that will reduce the administrative burden for Government and universities, while preserving the important oversight functions of the New South Wales Government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (16:20):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I welcome the work done by the Minister on the bill, which undertakes to streamline approval processes for a number of universities relating to land management and ensures consistency in delegations in the operation of those universities. The bill affects two universities in my area: the University of New South Wales and Charles Sturt University. I will reflect on the opportunities that better collaboration with regional universities will offer the State, particularly in rural and regional areas.

The bill is a useful reminder that a number of universities are the legislative responsibility of the State Government. We tend to ignore discussion around universities in this Chamber because they are largely funded by the Federal Government. As one Minister in the previous Government reminded me, it is the people who pay the piper that call the tune. So, even though we have legislative responsibility for a number of universities, we tend to leave their operation up to the Federal Government.

But why should this be the case? I am not saying that the State should fund universities, but why should we just leave that as an area of Federal intervention, particularly in rural and regional areas? We know how important it is for both levels of government to cooperate together, and how artificial divisions—such as those we see in health care—can lead to worse outcomes. I cannot overstate the importance of regional universities to their communities. They offer high-quality education and potentially immense economic and social value to their communities.

In my electorate Charles Sturt University in particular is a driver of learning, research and community collaboration. It offers more than 250 courses across its campuses. It rightly boasts of its record of producing graduates who end up working in rural and regional areas and that 83 per cent of its domestic graduates secure full-time employment within four months of graduation. As I say, many of those graduates hail from the regions, and they continue to live and work in regional areas after they qualify. This means that young people who love the regional and rural lifestyle do not need to move to the big cities to study, learn or practise their skills.

It is true that I have been critical of Charles Sturt University in the past. I would like to see the university invest even more in the Wagga Wagga campus, and I have been critical of decisions that have resulted in courses being moved away from there. I will continue to hold the university to account for that because it is so vital. I do it because the regional universities have such an important role that affects the social infrastructure of our communities. I know that their graduates end up practising in rural and regional areas. It means regional careers and a regional workforce—meaning more teachers, engineers, nurses, allied healthcare workers and others providing lifelong contributions to the places they call home. This is why it is critical that we do all we can to help our universities thrive.

There is an opportunity to link them more tightly to our government services—health and education are just two areas. In my region, we have the Murrumbidgee Health and Knowledge Precinct, an initiative to ensure that the local health district and the primary health network cooperate closely with the local universities—Charles Sturt and the University of New South Wales—on strategies around workforce, service integration and research. Too often in the past there has been an unnecessary division between State services and universities. With the right structure and collaboration, there is the real opportunity for both of those to work together—training pathways and clinical placements, for example in health, for universities; and, for the health sector, opportunities for research, strategic planning and new models of care that the universities can research. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to facilitate that collaboration.

I congratulate the Government on its funding of the Murrumbidgee Health and Knowledge Precinct. I also congratulate the universities for the work that they are doing with the local health district. It is a useful reminder of the importance of regional universities. I emphasise that just because they are federally funded does not mean that we cannot work closely with them and that there is not an opportunity, particularly in the regions. It is important that we do what we can to support them. The bill will remove the red tape that can stifle some university initiatives. Universities should not be subjected to time-consuming challenges of seeking ministerial approval for minor works on their sites. Those changes are welcome and a good thing for higher education in regional New South Wales. I hope that my reflections will cause some members of this Chamber, and of the Government, to reflect on the better opportunities we have in promoting and working with our regional universities.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (16:26):** I speak in favour of the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. There are public university campuses all over New South Wales, including Western Sydney University [WSU] in my electorate of Penrith. Universities provide life-changing opportunities to so many. They create jobs in our communities and add vibrancy to them. They provide a highly skilled workforce to support our community. Indeed, WSU is one of the largest employers in our area. Universities overall are a crucial part of our civil society. Western Sydney University is possibly the most significant single institution in greater Western Sydney, an area that is a driving economic force for the whole of Australia.

WSU is an institution I have great familiarity with, as it is my alma mater. It is a champion for Western Sydney in so many ways. A high proportion of WSU students are, like me, the first in their family to attend university. They may also come from ethnic and cultural backgrounds that span the planet. WSU is particularly proud of these facts: It has around 45,000 students across 13 campuses, and students from 170 different countries. WSU also has close engagement with TAFE NSW, and I acknowledge the Minister is in the Chamber today. It also has close relationships with local schools. It rightly prides itself on fostering the confidence and ambition of local students.

The bill makes small but important amendments to the Acts of 10 New South Wales public universities, including to the Western Sydney University Act. It is the role of Government to ensure that legislation is up to date and that it serves its purpose. It is important that we continue to modernise and improve the university Acts when needed. The 10 public universities require ministerial approval if they want to sell or lease long term the land that was obtained from the State of New South Wales for nominal or less than market value. This is an important safeguard on assets gifted to universities by the New South Wales Government for the purposes of higher education. However, for certain transactions, this can cause an unnecessary regulatory burden. The requirement for approval captures routine land dealings by universities around utilities infrastructure, for example, in granting easements and leases for electricity transformers, overhead powerlines and substation kiosks.

Universities should be permitted to enter such relatively minor arrangements for utilities infrastructure and related services without ministerial approval. The amendments in the bill will remove the requirement for ministerial approval for some routine university land dealings, like easements, and leases of up to 99 years for utilities infrastructure. Currently, universities can enter into leases for up to 21 years without approval. The change to 99 years will smooth the process for that type of transaction. That important existing requirement for universities to gain ministerial approval for the sale of land or the long-term lease of relevant land for other purposes will remain unchanged. The amendments in the bill maintain an appropriate balance of operational oversight of the lands and infrastructure occupied by public universities.

Other changes to the Acts, which are the same across the 10 university Acts, modernise the language used. Updating the language will make the legislation more easily understood and accessible to the general public, including those from different language backgrounds. Very specific amendments allow vice-chancellors at five universities to sub-delegate functions. That means that the respective vice-chancellors can sub-delegate functions delegated to them by their university governing body, but only where the delegation by the governing body includes the authority to sub-delegate. Accordingly, it is not a general sub-delegation power. The provision already exists in the Acts of the other five public universities. The bill proposes to add it to the Acts of Charles Sturt University, the University of New South Wales, the University of New England, the University of Sydney and Southern Cross University, bringing them all into line.

Examples of sub-delegated powers include approving particular commercial or financial transactions and the authority to approve specific human resources functions. That will reduce administrative burden for both governing bodies and university administrations. The third section of the bill removes outdated, irrelevant requirements on residential college leases. The bill removes a provision that requires leases to a "residential college affiliated with the university" to be at nominal rent and containing a term that the lease not be assigned. The requirement creates unnecessary confusion for universities in understanding their land responsibilities around residential colleges, with the majority of universities not having any colleges that fit that description.

I understand that an amendment will be moved that will remove that provision for eight of the 10 universities, rather than all 10, as appropriate for individual universities' current circumstances. The bill provides for measured and appropriate changes to the 10 New South Wales public university Acts. The changes largely preserve the important checks and balances on university land transactions already built into those Acts. The amendments make small modifications to modernise, clarify and update the public university legislation. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:33):** I make a contribution in support of the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The bill is a significant yet measured proposal aimed at modernising and streamlining the governance of public universities in New South Wales. The bill reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that the legislative framework governing the State's universities remains relevant, effective and responsive to the evolving needs of the institutions and the communities that they serve. The bill makes amendments to keep legislation up to date and relevant to various university Acts. The 10 universities that are the subject of the bill were named in the Minister's second reading speech. I acknowledge the presence of the Minister in the Chamber. Those institutions are not only centres of academic excellence but also vital economic and social hubs in their communities.

With over 420,000 students enrolled each year, universities play a crucial role in providing a highly skilled workforce, fostering innovation and contributing to the overall prosperity of the State. The primary objective of

the bill is to address issues related to land and property management by the universities. Specifically, it seeks to modernise the provisions governing land transactions and the sub-delegation of functions to vice-chancellors. The amendments in the bill are designed to remove unnecessary administrative burdens, streamline processes and ensure consistency across the various university Acts. The bill will streamline and update the lands requirements in the Acts. It will remove the requirement to gain ministerial approval for certain land transactions, relieving the unnecessary burden for the universities and the Government for certain transactions. Currently, universities are required to seek ministerial approval for land dealings concerning utilities infrastructure, such as electricity transformers, overhead powerlines and substation kiosks.

Removing the requirement for ministerial approval of those jobs will relieve the administrative burden for the universities and the Government. It will also decrease the time it takes to process those applications. The change comes as a result of the New South Wales public universities putting forward a proposal to have the language of the public universities lands provisions updated and modernised, which reduces routine transactions that require ministerial approval where appropriate checks and balances already exist. However, the pre-existing requirement for universities to gain ministerial approval for the sale of land or long-term lease of land for other purposes remains the same. The amendments in the bill help to create a reasonable balance of operational oversight over the lands and infrastructure occupied by public universities. They will drastically reduce the administrative burden on the Government and universities for certain land dealings, where appropriate.

The bill also removes outdated and irrelevant requirements on residential college leases. Further amendments proposed in the bill will allow the vice-chancellors at five universities to sub-delegate functions. That provision currently exists in five of the public universities. The bill intends to implement it in the other five: Charles Sturt University, the University of New South Wales, the University of New England, the University of Sydney and Southern Cross University. Sub-delegation powers include, but are not limited to, approving certain commercial or financial transactions and the authority to approve certain human resources functions. It is important to note that the amendments are part of a broader effort to ensure that the legislative framework governing the State's universities remains fit for purpose.

Since the establishment of the first university in New South Wales, the University of Sydney, in 1850, university Acts have undergone numerous updates to reflect changes in the higher education landscape. The most significant of those occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s following the Dawkins reforms, which created a unified national higher education system and led to the formation of the 10 public universities we have today. In 2011 this Parliament passed the Universities Governing Bodies Act, which introduced uniform provisions for the governance of public universities and modernised the language of the university Acts. The amendments proposed in the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 build on that legacy by addressing specific issues that have emerged over the past decade and ensuring that the State's universities can continue to thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

The amendments serve to streamline legislation and align the various Acts. The bill will provide consistency across universities in how their governing bodies function with their vice-chancellors and reduce the administrative load for both the governing bodies and universities. The amendments in the bill, while minor, stand to create a more up-to-date standard for our legislation. The bill will streamline administrative processes, decrease processing times and remove an unnecessary step concerning certain land dealings. The Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 represents a thoughtful and considered approach to updating the governance of our public universities. It introduces practical measures to reduce administrative burdens, streamline processes and enhance the consistency of university operations while preserving essential safeguards for public assets. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:39):** I support the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education for introducing the bill. I note the Minister has been sitting in the Chamber throughout the whole debate, closely listening to the contributions of all members. I turn to the core features of the bill. Minister Whan in his second reading speech said that the amendments aim to:

... modernise and streamline the lands requirements in the Acts, including removing the need to gain approval for certain land transactions.

The Minister explained that the amendments will remove the requirement for ministerial approval for some routine university land dealings, such as the granting of easements and covenants or student accommodation. The wonderful member for Auburn is Chair of the Legislative Review Committee, which examined the bill. She noted that the legislation also clarifies that ministerial approval will not be required in specific circumstances, such as where a proposed lease is less than 21 years and is consistent with the object and functions of the university, leasing land for up to 99 years where the lease is for utility infrastructure purposes, and entering into a planning agreement if the agreement does not require the university to dedicate land free of cost. I note that the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is in the Chamber.

Whilst the intention and explanation of the bill is commendable, as the Minister is well aware from our previous discussions, my concern is whether any potential loopholes in this legislation will allow the disposal of property without adequate consultation with the community—both local residents and students. I will explain one potential risk and ask the Minister to respond on the public record. Firstly, I provide some context regarding my concerns. My electorate is within the Blacktown local government area, which has Australia's fastest growing population, growing from 86,295 in 1961 to 430,000 in 2024. That is close to 5,500 people each year for 63 consecutive years. The last five-year Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] census data showed that Blacktown's population has grown by 12,000 per year.

On current growth rates, our population will surpass the State of Tasmania's by 2036. Tasmania has one dedicated university with campuses in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, plus a campus in Sydney; numerous study centres across Tasmania; 34,000 students; and 60 study areas with diplomas, two-year degrees and undergraduate degrees. The ABS data shows that 23.1 per cent of Blacktown's population, or close to 100,000 people, are registered in tertiary or technical education courses. That is three times Tasmania's student enrolments. Since 1977 Blacktown City Council has called for a university, or universities, with multi-faculty offerings to give our growing population all the educational opportunities possible in a growing city. At that time John Aquilina—a former Speaker of this House—was mayor of Blacktown City Council. Nirimba campus was set up in 1995 and heralded a new model for co-educational campuses, with Western Sydney University [WSU], TAFE and two senior high schools: a public high school, Wyndham College; and a Catholic high school, St John Paul II Catholic College.

The great legacy that former Western Sydney University Vice-Chancellor Barney Glover left for the people of Blacktown was letting a vibrant campus with multi-faculty degrees offering educational pathways in numerous courses dwindle to only a handful of diploma courses. He even closed many of the public amenities at Nirimba without consultation, including the local pool. That is despite WSU annual reports demonstrating that the greatest profit centre at the university was the Nirimba campus. WSU was so uncaring towards the college students that, a few years ago, without consultation with students, it moved all the business courses from the Nirimba campus and scattered them across the WSU network, whether it was to the Sydney city campus or to the Parramatta campus. There was no consultation and every student was relocated. Students had to apply to change their enrolments to at least get back to the Parramatta campus. The tyranny of distance probably ended some of the students' ability to continue with their studies.

When I was mayor from 2014 to 2019, I led the Labor council call to establish a multi-faculty university in Blacktown. At the time, we had 400,000 residents and no major university offerings. I went to Vice-Chancellor Glover, asking how WSU could expand its offerings. His solution was to allow WSU to sell the Nirimba campus. He said that he may invest some money into some courses in a Blacktown CBD campus. He also told me that Blacktown does not need a university because Blacktown students are prepared to travel. That was at the time when the Liberal-Nationals Government was flogging off TAFE campuses across the State and was considering selling the Nirimba campus. I was grateful to previous Minister Geoff Lee for not progressing with the plans to sell Nirimba TAFE at the time, but he said that there were no guarantees beyond the 2023 election. I welcome the appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor of Western Sydney University, George Williams, AO, who has a great social and moral compass as well as a fresh approach to the university. I look forward to meeting him one day.

I say to Minister Whan that, based on my history with WSU and the previous Liberal State Government, I am concerned about the future of the educational precinct in Nirimba. That brings me to the legislation at hand. I understand the complexities that the land at Nirimba was originally a naval training base that was converted into an educational campus and whether the State Government has any influence over the potential sale of the estate. I have three questions for the Minister. Firstly, will the Minister assure the House that, as a result of this legislation, WSU will not be able to use this legislation to sell off its portion of the Nirimba campus? Secondly, will the Minister assure the House that TAFE has no plans to sell off the Nirimba campus whilst the Labor Government is in place in New South Wales? Thirdly, will the Minister follow up with Western Sydney University about its intentions for the future of this education precinct at Nirimba and make it clear that the Government will not entertain, in any way, any proposal to sell off the land?

Despite the negativity I have highlighted, I report to the House that, after searching for a new university for Blacktown, the Australian Catholic University responded. The ACU opened a new public university in the heart of Blacktown CBD during COVID. I believe it is the only university in the world to open a campus during COVID. The ACU also had to contend with the previous Federal Liberal-Nationals Government policy of placing a cap on university places. I congratulate the wonderful team at the ACU Blacktown campus, led by campus dean Dr Valentine Mukuria. From engagement to orientation to studying at ACU, the staff make the students' educational experience and campus life an excellent one. The campus has expanded from just under 500 students when it first opened to approximately 2,000 students today. University degrees and pathways are available in teaching, nursing, midwifery, commerce, law, criminology, exercise and sports science, nutrition, theology and

many others. That campus includes purpose-built teaching and learning facilities, including nursing labs, bed simulation wards, moot courts and science labs—a modern university with second-to-none facilities. I do not know why WSU could not do it.

ACU is also part of the New Colombo Plan, an initiative of the Federal Government supporting Australian undergraduate students studying in the Indo-Pacific region, including students from the Blacktown campus, from sports science to nutrition, when they were in the Solomon Islands. Whilst I support the bill, I hope the Minister can address whether the bill allows WSU to sell the Nirimba campus. Is the TAFE Nirimba campus safe under a Labor Government from the previous Liberal sell-off as proposed, and would the Minister be prepared to join me and work with the new vice-chancellor to see what Western Sydney University's vision is for the Nirimba campus? I look forward to the Minister's response and commend the bill.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (16:50):** In reply: I thank all members who spoke in debate on the Universities Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. In the interests of time, I will not repeat what I said in my second reading speech about the fundamental basis of the bill. It is a fairly small change, in a lot of ways. I thank the shadow Minister for his work with my office in ensuring that the bill does not have areas that are capable of misinterpretation or having unintended consequences. I appreciate his positive engagement with my office in that process. I also appreciate the contributions from members representing the electorates of Coogee, Blacktown, Newcastle, Penrith, Terrigal, Wagga Wagga, Mount Druitt, Wairoonga and Gosford to this discussion.

As has been foreshadowed, I will be moving amendments in consideration in detail to deal with issues the shadow Minister and other members spoke about during debate. I will speak to them at that stage. They address a couple of issues that were raised once the legislation was available for members to look at. It is about simplifying the process for minor works to be undertaken on land which otherwise would have required ministerial approval. Land affected by that was provided by the State under a concessional arrangement or at no cost to the universities. That does not apply to all university land; it applies to those pieces of land which meet that provision.

I will address a few of the comments that were made by members during debate. I will start with the member for Blacktown because he is sitting in the Chamber waiting for answers to his questions. I agree with him about the terrific Australian Catholic University facilities in his area. The university has done a great job. I have had a chat with him about it and I have seen some of the facilities. Turning to the Nirimba precinct, this legislation allows for minor works such as utilities to be approved without the need for the Minister to approve them. It certainly does not allow land provided by the State to a university under a concessional arrangement to be sold for a major residential development without approval, nor even for residential accommodation. That is quite a specific provision. Nirimba has a history as a Commonwealth piece of land. In that sense, I would have to clarify whether it comes into that category of being land that was provided by the State, but it would not be affected by this legislation.

Will we be keeping and, indeed, enhancing the TAFE campus? Yes, we will definitely keep that TAFE campus. I noticed the size of that site and the TAFE site when I recently visited with the Minister for Education and Early Learning to announce a new initiative for the training of early childhood teachers, which is a terrific initiative funded by the Government. I also note the member's comments about the former Government, which set TAFE targets for the sale of land as part of the previous Government's privatisation agenda. We do not have that. I actually saw a letter that came from the Government about that—the former Minister might be going on that. It was actually provided in a call for papers from the upper House.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Do you know how long you are going back?

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** It was in context of something that I was reading about. The education in the area is very important. I certainly take on board the member for Blacktown's comments about wanting to work with Western Sydney University about future provision of education in the area. The member for Penrith also talked about Western Sydney University and its importance. The member for Wagga Wagga spoke about the importance of regional universities, which I strongly agree with, and the need for States to work more closely. The member for Terrigal talked about Gosford TAFE. I would point out that the project that he is so fond of talking about—namely, solid foundations locked in by the previous Government—did not involve any allocation of funds, unfortunately, in forward estimates. It was not as locked in as he might have made it sound.

The member for Wairoonga, and former Minister, spoke about the transformative effect of tertiary education. I agreed with a number of his comments. I do not know that I would agree with quoting a Menzies memoir, but, to an extent, I agree about pausing to think about where universities are going. That is partly why we have put such a focus on the Australian Universities Accord work that the Federal Government has been doing and the importance of some of the initiatives that will come out of that. Many of those are quite complicated and quite expensive. We would love to see the Federal Government get rid of the Liberal Party's job-ready initiatives

without putting up costs for access but removing some of the real negatives that came out of that program. But that will be expensive, and we will be working with the Federal Government on that. The member also talked about the Institute of Applied Technology. They are good facilities, but this Government will be putting in place three manufacturing centres of excellence that will work very closely with tertiary institutions. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Steve Whan.**

### Consideration in Detail

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 10 be agreed to.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (16:57):** By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 14 on sheet c2024-138D in globo:

**No. 1 Leasing university land**

Page 4, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 21(4)(b)(ii), lines 1 and 2. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 2 Lease of land to residential college**

Page 5, Schedule 2, proposed section 18(2)(d), line 13. Omit "(3) and (4)". Insert instead "(3)–(4A)".

**No. 3 Leasing university land**

Page 5, Schedule 2, proposed section 18(4)(b)(ii), lines 27 and 28. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 4 Lease of land to residential college**

Page 5, Schedule 2. Insert after line 31—

(4A) A lease of land vested in the University, or a renewal of the lease, to a residential college affiliated with the University—

(a) must be for a term that is no more than 99 years, and

(b) must be at a nominal rent, and

(c) must contain a condition that the lease must not be assigned, and

(d) may contain other conditions the Council considers necessary or appropriate.

**No. 5 Leasing university land**

Page 7, Schedule 3[2], proposed section 18(4)(b)(ii), lines 1 and 2. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 6 Leasing university land**

Page 9, Schedule 4[2], proposed section 18(4)(b)(ii), lines 1 and 2. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 7 Leasing university land**

Page 11, Schedule 5[2], proposed section 17(4)(b)(ii), lines 1 and 2. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 8 Leasing university land**

Page 12, Schedule 6, proposed section 18(4)(b)(ii), lines 27 and 28. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 9 Lease of land to residential college**

Page 13, Schedule 7[2], proposed section 18(2)(d), line 28. Omit "(3) and (4)". Insert instead "(3)–(4A)".

**No. 10 Leasing university land**

Page 14, Schedule 7[2], proposed section 18(4)(b)(ii), lines 1 and 2. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 11 Lease of land to residential college**

Page 14, Schedule 7[2]. Insert after line 5—

(4A) A lease of land vested in the University, or a renewal of the lease, to a residential college affiliated with the University—



- (a) must be for a term that is no more than 99 years, and
- (b) must be at a nominal rent, and
- (c) must contain a condition that the lease must not be assigned, and
- (d) may contain other conditions the Senate considers necessary or appropriate.

**No. 12 Leasing university land**

Page 15, Schedule 8, proposed section 18(4)(b)(ii), lines 27 and 28. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 13 Leasing university land**

Page 16, Schedule 9, proposed section 18(4)(b)(ii), lines 27 and 28. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

**No. 14 Leasing university land**

Page 17, Schedule 10, proposed section 24(4)(b)(ii), lines 27 and 28. Omit "utility infrastructure or services". Insert instead "utilities infrastructure or utilities services".

Firstly, the amendments insert the word "utilities" into the clause "utilities infrastructure or utilities services" in each of the university Acts. This is in relation to universities being able to enter into leases longer than 21 years for the purposes of leasing land for utilities, infrastructure or services. The insertion of the word makes it abundantly clear that the removal of ministerial approval for leasing of land in this section is only for "utilities infrastructure or utilities services". I thank the Opposition and the shadow Minister for the suggestion of inserting this word to make it abundantly clear. I was happy to accept that suggestion.

The second component relates to a subsection of the Acts that concerns the lease of university lands to residential colleges. Again, that has been discussed in the second reading debate. The original proposal was to remove a provision from each of the 10 university Acts, as had been requested by the Vice-Chancellors' Committee. It was felt that it was out of date and irrelevant. However, two universities with residential colleges felt that they liked the security, for want of a better word, of having that provision left in their Acts. As this should be worthy of bipartisan support and should not be overly complicated, we are happy to remove Macquarie University and the University of Sydney from the proposed provision, making it applicable to only eight of the 10 public universities. That will deal with the issue raised with us originally by the University of Technology Sydney, which is seeking to establish a college specifically for First Nations students. I commend the amendments to the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:59):** The Opposition supports the amendments. I take the opportunity to thank the Minister for responding to our concerns, particularly around the consultation with residential colleges—something that I noted in my speech was lacking. I certainly appreciate the improved clarity around the wording. Again, the Opposition supports the amendments.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that Government amendments Nos 1 to 14 on sheet c2024-138D be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 10 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 10 as amended agreed to.**

**Third Reading**

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Public Interest Debate*

**NORCO MILK**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the Northern Rivers of New South Wales are still recovering from the devastating floods of 2022.
- (2) Supports the Northern Rivers dairy industry and supports 100 per cent Australian farmer-owned cooperative, Norco.

- (3) Calls on the Minns Labor Government to reverse its decision to cut Norco's contract to supply milk to the Northern and Mid North Coast local health districts.

As all members know, in late February 2022 the Northern Rivers experienced one of the biggest natural disasters this country has ever seen. Towns like Lismore, Coraki, Woodburn, Broadwater and many others will always have a chapter in their histories about the floods. The floods impacted everyone on the North Coast, and many families and businesses lost absolutely everything. Farmers, who are not unaccustomed to the occasional flood, found water lapping at places it had never been before. Lismore institutions like Norco had their premises and factories flooded like they had never seen before. The Government response was unprecedented and bipartisan in nature. Supporting the North Coast after the floods was beyond politics, and that remains the case today. We all want to see a thriving North Coast, with families and businesses living their best life.

Before politics, I chaired a farmers' cooperative, and a group of chairs and CEOs would meet regularly at one of our businesses. Norco was a member of that group and also one of the biggest cooperatives in the region. It was, and remains, an organisation that every business looks up to—so much so that I headhunted its CEO Brett Kelly at the time. Norco is to Lismore what the Big Banana is to Coffs Harbour and the Opera House is to Sydney: Take it away and the city changes irreparably. There is a lot we can all be proud of when it comes to organisations like Norco. It is a 100 per cent Australian farmer-owned cooperative headquartered in Lismore, employing hundreds of people up and down the coast, as well as supporting thousands more families indirectly through the economic benefit it provides to the towns that it is based in.

A few months ago, calls and emails started coming to my office from patients and nurses working in our health district who were upset about the decision of the hospitals to remove Norco milk and replace it with milk from somewhere out of our region. After making some inquiries, it was confirmed to us that the Mid North Coast and Northern NSW local health districts have cut the contract with Norco and signed a supply agreement with another company. For transparency's sake, it is important to put on record that a similar decision was made by the then Coalition Government in 2018. But the key difference there is that, after pressure from then local members Thomas George and Kevin Hogan, as well as thousands of members of the community, the decision was overturned in five days. In 2018, Health Minister Brad Hazzard told the ABC:

In light of the impact on the community, which only came to light after the tender, I asked HealthShare NSW to review its decision.

Yet this time, weeks later, we are yet to hear whether this Government in 2024 will reverse its decision or continue to turn its back on a Lismore institution. We understand the decision was not made based on price or value but was instead made by a faceless bureaucrat within the department. Last month I joined my colleagues the member for Clarence and the member for Oxley, Norco farmers and the Mayor of Lismore, Steve Krieg, on a dairy farm just outside Lismore to launch a petition calling on the Minns Labor Government to reverse the decision. Thousands of people have signed our community petition asking the Government to do the right thing by the community at a time when it needs the Government's help and support—and not just financial support. Reversing the decision would strongly signal the Government's confidence in the Lismore region. It goes without saying that the floods of 2022 will have a lasting impact on those communities. But, as leaders in this place, we must ensure that we are sending the right messages to those communities, who are still recovering every day.

By not supporting the region's most iconic farmer-owned cooperative, the Minns Labor Government—if it does not reverse the decision—is sending very mixed signals, at best, to those recovering in the Lismore area. I know it might seem to some like a trivial or minor issue. But on the North Coast we are very proud of organisations like Norco, which has been the backbone of our communities for over 127 years. Members on this side of the House have a vision of a thriving regional New South Wales. It was described best to me as wanting to create regions where grandparents can live in the same town as their grandchildren because we created opportunities for their parents. Organisations like Norco are at the heart of that opportunity. But do not just take our word for it; Gerard Hayes, the Health Services Union NSW secretary, said:

"NORCO is more than a beloved local institution ... As Australia's last 100 per cent farmer owned dairy co-operative it also provides economic lifeblood to hundreds of families in a region that has experienced the double whammy of floods and the cost of living crisis.

"Why would we cut this off at a time like this?"

"NORCO is a trusted local company with deep roots. The dairy industry has played a huge role in the Northern Rivers for many years. We've even heard reports of patients refusing to drink the hospital milk unless it's NORCO.

"Health workers want this decision overturned. We insist on local milk in hospitals and health facilities throughout the Northern Rivers and the North Coast."

Decisions like this cross party lines and affiliations. Reversing the decision has wide and cross-parliamentary support. I conclude by again highlighting the longstanding relationship between Norco and health facilities from Tweed to Port Macquarie and stressing the importance of supporting local businesses and communities. I say to the Government that this public interest debate motion has been drafted in good faith. We are calling on it to

reverse this city-centric decision and put the best milk back into our local hospitals in the best region in New South Wales.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:07):** I acknowledge, as so many members have in this House, the devastating and ongoing impact of the Northern Rivers floods in 2022. I also acknowledge the efforts of the member for Lismore, and Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery and her major contribution to the recovery efforts. The member is well known for her unwavering advocacy—a trait that we all admire. Across the Northern Rivers we are progressing the largest disaster adaption project in the country. In July this year that program reached a major milestone in making tailored home assessments available. Under the Home Raising and Home Retrofit stream of the \$790 million Resilient Homes Program, approximately 370 home owners have been identified as being eligible for raising or retrofit. But small and medium businesses in flood-impacted towns and villages, as the member for Coffs Harbour has said, need our support. That is why the Government has funded the \$9.5 million Northern Rivers Towns and Villages Resilient Business Activation Program.

The 2022 floods had a devastating impact on many small towns and villages across the Northern Rivers, and they require unique support in their recovery. I welcome the opportunity to voice my support for the New South Wales dairy industry in this House—including, of course, Norco. In 2023-23 the New South Wales dairy industry had a gross production value of \$812 million, up 15.3 per cent year on year. The New South Wales dairy industry employs 6,400 people on farm and in processing, with 60 per cent of the milk in New South Wales used for drinking. While New South Wales milk prices and dairy farm profitability were at record levels in the 2023 and 2024 financial years, it is important to understand that not all dairy farm businesses have experienced record or even high profits in those years. Some are still struggling to recover from the financial impacts of the recent repeated disasters of droughts, fires and floods.

The mover of the motion referenced the recent NSW Health food service tender. I am advised that this included an open and competitive procurement process that was undertaken over a period of 18 months. All existing suppliers were invited to submit a tender. To ensure the decision-making process was based on merit and fairness, only suppliers who fulfilled all mandatory tender requirements were able to progress through the tender. I understand the Minister has received a comprehensive briefing on the food tender process undertaken, including a review of its alignment with the relevant New South Wales Government and NSW Health procurement policies and processes, including support for local jobs in rural locations. I am also advised that today he met with Norco and the member for Lismore to discuss that briefing. I am sure the member for Lismore will have more to say on that in a minute.

Our Government is committed to leveraging our precious procurement dollars to support local businesses and local suppliers. On 3 September 2024 the Minister for Finance issued a ministerial direction instructing the NSW Procurement Board to mandate that New South Wales government agencies engage with local suppliers before going to tender for projects worth more than \$7.5 million. The new rules require that if a contract worth more than \$7.5 million is awarded to a supplier outside New South Wales, agencies must explain. Agencies will need to take reasonable steps to consider what local suppliers are available at the start of the procurement process. Reasonable steps may include desktop research, discussion with industry bodies or requests for information. That will immediately allow agencies to encourage the participation of local suppliers and workers in bidding for government work. It requires agencies to focus on value for money and not just price, as the member for Coffs Harbour said.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (17:12):** I make a contribution to the public interest debate in the House this afternoon—public interest, indeed! In my electorate of the Clarence, and right across the Northern Rivers, there are two matters of great public interest: One is the cost of living, which is not getting any better under this Government, and the other is the faceless government bureaucrats who have made a decision to slash Norco milk from our Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers hospitals—a decision that, as my mother would say, has gone down like a lead balloon. I am, and we are, unashamedly parochial about this matter. Up north we have to be, because if we do not stand up for ourselves, nobody else is going to. Last week I was amazed to hear the Minister for the North Coast in the other place say that she had not contacted Norco after the Government slashed its contract to supply local milk to our local hospitals.

As the members will know, Norco is a 100 per cent farmer-owned cooperative that has stood the test of time, supplying high-quality dairy products not only to my electorate of the Clarence but also across the North Coast and Mid North Coast since 1895. Norco is more than just a brand; it represents the livelihoods of thousands of people, hundreds of farming families and people who are employed in the Lismore-based cooperative. They depend on Norco to pay the bills, pay their mortgage, make sure the kids can go to school, and ensure that their lives are better. The removal of this contract could lead to serious consequences, including potential job losses and reduced incomes for those families. I first heard of the decision to strip Norco of the

contract to supply our local milk to our local hospitals when a nurse texted me. She said, "You wouldn't believe what has happened here at work—Norco milk is out and another brand is in."

She said, "This is unbelievable. There was no consultation; there was no information. It was just a change from Norco to a company with foreign shareholders." In doing so, they are cutting a fresh local product from our hospitals. The member for Coffs Harbour was right. I, too, have received phone calls from nurses saying that patients are refusing to drink milk because it is not Norco. I, too, acknowledge the feeling of déjà vu, because this has happened in the past. The government has changed but the bureaucrats have not. In 2018 the same department tried this and the former Government stood with farmers and said, "No, the decision is wrong." It was overturned in five days. I am informed that this decision was not made on price, nor was it made on quality, nor on the reliability of the product. So why was it made?

Recently I stood in a dairy farm in Lismore with Andrew Wilson, his family and his workers, along with the member for Coffs Harbour, the member for Oxley, Mayor of Lismore Steven Krieg and others involved in the dairy business to launch a petition on the matter. I have not seen such a reaction to a petition in my public life. While I have not been in this place long, I have worked in local government since 2005. Doctors, nurses, unions, patients, farmers and the wider community are united in saying that this decision is not in the best interests of the Northern Rivers. The Minns Sydney Government should step up in a bipartisan way and simply overturn this decision. We need decisions made in the best interests of the people we represent. This Lismore-based business is an institution in the Northern Rivers. It is not just a company. We all have buy-in. We all buy Norco milk, ice cream or cheese.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Magnums.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** I note the interjection from the member for Tweed. This has happened before. It was deemed to be the wrong decision in the past and I deem it to be the wrong decision today. So reverse it. We are calling on this city-centric decision to be scrapped, and to put the best milk back in our local hospitals in the best region in New South Wales.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:17):** I contribute to the public interest debate. I support Norco being put back into North Coast and Mid North Coast hospitals. When the decision was made in 2018, nobody in the community supported it at the time. The local member, the Federal member, the Health Services Union [HSU] and everybody else involved in political life became active. The HSU ran a very strong campaign, and I thank Gerard Hayes for immediately backing us again. I do not know anyone in the Lismore electorate who does not want Norco products in our hospitals and health services. That is absolutely clear, speaking as the local member. I will continue to go into bat for them, no matter what, because it was the wrong decision and we need the right decision now. A rather lengthy ePetition on the matter states:

We ask the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to listen to the voices of the community. Reinstate Norco as the milk supplier for North Coast and Mid-North Coast hospitals. This will support local farmers, secure local jobs, keep profits in our state, and not send them overseas.

That petition could not be clearer. I am supporting that petition. I have put ads in the local media asking local people to support it because that is one way our voices can be amplified in this Chamber—apart from me and other members in this place advocating for Norco.

I will respond to a couple of things the member for Coffs Harbour and the member for Clarence said. The member for Coffs Harbour, as the mover of the motion, said the debate is brought in good faith, in a multi-partisan way. I accept that because Norco is an institution; it is iconic. Taking Norco out is like removing the Big Banana from Coffs Harbour, or the Big Sheep. I was just thinking about Nimbin then, but I will not talk about that. We will leave that.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Save that for another debate.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** I will save that for another day. It just came to mind and flashed past. The motion is brought in good faith. As I said, taking Norco out is like taking Bambi down. For God's sake, we just cannot do it. We must have Norco there. The member for Coffs Harbour said that our flood in 2022 secured multi-partisan support; it did and it still does. I thank every member in this Chamber for how we have worked together to make sure that it did not descend into any partisan politics, and we continue to do that. I acknowledge that. The member for Clarence said that his mother would say that it went down like a lead balloon. My mother would say that, but she would probably add a few expletives as well on such a decision.

I had a meeting with the health Minister, and I thank him. He has drilled down. We heard here about faceless bureaucrats. They now have faces, because I just had a meeting with them. The way I see it, it was from 2002 that they started to go to this whole-of-State approach. I did not support it then and I do not support it now. The Government now has gone to a local content policy, and I am sure all of us here, particularly those of us in

the regions, will support that. But these are decisions that governments can overturn. I know that it might not be easy and that there might be probity issues. I know all that. It is not like I have never been in government or around government or parliaments. I think it has been 19 years now or longer. This is one of those decisions I am absolutely committed to fight until we get the right decision. We must do that and we must do it locally. Bring on Norco.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I call the member for Oxley. I was supposed to have coffee with him when I visited my old ALP friends in Kempsey, from a long time ago. I apologise. We will catch up and have that coffee next time.

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (17:22):** Absolutely. I would love to see you there using Norco milk. This is more than a decision about milk, though; it is a decision about our values and our future. Stripping Norco milk from our local hospitals is nothing short of a brutal kick in the guts. Norco has been a source of pride and part of the fabric of the North Coast for 129 years. In my electorate of Oxley, there are dairy farms in Bellingen, Dorrigo, Nambucca, the Macleay Valley, the Hastings Valley and Comboyne. Every bottle of milk represents the sweat, tears, dedication and pride of local families, who are now struggling to understand how the Government is supposed to support them. They are not faceless farmers; they are our neighbours, our friends and the backbone of our regional economy. I wonder whether the fact that 100 per cent of Oxley's dairy farms supply Norco is even considered by the bureaucrats making the city-centric decisions.

Kate and Phillip Hand, two local farmers from the Macleay Valley, have been proudly contributing to the region's dairy industry for years and are devastated by the decision. Kate said, "It's just unfair. The Government talks about competitive fairness, but the community is missing out on opportunities that should be supporting our local farmers." That is farmers like the late Howard Lee, who dairied for near on 60 years and represented NSW Farmers on the Dairy Committee for over 20 years. It is without doubt that Howard would have expected to go to his local hospital and see high-quality Norco products there. Howard's daughter Donna recently said, "It's decisions like this that are making it harder and harder to be in the agriculture game." Dairies and agriculture are getting the life milked out of them. If the Department of Health and the Minns Government make conditions difficult and remain with a single-supplier model, I have no doubt I will see dairy farmers fold, carbon emissions increase, milk prices being driven up and monopolies continuing.

Norco milk is proudly produced and processed locally, in Lismore and Raleigh. They are the only processing plants in the area, with Wagga Wagga and Sydney being the others in New South Wales. Supplying Norco milk to health facilities on the Mid North Coast means lower food miles, lower costs and lower carbon emissions. Contrast this with the absurd possibility of bringing southern dairy farmers' milk, which is likely to come from as far afield as Victoria and could be processed in Brisbane, hundreds of kilometres from where it is produced and then trucking it back. The carbon cost is outrageous. It is downright insulting to think that they are trucking milk halfway across the country to serve the very people who produce the best milk in New South Wales. The unnecessary environmental damage of trucking milk over vast distances is environmentally reckless. The Government parades its so-called climate commitments while local milk is being ignored. Supporting local dairy means fewer emissions, less wear and tear on roads, less fuel consumption and a commitment to sustainability. Trucking milk from Victoria to process it in Brisbane and then return it to New South Wales would be the definition of environmental hypocrisy.

The Minns Labor Government claims to back companies in New South Wales with its local content policies, as referred to during this speech, but its actions might tell a different story when it comes to local communities like the North Coast. By taking this contract away from Norco, the Minns Labor Government seems to be undermining the farmers and local manufacturers for the ease of the stroke of a pen. Critical contracts lost from local, New South Wales-owned businesses like Norco, our farmers and the associated downstream employment show that this Government is not supporting local produce. This Government is instead favouring large corporations, whose profits may end up overseas.

By sidelining this iconic brand, the Labor Government is ripping out a piece of our local identity. Norco has been a trusted staple in our hospitals for generations, and diverting this contract is ripping hard-earned dollars away from our community. They are not just numbers; they are people seeing their efforts, pride and history cast aside for mega-corporations with no roots in our region. The Premier and the health Minister may have sent a message by allowing bureaucratic red tape and an easy path rather than a responsible, calculated attitude to decide this tender process. We are calling on the Government to reverse this city-centric decision and put the best milk back into our local hospitals in the best region of New South Wales.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:27):** I move:

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

- (3) Supports the New South Wales Government's "if not, why not" procurement policy, which mandates that New South Wales government agencies engage with local New South Wales suppliers before going to tender for projects worth more than \$7.5 million.

I acknowledge the hardships of the North Coast region and the substantial impacts of the floods, and I thank the fabulous member for Lismore for her advocacy and leadership demonstrated to her community at this time. I am advised that the Albanese Government and the New South Wales Government provided \$34.7 million in 2022-23 to support the rebuilding of Norco's ice-cream factory as part of the \$59.3 million Anchor Business Support Grant Program following the 2022 flood.

In addition, the Government paid \$8.5 million to Norco from March to July 2022 to support the ongoing employment of staff under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements following the 2022 flood event. Farmers who supply Norco have also received financial support as a result of the natural disasters in recent years. There were 36 farms across New South Wales—not just the North Coast—in the 2022-23 Dairy Farm Monitor Project dataset. The businesses affected were in local government areas that were eligible for the 2021 flood-related Critical Producer Grant, as well as the Special Disaster Grant. Approximately one-third of farms received grants of up to \$100,000. Another third received funds in the range of \$101,000 to \$200,000. The remainder received \$201,000 in grants.

When dealing with taxpayer funds, we need to ensure that appropriate processes are followed and integrity is at the centre. An open and competitive procurement process was undertaken. The tender was released on 31 August 2023. All existing suppliers were invited to submit a tender. To ensure the decision-making process was based on merit and fairness, only suppliers that fulfilled all mandatory tender requirements were able to progress through the tender. Further details about the tender are commercial in confidence. All NSW Health tenders are managed in accordance with strict procurement guidelines and probity measures, including a robust tender evaluation process. An extensive procurement process was undertaken over 18 months. It was fully aligned with legislative requirements, the NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework and Procurement Board directions.

A probity advisor and external procurement advisors were part of a thoroughly robust process. Notifications to successful and unsuccessful tenderers were issued in June. The successful supplier for the statewide dairy category is the Dairy and Drinks subsidiary of Bega Group, an Australian regional business. The contract commenced on 1 July 2024. I was advised that Norco received a debrief on the tender process and the Minister offered to meet with the CEO of Norco, the member for Lismore and representatives from HealthShare and NSW Health. That has already happened.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:32):** In reply: Government members keep us on our toes. I have had to completely rewrite my speech in reply.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** You were going to thank them for bipartisanship.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** I was. Firstly, I thank the members who contributed to the debate: the member for Shellharbour, the member for Clarence, the member for Lismore, the member for Oxley and the member for Heathcote. Up until five minutes ago, I thought we had landed in a really positive place where members from both sides of the Chamber came to an agreement on a fundamental issue for the North Coast community. I thank the member for Shellharbour for her support of the dairy industry. She spoke about the flood recovery and the open competitive process. The member for Lismore spoke in support of Lismore and putting Norco back into the hospitals. She said she does not know anyone who does not want Norco products in our hospitals. The member for Lismore also spoke about the local content policy. I was hoping she also supported the motion of the debate as put.

The member for Clarence and the member for Oxley spoke about the cost of living. The member for Clarence put it best when he said that everyone—from farmers and unions, to nurses and patients, to cats and dogs—was united behind this policy against the decision. I am very disappointed by the amendment moved by the member for Heathcote. We may have considered it if it had kept paragraph (3) and added a paragraph (4). The whole crux of the motion and the debate is paragraph (3), which calls on the Minns Labor Government to reverse the decision to cut the Norco contract to supply milk to the northern and Mid North Coast local health districts. I believe the wording in the motion was deliberately chosen to be very similar to the wording in the petition that the member for Lismore is supporting. The motion was not designed to trip anyone up. It was designed so we could have a really nice bipartisan moment and support a fantastic North Coast institution.

Instead, typically, the Labor Party is again putting politics and Sydney bureaucrats ahead of our communities on the coast. It is very disappointing. While I thank the Government members for supporting Norco and saying the words, and supporting our communities and again saying the words, we need some action now. We need them to do more to hold their Ministers to account. They cannot just come into this Chamber and read

speeches written for them by a staffer or ChatGPT. They should do their jobs and make sure that the Ministers are delivering for them. Governments do not always get it right. The previous Government did not get it right in 2018. It took us five days to change that decision. Here we are weeks later, and the Government has not changed the policy. Shame!

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Coffs Harbour has moved a motion, to which the member for Heathcote has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....44  
Noes .....39  
Majority.....5

#### AYES

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

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

Piper, G  
Quinnell, S  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Stuart, M  
Tesch, L  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

#### NOES

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

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

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

#### PAIRS

Car, P

Williams, R

**Amendment agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

*Members*

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I report receipt of a message from Her Excellency the Governor convening a joint sitting of the members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly on

Thursday 19 September 2024 at 2.30 p.m. for the purpose of the election of a person to fill the seat in the Legislative Council vacated by the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, MLC. I direct that the joint sitting with the Legislative Council for the election of a member of the Legislative Council be set down as an order of the day for 2.30 p.m. tomorrow as appointed in Her Excellency's message dated 18 September 2024.

*Bills*

**MUSIC FESTIVALS AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr David Harris, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (17:47):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Music Festivals Amendment Bill 2024. The bill is another part of the Government's commitment to support vibrancy, live music and culture in New South Wales. As we enter the summer festival season this year, the Government wants to ensure that it fulfils its commitment to remove red tape and create a more supportive regulatory environment for music festivals. New South Wales is home to a vibrant music festival industry, with over 150 music festivals—almost a third of the national total—offering a range of events and experiences to delight audiences across the State. Music festivals have long been a beacon of creativity, connection and joy for music-loving communities. They are where we discover new artists, forge lasting memories and celebrate the diverse rhythms that define our shared experiences.

Music festivals are not only a significant part of New South Wales culture and social wellbeing but also key economic drivers for our communities. They boost local economies, foster cultural tourism, employ diverse and skilled professionals, and support activity for local businesses. That is especially the case in our regions. Those festivals are some of the biggest events of the year in regional areas, attracting thousands from out of town, from the North Coast of New South Wales to out west and down south. This Government's focus on vibrancy does not end at the boundaries of Greater Sydney but extends throughout New South Wales. Music festivals are a critical part of the Government's priorities to ensure that regional areas share in the benefits of a vibrant and safe entertainment sector. Yet in recent years the music festival scene has faced unprecedented challenges, from increased labour and insurance costs to the broader impacts of adverse weather events, changing consumer behaviour and heavy-handed regulatory requirements.

Music festivals have been struggling considerably since the COVID-19 pandemic. Many iconic festivals have been cancelled or significantly downsized, resulting in multimillion-dollar losses for organisers and promoters and a loss of economic activity, particularly for regional areas. Whilst this is an issue right across Australia, New South Wales feels the impact the most. The boost that music festivals can bring to regional economies often comes during off-peak tourism periods, when it is most needed. For example, in 2022 Byron Bay Bluesfest generated \$70.2 million for Byron shire, \$143.9 million for the Northern Rivers and \$232.3 million in New South Wales; Parkes Elvis Festival injects over \$13 million into the Parkes local economy each year; I note the member for Tamworth, and shadow Minister is sitting opposite—the 2024 Tamworth Country Music Festival injected an estimated \$141 million into the local economy; and the North Byron Parklands site that hosts Splendour in the Grass and Falls Festival has estimated that the two events pump about \$100 million into the economy.

We must act decisively to create an environment where music festivals can thrive without unnecessary burdens that threaten their existence. The path forward requires a collective effort to ensure that festivals can continue to drive economic activity, bring communities together, showcase talents and celebrate our diverse cultural landscape for generations to come. Since the commencement of the Music Festivals Act, the regulatory burden for music festivals has become significantly higher in New South Wales—more than in any other State or Territory—causing some touring festivals to skip New South Wales altogether. Music festivals that were formerly deemed "high risk" or otherwise known as "subject" under the current regulatory framework must develop a safety management plan, which means festival organisers must meet higher medical and safety standards. Safety management plans must detail how the festival will comply with NSW Health's guidelines, and cover the event's medical plans, water plans, shade provisions, chill-out spaces, harm reduction messaging and services, and security.



However, over time, safety management plans have grown to capture information that is duplicated by other regulatory processes. This means festival organisers need to provide the same information to multiple government agencies via separate regulatory processes. In turn, this increases the costs for government and industry, and results in an increased administrative burden for the sector. Additionally, a significant portion of the financial burden on festivals are the high costs associated with user-pays government charges. That is why we have developed a series of reforms to refocus the framework towards health and medical matters, and to strengthen the Act's administrative provisions. The package of reforms covers four themes. These include refocusing the framework towards health and medical matters, reducing user-pays government costs to support the ongoing viability of festivals, reducing barriers for minors to attend festivals, and improving governance and other administrative requirements.

I now turn to the Music Festivals Amendment Bill 2024. The bill seeks to amend both the Music Festivals Act 2019 and the Liquor Act 2007 and make any necessary consequential amendments to achieve some much-needed changes to the regulatory framework. The first set of amendments seek to refocus the regulatory framework for music festivals towards health. Safety operations and best practice across music festivals have improved since the Act's introduction. Further, the health and medical elements of the safety management plan were praised by industry as being crucial to the improvement of health and safety at festivals. There is a need to streamline the requirements and to refocus the framework towards health and medical matters.

The bill achieves this in several ways: first, by amending section 6 of the Act to reframe the safety management plan to a health and medical plan. The bill removes the contents of the safety management plan in the Act and provides that the health and medical plan for a festival must be prepared in accordance with guidelines set out by NSW Health. The current decision-maker under the Act, the Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority, will be replaced with the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport, with the support of NSW Health and New South Wales police. As a result of the bill, the function within the department that will make decisions pertaining to music festivals will be performed by the deputy secretary of the hospitality and racing group. We are also removing the "subject" music festival designation from the Act and instead replacing it with a requirement for all festivals to develop a health and medical plan.

Only certain festivals will be required to have their health and medical plans agreed to by NSW Health. To give this effect, section 5 of the Act will be amended to prescribe what factors the secretary of the department is to consider when determining whether a festival needs the health and medical plan agreed to by NSW Health. These include advice from the Health Secretary; advice from the Commissioner of Police; advice from the festival organisers; whether a prescribed event has occurred at a music festival, or a related festival, for which the music festival organiser was the organiser in the three years immediately preceding the proposed festival or the three previous events; and any advice from the Music Festival Roundtable. The bill inserts new section 5A into the Act to introduce an appeal mechanism for music festival organisers to appeal to the Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority against the secretary's decision that the music festival requires an agreed health and medical plan. This will ensure procedural fairness on behalf of festival organisers.

The date an appeal must be lodged to the authority will be published in a ministerial direction. Importantly, an appeal may only be lodged on the grounds that the festival organiser is of the view that they have put in place sufficient measures and controls to manage and mitigate against the health risks at the music festival, and thus do not require an agreed health and medical plan. The bill also includes a mechanism to enable the Commissioner of Police to propose conditions relating to law enforcement and safety matters to the department on music festivals that require an agreed health and medical plan. Those conditions can be imposed on the liquor licence or be included in a law enforcement and safety matters schedule to an agreed health and medical plan where it is determined necessary by the department on advice by New South Wales police.

Importantly, the secretary will give the music festival organiser the opportunity to comment on the proposed conditions and will consider the advice of the festival organiser before imposing the requirements. The secretary, following a determination to adopt conditions proposed by the Commissioner of Police, will be required to advise the music festival organiser and the NSW Police Force, in writing. Additionally, New South Wales police will have enforcement powers under the Music Festivals Act and Gaming and Liquor Administrations Act 2007 to enforce the following activities under the Act: any conditions being imposed on a "law enforcement and safety matters schedule", and requirements for organisers to maintain an incident register.

I now turn to new section 19D, which relates to the imposition of government charges for music festivals. In other Australian jurisdictions festival organisers are generally required to cover the costs of user-pays policing, but those costs are usually lower, or the number of police required is less than in New South Wales. I note that, in Victoria, if festival organisers can demonstrate that the imposition of user-pays policing costs threatens the viability of their event, they can appeal to the chief financial officer of Victoria Police to have the charges waived entirely. To better align New South Wales with other States and Territories, festival organisers will be able to

apply for an internal review of user-pays charges. This will be an internal review by New South Wales police for user-pays police charges. An independent internal review pathway for user-pays ambulance costs will also be available.

In addition, for those festivals experiencing significant financial viability issues as a result of user-pays charges, the bill introduces a new pathway for festival organisers in very limited circumstances. The bill allows festival organisers to appeal, on financial viability grounds and in exceptional circumstances only, for financial support. This appeal will be considered by a panel comprised of representatives from Sound NSW, Destination NSW and the Premier's Department. Any appeal would need to meet and be assessed against a robust and narrow set of criteria. A ministerial order will be developed that will outline the application process as well as setting out the criteria and grounds for an appeal to be made. This provision will commence on proclamation.

I now turn to amendments to the Liquor Act 2007 that will support a more inclusive music festival environment in New South Wales. This Government is committed to encouraging all-aged events to occur safely in New South Wales. Currently, neither the Music Festivals Act nor the Liquor Act has a statutory prohibition on minors attending music festivals. However, the current rules to allow minors to attend music festivals are stringent and overly burdensome on patrons and festival organisers. The bill will rectify this by inserting new section 127A to the Liquor Act to better encourage all-aged events, where safe and appropriate to do so. New section 127A (1) will enable unaccompanied minors aged 16 and over to attend licensed festivals by ensuring that a condition on the festival's liquor licence that requires minors 16 and over to be accompanied can only be put on the licence if Liquor and Gaming NSW or the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority is satisfied that the licensee has not put in place sufficient control measures to manage and mitigate the risk of minors obtaining liquor.

New section 127A (3) provides a defence to the offence of breaching a licence condition that requires minors to be accompanied, if the licensee has made reasonable efforts to ensure that minors are accompanied. For example, this would include circumstances where, despite the efforts of the licensee, a minor is separated from their responsible adult unintentionally by a moving crowd. Additionally, the bill adds new section 127A (2) to provide for an exclusion to the offence of breaching a licence condition that requires minors to be accompanied, if the minor is unaccompanied, but only because the minor or the responsible adult is attending restroom facilities within the licensed premises area. There is currently a lack of flexibility and certainty surrounding the administrative requirements and definitions under the Act. The framework also does not provide a clear incentive for applications and amendments of safety management plans to be provided within the deadlines.

The bill makes several amendments to the Music Festival Roundtable to improve flexibility in establishing governance arrangements and processes. First, the bill moves provisions related to the membership of the Music Festivals Roundtable and its operation, such as meetings and reporting requirements to a new music festivals regulation. This change will bring flexibility into the framework and enable any emerging issues relating to membership and governance structures to be addressed quickly. The establishment of the round table will remain in the Act. We are also expanding the current membership of the Music Festival Roundtable to include the NSW State Emergency Service; NSW Rural Fire Service; Fire and Rescue NSW; two members nominated by DanceWize NSW and up to two additional members of peer-based harm reduction services, if required; and one member of a private medical provider nominated by NSW Health.

We are also updating the Act to explicitly include objects that focus on the Government supporting the sector to run safe events, with harm minimisation as the key goal of the Act. Adding objects will enhance understanding of the intent and scope of the Act. The bill achieves this by including the following objects:

- (a) to regulate and support planning for music festivals in a way that is consistent with the expectations and needs of the community, and
- (b) to support music festival organisers in ensuring adequate measures are in place to deal with possible risks associated with music festivals, including access to advice from clinical and public health and safety experts, and
- (c) to facilitate collaboration between government agencies and music festival organisers to deliver safe music festivals.

In order to secure these objects, each person who exercises functions under the Act, including music festival organisers, must have regard to the following:

- (a) supporting the development of the music festivals sector, including the development of the following in relation to music festivals—
  - (i) employment,
  - (ii) the live music industry,
  - (iii) the arts, community, cultural and tours sectors, and
- (b) promoting harm minimisation measures relating to the consumption of liquor and drugs at music festivals to ensure the safety of persons attending the music festivals.

Schedule 1 [3] amends the definition of concert to clarify that one group or collective is considered as "one performer" and to make it clear that all the characteristics in the definition of a concert must be fulfilled for it to be classified as a concert. A "prescribed event" is currently defined under the Act to mean the death of a person or admission to an intensive care unit that is reasonably suspected to be because of alcohol or drug use, or caused by crowd behaviour or improper safety management. New section 5 (7) will expand this definition to include the endotracheal intubation of a person. This will align the definition with common practice.

Liquor and Gaming NSW currently provides festival organisers with an early notification form to advise government of their intention to hold a music festival within 120 days prior to the event being held. Liquor and Gaming NSW records show that approximately 50 percent of festival organisers did not submit an early notification form. To rectify this, the bill will mandate the process for festival organisers to notify Liquor and Gaming NSW of their intention to hold a music festival in New South Wales, at least 120 days before the festival is to be held. New section 19B provides for the establishment of ministerial guidelines to be published on the New South Wales Government website about best practice standards, including incident briefings, information sharing at festivals and routine pre-, mid- and post-event briefings. Finally, an amendment to section 21 specifies a regulation may be made to detail the time frames applying to decisions under this Act, including the lodgement and assessment of information. This will include time frames for NSW Health, the NSW Police Force, Liquor and Gaming NSW, the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority and music festival organisers. These time frames will be agreed in conjunction with the relevant agencies.

The Government's reforms to the Music Festivals Act strike a balance between making sure festivals are viable and continuing to keep patrons safe. It is about supporting a thriving, vibrant music festival environment in New South Wales. The proposed changes will ensure that the regulatory framework is more streamlined, health focused and supportive of the sector. It achieves this by removing unnecessary red tape and duplication, and ensuring that the requirements under the Act are related to health and medical matters, and strengthening the administrative provisions of the Act. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (INTEGRITY AGENCIES) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (18:09):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024. This Government is committed to serving the people of New South Wales with integrity and making decisions in the public interest. The Government is committed to ensuring that integrity agencies receive appropriate funding to undertake their important work and that the funding arrangements for integrity agencies do not impede their independence. This bill proposes amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 to provide arrangements to safeguard the independence of integrity agencies and enhance transparency with respect to their funding. The bill also proposes amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act to expand the role of the Parliament, through its committee processes, in scrutinising funding of the Legislature.

The integrity agencies—being the Audit Office, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC], the NSW Electoral Commission and the Ombudsman's Office—are independent and not subject to the control or direction of the Executive Government. Instead, the integrity agencies are generally accountable to the Parliament. With one exception, the Acts of Parliament establishing the integrity agencies also designate a parliamentary committee, comprised of members of Parliament, with functions related to monitoring and reviewing the integrity agencies.

The Government Sector Audit Act 1983 establishes the Audit Office and constitutes the Public Accounts Committee [PAC]. The Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 establishes the ICAC and the joint committee known as the ICAC committee. The Ombudsman Act 1974 establishes the Ombudsman's Office and the joint committee known as the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission. The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016 establishes the LECC and provides the joint committee established by the Ombudsman Act with functions relating to the LECC. The one exception is the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, which is established by resolution of the House, rather than by an Act of Parliament. These committees, which I will refer to as parliamentary oversight committees, review the performance of the integrity agencies they oversee.

At the outset, I recognise the reports and the committee processes of the other place that have informed the Government's consideration of the funding arrangements for integrity agencies: firstly, the May 2020 and November 2020 special reports of the former Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Hon. Peter Hall, KC, entitled

*The need for a new independent funding model for the ICAC and A parliamentary solution to a funding model for the ICAC; secondly, the October 2020 report of the former Auditor-General entitled *The effectiveness of the financial arrangements and management practices in four integrity agencies*; and, thirdly, the March 2020 first report and the February 2021 final report of the former Public Accountability Committee entitled *Budget process for independent oversight bodies and the Parliament of New South Wales*.*

The Government is grateful to the members of the former Public Accountability Committee for their contribution to that inquiry. I acknowledge that the member for Murray introduced a private member's bill, the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2024, in this place relating to funding arrangements for the integrity agencies. I thank the member for Murray for bringing those matters before the Parliament and for her engagement on this bill. This bill is best seen as part of a three-pronged approach to tackling the issues that have been raised by integrity agencies in recent years. The first part was simply to better resource the integrity agencies in a way that better met their needs. That has eased some of the immediate concerns that those agencies placed in front of the estimates committees of this Parliament. I acknowledge that approach started under the previous Government and confirm that it has continued under the two initial Minns Labor Government budgets.

The second stage of the reform is the Government's adoption of a Treasurer's Direction and charter of independence for New South Wales integrity agencies for the period leading up to a budget. The third is this bill, which addresses post-budget transparency through a parliamentary process. Taken together, those are the three things that the Government sees as its reform agenda in this space. On 6 August 2024 a Treasurer's Direction entitled *TD24-12 Charter of Independence for NSW integrity agencies* was published on the New South Wales legislation website under the Government Sector Finance Act. The Treasurer's Direction codifies the special budget arrangements that have applied to the integrity agencies in each budget since the 2022-23 New South Wales budget. Those special budget arrangements include a specialist integrity agency within Treasury to manage representations for budget and supplementary funding, and provide the integrity agencies with information on funding outcomes; excluding integrity agencies from central agency financial management processes and outcome reporting as part of the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework; not imposing efficiency dividends on integrity agencies; and special arrangements for the Expenditure Review Committee's [ERC] consideration of integrity agency budget proposals.

The integrity agencies are invited to review Treasury's advice to the ERC on integrity agency funding bids and provide their own advice directly to the ERC. The integrity agencies and relevant parliamentary oversight committees are provided with funding decisions in writing and, if relevant, reasons for variation from a funding bid, including contingency funding for the integrity agencies in annual appropriation Acts, in addition to appropriations for the ordinary services of the integrity agencies. Expenditure of contingency funds may be approved by the Treasurer on request, with the request and the response also provided to the relevant parliamentary oversight committee. These special arrangements were first implemented as part of the 2022-23 State budget.

The Government has now, as requested by the integrity agencies, decided to codify these arrangements in a Treasurer's Direction. Codification in a Treasurer's Direction ensures that the special arrangements are clearly articulated and publicly available. The Treasurer's Direction requires officers of the Cabinet Office, the Premier's Department and Treasury to comply with the new arrangements. The special budget arrangements codified by the Treasurer's Direction respond to many of the concerns regarding integrity agency funding raised in the Auditor-General's report and the Public Accountability Committee report. The provisions of this bill will complement the arrangements in the Treasurer's Direction. It is significant that those reforms are not just operational but codified, publicly available and locked in for the longer term.

The Government committed to legislate to guarantee independent funding for the ICAC. The Government has consulted with the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM, on the implementation of the Government's election commitment. The chief commissioner has requested that the Government formally codify the budget management model for integrity agencies using a Treasurer's Direction, which the Government has done. The Government will continue to engage with the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC to ensure that funding arrangements for the ICAC do not impede its independence. The Special Minister of State tabled in the other place a letter from the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, dated 9 August 2024, thanking the Government for the opportunity to comment on the draft bill and for revising the bill in response to the ICAC's feedback.

I now detail the provisions of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill proposes amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, including to insert new division 4.2A, "Appropriations for integrity agencies". These provisions codify in legislation aspects of the Treasurer's Direction relating to communicating funding decisions that I described earlier. The provisions will give an important statutory oversight function to the relevant parliamentary committees in relation to appropriations to the integrity agencies. Proposed new section 4.14B requires the Treasurer to give written notice to the head of each of the integrity agencies, copying the relevant

parliamentary oversight committee for that integrity agency, confirming the amounts proposed to be appropriated in the annual appropriation Act for the services of each integrity agency and providing reasons, if relevant, for varying from an integrity agency's budget proposal within seven days after the introduction of the appropriation bill to the Legislative Assembly.

After receiving the notice from the Treasurer, the relevant parliamentary oversight committee is to examine and report to Parliament and the Treasurer on the appropriation within three months. The Treasurer must then respond to the relevant parliamentary oversight committee within three months of receiving the report. Schedule 2 to the bill proposes amendments to various Acts, providing the parliamentary oversight committees with the new function of examining and reporting to Parliament about the annual appropriation for the services of each of the integrity agencies. These provisions will provide the parliamentary oversight committees with a formalised and clear role in scrutinising the appropriations to integrity agencies and improve transparency regarding integrity agency funding decisions.

I note that the proposed role of the parliamentary oversight committees will apply after the introduction of the annual appropriation bill and, as is currently the case, the committees will not play a role in the ERC process for determining the budget. The Government considers that the integrity agencies are best able to advise the ERC on their funding needs. The Treasurer's Direction and the provisions of this bill will preserve important principles of Cabinet confidentiality and responsible government, while still providing a meaningful improvement in transparency and oversight. The Government has consulted closely with the heads of the integrity agencies—the Auditor-General, the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Chief Commissioner of the LECC, the Acting Electoral Commissioner and the Ombudsman—on the Treasurer's Direction and the bill.

I now move to proposed new section 4.14C of the Government Sector Finance Act, which will make provisions with respect to applications by integrity agencies for contingency funding. The Appropriation Act 2024 appropriated \$20 million to the Treasurer for integrity agency contingencies, as did the annual appropriation Acts in the prior two years. The Treasurer's Direction makes provision for an integrity agency to make a contingency funding application to the Treasurer for the payment of a sum from the integrity agencies' contingencies appropriation for an expenditure or reduction in revenue.

Proposed new section 4.14C provides the following matters that the Treasurer must consider before deciding an application by an integrity agency for contingency funding: the independence of the integrity agency from the direction or control of the Executive Government, whether the expenditure or reduction in revenue to which the contingency relates is urgent and unforeseen, whether refusing the application would cause the integrity agency to be unable to fulfil a statutory function, and the availability of funding from the contingency fund. I confirm that the Treasurer must consider all these matters when considering an application for contingency funding. The Treasurer must determine an application for contingency funding as soon as reasonably practical after receiving it and provide written notice of the decision to the head of the integrity agency and the relevant parliamentary oversight committee.

The Auditor-General's report raised concerns with the integrity agencies requesting additional funding from the former Department of Premier and Cabinet and recommended that the provision of additional funding to the integrity agencies outside the budget process is consistent with appropriation legislation and includes sufficient safeguards to protect the independence of the integrity agencies. The PAC recommended that the annual budgets for the integrity agencies include set contingency funding to address unbudgeted financial demands, with access to the funds governed by prescribed criteria and approval of the relevant parliamentary oversight committee. The Government proposes the appropriation of integrity agency contingency funding in the annual appropriation Act; clear arrangements, codified in the Treasurer's Direction, for applications by integrity agencies for contingency funding; clear criteria, set out in the Government Sector Finance Act, for the Treasurer to consider before deciding an application for contingency funding; and scrutiny of the contingency funding application process by the parliamentary oversight committees.

I now move to proposed new division 4.14A of the Government Sector Finance Act entitled "Appropriations for the Legislature". Proposed new section 4.14D would provide that, within seven days after the bill for the annual appropriation Act is introduced into the Legislative Assembly, the Treasurer is to give written notice of the amount proposed to be appropriated for the services of the Legislature to the Presiding Officers of each House of Parliament and any committee of Parliament or a House of Parliament designated by the Parliament or the House for the purposes of that section. If the amount is different from the amount sought for the services of the Legislature in a budget proposal, the notice must include reasons for the variation.

The drafting of proposed new section 4.14D (1) (b) would enable each House of Parliament to designate, by resolution, a preferred committee to consider funding for the Department of the Legislative Assembly and the Department of the Legislative Council. It would also enable the Parliament, by joint resolution, to designate a joint committee to consider funding for the Department of Parliamentary Services. The proposed new section

4.14D makes provision for that first step—that is, notification by the Treasurer to the Parliament of the appropriation for the Legislature. The specific model of parliamentary committee oversight would then be a matter for the Parliament to determine. I thank the Presiding Officers and the Clerks for their engagement with the Government on this matter. The Government is grateful to them for their advice and looks forward to continuing to work with them on these matters.

In conclusion, the provisions of the bill, together with the Treasurer's Direction, will safeguard the independence of integrity agencies and provide enhanced transparency and oversight of funding decisions made by the Government about integrity agencies. I thank the heads of the integrity agencies for their engagement with the bill and the Treasurer's Direction. I also acknowledge the contributions of the former Auditor-General and the former commissioner. I also thank previous chief commissioners of the ICAC who have contributed much to the consideration of these matters by the Parliament and the Executive Government. Further, the bill proposes new provisions that provide a first step in expanding the role of the Parliament through its committee processes and scrutinising the funding. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:24):** The Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024 is the latest in an interesting—some might find it interesting, others might not—history of funding arrangements for our integrity agencies. Indeed, the issues contained in the bill have been bouncing around in one form or another since early 2020. Prior to that, the Public Accounts Committee [PAC] started an inquiry in or around October 2019. This issue involves some interesting constitutional and other questions, which I will touch upon briefly in my contribution to debate on the bill. The starting point is that integrity is absolutely paramount to good government because corruption of processes is a drag on the proper allocation of resources and, therefore, leads to huge waste of taxpayer funds. In the last Parliament, a debate began about whether the Executive Government should make decisions about how integrity agencies were to be granted funding or whether parliamentary committees should make those determinations. The relevant history of the matter is as follows, deduced from an ICAC report from May 2020 entitled *The need for a new independent funding model for the ICAC*. Page 7 of the report states:

On 14 October 2019, the PAC announced an inquiry into the budget process for independent oversight bodies, including the Commission, and the Parliament of NSW.

The ICAC made submissions to that inquiry and the PAC tabled a report in March 2020, which made a number of recommendations to achieve greater independence. The following recommendations were of particular relevance to the ICAC. Recommendation 1 states:

That the parliamentary oversight committees for the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission review the annual budget submissions of each agency and make recommendations as to funding priorities.

Recommendation 2 states:

That the annual budgets for the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission include a set contingency fund to address unbudgeted financial demands, with access to the funds governed by prescribed criteria and approval of the relevant parliamentary oversight committee.

Recommendation 3 states:

That the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman, and the NSW Electoral Commission be directly allocated their annual funding through the Appropriation legislation, rather than the funding being allocated to the relevant Minister, so they are not subject to reductions in funding during the financial year.

Recommendation 4 states:

That the NSW Government remove the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission from the Premier and Cabinet cluster.

The nub of the problem is simply that each of those bodies have, effectively, a set budget that covers their ordinary staff and other overheads. But, depending upon the matters and complaints that come before the particular integrity bodies and the issues they have to determine, they may expend large additional sums of money or much lower sums of money, depending on the inquiries and other investigations that they conduct. It is how they are allocated those additional funds that is of particular concern and interest for the purposes of their independence. With regard to those four recommendations, on page 8 of its May 2020 report, the ICAC said:

The Commission fully endorses recommendations 3 and 4. With respect to recommendations 1 and 2, the Commission fully endorses the rationale – which is to preserve the Commission's independence – but, for the reasons given in chapter 5 of this report, the Commission recommends adoption of a different funding mechanism for determining its funding requirements.

The fact of the matter is that we have a system of parliamentary democracy whereby the Executive determines the annual budget and the appropriation of funds, and that is approved by Parliament, but the recommendations are made by the Executive. On page 4 of its report, in the executive summary, the ICAC said:

Since those two reports were tabled, the Commission obtained advice from Senior Counsel, Bret Walker SC, on whether the current funding arrangements were appropriate given the Commission's status as an independent body. Mr Walker's advice, which is published as Appendix 1 to this report, is that, because aspects of the current funding arrangements, namely the involvement of Executive Government in those arrangements, are incompatible with the Commission's independence, they are unlawful.

With respect to the author of that executive summary, they put it a little bit more highly than, in fact, Mr Walker's advice put the matter. Mr Walker's advice is annexed to the ICAC report. In paragraphs 33 to 44 of Mr Walker's advice, he specifically says that the justiciability of such a suggestion of unlawfulness—that is, the ability to take that to a court and argue that it is unlawful—is unanswered, which means that he was not unequivocally saying that it was unlawful at all. It is also to be noted that in Mr Walker's advice he made no reference to any judicial decisions or constitutional provisions in arriving at his conclusions. The constitutional arrangement, with regard to appropriations in New South Wales, is that under section 5 of the Constitution Act 1902 only the Legislative Assembly may provide bills for appropriating any part of public revenue or for imposing any new rate, tax or impost—that is, this particular House. Section 15 of the Constitution says that the Legislative Assembly may prepare and adopt standing rules and orders regulating various matters and that:

Such Rules and Orders shall by such Council and Assembly respectively be laid before the Governor, and being by him approved shall become binding and of force.

Our standing orders have the force of law. Relevantly, Standing Order 190 of this Chamber states:

The House shall not proceed upon any bill for the appropriation of any part of the Consolidated Fund, or for any other tax or impost for any purpose which has not been first recommended by message of the Governor during the Session in which such bill shall be passed.

The Governor makes such speeches only upon advice from Cabinet. It further states:

This provision does not apply to a bill introduced by a Minister or to a vote or resolution proposed by a Minister.

There is a similar provision in Standing Order 243. What does that all mean? The constitutional and standing order structure is that the members of Executive Government must make recommendations as to the appropriation of funds, which must commence in this House and not in the Legislative Council. Therefore the suggestion that there should be other bodies that are effectively determining the appropriation of funds towards integrity agencies is a suggestion which is not constitutional within our current set of legal arrangements in this State.

The bottom line is that the Executive Government must make choices as to where money is spent. That involves a whole lot of decisions about whether more or less is spent for one body or another, whether it is to go to schools, hospitals, integrity agencies and so on. We have a system, a constitutional arrangement, where Executive Government makes those recommendations to Parliament, and it is the Parliament that ultimately passes the appropriation bills that constitute the budget. The suggestion that parliamentary committees would somehow take on an appropriation function was novel and is not within our existing constitutional arrangements.

For the purposes of the 2022-23 budget, which was the last Coalition budget of the last Parliament, the Coalition effectively adopted the very processes which this bill now seeks to make law. Budgetary decisions for the integrity agency were taken out of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and put into a certain process with regard to the Treasurer's decision relating to the allocation of funds. Nevertheless, the important thing is that, whether it is the Cabinet Office and Premier's Department making the recommendation to the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet, which ultimately approves the budget, or whether it is the Treasurer making those recommendations, at the end of the day it is still a decision of Executive Government as to the amounts of money that will be allocated to the integrity agencies, which is then included within the appropriations approved by the budget.

Despite the much more radical proposals that were put forward by the Public Accountability Committee—and, to a certain extent, agreed to by the ICAC—the reality is that a much more conventional method of Executive Government proposing the funding for integrity agencies, which was the policy of the Coalition, is now being brought forward by the Labor Party through the bill. I am sorry to go through that somewhat long history, but it is important to note that, essentially, all the bill does is put in place what was the policy of the Coalition Government in its last budget in the last term of Parliament. It is hardly radical or particularly new. All it has been given is the force of law rather than a government process or procedural way of acting. Accordingly, the Coalition supported the bill in the upper House, and we will support the bill in this Chamber as well.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (18:38):** I speak in support of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024. This legislation has been a long time in the making. Many past members of the Parliament and some members who are still here have worked on the issue of how to make sure

our integrity agencies have independence in their funding and in their relationship with the Government. Many members of the legal and civil society community have wanted to see more robust protection of the independence of the integrity agencies. Likewise, many members of the public have wanted greater assurances that these agencies were not subject to budget cuts and pressures that impede them from doing their essential work for the people of New South Wales.

New South Wales integrity agencies play an important role in investigating potential wrongdoing and misconduct and defending the public interest. The New South Wales integrity agencies are the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, and the Electoral Commission. Oftentimes, the debate around independent funding is confined to the Independent Commission Against Corruption as the agency that seems most likely to be denied funding for political reasons by the government of the day. However, the other agencies have essential roles to perform in our society. It is appropriate they have that level of engagement in the budget process. The bill also includes measures to enhance transparency around the funding of the Legislature. I look forward to the Parliament doing the work on exactly how that will look in the future.

It is important to see the bill as working in conjunction with the Treasurer's Direction that introduces strong additional independence measures for the period leading up to the budget. The bill then ensures parliamentary oversight of those budget decisions. On 6 August 2024 the Treasurer made a direction under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, entitled *TD24-12 Charter of Independence for NSW integrity agencies*, codifying the special budget arrangements that have applied to the integrity agencies in each budget since the 2022-23 budget. Those special budget arrangements include a specialist integrity agency unit within Treasury to manage representations for budget and supplementary funding and provide the integrity agencies with information on funding outcomes.

They also include excluding integrity agencies from central agency financial management processes and outcome reporting as part of the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework; not imposing efficiency dividends on integrity agencies; and implementing special arrangements for Expenditure Review Committee [ERC] of Cabinet consideration of integrity agency budget proposals, with integrity agencies invited to review Treasury's advice to ERC on integrity agency funding bids and provide their own advice directly to ERC. They also include contingency funding for the integrity agencies in annual Appropriation Acts, in addition to appropriations for the ordinary services of the integrity agencies. Expenditure of contingency funds may be approved by the Treasurer on request, with the request and response also provided to the relevant parliamentary oversight committee.

The bill complements the Treasurer's Direction by proposing amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018. These include requiring the Treasurer to write to the head of each of the integrity agencies, copying the relevant parliamentary oversight committee for that integrity agency, to confirm the amounts to be appropriated in the annual Appropriation Act for the services of each integrity agency, and—if relevant—to provide reasons for varying from an integrity agency's budget proposal within seven days of the introduction of the appropriation bill to Parliament. The amendments also require the relevant parliamentary oversight committee to examine and report on the appropriation to Parliament and the Treasurer within three months, and for the Treasurer to then respond to the committee's report within three months of receiving it.

The amendments also provide the matters that the Treasurer must consider before deciding an application by an integrity agency for contingency funding, including the independence of the integrity agency, and whether refusing the application would cause the integrity agency to be unable to fulfil a statutory function. The Government consulted closely with the integrity agencies during the development of the Treasurer's Direction, and changes were made based on their feedback. The bill represents the latest milestone in the Government's significant reform agenda aimed at helping to restore public trust and improving public integrity, transparency and accountability. The reform agenda includes the commitment of an additional \$228.6 million in new expenditure over 10 years, commencing in the 2023-24 budget, to ensure integrity agencies remain adequately resourced.

The agenda also includes amendments to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to make it a legislative requirement for the Government to respond to recommendations of the ICAC directed to the Government; the ongoing implementation of recommendations made by the ICAC in relation to operations Witney and Keppel; the landmark ban on political parties accepting donations from clubs that have gaming machines; and a significant tightening of grants regulation to ensure the highest possible standards of grant administration. The bill is one that the whole Parliament can be proud of, and it is great to see it receiving bipartisan support. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (18:45):** On behalf of The Greens, I indicate that we will support the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024 even though it falls well short of delivering on Labor's election promise to deliver independent funding for the ICAC. "We can't wait until 2023."



That is what they said. The bill is part of a suite of measures to provide for greater transparency and oversight of funding for the Independent Commission Against Corruption, legislate funding arrangements for other integrity agencies, and expand Parliament's role in scrutinising the funding of the Legislature.

The bill is coupled with a Treasurer's Direction, made under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, to formalise a number of policy positions that have already been adopted. The bill will amend the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 to define integrity agencies, meaning the Audit Office, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Electoral Commission and the Ombudsman's Office, as well as the relevant parliamentary oversight committee for each of those agencies. It will require the Treasurer to write to the head of each of those agencies and to the relevant parliamentary oversight committee, confirming the amounts for their services in the annual appropriation bills.

The Treasurer must provide reasons if the funds made available are to vary from an integrity agency's budget proposal. The relevant parliamentary committee may then examine and report on the appropriation, and the Treasurer will be required to respond to the committee's report. The bill will also provide the matters that the Treasurer must consider before deciding an application by an integrity agency for contingency funding, including the independence of the integrity agency, and whether refusing the application would cause the integrity agency to be unable to fulfil a statutory function. Finally, the Treasurer will be required to give written notice to the Presiding Officers and any committee of Parliament, or a House of Parliament—as designated by the Parliament or the House—of the amount proposed to be appropriated for the Legislature in the next annual Appropriation Act, and to give reasons for any variation in the amount sought for the services of the Legislature.

As The Greens anti-corruption spokesperson, I focus on the work of the ICAC. In the past, New South Wales has had serious problems with integrity in politics and public life. We know that corruption has been an ongoing problem in the State. I am incredibly grateful, as I am sure others are, that the State has such a strong integrity agency to deal with corrupt conduct. But we know that the work is resource intensive and that it can take time for investigations to come to completion. We know that not everyone feels the same. The ICAC has been described as worse than the Spanish Inquisition; as more interested in headlines than integrity, due process or the rule of law; as an obscenity; and as a Star Chamber, kangaroo court and crowd-sourced McCarthyism all rolled into one.

Corruption is by its nature secretive, difficult to uncover and a crime of the powerful, with no obvious victim willing to complain. It calls for an independent watchdog with strong investigative powers to root it out. Such powers should not go unchecked, and they are rightly subject to the oversight of a parliamentary committee. But the ICAC needs to have an independent funding model. Throughout much of its history, the ICAC has had to go begging, cap in hand, to the Premier's Department for the funds that would allow it to do its job. That is simply unacceptable. We must not continue to have a situation in the State where the work of the ICAC is at risk because sufficient funding is beholden to the whims of the government of the day. The Independent Commission Against Corruption is one of the most effective corruption-fighting organisations in the world, but it cannot do its job properly with one hand tied behind its back.

The Greens have long called for a new funding model that will give the ICAC long-term certainty and ensure that its budget is independent of the government of the day. Guaranteed independent funding for the ICAC was an election commitment from NSW Labor. The bill and the Treasurer's Direction that accompanies it, while a step in the right direction and a clear improvement to transparency, fall short of meeting that commitment. They leave decisions about funding for the ICAC and other integrity agencies in the hands of the Executive Government of the day. Independent funding for the ICAC should not be abandoned. Despite our support for the bill, The Greens will continue to push the Government on that issue, as Greens members before me have done. I acknowledge the many years of work undertaken by the former member for Balmain Jamie Parker and the former member of the other place David Shoebridge on that front. I also acknowledge the work of the member for Murray in that space.

I ask that we all reflect, today and every day, on the work required to bring integrity to everything that goes on in this place and to politics generally. The local government election campaigns that wrapped up over the weekend showed us just how toxic politics can be, at every level. May it remind us to do everything that we can to prevent smear campaigns and misinformation from becoming the norm in campaigning, politics and public life. Everyone benefits when politicians, political parties and candidates engage with a positive vision driven by a contest of ideas, rather than stooping to sabotage, subterfuge and muckraking. But let us be honest: Despite our best hopes, without strong, independent and well-resourced bodies like the ICAC to shine a light on dodgy decisions and stamp out corruption—and without clear rules about lobbying, limits on political donations and truth in political advertising—some politicians will be tempted to do the wrong thing.

That is not how it should be. Putting a stop to it is core business for me, and that is why I am a proud member of The Greens. We know how important it is to end the special relationship between government and

business, which is why we call to ban all corporate political donations, to fix lobbying and to close the revolving door between Parliament and the big end of town. We know how critical it is to keep fighting corruption every day, which is why we have called for independent funding for the ICAC, new criminal offences for corrupt conduct and improved protections for whistleblowers. We want to restore confidence in our democracy by putting a stop to pork-barrelling, bringing truth to political advertising and rebuilding our public services. The bill is a positive step in the right direction. There is so much more work to be done on those issues but, in the meantime, I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (18:52):** As Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and member for Prospect, I speak on the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024. This long-awaited piece of legislation fulfills Labor's 2023 election promise of independent funding for the State's integrity agencies. I thank the Hon. John Graham, Special Minister of State, for his work developing the legislation and his extensive collaboration with stakeholders. As acknowledged in the Minister's second reading speech, the funding arrangements for the integrity agencies originate from the collective work of a number of members of Parliament that began under the previous Coalition Government.

A number of parliamentary committees have worked on the issue, as have other integrity and review bodies. For example, in May and November 2020, special reports of former Chief Commissioner of the ICAC the Hon. Peter Hall, KC, entitled *The need for a new independent funding model for the ICAC* and *A parliamentary solution to a funding model for the ICAC* were published. In October 2020 a report of the former Auditor-General entitled *The effectiveness of the financial arrangements and management practices in four integrity agencies* was released. Finally, in March 2020 a first report and in February 2021 a final report of the former Public Accountability Committee were published, the latter entitled *Budget process for independent oversight bodies and the Parliament of New South Wales - Final report*.

Upon its election, the Minns Labor Government inherited informal arrangements for integrity agency funding from the former Coalition Government. It adopted those arrangements for its first two budgets while engaging extensively in consultation with the integrity agencies on how the arrangements should be formalised. The Government has now codified those arrangements in a Treasurer's Direction and introduced the bill to Parliament. The bill proposes amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 that seek to safeguard the independence of integrity agencies and enhance transparency with respect to their funding. Integrity agencies in New South Wales—that is, the Audit Office, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC], the NSW Electoral Commission and the Ombudsman's Office—are independent and are not subject to the control or direction of the Executive Government. Instead, the integrity agencies are generally accountable to Parliament.

With one exception, the Acts of Parliament establishing the integrity agencies also designate the creation of a joint parliamentary review committee for each agency comprised of multipartisan members of Parliament. Those committees are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the integrity agencies. As acknowledged earlier, their work has been integral to the development of this reform. The Government has built upon the ideas of many to implement permanent structural reforms that ensure transparency and oversight of funding decisions made by the Government regarding the integrity agencies. It has closely consulted with the heads of our integrity agencies—the Auditor-General, the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Chief Commissioner of the LECC, the Acting Electoral Commissioner and the Ombudsman—on the Treasurer's Direction and the bill. They have expressed their support for the arrangements.

The Special Minister of State tabled a letter in the other place dated 9 August 2024 from the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM, thanking the Government for the opportunity to comment on the draft bill. The ICAC's feedback led to further revision of the bill. The bill follows a Treasurer's Direction entitled *TD24-12 Charter of Independence for NSW integrity agencies*, the object of which is to:

... safeguard the independence of the integrity agencies when engaging with The Cabinet Office, Premier's Department and Treasury concerning their financial arrangements and management practices.

Any attempt by a future government to weaken the protections in the Treasurer's Direction will be sure to attract both public and parliamentary scrutiny. The Treasurer's Direction sets out how the Executive should interact with the agencies to preserve their independence during the budget process. Members of this Parliament, academics and NGOs focused on transparency and accountability issues have raised concerns about the funding for ICAC being targeted for political reasons. Smaller agencies have also reported feeling that their budgets were relatively small, and thus they struggled to get attention. With the enacting of the bill, the integrity agencies will have a dedicated unit within Treasury and the ability to present their bids directly to Cabinet, to ensure a meaningful and fair assessment. They will also have the ability to review the Treasury's advice to Cabinet on their bids.

The bill is the final piece of the puzzle to build independent integrity agencies in New South Wales. The Treasurer's Direction is handed down during the budget process, and the bill imposes a post-budget obligation on the Government to be transparent if it has departed from the budget requested by the agencies. It would then require the Treasurer to write to the Parliament informing it of that so that relevant parliamentary committees are able to conduct hearings, gather submissions and evidence, and make a report or recommendation. The Treasurer will also be required to respond to a parliamentary committee's report. The Government had considered codifying in the bill a mechanism for the Parliament, via the committee system, to respond to the Treasurer's budget decisions.

However, based on discussions with the President of the Legislative Council, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the Clerks in both Houses, it is clear that the Legislature would prefer to research and resolve the specific committee model and oversight processes for that—a point of view the Government entirely respects. I understand the Presiding Officers will conduct further research and report back on their preferred model over the next months. Integrity agencies in New South Wales play an integral role in investigating potential wrongdoing and misconduct and defending the public interest. As the current Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and a former member of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission in my previous two terms as a member of Parliament, I know that our State cannot operate effectively without these integrity agencies.

Agencies like the ICAC, the LECC, the NSW Ombudsman, the Audit Office and the NSW Electoral Commission are tasked with a crucial mission to ensure integrity is at the centre of the work of the public sector. They investigate, prevent, detect and expose corruption and maladministration to ensure the public sector and law enforcement agencies operate with full accountability to the people of New South Wales. Like watchdogs guarding our State, they maintain transparency, agility, capability and a high standard of conduct throughout the Executive arm of Government. The bill ensures these vital agencies will be supported and funded to continue carrying out this important function.

The Minns Labor Government is committed to ensuring that integrity agencies in New South Wales receive appropriate funding to undertake their important work, and that the funding arrangements for integrity agencies do not impede their ability to act with autonomy and independence. The collaborative approach between these agencies and the New South Wales Government to develop these amendments can instil confidence that the bill will function to support greater accountability and transparency for all who serve the public interest. I thank the heads of our integrity agencies, including the Auditor-General, Bola Oyetunji; the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM; the Chief Commissioner of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the Hon. Peter Johnson, SC; the Acting NSW Electoral Commissioner, Dr Matthew Phillips; and the Ombudsman, Paul Phillips.

I recognise their engagement with the bill and the Treasurer's Direction to develop this substantial and purposeful reform. The provisions of the bill, together with the Treasurer's Direction, will safeguard the independence of integrity agencies and provide enhanced transparency and oversight of funding decisions made by the Government about integrity agencies. The Government and the Parliament can truly be proud of the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (19:02):** As Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer I contribute to debate on the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024. The Government is committed to ensuring that the integrity agencies receive appropriate funding to undertake their important work, and that the funding arrangements for integrity agencies do not impede their independence. The integrity agencies referred to are defined at proposed new section 4.14A as the Audit Office, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Electoral Commission, and the Ombudsman's Office. The new section also defines the relevant parliamentary oversight committees corresponding to those integrity agencies.

The Government has adopted a three-pronged approach to improving integrity agency funding arrangements. First, the Government has broadly increased the level of funding provided to the integrity agencies. The Government's first budget for 2023-24 committed an additional \$228.6 million in new expenditure over 10 years to ensure integrity agencies remain adequately resourced. The Government's most recent budget for 2024-25 committed an additional \$118.5 million in recurrent expenditure and \$70.6 million in capital spending over the next four years to ensure integrity agencies and the Legislature are resourced to deliver their important work.

Second, the Treasurer made a Treasurer's Direction under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, entitled *TD24-12 Charter of Independence for NSW integrity agencies*. The Treasurer's Direction codifies the special budget arrangements that have applied to the integrity agencies in each budget since the 2022-23 New South Wales budget. The special budget arrangements for integrity agencies codified by the Treasurer's

Direction were developed following extensive consultation with the integrity agencies and were also informed following consideration of the reports of the former Auditor-General and the former Legislative Council Public Accountability Committee.

Those special budget arrangements include a specialist integrity agency unit within Treasury to manage representations for budget and supplementary funding and provide the integrity agencies with information on funding outcomes; excluding integrity agencies from central agency financial management processes and outcome reporting as part of the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework; not imposing efficiency dividends on integrity agencies; and special arrangements for Expenditure Review Committee [ERC] consideration of integrity agency budget proposals. Integrity agencies are invited to review Treasury's advice to the ERC on integrity agency funding bids and provide their own advice directly to the ERC.

The integrity agencies and the relevant parliamentary oversight committees are provided with funding decisions in writing and, if relevant, reasons for variation from a funding bid. The contingency funding for the integrity agencies will be included in annual Appropriation Acts, in addition to appropriations for the ordinary services of the integrity agencies. The expenditure of contingency funds may be approved by the Treasurer on request, with the request and response also provided to the relevant parliamentary oversight committee. Third, the Government has introduced this bill, which proposes amendments to complement the arrangements in the Treasurer's Direction.

I briefly outline the proposed amendments in the bill. Proposed new section 4.14B of the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 will require the Treasurer to write to the head of each of the integrity agencies within seven days after the introduction of the appropriation bill to Parliament, copying the relevant parliamentary oversight committee for that integrity agency, to confirm the amounts to be appropriated in the annual Appropriation Act for the services of each integrity agency and provide reasons, if relevant, for varying from an integrity agency's budget proposal. It requires the relevant parliamentary oversight committee to examine and report on the appropriation to Parliament and the Treasurer within three months. The Treasurer will then respond to the committee's report within three months.

The Appropriation Act 2024 appropriated \$20 million to the Treasurer for integrity agency contingencies. Proposed new section 4.14C of the Act provides the matters that the Treasurer must consider before deciding an application by an integrity agency for contingency funding, including the independence of the integrity agency and whether refusing the application would cause the integrity agency to be unable to fulfil a statutory function. Schedule 2 to the bill proposes amendments to various Acts to provide the parliamentary oversight committees with the function of examining and reporting to Parliament about the annual appropriation for the services of the integrity agencies. The provisions of the bill, together with the Treasurer's Direction, will safeguard the independence of integrity agencies and enhance transparency with respect to their funding. The bill delivers on Labor's election commitments to provide independent budget certainty to the integrity agencies. It is an important bill with widespread support in the House. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (19:07):** I speak in support of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024. The bill seeks to amend the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, herein known as the GSF Act, to provide for independent funding of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, legislate funding arrangements for the other integrity agencies and expand the Parliament's role in scrutinising the funding of the Legislature. The Treasurer has made a Treasurer's Direction under the GSF Act that contains a charter of independence for New South Wales integrity agencies to promote transparency of funding. The integrity agencies include the Audit Office, ICAC, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Electoral Commission and the Ombudsman's Office.

The bill complements the Treasurer's Direction and expands parliamentary oversight. It provides that the Treasurer must give written notice to the head of an integrity agency, copying the relevant parliamentary oversight committee for that integrity agency, to confirm the amounts to be appropriated for the services of the agency in the next annual Appropriation Act within seven days of the introduction of the appropriation bill to the Legislative Assembly. Within three months after receiving the notice, the relevant parliamentary oversight committee must examine and report on the appropriation to the Treasurer and Parliament. The Treasurer must then respond to the relevant parliamentary oversight committee within three months after receiving the report. Furthermore, schedule 2 to the bill provides the parliamentary oversight committees with the function of examining and reporting to Parliament about the annual appropriation for the services of the integrity agencies, and makes consequential amendments to other Acts. The changes made by the bill, which complement the Treasurer's directions, safeguard the independence of integrity agencies. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (19:09):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Integrity Agencies) Bill 2024: the member for Wahroonga, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Balmain, the member for Prospect, the

member for The Entrance and the member for Fairfield. The bill proposes amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 to provide arrangements to safeguard the independence of integrity agencies and enhance transparency with respect to their funding. The amendments will complement the Treasurer's Direction *TD24-12 Charter of Independence for NSW integrity agencies*, which codifies special arrangements for the funding of our integrity agencies. The bill also proposes amendments to expand the role of the Parliament through its committee processes in scrutinising funding. I thank all the members again for their contributions to debate on this important legislation. 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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

### Consideration in Detail

#### Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

#### *Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 17 September 2024*

**No. 1 GRNS No. 2 [c2024-130]**

Page 4, Schedule 1.1[3], proposed section 8L, definition of *active transport and activation purpose*, paragraph (a), line 5. Insert "and enable" after "promote".

**No. 2 GRNS No. 3 [c2024-130]**

Page 4, Schedule 1.1[3], proposed section 8L, definition of *active transport and activation purpose*, paragraph (c), line 8. Insert "and accessibility" after "activation".

**No. 3 GRNS No. 1 [c2024-135C]**

Page 9, Schedule 1.2[10], proposed section 13, line 21. Omit "(5)". Insert instead "(7)".

**No. 4 GRNS No. 2 [c2024-135C]**

Page 9, Schedule 1.2[10], proposed section 13, line 23. Omit "(6)". Insert instead "(8)".

**No. 5 GRNS No. 3 [c2024-135C]**

Page 9, Schedule 1.2[10], proposed section 13, line 30. Omit "TAM's performance.". Insert instead "TAM's performance, and".

**No. 6 GRNS No. 4 [c2024-135C]**

Page 9, Schedule 1.2[10], proposed section 13. Insert after line 30—

- (e) details of the following that are proposed or expected to occur during the financial year—
  - (i) a sale or other disposal of land vested in or owned by TAM,
  - (ii) a lease of that land of more than 5 years duration.

**No. 7 GRNS No. 5 [c2024-135C]**

Page 9, Schedule 1.2[10], proposed section 13, line 31. Omit "(7)". Insert instead "(9)".

**No. 8 GRNS No. 6 [c2024-135C]**

Page 9, Schedule 1.2[10]. Insert after line 32—

#### **13A Additional information to be included in annual report**

The annual report for TAM for a financial year must specify—

- (a) details of the following that occurred during the financial year that were not specified as proposed or expected in the corporate plan for the financial year—
  - (i) a sale or other disposal of land vested in or owned by TAM,
  - (ii) a lease of that land of more than 5 years duration, and
- (b) details of the following that did not occur during the financial year that were specified as proposed or expected in the corporate plan for the financial year—
  - (i) a sale or other disposal of land vested in or owned by TAM,

(ii) a lease of that land of more than 5 years duration.

No. 9 **GRNS No. 7 [c2024-135C]**

Page 14, Schedule 1.3, proposed Schedule 7, Part 34. Insert after line 8—

**241A TAM's first annual report**

- (1) Section 13A does not apply to TAM's first annual report,
- (2) However, TAM's first annual report must specify details of the following that occurred during the period concerned—
  - (a) a sale or other disposal of land vested in or owned by TAM,
  - (b) a lease of that land of more than 5 years duration, and

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (19:11):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

The Government seeks the House's agreement to the amendments to move forward with this important legislation to amend the Transport Administration Act 1988. The bill will have two broad effects. The first is to deliver on the Government's commitments to reform the Transport Asset Holding Entity, or TAHE, by converting it from a State owned corporation to a new New South Wales government agency called the Transport Asset Manager of New South Wales, or TAM. The second is to cement Transport for NSW's role as the lead agency for delivering on the Government's vision for walking, bike riding and personal mobility by broadening the functions and objectives of the agency to include promoting active transport and improving the activation of our public spaces.

The Government accepts the amendments made in the other place as they will bring further clarity to both those aspects of the bill. In relation to the new entity, the amendments will support planning and reporting by TAM of activities related to land leases, sales or disposals. That will provide increased transparency and is supported by the Government. In relation to Transport for NSW's functions relating to active transport and activation of public spaces, the amendments will ensure that the agency promotes as well as enables active transport, and include accessibility as an explicit aim of improving activation. The Government acknowledges all the members who spoke in debate on the bill, noting that no-one opposed it. The bill is an important milestone in improving both the management of our State's rail-related assets and a range of transport options available to residents and visitors to our great State. I commend the Legislative Council's amendments to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Community Recognition Statements*

**WENDEN SWIMMING CLUB MS CHALLENGE**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:13):** I am happy to report that the Wenden Swimming Club multiple sclerosis [MS] challenge held on 30 August was a splashing success, showcasing our community spirit and generosity. Held at the Michael Wenden Aquatic Leisure Centre in Miller, the event united swimmers of all ages and abilities from across the region to raise funds and awareness for multiple sclerosis. Throughout the day, participants pushed themselves, swimming countless laps to support those living with MS. Thanks to the dedication and generosity of sponsors, the challenge raised an outstanding \$5,355, surpassing all expectations. The funds raised will directly support those affected by MS, providing vital services, resources and funding for research to improve lives. The Wenden Swimming Club and everyone involved should be proud of this incredible accomplishment. I congratulate all participants, volunteers and supporters for making the event a resounding success and for swimming towards a brighter future for people living with MS.

**LIZ WEBB**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (19:14):** I congratulate Liz Webb on her appointment as president of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club. Founded in 1907, Bondi Bathers is recognised as the oldest lifesaving club in the world and Liz will be the club's first female president. Liz has been a member of Bondi Bathers since 2002 and has been the director of Nippers for the past three years. Run by volunteers, our surf lifesaving clubs provide an invaluable service to our community, patrolling beaches every summer to keep our residents and visitors safe. I congratulate Liz on her incredible appointment. I look forward to seeing her lead the iconic club.

**BEAUTY POINT SOCIAL CLUB FUNDRAISER**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (19:15):** I thank the Beauty Point Social Club for raising over \$3,000 for our local Biyani House women's shelter. The Beauty Point Social Club has shown great generosity to

Biyani House over the past few years, raising funds through events such as Sunday afternoon soirees and a garage sale. The success of this high tea event was a collective effort, from the raffles and silent auction to the generous contributions from the craft group. I also give special thanks to the caterers and management of Beauty Point retirement village for their support and donations. The turnout was fantastic, with 64 residents, along with their families and friends, coming together to support a vital cause. I express my gratitude to Jan Walliss, Sue Winkley and all the members of the Beauty Point Social Club. Their commitment to supporting survivors of domestic violence in the community is commendable. I thank them for making a real difference in the lives of those who need it most.

#### **RALEIGH PUBLIC SCHOOL 150TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (19:16):** Raleigh is not just a place that produces milk. Recently Raleigh Public School's youngest student, Macey Winzer, and its oldest former student, Pat Sinclair, came together to cut the cake in celebration of the school's 150th anniversary. More than 100 people gathered at the school, marking an incredible milestone for a small school that embodies the beauty of close-knit, rural education. For a school of 27 students, reaching 150 years is a significant achievement. Small schools like Raleigh are the heart of rural communities. It was not a celebration of just the school, but also the wider community. Raleigh Public School is a shining example of how a smaller student body fosters a sense of belonging and collaboration that is often lost in larger schools. The birthday bash featured plenty of food, market stalls and the unveiling of a new cow, "Sunny"—a monument to Raleigh's proud dairy farming history. The celebration also gave the community a chance to admire student projects and historical displays, showcasing the school's past and present contributions to education. I wish Raleigh Public School a happy birthday. Well done to the dedicated staff and parents and to everyone who keeps that school thriving.

#### **ROD GALIC**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (19:17):** Rod Galic has been a vital contributor to the Southern Districts Soccer Football Association since 2014. His unwavering dedication and innovative initiatives have significantly benefited the soccer community and fostered a love of sport among children in south-western Sydney. His impact is evident through several programs he spearheaded, including the Football in Schools program, which has provided over 100 donations of football equipment to schools since 2015, and the medal sponsorship program, celebrating sporting excellence in our schools. His commitment extends beyond the field. He has championed fundraising initiatives for Fairfield Hospital, including donations of gear to the emergency department as well as contributions for medical equipment. Rod's dedication and spirit embody the very essence of community service and sports promotion. I thank Rod for his service to soccer players, students and kids.

#### **KIAMA ELECTORATE RURAL FIRE SERVICE BRIGADES**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (19:18):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the work of the Rural Fire Service in protecting our communities from the ever-present threat of bushfires. The men and women of the RFS are true heroes, dedicating their time and risking their lives to safeguard our homes, families and livelihoods. Unfortunately, time limits me from naming everyone, but I acknowledge some of my local RFS heroes: Captain Greg Tedder of Berry-Broughton Vale RFS; Captain Luke Marshall of Cambewarra RFS; Captain Charlie Shusser, AFSM, of Falls Creek RFS; Captain Stephanie Judge of Shoalhaven Heads RFS; Captain Greg Judson of West Nowra RFS; and Captain Hannah McInerney of Jamberoo RFS. Each captain is instrumental in protecting their local communities from the dangers of bushfires. Fighting fires in scorching heat and dense smoke, the RFS is our first line of defence as we enter another Australian summer. The quick response and strategic actions of the RFS are critical in preventing widespread bushfires, particularly in my community. I thank all of our local RFS volunteers from the bottom of my heart. Their bravery and commitment are appreciated by one and all across this State and Parliament.

#### **VENERABLE ABBOT SAVOEUNG POR**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (19:19):** Venerable Abbot Savoeung Por, a distinguished monk at Wat Hong Rattanaram since 2021, has been a pivotal figure for the Kampuchea Krom Cultural Centre of NSW Incorporated and the Buddhist monks human rights council. Since his ordination in 1990 in Kampuchea Krom, now South Vietnam, Abbot Por has dedicated his life to advancing Buddhist teachings and human rights. Fleeing restrictions on Khmer Krom monks in 1999, he sought refuge in Cambodia and later arrived in Australia in 2010, sponsored by the centre to promote Cambodian culture and Buddhism. Abbot Por, originally from Bac Lieu province, is bilingual in Vietnamese and Khmer, which has enhanced his ability to bridge cultures. His efforts include advocating for Cambodian and Khmer Krom communities, and launching the KKCC TV online talk show, which was a crucial information source during the COVID-19 pandemic. His work has elevated Khmer Krom visibility and fostered Australian multiculturalism, benefiting both local and Indigenous communities.

**TONY AND CAROL ALLEN**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (19:21):** I recognise husband and wife dynamic duo Tony and Carol Allen of Sylvania on being named Volunteer Team of the Year at the Centre for Volunteering 2024 Southern Sydney Volunteer of the Year Awards on 3 September. The awards acknowledge the incredible dedication, effort and community service of our local volunteers, who work tirelessly to improve our communities. Tony and Carol were nominated in recognition of their 10 years of service to the Sutherland Shire Bushcare program. Over the past 10 years the couple have attended several Sutherland Shire Bushcare groups each month, contributing to the protection and restoration of our natural ecosystems in the Sutherland Shire. As Bushcare volunteers, the couple regularly remove invasive weeds and rubbish, and plant native species to revive green spaces, including at Burnum Burnum Sanctuary. I congratulate Tony and Carol for their success at the Southern Sydney Volunteer of the Year Awards and thank them for their ongoing contribution to preserving our natural environment.

**TRIBUTE TO VOLKAN ERGUN**

**Ms LYNDa VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:22):** It was truly heartbreaking to learn of the tragic death of Auburn Football Club's all-age men's player Volkan Ergun at Binalong Oval on 31 August. The loss of a teammate and friend on the field is distressing, and Volkan's passing has deeply impacted the entire community. The decision to award the grand final to Auburn FC and not replay the remaining minutes of the match was a profound gesture of respect and solidarity from both teams. Such moments bring out the best in people, as was evidenced by the compassionate responses from the soccer community and the generous support made through the fundraiser for Volkan's family. The suspension of matches and postponement of others reflected the association's respect and sensitivity towards everyone affected by this tragedy. Auburn FC's efforts to honour Volkan's memory and support his family are truly commendable. I acknowledge the first responders, including players from Wentworthville Uniting Football Club, Regents Park Saints Football Club and Pendle Hill Football Club, who assisted until paramedics arrived.

**CALROSSY ANGLICAN SCHOOL**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (19:23):** It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Calrossy Anglican School's R U OK? Day committee, led by year 10 student Bronte Gillan, on a successful R U OK? Day last week. Calrossy students were inspired by local speaker Sam Bailey, who became a quadriplegic in a car accident many years ago. His story was about conquering his disability and becoming a successful farmer, ultralight pilot and best-selling author. His inspirational message was about never giving up and overcoming the odds. We could have heard a pin drop in the hall. The day was a great success. I congratulate Bronte and her committee. Another event is on the way. On 11 November Calrossy will be hosting 2022 Australian of the Year Shanna Whan for a free educational and conversational evening with parents and caregivers. The theme of "Rethinking social norms" is a valuable one. I encourage local parents and caregivers to register for the event. I thank Bronte, Calrossy and the R U OK? Day committee.

**WISTARIA GARDENS**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (19:24):** Making a visit to Wistaria Gardens is a must do this spring. Bring a picnic blanket and enjoy the gardens, which are in full bloom throughout September. While everyone can enjoy the stunning floral displays every day of the week, World Heritage-listed Parramatta Park will be hosting free activities, live music and tours on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 September from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Designed and planted in 1906, the Wistaria Gardens were part of the residence of the medical superintendent of the Parramatta Lunatic Asylum, Dr William Cotter Williamson. It is now Sydney's most intact surviving Edwardian gardens. After a strong local campaign in 2022, the New South Wales Government transferred the gardens to Parramatta Park, ensuring its preservation and the continuation of a 100-year Parramatta tradition. I encourage everyone to drop by to see the stunning cherry blossoms and enjoy the scent of the wisteria, along with the picturesque annual plantings.

**IAN CHAFFEY**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:25):** Local government is farewelling one of its greatest servants with the retirement of Snowy Valleys Mayor Ian Chaffey after 37 years of dedicated community representation. Councillor Chaffey was elected to Tumbarumba council in 1977 at the age of 33 and went on to serve as shire president and mayor of Tumbarumba council and the merged Snowy Valleys Council. Now aged 80, Ian decided not to stand for re-election, in order to let younger candidates bring new ideas. Councillor Chaffey said his work had always been a team effort, but there is no doubt he leaves a strong individual legacy, including nurturing the Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail, streetscape and creek-front transformations, and new ways of enabling communities to have their say. He says the region's biggest challenge remains demerging the forcibly amalgamated Tumut and Tumbarumba councils. He looks forward to a new generation of leaders tackling the



issue. The former apple grower and current school bus operator thanks his wife, Evelyn, and his children, Ian and Andrew Chaffey, Kathryn Woodin and Susan Cox, for their love and support over a long journey. I congratulate Ian and thank him for his service.

#### **ZAHLIA KELLY**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (19:26):** I congratulate Zahlia Kelly, who has been named the 2024 NSW Youth Parliamentarian of the Year. The award recognises the participant who displays the most outstanding qualities of leadership, citizenship and engagement. Zahlia is a year 11 student at St Peter's Anglican College, Broulee. During the Youth Parliament program, Zahlia contributed to the committee from the housing and homelessness portfolio and presented a bill to provide a just transition from out-of-home care into stable and affordable housing. Locally, Zahlia organised the Winter SOULstice youth event with Eurobodalla Shire Council and headspace. Recently she represented her school at the Model United Nations Assembly in Old Parliament House, Canberra, where her team won the Totenhofer Peace Prize. The prize was awarded to the delegation that contributed most consistently to world peace during the assembly. I congratulate Zahlia, her family and St Peter's Anglican College, Broulee.

#### **HENDERSON PARK**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (19:27):** Recently I was excited and proud to join the family of one of Australia's greatest news readers, Brian Henderson, at the opening of Henderson Park in Willoughby on 29 August. From 1957 to 2002 the iconic newsreader was a familiar face on our TV screens, with his trademark dark-rimmed spectacles and baritone voice. Known affectionately as "Hendo", Brian was one of the enduring greats of Australian television. Together with councillors, members of Parliament, media personalities and many local residents, I was honoured to meet Brian's widow, Mardi Henderson. I was joined by Peter Overton of Nine News. I thank Peter for his wonderful speech on the day, honouring the legacy of the great man, Hendo. I thank Mirvac for hosting such an incredible event on a site it developed so well. It was a wonderful way to celebrate a fondly remembered Australian icon. As well as being a memorial, Henderson Park will provide welcome green space for our area. It is a place our community can cherish and enjoy for many years to come.

#### **MCDONALD COLLEGE**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (19:28):** I extend my sincere thanks to McDonald College and head of PDHPE Ms Sharlane Murphy for their outstanding work in leading students through an exploration of the benefits and harms of social media. The insights shared by students of years 7 to 10, in written and video formats, will play an invaluable role in shaping discussions at the upcoming Social Media Summit run by the New South Wales and South Australian governments. As an independent co-educational school with a focus on creative and performing arts, the McDonald College in North Strathfield excels at nurturing both artistic talent and critical thinking. The thoughtful perspectives provided by the students will help inform meaningful dialogue on social media's impact on young people's wellbeing. Their contributions are a testament to the college's commitment to fostering well-rounded individuals to make a real difference. I congratulate the McDonald College, Ms Murphy and students for their important work. I look forward to seeing how their insights shape the conversation at the summit.

#### **COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE SCHOLARSHIPS**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:29):** I was honoured to spend time recently with two Coffs Coast achievers who have been awarded prestigious scholarships. Coffs Harbour Senior College student Roxy Thomas is preparing for a trip to remember after she was awarded a Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship. Roxy is among 20 students from across New South Wales who will soon visit Japan for a historical study tour to learn more about Australia's involvement in World War II. Roxy is a passionate history student, and she will be a wonderful ambassador for the Coffs Coast. At Coffs Harbour's Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School, teacher Blake Cusack received a scholarship from the Aboriginal Languages Education Scholarship Program. This program aims to contribute to the growth of Aboriginal languages by supporting recipients to pursue languages training and education. Blake is an integral part of the team at the Freedom School, which leads the way in revitalising Aboriginal languages in our community. The school is revolutionising education for Gumbaynggirr people and First Nations communities. I wish Roxy and Blake every success with the exciting opportunities they are pursuing.

#### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS' DAY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:30):** On Early Childhood Educators' Day, I had the privilege of delivering special treats to our local early education centres to acknowledge their unwavering efforts to provide the best care and education for our future generations. A week before this special day, I started a fun competition on social media and asked our community to nominate their beloved centres in the Gosford electorate. More than

150 nominations were received in less than five hours. I was stoked to see how much these centres mean to our young families and how much our communities appreciate the beautiful educators who care for our littlest learners. Early childhood educators play such a crucial role in our economic and social landscapes. Undeniably, parents and carers rely on the support from our marvellous educators, as they are not able to return to work or further their education without securing a decent day care centre for their young children. The first five years are the most important period for our future generations. Their growth is heavily dependent on the care they receive today. I am truly grateful for the amazing early childhood educators in our community.

#### **AUSTRALIAN SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION AWARDS**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (19:31):** The Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards recognise the achievement of women in business, and I am proud to congratulate two Wollondilly organisations for being named winners this year. From 32 finalists, Wildflower Holistic Services emerged as the winner in the category of health improvement services. It is a huge achievement for co-founders Alexandra and Rebecca McCarthy, whose holistic healthcare service has gone from strength to strength and helped so many along the way. Wollondilly Women in Business [WWIB] has repeated its 2022 win by again taking home the award for the best women's organisation, in a brilliant night of celebration, on 24 August 2024. From thousands of entrants Australia-wide, more than 800 female small business owners have been shortlisted and then narrowed down to eight category finalists. Offering women a place to unite to share their knowledge, WWIB creates a welcoming and supportive environment for businesswomen and is highly deserving of this recognition. I congratulate both organisations and thank them for their contributions.

#### **SAM FORD**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:32):** On a crisp, sunny morning I was invited by shipwright Robert Bailey to his business, Cove Marine, in beautiful Oyster Cove, to meet a young man with a bright future. Robert, also known as the mayor of Oyster Cove, introduced me to his apprentice, Sam Ford. Sam is studying a Certificate III in Marine Mechanical Technology under the tutelage of Robert, who has imparted his 50-plus years of experience of working in the boating industry. Robert is exceptionally proud of Sam because he was recognised at the TAFE NSW Excellence Awards at the Sydney International Boat Show this year. Sam received the Marine Mercury award for the highest achievement in New South Wales for a stage two marine mechanical apprentice. Sam's dedication to his studies and his work ethic are worthy of recognition, even more so because he has had to travel from Port Stephens to Ultimo to complete his TAFE components. The award recognises Sam's outstanding performance and commitment, cultivated by the wonderful team at Cove Marine, TAFE and Robert Bailey. I love that a local apprentice working on boats in Oyster Cove has taken out a statewide award. This Minister and this Parliament are proud of Sam.

#### **COOPER WEST AND LIAM MERCER**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (19:33):** I recognise Cooper West and Liam Mercer from Mackillop College Port Macquarie for being selected in the Australian football team to compete internationally for the Dana Cup, in Hjørring, Denmark. The Dana Cup is Denmark's largest sports event, held in July each year. Since 1982, 118 nations from around the globe have competed in what is known as one of the largest top-ranked youth tournaments in the world. Proud advocates of equality and inclusiveness of race, gender, society and culture, the Dana Cup's organisers aim to unite countries together in a safe, inclusive environment through football. Representing Port Macquarie in the Australian team were students Cooper West, in the number 5 jersey, and Liam Mercer, proudly wearing the number 16 jersey. Both students played exceptionally well over the course of the tournament, displaying determination, grit and athleticism that comes from local grassroots football. The Australian team was dominant throughout the tournament, reaching the semifinal before going down in a tight match 2-0, to finish third out of 85 teams that competed. I congratulate Cooper and Liam on achieving this outstanding milestone in soccer, and I wish them both well in their future endeavours in football.

#### **BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE FIRST RESPONDERS**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:34):** I convey my heartfelt gratitude to all first responders who attended the tragic incident at Faulconbridge on Tuesday 10 September. The Blue Mountains community faced a terrible tragedy when two young boys were killed. The ripple effect this has had on our closely knit community is beyond comprehension, as family members, neighbours, school peers, teachers and soccer teammates, to name just a few, have grappled to come to terms with this loss. I cannot imagine what these brave first responders faced upon arriving at the scene. I saw and spoke with paramedics on the day and could see the shock etched on their faces. Every day our first responders not only place themselves in danger but also may face tragedy that is confronting and harrowing. I acknowledge the police and paramedics, particularly those who were on the scene first. They maintained professionalism and gave support to those requiring services, while having to

face an intensely emotional, unimaginable and devastating situation. My heart aches for them all. Their job is beyond tough. I thank them.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The House stands with your community, the first responders and you, member for Blue Mountains.

#### **UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE SPORTING TEAMS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (19:35):** The Upper Hunter has again shown that our footy talent reigns supreme. In rugby league, the Scone Thoroughbreds won their fifth first-grade Group 21 premiership. They were premiers also in the reserve grade. They also brought home the win in Ladies League Tag. The Singleton Greyhounds were victors in the under-18s competition. The Dungog Warriors won the C-grade Ladies League Tag. Paterson River won the D-Grade North men's title. In rugby union, the Maitland Blacks saw huge success for the under-15 girls and the under-16, under-15, under-14, under-12 and under-10 boys, all getting a win. The Singleton Red Bulls took out the suburban rugby title. In the world game of football, the Gresford Vacy Scorpions A-grade division was the all-age premier. Greta Branxton Football Club took out the B-grade women's and F-grade men's competitions. The Muswellbrook Eagles took out the J-division men's and the F-division women's competitions.

#### **ANT RITTER**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (19:36):** I acknowledge and celebrate the incredible contributions of Ant Ritter, the outgoing president of Scarborough Wombarra Surf Life Saving Club. For the past 15 years Ant has been at the helm of this remarkable club, guiding it through challenging times and transforming it into the vibrant community we know today. When Ant first joined Scarborough Wombarra Surf Life Saving Club 20 years ago as a new father keen to develop some surf rescue skills, he probably did not imagine the impact he would have. What started as a desire to give back to the community grew into a deep and lasting commitment to beach safety and community spirit. His efforts, sparked by something as simple as a scrap of paper in his letterbox, calling for volunteers, have reverberated throughout the northern Illawarra. Under Ant's leadership, the club has seen a dramatic turnaround. In the past three years alone, the club has grown from 17 adult patrolling members to 65. Ant Ritter's legacy at Scarborough Wombarra Surf Life Saving Club will be felt for years to come. On behalf of the community, I thank him for his outstanding service.

#### **PETA STEWART**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:37):** I congratulate Peta Stewart on the publication of her book, *Beyond the Craft: Essential Skills for Small Business Success*. As a successful conveyancer in Lavington, Peta has drawn from her 15 years of experience to create an invaluable guide for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Peta's book offers practical insights into the challenges and lessons learned throughout her business journey of guiding a team of nine employees, confronted with the complexities of growth and management. The book is thoughtfully structured into three parts: You, Team and World. *Beyond the Craft* covers a wide range of essential topics, including self-care, emotional intelligence, leadership and team dynamics. Peta penned the book to give back to her community. She is doing so by donating proceeds from the book to Betty's Place Women's Refuge, in Albury. I thank her. It was great to be at Business Women Albury Wodonga the other day as she went through this fantastic book. I am really enjoying reading it. Well done.

#### **BANKSTOWN BRUINS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (19:38):** I congratulate the Bankstown Bruins under-16 boys basketball team on their recent impressive victory at the Spalding Waratah Junior Premier League finals and being named the 2024 State champions. Their dedication, teamwork and skill shone brightly, showcasing the essence of sportsmanship and excellence. The win reflected not only their hard work on and off the court, but also their commitment to representing our community with pride. The Bankstown Bruins Basketball Association was formed in 1964 and its first official competition was an under-16 boys competition, which the Bruins won. This year, 60 years later, it was a full-circle moment when the under-16 boys team were again named State champions. Their success is a testament to the support and encouragement they receive from their coaches, supporters and the entire community. Their achievement inspires aspiring athletes and demonstrates the positive impact of sports on individuals and communities. This win not only brings glory to their team but also adds to the rich legacy of sporting achievements in our community.

#### **GLENMORE PARK HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (19:39):** I commend Glenmore Park High School and all involved for conducting a successful STEM open night last month, where students of all ages were informed of

what a future career pathway in STEM would entail. Participating students also included those from Surveyors Creek Public School and Regentville Public School. The students were afforded the opportunity to engage in hands-on experiences, including a planetarium set up by representatives from Western Sydney University and stargazing through powerful telescopes offered by the Western Sydney Amateur Astronomy Group. Further experiences included green space technology, virtual reality, 3D printing, electric vehicle technology and firefighting demonstrations. Industry partners such as Sydney Science Park and CSIRO also played a significant role. I thank and commend all involved in the informative and important event for our future generations.

#### **RUTH COWIE**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:40):** I recognise and congratulate Ruth Cowie on her incredible 100th birthday, which Ruth celebrated with family and friends at Kingscliff Community Hall on Sunday 15 September. Born in Nowra in 1924, Ruth is the last surviving World War II veteran born in the Shoalhaven region. Ruth's life is deeply rooted in the Shoalhaven, where she attended Nowra Public School and worked in her father's plumbing shop before enlisting in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force in 1942. Her remarkable service during the war—from working as a flight clerk to assisting families in the prisoner of war section—exemplifies her courage and dedication. After the war, Ruth married Tom, and together they raised five children. Her story of resilience, love and service continues to inspire us all. Even at 100, Ruth remains active, tending to her garden and engaging in her community with a bright smile and quick wit. She truly is a living treasure.

#### **ELAINE FOULSHAM**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (19:41):** I recognise the magnificent work of a local artist from the electorate of Castle Hill. I have the privilege of currently hosting the artwork of Elaine Foulsham in the Fountain Court of the New South Wales Parliament. Elaine's work is inspired by nature, open spaces, rambling terrains and coastal areas, and captures the untamed beauty of nature. Her paintings evoke a contemplative and hushed admiration for the breathtaking beauty of the terrain in which we live. Elaine focuses on capturing the energy and spirit of the landscape, which is evident through her extensive collection. Elaine's work has already captured the attention of so many since the beginning of her exhibition in the Fountain Court. I encourage all members to take the opportunity over the next two weeks to view the wonderful art by Elaine Foulsham that is on display. Elaine will be attending a morning tea in the Fountain Court on 24 September 2024.

#### **PENRITH VALLEY SPORTS FOUNDATION AWARDS**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:42):** I congratulate all the local athletes on their recognition at the Penrith Valley Sports Foundation Sport Star Awards dinner on 6 September. The Sports Administrator of the Year Award went to Shane Northam from Penrith Rovers Football Club. The Pendragons Dragon Boat Club senior A team were awarded the Female Team of the Year Award. The Penrith City Softball Association mens open team were awarded the Male Team of the Year Award. I proudly sponsored the Volunteer Award for Louise Regent, who has volunteered with the Nepean Hockey Association for more than 20 years. The Master Athlete Award went to David Cheung for 30 years with Penrith Touch Association. Matilda Mobbs won the All Abilities Award for dominating the swimming and archery worlds. The Referee/Umpire Award went to Dave Cooper for his work with World Aquatics. Sue and John Howard were honoured with the Jim Anderson Memorial Award for more than 35 years of dedication to touch football and Oztag. The Rising Star Award went to Anna Dubier as she makes her mark on cycling in Australia.

#### **INDO-AUST BAL BHARATHI VIDYALAYA HINDI SCHOOL**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:43):** I recently had the pleasure of attending the Indo-Aust Bal Bharathi Vidyalaya [IABBV] Hindi School Hindi Day celebrations at Thornleigh West Public School. India's national Hindi Diwas falls on 14 September every year and acknowledges the adoption of Hindi as the official language of India in 1949. This year the Hindi school celebrated 37 years of teaching. The school is of absolute importance to my local community and beyond. It is a way for the next generation to stay connected to their culture and land of origin, and enables them to communicate with their parents, friends and families. I thank each of the volunteer teachers who dedicate so much of their time to teach Hindi. I thank in particular Mala Mehta, Wahroonga Woman of the Year in 2023 and president and honorary founder of the IABBV Hindi School, for her extraordinary efforts to make the school such a vibrant and important space for Hindi students.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **TRISTAN KNOWLES**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (19:44):** I recognise the outstanding achievements of one of our region's most decorated and accomplished Paralympians, Tristan Knowles, OAM. Tristan's motivating story is filled with

inspiration, confidence and achievement, so it is no surprise that those words form his personal mantra. After he was diagnosed with bone cancer at nine years of age and underwent intense rounds of chemotherapy, Tristan was left with no choice but to have his left leg amputated to above the knee. Merely two years later at age 11, Tristan was told by doctors that they had found cancer in his lung, and he only had a fifty-fifty chance of survival. After he was gifted a sports wheelchair at the age of 15, Tristan overcame the odds and faced hurdles of adversity to carve out one of the most successful wheelchair basketball careers in this country's history.

Using the strength and courage that Tristan has mastered, he has played both nationally and internationally for the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. After playing in Spain, Italy and Turkey, it is the Wollongong Roller Hawks that he calls home. After his years of service to the sport, Tristan was awarded the Medal of Order of Australia in 2009 and founded the Tristan Knowles Kids Cancer Foundation. Using his knowledge of finances, stemming from the Bachelor of Commerce degree that he completed at the University of Wollongong in 2006, the foundation has a strong message that aims to restore confidence in children and kickstart and inspire their motivation to achieve their dreams.

Now a six-time Paralympian and world champion in wheelchair basketball, Tristan was the captain for the Australian Rollers at the Paris Paralympics, where they were striving for a gold medal after their fifth-place finish in Tokyo. Although the Rollers' Paralympics campaign did not end as they hoped, they were able to secure fifth place after battling it out with the Netherlands. I congratulate Tristan on such a commendable career. His story is inspiring to all ages and his hard work and dedication to achieve his goals should be followed. I congratulate also fellow Wollongong Roller Hawks Brett Stibners and Luke Pople, who were also members of the Australian Rollers at the Paris games. I wish them all the best for the rest of their careers. Our region is very proud of them all.

### **WAHROONGA TIGERS RUGBY CLUB**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:48):** The Wahroonga Tigers Rugby Club was founded in 1962 and boasts players like David Campese amongst its alumni. For more than 60 years, the Wahroonga Tigers Rugby Club has provided people of all ages the opportunity to get involved in the great game of rugby union. The club has been run successfully by parent volunteers and this year it reached its goal of 500 registrations, the highest number in its history. If rugby is the game they play in heaven—and nobody has ever established otherwise—then I attended a slice of heaven at Cliff Oval in Wahroonga for the Tigers club presentations, which included the recognition of several teenage players who have been with the Wahroonga Tigers for five or 10 years respectively. The five- and 10-year players were given jerseys to recognise their outstanding commitment to the club over the years.

I was delighted to recognise two new life members of the Tigers for their incredible work with the club over many years. With my eldest brother, Frans Henskens, being a life member of the University of Newcastle rugby club, I have some idea of the commitment required to be given that honour. Retiring Tigers club president Dave Proctor became a life member after being with the club since he was a junior. His love for the game grew over the years and he evolved from a promising young player into a pivotal part of our rugby community. For the past three years, Dave has served as the club's president, and during his tenure he has been a driving force behind the club's successes and a source of inspiration to all involved. There is no doubt that Dave's leadership and commitment to the club significantly contributed to their record-breaking year of registrations this year.

Beyond his official role, Dave has coached numerous teams, sharing his extensive knowledge and passion for rugby to the younger generations—and it is passion with a capital "P". His involvement has not only fostered a love for the sport but also significantly enhanced the skills and development of many young players. Dave is always willing to put his hand up to assist in any way he can. He is happy to get his hands dirty to maintain the grounds, assist in the canteen or organise events. Dave's dedication to the club is unwavering. He has made a point of recognising past players by framing jerseys in the clubhouse, celebrating their contributions and ensuring that the club's rich history is honoured. His generosity with time and knowledge coupled with his leadership and commitment have made a profound difference. Dave's role as a Gordon Junior Rugby committee member alongside his presidency at Wahroonga Tigers further demonstrates his dedication to our local community through rugby.

The other life member recognised at the presentation was Karen Gilbert. Karen has shown unwavering commitment and exceptional service that has enriched the Wahroonga Tigers community. For the past decade, Karen has been an indispensable member of the Tigers. Throughout her time at the club, Karen has demonstrated her dedication and passion for the game, playing an integral role in the club's success and growth. For the past seven years, Karen has been the gear steward. She has managed the club's equipment with great care and efficiency, ensuring that the players have the necessary gear to perform at their best. Not only has Karen excelled in her role as gear steward but also she has been the manager and age coordinator for her sons' teams. That role demonstrated her logical skills and a deep commitment to the players and their families.

In 2022, Karen was honoured with the President's Award—a testament to her exceptional skill and dedication. That accolade recognised her tireless efforts and significant contributions to the club. One of Karen's most admirable qualities is her dedication to welcoming new families to the Tigers club community. Her warmth and enthusiasm have undoubtedly made countless new players and families feel at home in the club. Karen has always lent a hand to help organise club functions, from organising events to helping with logistics. Her willingness to tackle any task no matter how challenging has made her an invaluable asset to the community.

Without the selfless volunteers, our local sporting clubs and community groups would simply not be able to run. We are fortunate in the Wahroonga electorate to have many volunteers who generously give their time to give back to the community. I thank everyone who volunteers for the Tigers. The Tigers are like many of our sporting clubs and incredible social clubs. The Cliff Oval Tigers clubhouse has seen much community bonding in the past, and I have no doubt that will continue well into the future. The Tigers is a club whose enthusiasm should be tapped. It is a great atmosphere at Cliff Oval. I wish the club all the very best for the future, and I congratulate those life members and the players who received the five- and 10-year club awards.

### **FOX ISLAND, PENRITH WHITEWATER STADIUM**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:53):** The island at the heart of Penrith Whitewater Stadium has officially been named Fox Island by the New South Wales Government following the growing list of contributions to the paddling community by the entire Fox family. This recognition of many years of achievement and service to our local Penrith community naturally follows on from Jess and Noemie's spectacular performances at the Paris Olympics. Richard Fox, a very accomplished canoeist in his own right, competed for Great Britain from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. He won 11 medals at the International Canoe Federation [ICF] Canoe Slalom World Championships, with 10 golds and a bronze. Richard also won the overall world cup title three times and the Euro Cup four times. Unfortunately, Richard was already at the end of his competitive career in 1992 when whitewater slalom canoeing became a regular Olympic event.

The Fox family relocated to Australia in 1998 for Richard to take up a position as the national head coach for the Sydney Olympics. He was instrumental in preventing canoeing from being axed from the 2000 Olympics after the Olympic committee determined there were inadequate facilities and insufficient funds to host an Olympic slalom competition. Fox's continuous campaigning to governments at all levels eventuated in the construction of Penrith Whitewater Stadium. Richard Fox was also the Australian Institute of Sport [AIS] and national team head coach, leading the slalom team at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens. Richard is still very active in the Penrith community and is the current president of Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce. We had the pleasure of hearing Richard commentate the paddling events at the Olympics.

Myriam Fox is a former French slalom canoeist who competed at the international level from 1979 to 1996. Myriam has also won eight golds and two silvers at the ICF world championships. She won the overall world cup title three consecutive times, between 1989 and 1991. One of Myriam's most iconic achievements was her pivotal role in developing women's C1 in Australia and its inclusion into the Olympic program for Tokyo 2020. Her advocacy and relentless efforts resulted in a historic moment for women in the sport. The inaugural Olympic title was fittingly claimed by her daughter and accomplished athlete Jess. In 2018 Myriam was named Coach of the Year at the AIS Sport Performance Awards. In 2022 Myriam was awarded the International Olympic Committee's Coaches Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2023 she was inducted into Paddle Australia's Hall of Fame.

Jess Fox is regarded as the most decorated canoe slalom athlete to date and was Australia's flag-bearer in the opening ceremony at the Paris Olympics. For Penrith residents, there was never any doubt that there should be some permanent recognition for the family and all they have done to put Penrith on the world map. Jess Fox has won three gold, one silver and two bronze medals since her debut at the 2012 London Olympics, with her younger sister, Noemie, scoring her first gold medal this year in Paris, winning the inaugural kayak cross. Who will ever forget the images that went worldwide when her mum and sister jumped into the water to celebrate her huge victory at the end of her race?

The official naming of Fox Island comes as the New South Wales and Federal governments announced they would contribute \$3.2 million to Paddle Australia ahead of the International Canoe Federation Canoe Slalom World Championships. The funding will go towards the organisation, staging, marketing and programming for the event. It is estimated that the world championships will be an economic bonanza for Western Sydney and the local businesses, with an estimated 20,000 spectators expected to descend on our city. This world-class event will be hosted from 1 to 6 October 2025 at Penrith Whitewater Stadium, which I am proud to say recently underwent a \$3.1 million upgrade by the New South Wales Government.

This venue upgrade included new course gates and obstacles, a new timing system, refurbishment of pumps, stadium pathway improvements and canoe conveyer system upgrades. The 2025 championships will feature 10 medal events. The Fox sisters are also tipped to compete at the championships, along with

300 competitors from 50 nations. As the sport continues to evolve and thrive, the Fox family's impact will continue to resonate in Penrith and the paddling community for generations to come.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** They have done all right that Fox family, haven't they?

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN:** They are high achievers. They are pretty good with a paddle.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for Penrith for giving us all the incredible family details.

### REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (19:58):** I too acknowledge the Fox family. I reckon we were all proud as punch to see those images. The member for Penrith is absolutely right. What a time. What they have done for canoeing and kayaking in this nation is out of this world. I highlight how important it is that communities in regional New South Wales not only feel supported by their Government but also are supported by their Government. Recently in my community the Ulmarra Ferry was axed, a service that has served both the Southgate community and the Ulmarra community for generations—and I mean generations. It was a unique part of the Clarence Valley's transport system for years. The native forest industry in my electorate and across the mid-north and Northern Rivers is under stress. We have timber mills, timber owners and harvesters who are feeling a great deal of stress in their industry at the moment.

Earlier tonight we had a debate in this place about the dairy industry. Whilst Norco is not in a similar boat to some of those other industries, it could be seen as death by a thousand cuts. I note in tonight's debate the member for Lismore said we should not give up, and I agree with that, absolutely. I will not, and I do not think we will give up. We will continue to press the case to have our local Norco milk back in our local hospitals. It is an important point that is not lost on me and I am sure not lost on other members in this place. We are all here to represent our local area with passion and vigour in a respectful way. I will always do that while I am in this place.

Norco and the families who produce the milk for Norco are good, decent human beings. In many cases they are generational farmers who have been on the land, toiling away at four o'clock in the morning to milk the herd, and then again late at night, seven days a week, even on Christmas Day, because the animals on their farm need to be catered for. I will stand up for them in this place to ensure that they get a fair hearing and that their businesses and their farms receive every opportunity to have the Government's support. I acknowledge that this Government and the previous Government have supported them through what has been a catastrophic time. That of course is the 2022 floods. It is not the first flood they have seen and it will not be the last flood they will see, but it is most devastating.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** It was the worst flood.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** I agree with the member for Lismore, it was the worst flood. It was the biggest flood that caused the biggest mess and the biggest clean up. It had the biggest impact that a natural disaster has ever had on their business. I will go into bat for them and other members in this place will as well. Is it the biggest contract that Norco has? Probably not. But it is death by a thousand cuts. This time it is this place, previously it has been Woolworths, and into the future, who knows. We need to take a stance. We absolutely need to remind the decision-makers, whether they are in private enterprise or in this building, that their decisions hurt local people. This decision will.

I spent a couple of hours on Andrew Wilson's farm talking to him about the recovery. Where we stood was five metres under water during the flood. They lost everything, including some of their herd. It is important that we continue the fight for the bush, regional New South Wales and the people who make regional New South Wales tick. I will not stop and I know other members in this place will not stop either. We have it in our bones in the bush to stand up when we are under pressure. If I know one thing, it will bring us all together and closer as a community. I thank the House.

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (20:03):** I raise one of the most pressing issues facing the community in my electorate: the rising cost of living, especially for renters. For many, the rental market feels like a vast, turbulent sea. The waves of rising rent prices, insecurity and financial pressure threaten to sweep families, individuals and young people off course. It is the responsibility of government to be the lighthouse that guides them safely to shore, offering them stability amid the storm. The New South Wales Government is committed to be that guiding light, that beacon of hope, tackling the cost-of-living pressures for renters and building a fairer rental system that I hope will become the bedrock upon which families and young people can finally build their future. We live in a time where housing is no longer just a roof over our heads, it has become the largest single burden weighing on so many families.

Over 2.2 million people across this State are renters and that number continues to grow. In my electorate 57.6 per cent of residents are renters. The housing market is tighter than ever and it is pushing more people towards renting as a long-term solution. But with rent prices rising and vacancies shrinking, many renters feel like they are stuck in the endless cycle of stress and uncertainty. It is not just the cost of renting that is impacting on residents. Many hidden, insidious costs have emerged within this insufficiently regulated industry. It is in this environment that the Government is taking decisive steps to ease the strain, ensuring that the currents pushing renters further from shore are brought under control. One of the ways in which we can achieve this is by banning unfair background check fees. For too long renters have borne the unnecessary costs, such as paying for their own background check costs when applying for a home. These background check costs add another layer on to this already heavy load. This is the money that should stay in renters' pockets. By moving to outlaw this fee, we are ensuring the renters are not paying for something that should be covered by landlords.

Speaking of keeping money in renters' pockets, the New South Wales Government will soon be implementing Australia's first ever portable bond scheme. Think of the bond as a bridge. Right now when a renter moves from one home to another, they are often left stranded in between, waiting for the bond for their old home to be refunded, before they can afford to pay the bond for their new home. It is as though they are standing on one side of the chasm, unable to cross because they cannot afford the toll. But with this new scheme the bridge is built for them. We are investing \$6.6 million to ensure that renters can transfer their bond digitally from one property to the next. This means no more standing in limbo, taking out predatory short-term loans and waiting for funds that take weeks, if not months, to be returned. Renters will be able to move forward without financial anxiety and without the weight of paying double bonds.

The changes that this Labor Government is making are about more than just policies, they are about reshaping the landscape of renting. We are building a foundation upon which renters know that they are supported, respected and treated with fairness. We are constructing a system that does not pit renters against homeowners, but one where both can thrive in a balanced, equitable environment. The portable rental bond scheme is part of that vision. It is a tangible example of how we are creating bridges, not barriers. Just as a lighthouse guides ships safely to shore, these reforms will guide renters towards financial security, stable housing and peace of mind.

#### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:08):** I share a story about how a visit to a sawmill supplies store 26 years ago secured for a new worker a pair of steel-capped boots, a lifetime of service to the timber industry, and a husband. This is the story of Tumut's Sharon Musson and her husband, Greg. It serves not just to tell a love story that began in a timber mill depot, but also to illustrate the ways in which a sustainable timber industry supports lives, communities and the nation's economy. In 1998 when Miss Musson reported to the office to get her new boots, she was brand new to the timber industry, had never driven a car, and in her own words "didn't know one end of a piece of timber from another". The challenge of finding a pair of men's boots to fit a woman—still a relative rarity in the industry back then—attracted a crowd of co-workers, and among them was Greg Musson. The attraction between Greg and new employee Sharon was almost instant. Four years later they were married, on Norfolk Island of all places.

I share this story to showcase just two of the human faces that make up our timber industry. It is an industry that contributes almost \$1 billion to the New South Wales economy every year. The Mussons are among many thousands who sustainably produce and process the timber that goes into our houses and our economy. Like so many in the industry, they fear for the future because of the intense pressures on the forestry that they need, and that we all need. These are pressures such as insufficient areas for plantations, reduced access for sustainable logging and, of course, fire.

Our forests are living treasures, both environmentally and economically. We can and must manage our forests to help the environment, reduce fire risk and provide jobs and growth to regional communities. One way to do that is to consider the forestry industry's proposal to create strategic plantation establishment zones, a bit like renewable energy zones, but for trees. These zones would support sustainable harvesting by providing streamlined planning approval pathways; regulation for best practice management; infrastructure to support investment; and support for communities, including training and skills. In this way, we can build an expanded network of plantations with fire control and pest management measures built in and get good outcomes for the environment and jobs. And we can address an emerging issue: the broadscale planting of unmanaged forests for carbon credits. Unmanaged forests can become infested with weeds or overrun by vermin. Above all, unmanaged forests are a dangerous fire risk.

The delivery of strategic plantation establishment zones would effectively encourage managed forests on land that is better suited for sustainable and harvestable plantations. Under these zones, we would not lose forest jobs, which means we would not lose the specialist firefighters who are trained and equipped to detect and prevent forest fires. Without this skilled workforce, our forests lose their first line of defence against fire. In my electorate,



softwoods form the core of the forestry industry, but the same thinking could be applied to our native hardwood forests. Under the strategic plantation proposal, there is no reason that sustainable native forest logging should not continue with a science-based approach to selective logging that will preserve and enhance habitat while keeping thousands of people in work—people like Sharon and Greg Musson.

Sharon's size 5 men's boots have long since worn out, but her marriage to Greg is stronger than ever. Together, they have built their lives and supported their community through sustainable forestry. For Sharon—who came to Tumut greener than the plantation trees that cover the beautiful hills around the town—sustainable forestry provided skills and relationships that helped to define her life. Her love of the industry and its people inspired her to take a leadership role in her union, and through the union she has helped to grow the sector and support her community. The establishment of domestic violence leave for both men and women is just one of the union success stories during her time in her role. People like Sharon and Greg are the real faces of the forestry industry: hardworking, community-minded people who help to underpin the economy of our State. For these people, for the timber that we need to build our homes and for our economy, we need sustainable forestry to thrive for generations to come. To ensure that happens, we must expand and manage our harvestable forests. Creating strategic planting establishment zones is a great start, and the time to start is now.

### BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE NURSES AND MIDWIVES

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:13):** I recognise the nurses and midwives in my electorate of the Blue Mountains. I have many wonderful hardworking nurses and midwives who work in many different facilities in the Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial Hospital and Springwood Hospital or who travel out west to Lithgow or down the hill and across the river to the Nepean Hospital. They are extraordinary men and women. I recently had a meeting with some of them so that they could talk to me about their experiences over the past number of years. I heard with great sadness that many of them feel burnt out. Many talked about feeling demoralised, having to work extremely long hours in difficult circumstances and struggling to make ends meet.

I will share with the House, as I did with the nurses and midwives in my electorate, that our Minister for Health has stated that nothing is more important to him as the Minister than investing in our essential health workers and that, working in partnership with the Nurses and Midwives' Association and NSW Health, there are steps being taken to make sure nurse retention levels are dealt with. We on this side have improved the retention rates since coming to government. We invested heavily in the nursing workforce, including putting in \$572 million to save the jobs of over 1,000 nurses whose positions were unfunded from 1 July this year. We are rolling out the safe staffing levels, otherwise known as ratios, across the State; dealing with those gaps in emergency departments across metropolitan and regional New South Wales; and achieving nurse numbers at record levels, so increasing the workforce. Upon coming to government, the Minns Labor team removed the wages cap and delivered some much-needed wage increases.

I will share with the Chamber some of the comments of my constituents who are nurses and midwives. They are aware that, after years of lack of investment under the previous Government, there is much work to be done to repair our healthcare system. They acknowledge the actions that have already been taken. One of my nurses thanked me for my ongoing support. Long before I was elected as a member I was working alongside our nurses and midwives. Another one said,

I am both a Registered and a Nurse and a Registered Midwife, balancing shift work with caring for my two children as a single mother. The wage I currently earn means that we can only afford to live in a very small and old house on a busy road. My beautiful children are either up while it's still dark so that I can drop them off on my way to work, or staying with family while I work late or overnight shifts.

I acknowledged that that is a very tough situation, and I committed to taking these stories to our health Minister. That same nurse says:

During COVID, while we worked on the front line, the government chose to freeze our wages. My colleagues and I felt so unappreciated and demoralised as we worked in very difficult and stressful conditions.

...

For more than a decade, we've felt the impact of neglect under conservative governments. Our public health system has struggled from under-resourcing and lagging pay rates.

I acknowledge some of those tough stories that I heard from our nurses and midwives. I assure them that I will continue to raise those stories with our health Minister, our Treasurer and our Premier to acknowledge their work. I say to each and every one of them: We need to do more, and we will. There is a lot to recover in addressing those conditions. I value you.

### COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE SPORT

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:18):** Coffs Coast sports stars are hitting the headlines, courtesy of some outstanding achievements. They continue to capture the imagination of our community with their accomplishments, and we are fortunate these inspirational individuals reside in our region. Coffs Coast athlete Kyle McIntosh is an outstanding example of a sportsperson who continues to turn heads with stellar performances. Last week at Coffs Harbour's Fitzroy Oval, I presented Kyle with a NSW Government State Representative Award in recognition of his outstanding achievements. The Emerald Beach runner won an Open Para gold at the 2024 NSW Cross Country Championships at Nowra in June. He followed this with an Open Para silver at the national Cross Country Championships in Tasmania in August. Kyle has won multiple national cross country titles and is an outstanding ambassador for his sport and the Coffs Coast, where he is coached by Andrew Rowlings.

Another top Coffs Coast athlete is talented lawn bowler Joey Clarke, who has been selected by Bowls Australia to represent his country at the Oceania Challenge in November. The Toormina 19-year-old was selected on the 10-person team that will take on New Zealand and other nations in Auckland. He hopes it is the first of many occasions that he will don the green and gold. Joey's Australian selection continues his great year on the greens, which has also included winning the Park Beach Phoenix Pairs Championship. He has played locally for both the Sawtell Bowling Club and Park Beach Bowls Club and has spent the past 18 months playing for St Johns Park Bowling Club in the premier Sydney competition. Joey has won two national junior titles, having been a two-time under-18s Australian champion. He will head to New Zealand as part of the Performance Pathways team from the Right at Home Emerging and Pathways Jackaroos national squads.

Elsewhere, Nana Glen Cricket Club players have been busy ahead of the Coffs Harbour District Cricket Association season. Club junior Daniel Craig was selected in the under-17 NSW Country Academy Squad. The 16-year-old's call-up is quite the coup for his club. Eric Higgins and Bruce Mackie were selected in the New South Wales over-65s to play at the national championships in October. Glen Pearce was chosen in the New South Wales over-60s squad to play at the national championships in November, as well as the Australian over-60s team that will host the England over-60s in November and December. Glen is the fourth Nana Glen player to be selected in an Australian veterans cricket team.

On the footy field, the Sawtell Panthers women are the queens of Group 2 Rugby League, capping off a superb undefeated season by winning the inaugural Women's Tackle Premiership. Their perfect run culminated in a 20-12 grand final victory over the Woolgoolga Seahorses at C.ex Coffs International Stadium. It was the second straight title for the Panthers women, having also won last year's North Coast Women's Rugby League Premiership. Panthers vice-captain Zoie Shreiweis-Helback explained after the win why her side was able to remain undefeated this season. She said:

I think we just believe in each other and when you've got a strong side like we do, we know that each individual has put in the work, so you just feel safe as a team. We've put in the work, the girls work every training session and train really hard, and I don't think we go out any week and underestimate anyone. We go out ready to play and I think that's what got us over the line.

It is fantastic to see the growth of women's footy in Group 2 Rugby League. I congratulate all of our outstanding Coffs Coast sportsmen and sportswomen for flying the flag for our region. They should be extremely proud of their hard work, passion and determination as they continue to pave the way for others.

### COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:22):** Collaborative leadership is crucial for the development of Greater Western Sydney and fosters a culture of shared decision-making and innovation. The Collaborative Leadership Program [CLP], spearheaded by the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue, in partnership with the New South Wales Government and Western Sydney University, exemplifies that commitment. The five-day immersive executive program invests in the professional growth of the region's leaders, shaping a robust leadership class. The program provides participants with deep immersion in local institutions and communities, offering unique exposure to inspiring leaders. This year they welcomed 24 participants, expanding their alumni network to nearly 100 strong.

Collaborative leadership not only encourages inclusivity but also builds trust and transparency, empowering diverse voices to come together and drive development in the region. Earlier this month, I was privileged to meet with several key contributors, featuring a keynote by Professor Peter Shergold, AC, and a response panel with Dr Amanda Larkin, Violet Roumeliotis and myself, facilitated by Adam Leto. Our discussion highlighted Greater Western Sydney's pivotal role as a home for refugees and migrants. We also underscored the need for targeted support and resources to ensure that newly arrived families are set up for success, which, in turn, enriches the community with diverse skill sets and perspectives. I extend my gratitude to Chairman Christopher Brown, CEO Adam Leto and CLP Program Director Faith Halliday for leading the efforts. I also thank the

governors—Lucy Hughes Turnbull, AO; Monica Barone; Professor Barney Glover, AO; Simon Hickey; and Amanda Larkin—for supporting the invaluable initiative. I thank them for their work in shaping a brighter future for Western Sydney.

### HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:24):** Tonight I recognise the amazing work of yourtown San Miguel Family Centre, the Jeremiah Project, Hawkesbury's Helping Hands and PCYC Hawkesbury. I recently invited the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, shadow Minister for Families and Communities, Homelessness, Youth, and Disability Inclusion, and the Hon. Susan Carter, shadow Assistant Minister for Attorney General, shadow Assistant Special Minister of State and shadow Assistant Minister for Corrections to showcase these organisations and see the great work they do for the Hawkesbury Community. Yourtown San Miguel Family Centre is a child-centred family residential service providing intensive, individualised support to vulnerable young parents and their children. It aims to transform the lives of young parents and their children by improving their safety, wellbeing and life prospects. It was great to hear that it does this through counselling, employment services and educational opportunities.

The Jeremiah Project is a homeless ministry helping those in need of food, a warm shower, a place to clean their clothes and social interaction. It aims to extend the love and compassion of its committed volunteers, healing hearts and transforming lives from the inside out. It is through hope that a future outside of homelessness can seem possible. Hawkesbury's Helping Hands was started when an eight-year-old girl witnessed a hungry man rummaging through her family bin for food. With the support of her mother, the organisation has helped those experiencing or at risk of homelessness every day of the week for the past nine years. To date, over 500,000 meals have been served, on top of essential provisions such as food hampers, toiletries, clothing, shoes, blankets, sleeping bags, tents, swags and pet supplies.

PCYC Hawkesbury is the community's largest indoor sporting precinct. Its programs are focused on creating young leaders of the future and developing practical and real-life skills that can be applied to work, family and communities. That includes intervention programs and programs aimed around wellbeing and resilience. What all of those organisations have in common is a commitment to a future where people and children have the best possible chance of a great life outcome. To me, that outcome means that they can meet their psychological, safety and security needs. It means that they can form connections that build their sense of love and belonging. Above all, it means that no matter what their age or background, people can grow a strong sense of self-esteem through confidence, achievement, respecting others and finding their place as a unique individual.

During our visit to the yourtown San Miguel Family Centre, the Jeremiah Project and Hawkesbury's Helping Hands, it became very apparent that residents in Hawkesbury are becoming increasingly reliant on the assistance of such organisations. People with full-time jobs are at risk of homelessness while trying to keep up with essential everyday expenses. What makes it more concerning is that those organisations have found it less humiliating to their customers if they simulate a "shopping experience" for essential items, rather than appearing to be receiving a hand-out. While that is great in theory, it is not the solution.

Unfortunately, homelessness seems to be more prevalent with the increase in cost-of-living expenses, mental health diagnoses, domestic violence incidents, drug and alcohol addictions and gambling. It should not be left to organisations such as yourtown, the Jeremiah Project or Hawkesbury's Helping Hands to bear the brunt of the current crisis. Why should they be expected to plug the gap, especially when their funding is mostly through the generosity of donors, sponsors and fundraising efforts? Residents in Hawkesbury who reach out to government services for housing solutions are being sent out of the area, sometimes as far as Liverpool. The shift from where their roots are entrenched can cause anxiety, distress and uncertainty as they are forced to leave their connections and their community. I am calling on the Minns Labor Government to step up. When will temporary housing options be available in the Hawkesbury for those at risk of becoming homeless or those who are already in that spiralling predicament?

### PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE WATERWAYS

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (20:29):** As you enter Port Stephens via the water, the iconic, volcanic, majestic Yacaaba and Tomaree headlands stand guard on either side. The beauty of the bay unfolds before you, with Hawks Nest hugging the northern shoreline and stunning Shoal Bay to the south. I feel so fortunate to represent in this place such a magical part of the world. It is an electorate well known for its pristine waterways, boasting the biggest marine park in the State, alongside important rivers and countless coves and beaches loved by locals and visitors alike. My community's relationship with our waterways is special, whether we enjoy swimming, surfing, boating, fishing, dragon boat racing, outriggers or just breathing in the sheer beauty.

In recognition of the importance of our waterways to our community, the New South Wales Minns Labor Government is protecting, enhancing and investing in them. Here are just a few of our latest projects, starting at the top of my electorate in Tea Gardens, which sits on the majestic Myall River. The Tea Gardens jetty and boat ramp upgrade has just been completed, courtesy of a significant injection of more than half a million dollars under the New South Wales Government's Boating Now program. The upgrade includes widening and lengthening the existing boat ramp, installing a floating centre pontoon and extending the boat rigging area to align with the new boat ramp width. Those much-needed upgrades will improve access and safety for boat users just in time for the upcoming boating season. Critical to enjoying our waterways is access, which has been a growing concern when it comes to the Myall River due to increased sand inundation and siltation.

That is why our Government has delivered funding to MidCoast Council to drive a dredging program to keep the channels navigable. Having now sat in monthly meetings of a taskforce set up to keep the project on track, I have learnt how complex dredging is. Taking numerous factors into account, including the nesting season of the endangered little tern, we have worked hard to get the best possible outcome for the community, the boat users and the environment. Whilst we could have decided to push ahead earlier, we would have been limited to dredging the navigation channel only. By waiting until early next year, we can dredge three sites, including the Eastern Channel, which is vital to the health of the Myall River. Another update on that will be coming to the community soon, when the timing becomes clearer. In the meantime, I thank NSW Maritime for working closely with ferry operators to ensure that they can continue to operate until the dredging program gets underway.

On the other side of the bay sits the Port Stephens Fisheries Institute at Taylors Beach, which plays a vital role in the State's biosecurity surveillance, emergency responses and securing the future of commercial fisheries. The institute focuses on research in aquaculture, freshwater and marine ecosystems, aquatic biosecurity and habitat management, and fisheries resource assessment. As part of the New South Wales Labor Government's historic \$60 million investment in research stations across the State, Port Stephens Fisheries Institute is benefiting from a \$3 million injection to safeguard the future of our commercial fishing industry, delivering vital upgrades to enhance breeding facilities for oysters and finfish, allowing research to support innovation in commercial fisheries.

I recently had a very special opportunity to see firsthand some of the important work that is done by the Port Stephens Fisheries Institute. I got to help release an animal I never thought I would see—baby seahorses. With the Minister for Agriculture, Tara Moriarty, I helped release 132 endangered White's seahorse babies into the pristine waters off Little Beach. The entire baby seahorse herd was bred at our fisheries institute and I am told that there are many more to come. We were, of course, undertaking the very serious work of helping to save a species from extinction, but I have to say that baby seahorses are really cute. The baby seahorse herd was checked into seahorse hotels by Senior Research Scientist Dave Harasti whilst 400 primary school students from across the Hunter watched on with woots and cheers.

The students were Seahorse Saviours, who had taken part in a program to build the seahorse hotels and were on hand on the day to deploy the hotels they had made. Not only was the whole initiative exceptionally cute but it also highlights the Government's commitment to preserving Port Stephens' unique marine life and restoring our important ecosystems. One young Seahorse Saviour summed it up well when she said, "It's so exciting to know we are helping the seahorses to be not endangered." Our waterways are the lifeblood of our community and the Minns Labor Government is investing in our very special natural assets in many ways.

### TUNCURRY SLIPWAY

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (20:34):** I address a pressing issue that has been a growing concern in my electorate—the urgent need for funding to replace the Tuncurry slipway. The Tuncurry slipway has served our community for nearly 150 years, dating back to the establishment of Tuncurry in 1875. Originally a sawmill and shipyard, it has evolved into a vital facility for maintenance and repair services for vessels navigating the Myall Lakes waterways. Its existence is not just a matter of convenience; it plays a critical role in safeguarding our environment by ensuring that our waterways remain clean and free from contaminants. However, the reality is that the slipway's infrastructure has deteriorated to the point where it no longer meets modern environmental standards.

In February 2021 the Coalition Government announced \$4.9 million in maritime stimulus funding aimed at upgrading this essential facility. The project promised several benefits, including increased community access to the slipway, enhanced safety for users, and improved protection of the Wallis Lake marine environment through upgraded drainage and wastewater treatment systems. Regrettably, that funding has since been redirected to another project, leaving our community without this critical facility. The consequences have been profound. Local boaters, once able to access the slipway within minutes, now face a daunting journey of up to 200 kilometres to reach the nearest slipway in Nelson Bay. That can take around 10 to 12 hours on the water, posing significant logistical challenges and compromising the safety of vessels that may require urgent maintenance.

That situation impacts not only recreational boaters but also essential services like the Forster Tuncurry Marine Rescue. That organisation plays a vital role in providing emergency support and ensuring safety on our waterways. Without local access to a functioning slipway, its ability to respond swiftly to emergencies is jeopardised. We cannot afford to compromise the safety and readiness of our marine rescue operations. Moreover, our region boasts one of the highest numbers of boat registrations per capita in New South Wales. Our local waterways are heavily utilised, particularly as we approach the tourist season. The Tuncurry slipway is not just a local asset; it is a hub in our maritime infrastructure that supports the broader boating community along the east coast of Australia. I have received numerous urgent requests from locals over the past year calling for the replacement of this essential infrastructure.

It is also important to note that the Tuncurry slipway was the only public slipway between Coffs Harbour and Newcastle capable of servicing larger vessels. The absence of that facility has severely limited the options for local boaters and has had a ripple effect on our economy, particularly in the marine and fishing industries that rely on consistent access to maintenance and repair services. I acknowledge the Minister for Transport for her assistance with this matter so far. However, I stress that the longer we delay restoring the slipway, the greater the risk to our local community and the safety of our visitors. I am aware that there have been concept designs put forward and that Transport for NSW is actively seeking funding for this project, but we need action now. Providing funding for the Tuncurry slipway is about more than just restoring a facility; it is about protecting our community's safety and supporting our local economy.

The proposed upgrades aim to deliver a modern slipway with best-practice environmental controls, enhancing safety and protecting the sensitive Wallis Lake ecosystem. I urge the Minister and the Government to prioritise this project. The Tuncurry slipway is essential not only for our local community but also for the marine community up and down the coast. We need the slipway to ensure the continued safety, sustainability and economic vitality of our region. I call on the Government to support this vital project, not just for the present generation but also for the future generations who will rely on these waterways.

#### HAZARA RELIGIOUS MINORITY

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (20:39):** Many members in this Chamber understand the profound impact that global conflicts have on communities, particularly within my electorate of Auburn. As a representative of a diverse community that includes large Ukrainian and Palestinian populations, the current conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine weigh heavily on our hearts. However, while these conflicts are prominent in the public eye, it is crucial to remember that other parts of the world are also suffering from immense turmoil, and that suffering reaches deeply into our local community. Alongside the pain felt from the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, the ongoing violence in countries like South Sudan and Afghanistan continues to take a toll, especially for those who have sought refuge in our State.

Those conflicts may not dominate the headlines, but their effects are equally devastating. Last night I had the honour of attending a candlelight vigil organized by the Kateb Hazara Association in Auburn. The vigil was held to remember the victims of a brutal attack that occurred on 12 September in a remote Hazara village in Daikundi Province. Gunmen affiliated with the Islamic State Khorasan Province [ISKP] launched a ruthless assault, resulting in the horrific deaths of 14 innocent Hazara civilians, with many others injured as they travelled between Ghor and Daikundi provinces. The attack is not an isolated incident. It is yet another tragic chapter in the long history of violence against the Hazara people, an ethnic minority that has faced repeated persecution for generations. Azra Jafari, the former mayor of Nili in Daikundi Province, noted the following during a cross-party inquiry by UK politicians:

With the fall of the Afghan Government in August 2021, the Taliban took over control of Afghanistan once again, undoing twenty years of progress. Hazaras now find themselves in the same dire situation they faced from 1998 to 2001—facing arbitrary arrests, mass killings, forced displacement, and the confiscation of their lands in provinces like Daikundi and Ghazni.

Earlier this year, on 6 January, a minibus carrying civilians was attacked by ISKP militants in the predominantly Hazara area of Dasht-e-Barchi, killing five and injuring 15. Sadly, this was only the beginning. In the months that followed, the ISKP launched several more brutal attacks, with many others unclaimed yet bearing similar hallmarks of violence. In the first 20 months since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, over 345 Hazara individuals have been killed or wounded. Between August and November of last year, the United Nations recorded eight separate attacks by ISKP targeting Shia civilians, further escalating the terror faced by the Hazara community. These attacks are not only frequent but also devastating in their scope.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has noted ISKP's involvement in several high-profile bombings, including the attack at Kabul's Hamid Karzai airport on 26 August 2021, which claimed more than 180 lives, the majority of whom were civilians. ISKP was also responsible for the bombing of a Shia mosque in Kunduz Province on 8 October of that same year, killing over 70 people, most of them Hazaras. Another suicide bombing targeted a mosque in Kandahar Province just a week later, killing 63 more. Human Rights Watch and

other international organisations have expressed grave concerns over the Taliban's failure to protect religious minorities like the Hazaras from such attacks.

The impunity with which ISKP operates leaves vulnerable communities living in constant fear, unable to access food, education, shelter or safety. The forced evictions of Hazaras from their ancestral lands in provinces like Daikundi, Uruzgan and Kandahar further exacerbate this tragedy. According to reports, nearly 2,800 Hazara residents were forcibly removed from 15 villages in September 2021 alone. For members of my community in Auburn, this violence feels personal. The day-to-day grief of not knowing whether the next attack will claim the life of a brother, sister, father or mother is a heavy burden to bear.

After two decades of international involvement in Afghanistan, we must reflect on the current risk. While the evacuation of over 100,000 Afghans in the aftermath of the Taliban's resurgence was a significant achievement, we must not forget those who were left behind, still enduring unimaginable hardship. As we continue to witness conflicts and violence worldwide, we must be mindful of the suffering of all those affected, not just in the war-torn regions we hear about most often but also in the less publicised parts of the world where violence persists. The families in my community ask that we remember their pain and acknowledge the immense sacrifices they continue to endure.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** Before I call the member for Ryde, I acknowledge and welcome my special guests in the gallery. They are school captains and vice-captains from Concord High School, Domremy College and Rosebank College. I also welcome principals Victor Newby and Antoinette McGahan.

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

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (20:44):** I welcome the guests in the gallery. They may appreciate some of what I have to say in my private member's statement, because I suspect it may relate to those of them who catch public transport. I speak to a number of ways that I believe the Government could apologise for the delays associated with the Sydney Metro opening. The catalyst for major bus timetable changes last month was the opening of Sydney Metro. That was what the Government sold us. The only problem was the metro did not open on time. Yet, like an episode of *Utopia*, the bus timetable changed anyway.

In my electorate of Ryde, some went without any weekend services at all. It was, for lack of a more imaginative pun, a bit of a train wreck. During that period I felt sorry for the Sydney Metro staff, who stood forlornly outside of the train stations in their "Ask Me" T-shirts. How did they respond when asked, "Where is the metro?" Of course, we have already moved on from this bungle, as the visionary infrastructure project of the former Government now sustains our growing city. In the spirit of being optimistic, there is opportunity in this difficulty: an opportunity for the Government to say sorry in five simple ways, transforming commuter anger into long-term progress.

First, do not make us pay for your metro delay. People impacted by delays should get their fares back. In opposition, Labor demanded commuters receive fare-free days whenever there was a train delay. With the metro delay debacle, the silence from the now Government has been deafening. In the words of then shadow transport Minister Jo Haylen, "It is clear there is no accountability. No-one knows who is in charge, and passengers are yet again paying the price." There should be fare-free days for every day that that mess continued.

Second, this is an opportunity to reboot the network. If Chris Minns insists on having public servants return to the office, we will need more frequent transport services. After all, adding thousands more workers onto already crowded trains is just the cherry on top of the time, productivity and flexibility that are being lost on the morning commute, not to mention the cost. The Australian commute report revealed that the average daily office commute costs Australians \$5,020 annually. And it is only getting worse, with Opal fares rising by 3.7 per cent in October last year. With the cost of everything going up, the least that the Government can do is provide free wi-fi on the journey. There is good precedent for wi-fi on trains in Seoul and buses in Seattle, and yet Sydney lags behind. It is time we caught up and made public transport more worker-friendly.

Third, power to the people, please, Minister. As people are increasingly reliant on their devices, they need chargers, and not the stationary chargers at hot, crowded Wynyard station that commuters in Katoomba and Wollongong will rarely use. I am talking about chargers on trains. Again, there are multiple international examples—London's Elizabeth line being one—yet in New South Wales, those travelling long distances lug around battery packs like it is 2008. New train and bus fleets offer an opportunity for integrated charging facilities. However, there also needs to be a concerted effort to retrofit the old fleets so nobody is disadvantaged. Fourth, let our pets fetch a ride. We need to wake up to the reality of pet ownership in apartments. If the Premier wants to build more apartments around train stations and get cars off our congested roads, then we cannot continue to have

some of the least pet-friendly transport networks in the developed world. I have long advocated a trial of pets on certain carriages, provided they are tethered or contained, and board during non-peak times.

Fifth, failing to plan is a plan to fail. It is time to modernise transport planning apps. New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority app gives users the ability to do more than peruse a timetable. It is an intuitive planning tool that allows users to map a whole multimodal journey from current location to final destination. These tools are a one-stop shop, giving directions to transport nodes. They can tell users the fastest, cheapest and simplest routes within a single search. We could say goodbye to app duplication and save everyone a bit of time, money and inconvenience. These initiatives will take some of that vision that Dominic Perrottet articulated in his valedictory speech, which since the last election has well and truly stagnated. This is an opportunity to get on the right track, to say sorry to those inconvenienced commuters and to do something positive for the future of New South Wales.

### SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (20:48):** Today I speak about an important issue raised by the young people in my electorate: the impact of social media on their lives. Recently 12 members of Strathfield's Youth Advisory Board participated in a focus group to discuss social media ahead of the upcoming Social Media Summit in New South Wales and South Australia. Their insights are both enlightening and concerning, reflecting the dual-edge nature of this ubiquitous technology in the lives of young Australians. On the positive side, many young people emphasise the crucial role that social media plays in staying connected. In an increasingly globalised world, platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube allow them to maintain friendships that span years and miles. As one participant, referring to staying connected with childhood friends long after moving to different schools, put it, "It's just nice to know that you can still somehow keep in touch with them."

Social media also provides a gateway to learning. Several students pointed out that YouTube has become a valuable resource for subjects they struggle with in school. One student remarked, highlighting the educational potential of those platforms, "There's this one guy on YouTube that teaches the entire IB biology course, and it's really good." Additionally, access to niche communities was seen as a way to find support and shared interests, particularly for those who may feel isolated in their immediate environment. Another participant said, "Social media brings a way to broaden horizons and feel involved in communities." However, the conversation also revealed deep concerns about the harmful effects of social media.

While there are benefits, many young people felt that the negatives outweigh the positives. One student poignantly stated, "What you would lose without social media is nothing compared to what you gain in time." Another said, "I spend hours a day just scrolling. I genuinely noticed myself not being able to pay attention in class." Indeed, a recurring theme in the discussion was the impact of mindless scrolling—also called doomscrolling or death scrolling—and the dopamine-driven design of platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels. The constant stream of short-form content, engineered to capture attention, often leads to hours of unproductive scrolling. Echoing a concern many shared about how those platforms exploit their focus and mental wellbeing, one student said, "It's just a constant stream of dopamine. It's very well-crafted to suck you in."

Several admitted their school grades had suffered as a result of social media overuse, with one participant recounting, "I got almost straight Bs and then straight Cs. I've got to change." In other words, the young people were very self-aware of the harm that social media was causing them, but they just could not do anything about it and they found it frustrating. It made them anxious. In other words, it is an addiction. The impact on mental health was a serious concern. Young people in Strathfield noted that social media often fosters unhealthy comparisons when carefully curated snapshots of perfection leave them feeling inadequate. Reflecting on the harmful effects of constant comparison on self-worth and mental health, one participant shared:

I followed someone who was always posting about her perfect life. It made me feel bad when I didn't have straight A's or didn't look my best that day.

The young people also raised the serious issue of online bullying and scams. Anonymous online environments make it easier for harmful behaviours to go unchecked. One person explained, "It's really easy to leave negative comments online because you're not seeing them face to face." Scams and security breaches, too, have left many young people feeling vulnerable and anxious about their online privacy. But what stood out to me was the thoughtful consideration those young people had given to potential solutions. Many advocated for stronger age restrictions and government regulation, likening social media to other regulated industries like alcohol or gambling. One young person suggested:

The government should step in like they do for alcohol or cigarettes, especially because we haven't seen the full extent of what these screens can do to kids.

They also called for more control over their social media experience, with suggestions like the ability to turn off short-form content entirely. One board member said, "If there was an option to turn off short-form content, it

would eliminate some of the issues we're talking about." The insights of those young people must be heeded. Their experiences reflect the growing reality of those in the digital age. Let us hope we hear their voices in the upcoming Social Media Summit.

### MICHAEL BRYCE

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:53):** Every member in this House will remember an educator who changed the course of their life. For many young people in the Liverpool electorate, particularly those from the valley, that person is Michael Bryce, who recently retired as principal of Bonnyrigg High School [BHS]. This day has been over 16 years coming since he first walked into the high school in 2007. The school is not the same school as it was then thanks in no small part to the leadership of Mr Bryce. He is the longest serving of the eight principals the school has had since it was established in 1961. He was with the Department of Education for almost 45 years but, in his own words, his time at Bonnyrigg has been the best.

When he started, BHS had only 670 students. Today the school has in excess of 1,625 students, with an overall staff approaching 170. Today, Bonnyrigg is recognised as a school that caters for all. Over his tenure at the school, Mr Bryce can list many achievements, especially those of the major projects kind. The huge growth in the student population meant that a corresponding expansion of space and facilities was needed. To that end, he met with every local New South Wales State Parliament member, every director-general or secretary of the department and all but one Minister to try to get the department to improve the buildings at BHS. Indeed, he was immediately in contact with me following my election to this place to offer a tour of the school to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of the students and of the community.

It is a testament to Mr Bryce's advocacy that both the Minister and the Treasurer visited BHS this year, and that our Government announced necessary funding for urgent maintenance upgrades at the school. I hope that, in due course, "demountables city" will be replaced by permanent buildings. Some of the other works that make up his legacy include establishing a trade training centre, including hospitality kitchens, with a Federal grant of \$1.5 million; refurbishing the school basketball sports facility and the construction of a separate fitness centre; completely refurbishing the library area, which was funded by a donation organised by the principal; constructing a community first aid centre for St John Ambulance's cadet division; and upgrading the canteen, all of which were funded by the school.

But that is only a very small selection of the huge impacts Michael Bryce has made to the many thousands of students who pass through the gates and go on and do great things in their lives. Indeed, I believe we have an alumni of Bonnyrigg High School in the House today. I believe they look back on their time at BHS with fond memories. In Mr Bryce's words, the only negative has come from every ex-student stating, "You took down the green wall. We used to smoke behind that." Progress sometimes has a disadvantage. Students and members of the P&C said:

Inevitably, with Mr Bryce being our longest standing principle, there is a deep attachment present amongst many people at Bonnyrigg High School, but his attentiveness and care play a large role in the connections he developed with Bonnyrigg students and teachers. Truthfully, his newsworthiness could be attributed not to one reason and "memorable" would be insufficient to describe him.

While his resemblance to Colonel Sanders may be one reason, his extensive tie collection was another. And his dad jokes were some of the student representative council's favourites. But, out of all the reasons that we could list, his outstanding work garnered gratitude from everyone. Although we were only at school to experience five of the 17 years Mr Bryce was Bonnyrigg's principal, his involvement with the SRC was enough to know that he was an extremely dedicated and devoted principal. He always strongly supported the SRC, meeting regularly with the senior executive to discuss upcoming school projects, and was always open to the SRC's suggestions on improvements and events that the school needed.

On behalf of both past and present SRC representatives, we are extremely appreciative of his ongoing commitment to the growth of our school's reputation and infrastructure, and the wellbeing of our students, overseeing 40 major projects and upgrades since 2007. I thank Mr Bryce for always working tirelessly for the greater good of the school.

That was a message from the SRC and the P&C of the school, but on behalf of our broader community and on behalf of the many people who have been impacted by his legacy, I thank Mr Bryce. We wish him well. We know that Bonnyrigg will thrive because of him.

### BUILDING INDUSTRY

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (20:58):** I note the speech of the member for Liverpool and, as a former student of Bonnyrigg High School who has two kids there currently, I also acknowledge Mr Bryce. He has done a fantastic job. The building industry, one of the cornerstones of our economy, has long been beset with dodgy dealings, corruption and blatant disregard for safety and ethical standards. However, if we expect to clean up the industry with some old-fashioned union bashing, we are delusional. To ignore the rest of the industry is disingenuous and does a disservice to the community. A cancer can only be genuinely cured when we rid it from the entire body. Let me be crystal clear: I have zero tolerance for corruption and criminality anywhere. My record as a councillor and my time in this place makes that very evident.



Despite the many column inches, prime-time exposes and hot air from the shock jocks, we still see bad actors cutting corners, bending the rules and putting profits ahead of people across the entire construction industry—and that is happening all over the world. The word "Grenfell" is permanently etched into our collective consciousness. What was once the name of an unassuming tower block in London is now a symbol of greed, incompetence and lack of oversight in the building industry—and the tragic location where 72 lives were lost. The inquiry into Grenfell recently handed down its final report. Chair Sir Martin Moore-Bick stated, "The simple truth is the deaths that occurred were all avoidable."

The inquiry put the blame squarely at the feet of systematic dishonesty by multimillion-dollar companies and decades of failure by governments. It is a morbid reminder of what happens when we allow weak regulations to go unchecked and unchallenged in the absence of a strong union movement. Thankfully, we have not seen a similar tragedy here, but we do continue to deal with the fallout from flammable cladding. Names like Opal Tower and Mascot Towers point to the local consequences of weak regulation and corner cutting. In recent years we have seen stories of dodgy certifiers, the exploits of Jean Nassif and the firebombing of friendlyjordies' home. Last month a Sydney property developer was exposed in a damning case of money laundering linked to a tax avoidance scheme. Ultimately he was forced to repay \$11 million.

Just this week *The Guardian* revealed that two individuals convicted of dishonesty offences have been allowed back into the real estate industry within the usual 10-year prohibition period. Gaps in the law have allowed convicted money launderers back into the industry. Hundreds of complaints were lodged involving agents operating without a licence. Investigators found multiple agents selling properties without being listed on public registers. My own community of Leppington, which has shouldered a significant share of the State's housing growth, has not been spared the horror stories. My office has been inundated with reports of shonky builders—one of which I will have more to say about soon.

The Government acknowledged those issues last November in Leppington, when the Premier, the Minister, the Building Commissioner and I announced an expansion of the Building Commissioner's powers. While those important changes were a response to past scandals, they also had an eye on the future. At that announcement the Premier said:

We're delivering more homes across the state, but we won't let quantity get in the way of quality.

Tackling the housing crisis is one of the cornerstones of this Government's agenda. Transport oriented developments, first home buyers grants, more rights for renters, reforms to the planning process and the biggest investment in social housing we have ever seen will assist people to enter the housing market. However, the Government also recognises that this will increase the need to keep shonks out of the industry. But we cannot do it alone. Unions like the CFMEU play a crucial part in holding the industry to account. They advocate for safer working conditions, fair wages and higher standards in construction.

Without the strength of organised labour, there is little to no counterbalance to the power of the almighty dollar that many developers flagrantly wield. We must stamp out corruption and criminality across all elements of society, including the entire building industry. We must also hold everyone to the same standards—whether they wear a hard hat on a construction site or an Armani suit in the boardroom. The building industry must be cleaned up from top to bottom, and that means better regulation, a commitment to putting people before profit and, most importantly, strong and reputable unions.

### SMALL BUSINESSES

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (21:03):** I address an issue close to my heart—the importance of small businesses to our community and the need for genuine support to help them thrive, particularly in these challenging times. Small businesses are the backbone of my electorate of Willoughby and communities across New South Wales. They are not just economic entities. They are where families build their futures, where innovation is born and where multiculturalism thrives—among many other great dynamics. Our small business community truly reflects the diversity and vibrancy that makes Willoughby so unique and special. Just the other week I had the pleasure of attending the opening of Momo Adda, a new Nepalese street food restaurant in Artarmon that showcases the rich multicultural spirit of our area. As a proud member of the Chatswood Chamber of Commerce, I am committed to supporting and engaging with our local small businesses, which are the heartbeat of our community.

Recently I renewed my membership with the Chatswood Chamber of Commerce and was pleased to participate in an event it organised—a ride on the new Sydney Metro from Chatswood to Barangaroo. The event was more than just a journey; it was a powerful symbol of connectivity, collaboration and growth. It represented what we can achieve when community, government and business work together. The new Sydney Metro has brought significant benefits to our local economy, particularly to local small businesses. Improved infrastructure leads to improved access and greater opportunities, including in economic terms. On the opening day of the metro

I spoke with a commuter from Belmore who works in Chatswood. He said that over the course of a week he stood to save a total of 10 hours on his commute. He plans to dedicate that extra time to establishing a small business on the side—a perfect example of how investment in infrastructure can foster entrepreneurship and economic growth. When we make it easier for people to access our community, we enable our small businesses to flourish.

Recently I had the honour of attending the 2024 North Shore Local Business Awards presentation evening at Norths Cammeray. Local initiatives like awards nights play a vital role in celebrating the contributions of small businesses to our community. Those awards not only recognise success; they also highlight the dedication, innovation and resilience that define our local small businesspeople. It is an opportunity to showcase the incredible range of businesses that call our area home, and to emphasise their importance in making our community what it is today. I also acknowledge my colleague the shadow Assistant Minister for Jobs and Small Business, the member for Badgerys Creek, who attended the Australian Trades Small Business Champion Awards, further demonstrating the Opposition's commitment to supporting small businesses. I extend my deepest gratitude to all the businesses in Willoughby and across New South Wales for their hard work and contribution to our great State.

Small businesses employ nearly two million people in New South Wales, which accounts for almost half of private sector employment. Their role in our economy is undeniable, and it is crucial that we continue to support them every step of the way. While in government, the Coalition introduced several initiatives to support small businesses, including cost-of-living relief measures that provided consumers with more disposable income to spend on local businesses. During the height of COVID, we established the micro-business grant, among other initiatives. On coming to government in 2011 we appointed a Small Business Commissioner to advocate for and support small businesses. We connected small businesses to Service NSW through Business Concierge. Those were a few of the practical measures that we designed to help our small business sector weather the COVID storm and emerge stronger. We understood the challenges they faced and acted decisively to provide relief.

Regrettably, the situation for small businesses has become increasingly dire. Electricity prices and rents are rising and consumer confidence has fallen. Indeed, business insolvencies have increased by 41 per cent over the past 12 months. Small businesses are doing it tough and they need support now more than ever. The current Government's lack of support for small businesses is unacceptable. The Government has been too slow to act and, when it has acted, the measures have often been inadequate. Mixed messages about how to handle issues such as supposedly fraudulent COVID-19 micro-business loans have only added to the uncertainty and confusion. One day the Government says it is systemic fraud; the next there is a call for caution in investigations. As has been well reported, this leaves many small businesses caught in the middle, unsure of where they stand or what support is available to them. I call on the Government to do more to foster growth and confidence in the small business sector. I note the Minister is in the Chamber—

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** The Opposition was in government when it established the fraud.

**Mr TIM JAMES:** The Minister will have his chance. Small businesses are the heartbeat of our communities and their success is essential to our State's prosperity. It is time for the Government to take meaningful action to provide real support, reduce red tape and foster a strong environment for growth. We cannot afford to neglect our small businesses. They deserve better. I will continue to stand up for the small businesses in Willoughby and across New South Wales. I will advocate for the resources, support and policies they need to thrive. We must ensure that our small businesses not only survive but also continue to be the vibrant heart of our communities.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:08 until  
Thursday 19 September 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

**According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.**

**KEN Warburton – SYLVANVALE PRE WORLD WAR II CAR SHOW**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the efforts of Ken Warburton of Burraneer, who organised a very successful Sylvanvale Pre World War II Car Show again this year. The show is now in its eighth year and raises fund for clients at Shire based disability organisation Sylvanvale, which provides services for more than 750 children and adults throughout Sydney and the Blue Mountains. The show was started by Ken whose parents were part of the founding group of parents who established Sylvanvale in 1947. Thousands of car enthusiasts and families descended on Sutherland for this year's show to enjoy a gleaming array of vintage vehicles, together with food stalls and raffles. The magnificent cars were complimented by colourful period costumes that gave visitors a special trip down memory lane. This year's event raised more than \$47,000 which will go towards the purchase and modification of a new wheelchair accessible van that will enable people with

disability to access the community. The show is a passion project for Ken and I congratulate him and the Sylvanvale team, and all of the volunteers who brought the day together for a great cause.

#### **ERNESTO YOUNG**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Cronulla dancer Ernesto Young on being named one of the winners of the prestigious Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition. 'The Fonteyn' attracts the finest young dancers from around the globe who are trained in the Royal Academy of Dance syllabus. The competition is dedicated to promoting and rewarding standards of excellence in young ballet dancers internationally and offers candidates the unique opportunity to work with world-renowned choreographers and professionals, as well as the chance to perform on an international stage. 64 dedicated dancers started the competition and Ernesto was one of 12 finalists who took to the grand stage of His Majesty's Theatre in London's West End and captivated audiences and judges. Ernesto took out the bronze medal and won Dancer's Own Choreographic Award on what was described as "A night of artistry and emotion". The Royal Academy of Dance says Ernesto is becoming known for his dynamic style and creative spirit and that his journey to The Fonteyn is a testament to his hard work and artistic growth.

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF CRONULLA**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the leadership team of the Rotary Club of Cronulla for its work to serve the community over the last 12 months. I was delighted to attend the club's annual handover dinner in late June as outgoing president Jean-Philippe de Jong passed the baton to Margaret Johnson for the next annual term. Among the club's achievements over the last year has been implementation of the Intergenerational Learning and Wellbeing Program at St Aloysius Primary School Cronulla and Our Lady of Fatima Primary School Caringbah. The club has partnered with Cronulla RSL to introduce the program that sees school students and seniors discussing curriculum topics or cultural events. The program helps students develop empathy and gratitude, while improving the mood and wellbeing of senior adults by reducing their loneliness and isolation. Thanks to its success the club is now working to involve other schools and aged care facilities. Jean-Phillippe has been described by Margaret as a "visionary leader" and I congratulate him on his 12-month term. I wish Margaret well as President, together with past Presidents Carol Denison and Lyn Bates who will be sharing the leadership with her.

#### **RALEIGH SCHOOL CELEBRATES 150 YEARS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Raleigh Public School's youngest student, Macey Winzer, and its oldest attending former student, Pat Sinclair, came together to cut the cake in celebration of the schools 150th anniversary. More than 100 people gathered at the school, marking an incredible milestone for a small school that embodies the beauty of close-knit, rural education. With 27 students, reaching 150 years is a significant achievement. Small schools like Raleigh are the heart of rural communities, it wasn't just a celebration of the school, but the whole community. Raleigh Public School is a shining example of how a smaller student body fosters a sense of belonging and collaboration that is often lost in larger schools. The birthday bash featured plenty of food, market stalls, and the unveiling of a new cow 'Sunny' - a monument to Raleigh's proud dairy farming history. The celebration also gave the community a chance to admire student projects and historical displays, showcasing the school's past and present contributions to education. Happy Birthday Raleigh Public School! And well done to the dedicated staff, parents and everyone who keeps the school thriving.

#### **KEMPSEY-CRESCENT HEAD SURF CLUB BRING HOME SILVER MEDALS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Today, I rise to congratulate the Kempsey-Crescent Head Surf Club 140s and 240s boat crew, who braved the waters and brought home two silver medals at the Lifesaving World Championships. The 240s Boat Crew delivered an excellent performance, winning all three heats and advancing to the Lifesaving World Championship finals. Their hard work and determination earning them the World silver medallist's title. Equally impressive was the 140s Boat Crew, who represented our region with distinction and also secured the title of World silver medallists. This is a remarkable achievement for a small club in the Macleay Valley, showcasing the exceptional talent within our local community. These accomplishments are a testament to the dedication, teamwork, and spirit of the Kempsey-Crescent Head Surf Club members. I commend every one of them for their outstanding efforts and for representing our region on the world stage. Well done to the Kempsey-Crescent Head Surf Club members – your achievements you have done our community proud. Congratulations on this incredible success!

#### **NAMBUCCA HEADS HIGH SCHOOL OPEN BOYS TOUCH TEAM**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—It is with immense pride that we celebrate the remarkable achievement of the Nambucca Heads High School Open Boys Touch Football team, who recently secured 5th place in the State Championships. Their performance at the carnival was nothing short of outstanding. On Day 1, the team faced

tough competition, starting with a narrow 6-5 loss to Balgowlah and a 10-5 defeat against Hunter Sports High. However, their resilience shone through with a solid 6-4 victory over Leeton. Day 2 brought a well-deserved 9-4 win against Endeavour Sports High, showcasing their skill, teamwork, and determination. Congratulations to each member of the NHHS Open Boys Touch team for your dedication and hard work. Your performance not only highlights your individual talents but also the strength and spirit of our community. A heartfelt thank you to the coaches, families, and supporters who have cheered you on every step of the way. Your achievements are an inspiration and a testament to the extraordinary talent within Nambucca Heads. Keep up the great work and continue striving for excellence!

#### **BEEF WEEK 2024**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the Beef Week team for another successful event for 2024. Casino came to life for the annual and now iconic Casino Beef Week celebration earlier in the year. Over almost two weeks the celebration filled the town with visitors, there to see the variety of events. A grand evening was had with the Opening Ball held at the Casino RSM. There were dinners, markets, horse races and train trips. One of my highlights was the ride on the Rainforest Rattler travelling from South Grafton to Casino on a beautiful crisp morning, what an experience. There was an Orchid Show and the annual Street Parade which drew a record crowd and entries into this year's event. Congratulations to Annaleise Barrett who was crowned the Casino Beef Week Queen, and Ellie Brettner who was runner-up. Great job to all the entrants as they presented themselves exceptionally well. Well done to the 2024 Northern Rivers Times Casino Beef Week Ambassadors Daniel Keogh, Ella Boag & Stella Dean also. Congratulations to everyone on another amazing event for the region, I look forward to 2025, bound to be bigger and even better next year.

#### **CASINO TRUCK SHOW - 2024**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—My congratulations go to the organising committee Coordinator Darren Goodwin, Richmond Valley Council staff and industry volunteers who pulled together another phenomenal annual North Coast Petroleum Casino Truck Show this year. Known as one of the greatest truck shows in the southern hemisphere, the event, held in the Casino town centre, saw locals along with tens of thousands of visitors from far and wide, enjoying a day of trucks and automotive excellence. Drawing a record crowd with more than 30,000 attendees, the Casino Truck Show now stands out as one of the biggest single-day events in regional NSW. This year's event featured a diverse range of trucks, from vintage classics to high-tech models, live music performances, food stalls, industry exhibitors and activities for children. The family-friendly environment ensured residents and visitors of all ages had a memorable experience. Offering something for everyone, the unforgettable celebration of community spirit and trucking life passion received positive feedback from everyone who attended, with almost all saying they would be back next year. Going from strength to strength, I imagine the 2025 event will be even bigger and better, well done!

#### **SCOUT AWARDS - REECE LUXTON AND KEVIN GOODING**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate two scout leaders from the Clarence Valley who were recently recognized on World Scout Day, for their valuable contributions to the Scout movement. I would firstly like to acknowledge Reece Luxton, the Group Leader in Charge of the Grafton Scout Group who was awarded the Silver Wattle. I am told that this honour is given for outstanding service to Scouts Australia as an Adult Member in an active leadership role, typically over a period of ten to twelve years. I would also like to recognise Kevin Gooding, the Unit Leader in Charge of the 1st Iluka Scout Unit, who was awarded the Special Service Award. This award is given to young adult members, adult members or supporters for their successful support, development, or management of a Section or Formation, or for an intense contribution over at least 12 months to the success of a major event or activity. I would like to thank both Reece and Kevin for their outstanding service, as well as the many other members and supporters who work so hard for our young people in the Clarence Valley.

#### **LEWIS BIRD**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to acknowledge the work of Lewis Bird, founder of The Amend Project, a mental health education program tailored to men. Lewis, who has a strong presence in local league circles and a background in suicide prevention, has been creating a supportive community within the football code, breaking down the emotional walls men place around themselves. He doesn't regard himself as any sort of 'saviour' but is playing a similar role by giving his clients, through their peers, tools to help themselves. Lewis adopts a different approach to get men to open up, creating a safe space through a casual sing-along, before a chat about mental health, mental illness and anxiety. That's when the lived experiences of participants usually surface. Amending the statistics is the rationale behind the Amend Project. With that in mind, Lewis is open to enlisting the expertise of other support services like the Central West Pregnancy and Infant Loss group, which recognises grieving fathers are often overlooked and ill-equipped to deal with losing a child. It's widely documented mental

health services are overwhelmed in the bush. I thank Lewis for doing more than his share of the heavy lifting in this area.

#### **MANILDRA RHINOS**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate the mighty Manildra Rhinos on claiming a Woodbridge Cup rugby league double in 2024. Lining up against traditional rivals Canowindra Tigers in both grand finals, the Rhinos secured the mens and womens premierships this year, cementing Manildra's position as the premier club in Woodbridge Cup. For the men's outfit, a hard-fought 20-4 win earned a hat-trick with premierships in 2022 and 2023 while the Rhinettes claimed their second consecutive title with a narrow 10-6 win. The Rhinos' win was also a reward for player Simon Osborne who had coached the side to the decider in 2018 and 2019, only to fall at the final hurdle. This time he returned as a player and ends his career with a premiership. Another signifying Manildra's spirit was Holly Petrie, a mum of three who started with the club as a 14 year old. During the season she gave birth to her third child and battled a kidney infection. The Rhinos also mourned the loss of club stalwart Graham Gibson, Holly's grandfather, in July. A premiership double is a fitting way to honour his memory and I congratulate Rhinos on their success.

#### **MARLEY MCLEAN**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to commend Orange local Marley McLean, a young man with a promising future in the arts, on his recent success in the LiveBetter Firsts Nations Art Prize is any indication. At just 18, Marley took out the open category, one of three in the competition, with his work 'Foundation'. Following the competition's dictated theme of relationship, respect and opportunities, Marley produced a visually dynamic mixed-media work centred around a papier-mache mountain. Marley says the work represents the community coming together, with the respect and tolerance. He worked on the work for more than two months. With Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi roots, Marley says his creativity is growing as he gets older, having just finished year 12 at Canobolas Rural Tech High last year. LiveBetter CEO Natalie Forsyth-Stock and her panel of judges were very impressed with the calibre of work produced. Marley's work, and that of the other two category winners, will now take pride of place in LiveBetter's offices where others will no doubt enjoy its vibrance. I commend Marley and encourage him to nurture his wonderful talent.

#### **ELISE MELE, ROTARY EXCHANGE STUDENT**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On 18 August 2024 I had the pleasure of meeting Elise Mele. Elise is a 16-year-old French student here in Australia living and studying for 12 months as part of the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. Elise has been hosted by the Rotary Club of West Pennant Hills and Cherrybrook. Elise's home in France is in Metz which is close to the Luxembourg border. She chose Australia as her preferred destination as she's eager to learn about our culture and experience a new way of life. She's keen to try different foods, study different subjects, and enhance her English language skills, not to mention seeing the countryside and our unique wildlife and landscapes. Elise is enrolled in Year 10 at Pennant Hills High School and has already discovered the joys of wearing a school uniform each day – something unfamiliar to her in France. She's starting to make friends at school as well as making life-long friendships with her host families, Rotarians, and fellow Exchange students from a whole range of countries. Rotary Youth Exchange Programs students build goodwill and understanding between countries, and in the process learn about themselves by fostering confidence, resilience and independence.

#### **HILLS KELLYVILLE ROTARY CLUB, ANNUAL WRITING COMPETITION**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I was delighted to attend the Hills Kellyville Rotary Club Annual Writing Competition Awards held on 9 September 2024 at the Castle Hill RSL Club. The Competition was first held in 2005 to celebrate Rotary International's Centenary of Service to humanity. The title of this year's narrative was "The Value of Volunteering in our Community." Year 6 students from schools within the Castle Hill, Kellyville, and Winston Hills electorates submitted entries this year. Organising the competition takes several months of planning by club members. The competition recognises individual student winners as well as the overall school winner. I congratulate, Darsh Shad from Bella Vista Public School, 3rd place; Rishi Suman, from Ironbark Ridge Public School, 2nd place; and Aurora Lui from St. Michaels Primary School, 1st place. I also congratulate the winning schools: Bella Vista Public School, 3rd place, Jasper Road Public School, 2nd place, and St. Michael Primary School, 1st place. I recognise and thank the Hills-Kellyville Rotary Club for continuing this incredible competition over many years. I also thank the club President John van den Berg and the contribution of the competition Judges for their service, Sheila Krishnan and Michael Richardson.

#### **WEST PENNANT HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOL, FAMILY FUN FAIR**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On Sunday, 18 August 2024 I attended the West Pennant Hills Public School Family Fun Fair. The Family Fun Fair is an event the entire community looks forward to with great

anticipation. This year Parents and Citizens Association created a fun packed day for the entire community. The fair included great stalls, cultural food delights, market stalls, trash and treasure, face painting, arts and crafts, lucky dip, carnival rides, the West Pennant Hills and Cherrybrook Rotary Club Barbecue, Cherrybrook Rural Fire Service, Beecroft Fire Brigade, teacher dunking and lots more. School fairs involve many hours of voluntary work by a team of dedicated parents and friends and as such I especially want to congratulate, acknowledge, and recognise the West Pennant Hills Public School Parents and Friends Association President, Samantha (Sam) Robinson, the fair organiser Melissa Parker and the entire committee for organizing a wonderful fair for our community. The fair raised a \$103,000.00 of which \$76,000.00 was profit. The funds raised will be reinvested within the school. Thank you again to the entire committee for your hard work.

#### **VISIT AT BONNYRIGG MOSQUE**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 10 August 2024, I had the privilege of visiting the Bonnyrigg Mosque. During this visit, I had the honour of presenting Community Recognition Statements to Mr. Muhammet Eris, Mr. Adem Cetinay and Mr. Bahtisen Gunacti. Their dedication and contributions to the mosque's development are deeply appreciated, and it was a pleasure to acknowledge their efforts formally. I also had the opportunity to congratulate their Association the Bonnyrigg Turkish Islamic Cultural Association for their successful application of the Community Building Partnership grant. I understand that this grant will support the calligraphy writing, inscription, and decoration of the mosque's dome, walls, and other decorative elements, enhancing the mosque's architectural and cultural significance. The Mosque construction began in 1992 on land leased by the NSW State Government to the Bonnyrigg Turkish Islamic Cultural Association. It stands as a testament to the rich cultural and religious heritage of the community. I look forward to witnessing the final work, which promises to be a beautiful blend of art, history, and religion, reflecting the Mosque's significance in our diverse community.

#### **VISIT AT OTHMAN BIN AFFAN MOSQUE**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 21 August 2024 I had the privilege of visiting the Othman Bin Affan Mosque in Cabramatta. The mosque has long been a cornerstone of the community, providing a place for worship, gathering, and support. During my visit, I had the opportunity to congratulate Sheikh Mohamad, President Salim Allouche, and Vice President Salah Jindi for their recent successful application of the Community Building Partnership grant. This grant will help fund repairs to the roof flashing and the exterior walkway ceiling, address areas damaged by water, and refurbish the security cameras. These enhancements are crucial for maintaining the safety and functionality of the mosque, ensuring it continues to serve as a vital community hub. Also it will help preserve and improve the facilities, ensuring that they remain in good condition for years to come. I commend the efforts of the mosque's leadership and look forward to seeing the positive impact of these upgrades on the community.

#### **THE TREASURER'S VISIT TO FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On 26 March 2024, I had the privilege of meeting with representatives from Fairfield Hospital, alongside the NSW Treasurer, The Hon Daniel Mookhey MLC and Member for Prospect Dr Hugh McDermott at Fairfield Hospital, to discuss its redevelopment project under the \$550 million investment commitment announced last budget. The meeting centred around the project planning phase. We had the opportunity to hear from the hospital representatives about the progress of planning and the support they need to ensure timely delivery of the project. Each year Fairfield Hospital admits over 30,000 patients and has over 35,000 presentations to the Emergency Department and over 200,000 outpatient encounters. This historical funding is a much-needed investment for our local hospital especially with the expected population growth. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Acting General Manager of Fairfield Hospital Ms Sharon May and her team for assisting us with this visit. Their seamless dedication and commitment to this historical upgrading project is commendable. I thank the Treasurer for his visit and support. I look forward to continuing to work with him and our local MPs to bring about improved healthcare services for our constituents.

#### **BOOROWA TEENAGER NAMED YOUTH ADVISOR**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I rise to recognise Boorowa local Maddie Duffy, who has been named as the National Youth Advisor for the organisation Womn-Kind. Womn-Kind is a youth mental health organisation on a mission to close the gap in effective wellbeing education and support for young people. They offer low-intensity, strengths-based and largely preventative mental health support to young people through their in-person and online programs and resources. Womn-Kind boasts a youth leading youth model of support where qualified mentors work alongside a network of allied health professionals to deliver leading wellbeing workshops in schools and communities. This approach continues to prove impactful for youth with 96% of participants reporting to have found the sessions beneficial to their overall health and wellbeing. Maddie was selected for this prestigious position due to her long and passionate advocacy and desire for not only the youth of Boorowa but those further afield. Her belief that everybody has the capacity to make a difference has been formed from her

strong values and her personal experience with mental health challenges in her early years of high school. I commend this courageous and dedicated young woman to you all.

#### **JAKE SEMMLER – UPCOMING VIDEOGRAPHER**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Jake Semmler's first memories of photo shoots were with his dad, Daryl Semmler who would race out to Barellan Road to capture nature in its glory as a storm came rolling in. Daryl was Jake's first mentor who instilled the basics of aspect, light and framing and he has always had a camera in his hand since he received his first at age 10. Jake's videography interest peaked when the saving of pocket money led to the purchase of a Lumix Fz80 that had video capabilities. His next big leap came when a local real estate offered Jake consistent work and this, along with his parent's support, started Jake freelancing at the age of 16. His skills continued to increase, and his next mentor moved into the area. Independent filmmaker Ozan "Ozzie" Fikri arrived and settled with his partner and their children, in Narrandera. Ozzie opened up his video world to Jake, generously sharing his knowledge and experience. Jake's opportunities continue to grow, and I am pleased to share this wonderful storey of a Narrandera local.

#### **YIELD FESTIVAL – A VIBRANT PART OF THE COOLAMON SHIRE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—This event has become a favourite of mine now in its fourth year. The Yield Festival is the joining of two amazing art events, the Capture Coolamon Shire Photo and the Up2date Art Competitions. The gala evening played host to over 450 people who viewed 392 pieces of art and 278 photos. It was just amazing, and I was privileged to open this event. Congratulations to Committee Members, Angela McCann, Lyn Matthews and Eileen Knox, assisted by Council staff, Laura Munro, Helen McLoughlin, Molly Campbell and Bec Keatly who did an amazing job displaying the entries and created a wonderful atmosphere with live music and fabulous food for people to enjoy the night. Catherine Roberts' painting "Bend in the Land" and Charmaine Berger's photograph "Happiness in a Cup" were chosen by Coolamon's Mayor, Dave McCann OAM, and General Manager, Tony Donoghue to hang in the Council Chambers. "Beautiful Days" by Tauriel Payton and "A4Skyhawk" by Benjamin Mearns won the Primary and High School Categories. It was wonderful to see so much talent in the region.

#### **AARON EICHNER**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Aaron Eichner from Forster, who has once again proven his endurance by retaining his Treble Bridge Buster title at the Forster-Tuncurry RunFest. The Bridge Buster challenge, which spans a grueling 36.10 km, involves participating in the 21 km, 10 km, and 5 km events with minimal recovery time in between. Aaron's standout performance included a second-place finish in the half marathon, along with a fourth-place finish in the 10 km and fifth in the 5 km, for a combined time of 2 hours, 18 minutes, and 9 seconds - just three seconds shy of his previous year's record. Aaron's consistent results demonstrate not only his skill as a runner but also his perseverance in one of the event's most demanding challenges. I congratulate Aaron on his achievement and look forward to his future successes.

#### **MID NORTH COAST BUSINESS AWARD FINALISTS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to congratulate the Myall Lakes finalists for the Mid North Coast Business Awards for 2024. The Mid North Coast Business Awards celebrates the innovation, resilience and dedication of businesses across the region. Outstanding Young Business Leader: Shelley Kurtz, Creative Shell, Hallidays Point; Outstanding Business Leader - 21 Employees and Over: Colin Steber, Dundaloo Foundation Ltd, Taree, Joshua Rogers, Manning Support Services Inc, Taree; Employer of Choice - Under 20 Employees: Local Pest Experts, Taree; Employer of Choice - 21 Employees and Over: Valley Industries, Taree; Outstanding Community Organisation: Dundaloo Foundation Ltd, Taree, Manning Support Services, Taree Outstanding New Business: Coastal Workspace, Forster; Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion: Dundaloo Foundation Ltd, Taree, Valley Industries, Taree; Excellence in Small Business: Bent on Food, Wingham Lumpy's Nursery and Landscape Yard, Tuncurry Taree Off Road, Taree; Excellence in Large Business and International Business: Manning Support Services, Taree. I wish the finalists the best of luck when the winners will be announced at a Black Tie evening at Sales Port Macquarie on Friday, September 20, 2024.

#### **TAREE RSL SUB-BRANCH**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognize Taree RSL Sub-Branch, which held a solemn and well-attended service on August 18, commemorating Vietnam Veterans Day. The event, hosted at the remembrance precinct of Club Taree, brought together over 70 attendees, including veterans, their families, and local representatives such as Federal Member for Lyne Dr. David Gillespie, MidCoast Council Mayor Claire Pontin and myself. The ceremony featured stirring performances, including Christina Jones playing the Last Post and Reveille, the Manning Valley Pipes and Drums, and a moving rendition of I Was Only 19 by Brianna Xuereb. The event marked 51 years since the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. I thank Sub-branch

President, Darcy Elbourne and Taree RSL Sub-Branch for continuing to honour those who served, paying respect to their sacrifices.

#### **GREATER NARELLAN BUSINESS CHAMBER PREMIER'S BREAKFAST 21 AUGUST 2024**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Every year, the Greater Narellan Business Chamber Premier's Breakfast is a highlight on the calendar. The Hon. Chris Minns MP inspired a room full of business leaders and local school representatives, fostering meaningful connections with our local government and state government politicians. As the peak business organisation in the Macarthur region incorporating Wollondilly, independent not-for-profit organisation Greater Narellan Business Chamber plays a vital role in advocating for the interests of businesses of all sizes and is supported by NSW Business Chamber. Their commitment to creating positive change is evident in their work, leading members to collaborate for the greater good. The Chamber believes that a thriving business community is essential for creating jobs, social wealth, and a better quality of life for all residents in the region. I am heartened to see businesses of all sizes thriving in Wollondilly, creating jobs close to home, strengthening community bonds and boosting our local economy. The breakfast event was enjoyable, and I commend the Chamber team for orchestrating such a successful event.

#### **WOLLONDILLY RSL SUB-BRANCH VIETNAM VETERANS DAY SERVICE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—The 18th of August marks the annual Wollondilly RSL sub-branch Vietnam Veterans Day Service and this year's beautifully crafted service was held at the Thirlmere RSL Memorial Park. The moving ceremony included prayers, songs, laying of the wreaths, The Last Post, Reveille, Raising of the National Flag, and both the Australian and the South Vietnam Anthems. It was a fitting way to honour the lives of those who served. Rex Marshall AFSM, Wollondilly RSL sub-Branch Vice President read the much-loved blessing: May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again. Thank you to all involved in the service including Wollondilly RSL sub-Branch; Barbara Edwards RFD JP, President, Rex Marshall AFSM, VP, Kristy Brown, sub-Branch Member, Michael Lynch, sub-Branch Treasurer, Christine Dunnell, sub-Branch Secretary and Chaplain, Steve Black. Wollondilly sub-Branch meetings are held 4th Sunday of each month, 10:00 am, at 1 Mason Street, Thirlmere, NSW. All Defence Service members and families are welcomed.

#### **WOLLONDILLY ANGLICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS VISIT PARLIAMENT**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—It really makes my day when locals visit me while parliament is sitting - especially when it's members of one of our local schools. I was pleased to welcome the year 11 Legal Studies students from Wollondilly Anglican College to Parliament House on Wednesday 14th August. I am always heartened by the interest and energy of the high school students in Wollondilly. The students enjoyed the Legislative Assembly Question Time, and prior to that, we got to have a Q&A session in the NSW Parliament Education Centre. It was terrific to discuss the role of an Independent Member of the NSW Parliament and what it entails. The students asked many insightful questions, and I wish we could have continued the discussion for hours. I appreciate and welcome the voices and opinions of young people, and encourage their involvement in politics at all levels of Government. Thank you to the hardworking 'Education and Engagement Officers' at the NSW Department of Parliamentary Services, particularly Cameron Craig and his colleagues, for organising this connection.

#### **SCIENCE, VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS - A MULTILINGUAL CONFLUENCE 2024**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to attend the Science, Visual and Performing Arts - a multilingual Confluence on behalf of Premier Chris Minns, Minister of Multiculturalism Steve Kamper, and Minister of Housing Rose Jackson, on 10 August 2024, at Granville Town Hall. Founded by Dr. Tanima Banerjee, Bandana Cultural School [BCS] is rooted in the belief in the transformative power of education. The school stands as a beacon of innovation, it embodies the spirit of cultural enrichment and pushes the boundaries of creative expression. BCS does not miss any opportunity to make children of the Indian Diaspora connect with their motherland by learning lifelong skills across a range of disciplines, while also strengthening their connections to the languages and cultures of the subcontinent. The event beautifully combined Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics [STEM] with arts and cultural activities, providing enthusiastic children with the opportunity to participate in a wide range of engaging activities. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Tanima Banerjee, the BCS team, and students for the wonderful work.

#### **TEEJ FESTIVAL CELEBRATION FOR CHARITY**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to attend the Teej for charity celebration, hosted by the Non-Resident Nepali Association [NRNA] Women's forum. Teej is a cherished festival celebrated by Nepali women dedicated to the goddess Parvati and her union with Lord Shiva. The festivities are marked by vibrant celebrations that include singing, dancing, and feasting. Founded in 2003, NRNA was established to unite the



Nepali diaspora around the world. Today, it has grown into a dynamic global organisation, connecting Nepali origin communities across 86 countries. With its motto "For Nepali by Nepali," NRNA Australia serves as a bridge between Nepalis living in Australia and their homeland. The vibrant cultural dances and performances created a memorable experience, more importantly, the event's focus on raising funds for projects supporting women in rural Nepal highlights NRNA's commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of those in need. Your efforts in uniting women, celebrating womanhood, and empowering them to stand together on common issues are truly inspiring. Thank you for your dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to fostering unity among Nepalis worldwide.

#### **AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF HINDU CLERGY ANNUAL EVENT**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 17 August 2024 I was delighted to represent Premier Chris Minns at the Australian Council of Hindu Clergy [ACHC] Annual Event, held at the Sri Ram Krishna Temple in Austral, to celebrate Raksha Bandhan. This beautiful event honors the bond of love, care, protection and respect between brothers and sisters. The ACHC is a respected council of Hindu priests, monks, nuns, astrologers, and preachers from diverse backgrounds, including India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Fiji, and South Africa, all serving across Australia. Since its founding in 1989, the ACHC has been dedicated to the service of the Hindu community within Australia and propagating the Hindu dharmic values. The ACHC plays a crucial role in nurturing Hindu faith amongst Hindus in Australia, providing qualified priests to guide and assist the Hindu community in the performance of their ceremonies, rituals, sacraments, and festivals. Their efforts in promoting multiculturalism and interfaith dialogue and collaborating in harmony with other communities in our state are truly remarkable. Thank you ACHC for your kind invitation and unwavering commitment to fostering unity among Hindus in Australia.

#### **CENTRAL COAST WETLANDS PIONEER DAIRY**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Central Coast Wetlands Pioneer Dairy for receiving \$17,240 through the Community Building Partnership Program. The Community Building Partnership program shares \$300,000 in funding across the Wyong electorate to non-for-profit groups to build, refurbish or repair community infrastructure, or to buy freestanding equipment or vehicles. I congratulated the Central Coast Wetlands Chairperson Jed Field and Board members by presenting their \$17,240 cheque on-site at Tuggerah. The funding will go towards a new All-Terrain Vehicle to assist volunteers with maintenance work around the wetlands including weeding and maintaining walking tracks. The off-road vehicle will benefit the volunteers in keeping the wetlands pristine. Located on the Wetlands you will find organisation Sustainable Wetlands Agriculture Makers Project who grow fresh produce for the community, Mark Churcher Golf Range, The Golden Grove a space dedicated to children, families and educators and the beautiful surroundings with looping trails of the natural environment and the Tuggerah Lakes estuary has been declared 'an Important Bird Area'.

#### **BOB BLUE**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge volunteer Bob Blue from NSW Marine Rescue Tuggerah Lakes for receiving recognition of National Medal for 15 years long and diligent service to community. The National Medal was established in 1975 as one of the first three elements of the Australian honours system. I was honoured to present Mr Blue the medal during a ceremony surrounded by volunteers at the Toukley base. Following a career with the Australian Defence Force, Mr Blue began volunteering with Marine Rescue Tuggerah Lakes in 2016 and is today a rated senior crew member and radio officer. Mr Blue is an extremely reliable and committed volunteer who protects and assists our community on Tuggerah Lakes. He is highly skilled and dedicated, attending numerous emergency responses to saving lives on the water. I thank Mr Blue for being a valuable member of the NSW Marine Rescue Tuggerah Lakes who truly represents the values of being a volunteer at the unit.

#### **TAHANNI KAUFUSI**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Tahanni Kaufusi, from Corpus Christi High School, for being selected to compete in the NSWCCC Under 16's Girls Rugby League team to compete at the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League National Championships held in Port Macquarie in July 2024. Tahanni and the Under 16's Girls Rugby League team performed wonderfully in the competition, placing 3rd overall. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Tahanni and wish her well in all her future sporting endeavours.

**HALLE BARRET**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Halle Barret, from Corpus Christi High School, for being selected to compete in the NSWCCC Under 16's Girls Rugby League team to compete at the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League National Championships held in Port Macquarie in July 2024. Halle and the Under 16's Girls Rugby League team performed wonderfully in the competition, placing 3rd overall. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Halle and wish her well in all her future sporting endeavours.

**CHLOE RICHARDS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the wonderful achievement of Chloe Richards, from Warilla High School, on her recent success at the New South Wales All Schools AFL Championships. The All Schools Under 15's AFL Championships were held in Albury from 3 to 4 June 2024. Chloe played amazingly over the few days and has earned her spot in the New South Wales All Schools Team to compete at the National AFL Championships on the Gold Coast. On behalf of the Shellharbour community, I would like to congratulate Chloe and wish her well in all her future sporting endeavours.

**ALLAN WRIGHT**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Allan Wright from Hamlyn Terrace is a volunteer delivery driver for Meals on Wheels at Tuggerah and has reached a 10-year milestone. Meals on Wheels is run by a group of volunteers who assist seniors and people with disabilities across the Central Coast providing affordable meals, social support, and a helping hand for over 55 years. With over 1,000 clients, 180 dedicated volunteers, 18 passionate staff and 9 volunteer board members, Wheels on Meals are honoured to serve the community providing a vital service to those in need delivering over 20,000 meals every month. I joined Mr Wright on one of his delivery runs to Tuggerah, Tacoma, Kooindah Waters, Kangy Angy and Ourimbah. It was great to meet residents who appreciate healthy meals delivered from Mr Wright and hear that Meals on Wheels are a lifesaver. Just knowing someone will drop by to say hello boosts their health, happiness and helps them to stay connected with their community. I congratulate Mr Wright for his service and the time given to the community in making a difference and making that sincere connection to residents.

**LYNETTE RICHARDS**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Paramedics do an amazing job in sometimes traumatic circumstances but to serve and save over 40 years is truly remarkable. For an example of that dedication, look no further than Tumut's Lynette Richards who notched up four decades of service last month. In a career journey that started at a year 10 jobs expo, Sydney-born Lynette has spent 26 years of her service caring for the people of Tumut and surrounds. She says Tumut is a caring, supportive place where close community bonds make it easier to provide care in difficult times. While there have been challenging times, she prefers to dwell on the happier jobs, including the time she delivered a baby who could not wait to get to hospital! Lynette says she is lucky to work with a wonderful team at the Tumut ambulance station, some of whom were not even born when she began her career. She thanks her sister Danielle Richards, who also lives in Tumut, for a lifetime of love and friendship and while retirement will beckon in the future, Lynette plans to spend the rest of her days in her adopted hometown. Thank you and congratulations, Lynette, for all you have done.

**NOEL PORTER**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations to Wagga's Noel Porter whose care and compassion for those less fortunate has been recognised in the 2024 Riverina Volunteer of the Year Awards. At the age of 86, Mrs Porter was named Senior Volunteer of the Year. In this role she has worked closely within the team at Carevan Wagga. The former nurse has helped in various volunteer roles over the years but after retirement, she threw her passion and spare time into the kitchen to prepare meals for Carevan's clients. As part of a dedicated team, she devotes at least two days a week to preparing about 200 meals a day for those in need. She is humble about her award, saying she is just one in a group of 'kind people always willing to help' and that the rewards have come in the friendships made with her fellow volunteers. Carevan founder Lynne Graham describes Mrs Porter as a treasured volunteer and an inspiration to others. Those who enjoy the team's nutritious meals would no doubt heartily agree! On behalf of a grateful community, thank you, Mrs Porter, for your kindness. Our city is healthier and happier because of you and the team.

### WOONONA SHARKS PREMIER LEAGUE

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I am honoured today to recognise the outstanding achievements of the Woonona Sharks Football Club who had two impressive wins in the Women's Premier League Grand final and Reserve Grade final. After a devastating loss to Shellharbour in last year's final, the Woonona Sharks came back with a vengeance this year, determined to get the job done. The pain of losing last year's final fuelled the side this year, with the stage being set the same with extra time required to decide the winners, it was Woonona who was able to find the net and come away with the 1-0 win. Along with this, the Woonona Sharks Women's reserve grade side also claimed grand final glory, winning their match, and writing their spot in the history books as the Woonona Sharks come away with an outstanding club effort for their 2024 campaign. The Grand Final victory added to their list of accomplishments this season, having won the Julie Porter Cup and the League Championship. I would like to extend my congratulations to the players, coaching staff and Woonona Sharks community for their efforts during the 2024 season and all the best for the 2025 season.

### SHOALHAVEN AUTUMN CELEBRATION

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and congratulate the Shoalhaven Autumn Celebration of Food, an extraordinary six week event that brings together the very best of our region's culinary talents. Over these six glorious weeks, this celebration showcases Shoalhaven's finest chefs, cheese makers, baristas, patissiers, brewers, winemakers, distillers, bakers, growers and artisan producers, all offering a diverse and sumptuous experience. During this event, visitors can sample Shoalhaven's renowned wines at local cellar doors, enjoy incredible collaborative meals from top chefs, and savor handmade chocolates, artisan breads, cheeses, and condiments. It's a wonderful opportunity for locals and visitors alike to indulge in the best that Shoalhaven has to offer, while also strengthening our vibrant food community. From markets offering organic vegetables to exciting workshops, cooking classes, long lunches, and food trucks, there is truly something for everyone. It is great having such a fabulous organisation that not only showcases our region's talent but also attracts visitors to our beautiful Shoalhaven. Congratulations to Di Laver and all involved in making this event a success!

### CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP MARINE RESCUE

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and celebrate the change of leadership team at Sussex Inlet Marine Rescue, where the commitment to community safety and service continues to thrive. With the retirement of Commander Karen Lowry, Brett Eurell was unanimously elected by the unit membership as their new Commander, marking a new chapter for the team. Brett will be supported by two experienced and dedicated leaders: Glen Wright, Deputy Unit Commander for Operations and Greg Collins Deputy Unit Commander for Finance and Administration. Their wealth of knowledge and leadership experience will ensure Marine Rescue Sussex Inlet continues to be a vital part of our community's safety and will be supported by a team of both new and long-serving executive members. I would also like to thank Karen Lowry for her commitment to Marine Rescue over many years, which was recognised by winning the Rotary NSW Emergency Community Awards 2022. We are grateful for their professionalism and we are excited to see what they will accomplish in the years to come.

### CILLIAN STANTON

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Cillian Stanton, a talented second-year apprentice butcher from Milton IGA, who recently competed at the TAFE Skills Day in Sydney, competing against mostly 3rd & 4th year apprentices, which made his performance all the more impressive. Having left Ulladulla High in Year 9, Cillian has proven that determination and a clear sense of purpose can lead to early and significant achievements. His journey is supported by a fantastic team at Milton IGA, including Meat Department Manager Brad Gins and experienced butcher Grant Carriage. The competition Cillian competed in ran for six challenging hours, with Cillian tasked with a number of complex butchery skills, including taking a whole lamb and producing various cuts such as a boned and rolled shoulder, as well as cutting up a chicken into four distinct products. While Cillian did not take home the top prize, his effort, skill, and dedication were nothing short of outstanding. This was his first time competing, and Cillian is already eager to participate again. Congratulations Cillian on a job well done.

### BSTREETSMART 2024

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I would like to thank and congratulate everyone involved in the Bstreetsmart 2024 live event, which was delivered to high school students at Qudos Bank Arena. The realistic scene was interspersed with life stories depicting different facets of the aftermath. One such story came from a woman who was negotiating a round-about on her motorcycle when she was hit and pinned between a car and

crash barrier. The driver of the car was under the influence of drugs and drove off straight away, later apprehended. The innocent woman's life was changed forever with an irreparable spinal injury. Another emotional story came from the mother of a son who one night, decided to drive after drinking and smoking marijuana. At speed, he crashed his car into another killing himself and the four innocent occupants of the other car. The event was MC-ed by an emergency doctor and involved a very realistic vehicle crash with associated horrific injuries. Police, Fire & Rescue and all the associated first responders arrived to deliver realistic display after an accident, including treating a person with head injuries, activating the jaws of life, and dealing with the victims' responses. That's just amazing!

### **GOODSAM APP**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Tonight, in the NSW Parliament I would like to sincerely thank Luke Stevenson of Umina Beach, and everyone across NSW who has put their hand up to be part of the incredible GoodSAM program. The GoodSAM program is a lifesaver and if you can do CPR, you can help us save lives as an early responder in NSW. As a volunteer, the GoodSAM app alerts you once a call has been made to New South Wales Ambulance, and somebody in your vicinity needs CPR. Luke heard about the program before it was even released in Australia and registered in the international realm as a volunteer. Luke is an amazing community minded person, and he is also a volunteer for the SES and local RFS. When NSW Ambulance switched on the app, Luke was already in the system and now when the siren goes off, he pulls himself away from the screen if he's at work or apologises to the wife and kids, and heads off to save someone's life. Luke says it's very rewarding and if he can help save a life, it's an absolute bonus. Once again, thanks so much to all of our GoodSAM volunteers.

### **GIG BUDDIES CENTRAL COAST**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Tonight, I have the privilege to acknowledge Gig Buddies Central Coast for their amazing efforts to assist people with disabilities to live a high quality of life. What's so special about Gig Buddies? The Gig Buddies team matches and pairs a volunteer, and an adult with a mild to moderate learning disability and/or autism. Once the "buddies" are matched up, they can attend events or gigs of their choosing. How exciting is that! Gig Buddies provides a supportive network, which fills a gap due to support workers typical working hours. Gig Buddies believe that people with disability who use the services of a support worker on the Central Coast have the right to stay up late, meet new people, go to events and have some fun, and I echo that. I'm always amazed by the creativity and commitment of organisations like Gig Buddies because they truly are fantastic, and their services improve the quality of life for our community members in various ways. I applaud Gig Buddies Team and I wish you all the best.

### **OLIVIA NOVOSADEK**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I wish to recognise Miss Olivia Novosadek for her recent award for student excellence. Olivia is a student at CathWest Innovation College, which is located in my electorate. Olivia contributes to faith formation at CathWest Innovation College as a Mass and Liturgy reader, she represents the school as Diocesan LIFTED events. Olivia has been an example of leadership amongst her peers, in the FIAT group she has initiated fundraisers for local and global charities. Olivia has been a standout role model to other students at CathWest Innovative College, she shows courage and compassion and treats her peers with respect and dignity. I would like to congratulate Olivia on this well-deserved award.

### **BILLABONG HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS CAN TOO**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Billabong High School for taking on the 'Girls Can Too Trade Program', a joint venture between the NSW Department of Education's Educational Pathways Program and TAFE NSW. The program aims to introduce female students to non-traditional trades and industries; such as plumbing, construction, automotive/diesel technicians, technical mechanics, where women make up less than 25% of the total workforce. A special mention to Sienna Oehm, a dedicated Year 10 student, and her peers for seizing the opportunity to explore various trade fields. These students delve into different trades every Thursday in Term 2, with industry visits helping them gain hands-on experience and insights into potential career paths. The 'Girls Can Too Trade Program' is a fantastic scheme that builds confidence and leadership. Keep up the great work, Sienna and friends, as you continue paving the way for future generations of talented female trades.

### **LET THERE BE LIGHT – LANTERN FESTIVAL TO KICKSTART A MAJOR FUNDRAISER**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Jindera Pioneer Museum, for hosting its largest event to date, the "Illuminate our Heritage" Festival from August 2-4. The three-night celebration marked the launch of a vital fundraising campaign aimed at expanding the museum's facilities and enhancing its significance as a regional attraction, that draws over 5,000 visitors annually. The festival's highlight was a free community lantern walk inspired by the German tradition of Laternelaufen. This enchanting walk featured a

stunning display of beautifully hand-crafted lanterns winding through Jindera's main street. Each night, the museum grounds became alive with captivating light shows and sounds, including fire twirlers, bush poetry, music, and silent films. Local schools also participated by creating their own lanterns, and two lantern-making workshops were held to engage the community. A special thank you to Museum President Margie Wehner, the dedicated volunteers, and the community members for their commitment to preserving history, celebrating cultural experiences, and actively engaging local schools in the lantern-making festival.

#### **110 YEARS OF GLEN INNES RED CROSS AUSTRALIAN BRANCH**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of the Glen Innes branch of the Australian Red Cross, which was formed in 1914, the same year the Australian Red Cross was established, just nine days after the World War 1 outbreak. I congratulate the branch and their retiring President, Mrs Annette Law for the ongoing commitment to helping the community. There are many programs the Red Cross supports to assist people in need and the local branch is still very active despite the present widespread lack of volunteers. In this 110th year of Red Cross, the Power of Humanity is strong in both the local Red Cross Branch and also in the Glen Innes Public School Red Cross Youth Group. I commend the Glen Innes branch for its 23rd year of running 'The Red Cross Christmas Tree'. I also commend Mrs Carla Bryant, who for the past two years has led the High School Red Cross Youth group and has supported this by collecting many, many food items and shaping them into a Christmas Tree, which is later distributed where needed.

#### **MOREE FESTIVAL OF HEALTH**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Moree community, for banding together to support the Life Ed program by staging a Festival of Health recently. The cornerstone event over the 10 days of celebrations was a Healthy Harold Colour Run, which included over 1000 children from the local area. The aim of the event is to encourage conversations and help everyone learn about health, safety and wellbeing through an inclusive community engagement. I congratulate each of the local organisations involved in the festival, including local schools, Moree Plains Shire Council, Headspace/Centacare, Community Health, Miyay Birray Youth Service, Moree Family Support, Lions Club, Johnstone Concrete and Quarries and Chiropractic Life Moree. I commend all involved in this event, for their hard work and exemplary community spirit, ensuring each activity ran smoothly and importantly, fun was had by all. Special thanks to the volunteers, as events such as this in regional towns cannot function without the wonderful support and commitment these volunteers give.

#### **NURSE NEXT DOOR - SRUTHI PRAKASH LAUNCHES IN ARMIDALE**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Sruthi Prakash who in May of 2024 launched the New England franchise of 'Nurse Next Door' home care services. Ms Prakash's mission is to offer elderly residents and people living with special needs the opportunity to continue living independently at home. That is whilst receiving the care they require and to continue to participate in the community safely, with an added touch of compassion from locally employed caregivers and nurses. I congratulate Sruthi for providing these essential services to our communities. Sruthi was driven by a deep concern for the lack of comprehensive care services in the region. 'Nurse Next Door' provides personalised care for clients including shopping, taking them to appointments, medication management and palliative care. I commend Sruthi for her servicers providing for those who are dangerously cut off from general medical care. Her commitment to making lives better is evident in the personalised care and enriched experiences she aims to provide, ensuring that every individual in her care can continue to find joy and happiness at home.

#### **LACHLAN MORTON**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I rise to applaud the incredible fitness and commitment of cyclist Lachlan Morton, whose goal is to ride 14,201km, circumnavigating Australia in record time. Lachlan aims to break the 2011 Around Australia Record, currently standing at 37days, 20hours and 45 minutes. To break this record, Lachlan will need to ride a staggering 400kms every day on bush roads and remote highways. This is the second of Lachlan's ultra-rides. His first, the 'Alt Tour,' was a gruelling 5,500km ride where Lachlan completed every stage of the Tour de France, completely unsupported. This ride is Australia's most prestigious distance cycling record and is nearly triple the distance. I'm glad that this time Lachlan will have a team of family and friends who will keep him well-fed and safe throughout the journey. This is more than just a personal challenge though. Lachlan is dedicated to raising funds for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation to equip children in rural communities with stories and books translated into languages they can understand. I am in awe of Lachlan's fitness, his grit and determination and incredibly proud of his dedication to put books into the hands of children living in rural Australia.

**COMMUNITY RALLY TO SUPPORT SHARK VICTIM KAI MCKENZIE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today, I recognise with much gratitude and awe the local community who has worked tirelessly to support one of their own, after a life-altering shark attack. On Tuesday, 23 July local surfer Kai McKenzie was surfing the river around 11 am at the North Shore when a three-metre great white shark changed his life forever. Rallying behind Kai, the North Haven Board Riders Club [NHBRC] coordinated a major fundraising event on the 11th August, which included all ages and abilities to take up their board in unison for their friend and local surfer. Approximately 100 surfers took to the water and roughly 200 all up attended the fundraising event with raffles, auctions and live music decking out Rainbow Beach facing the Wauchope-Bonny Hills Surf Life Saving Club. In total, a mammoth \$60,000 was raised to support Kai in his rehabilitation and recovery. It just goes to show what lengths a community will go to support a member in need. I would like to thank Geoff Branch and his team from the NHBRC for organising the fundraiser including all the surfing community who have banded together to give hope and assistance to Kai.

**IZAAC GASKIN – 2024 NATIONS OF ORIGIN**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise fifteen-year-old Izaac Gaskin from the Camden Haven on being selected to referee in the Nations of Origin rugby league competition in Western Sydney. Showcased annually during NAIDOC week, the Nations of Origin is a multifaceted sport, cultural, education and leadership program. Approximately 1,400 indigenous and non-indigenous young people represent Aboriginal nations in sports at the event each year that promote reconciliation within communities. Izaac was handpicked by the NRL's Gavin Badger to referee at the prestigious event, following his experience in refereeing younger children and his reputation of fairness and upholding the rules for all players on the field in local games. This was a wonderful opportunity for Izaac to enhance his skills and gain expertise at a higher level of refereeing. It is a credit to Izaac's determination and commitment to succeed as a referee that has led him to achieve this high-profile level in only two years since taking up the role. The Nations of Origin's mission is "promoting reconciliation, cultural identity, education and sport." Izaac's involvement in maintaining a fair and robust match is an essential component to the competition's success. I congratulate Izaac on his achievements.

**COUNCILLOR SREENI PILLAMARRI**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Speaker, There are few things that make me prouder than the success of the Ryde Liberal team in the recent local government elections. Diverse, professional and future focused, the team is a reflection of modern Ryde. However I want to acknowledge the success of Parramatta's Epping Ward Councillor-elect Sreeni Pillamarri whose constituency partially overlaps my electorate. He was elected with an impressive margin on 14 September 2024. Cr Pillamarri is a director of innovation and technology, Justice of the Peace, and a personal friend who has done so much to advance the cause of Ryde and Parramatta. I know his advocacy will see our Party and the Council become even more accessible to multicultural communities right across Ryde and beyond. Cr Pillamarri, like so much of the Ryde Liberal team, is thoroughly community based. Their ability to know their neighbours, engage with new audiences, share good ideas and be responsive to community needs is the ultimate recipe for political success. I look forward to working closely with Sreeni this term, to make the place I truly love, Ryde, an even better place. Congratulations!

**COUNCILLOR DANIEL HAN**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Speaker, There are few things that make me prouder than the success of the Ryde Liberal team in the recent local government elections. Diverse, professional and future focused, the team is a reflection of modern Ryde. I want to particularly acknowledge the success of Central Ward Councillor Daniel Jung Tae Han, who was re-elected with an historic margin on 14 September 2024. Having served as Ryde's Deputy Mayor, Cr Han is a local high school teacher, pharmacist by background, multicultural community leader, and a personal friend who has done so much to advance the cause of Ryde. It was his initiative that drove the Ryde Liberals policy for KoreaTown, and I know his advocacy will see our Party and our Council become more accessible to cultural communities right across Ryde and beyond. Cr Han, like so much of the Ryde Liberal team, is thoroughly community based. Their ability to know their neighbours, engage with new audiences, share good ideas and be responsive to community needs is the ultimate recipe for political success. I look forward to working closely with Daniel this term, to make the place I truly love, Ryde, an even better place. Congratulations!

**COUNCILLOR SOPHIE LARA-WATSON**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Speaker, There are few things that make me prouder than the success of the Ryde Liberal team in the recent local government elections. Diverse, professional and future focused, the team is a reflection of modern Ryde. I want to particularly acknowledge the success of East Ward Councillor Sophie Lara-Watson, who was re-elected with an historic margin on 14 September 2024. Re-elected to a second term, Cr Lara-Watson is a chartered accountant, young professional, and a personal friend who has done so much to

advance the cause of Ryde. It was her initiative that drove the Ryde Liberals policy for live-sites across Ryde, and I know her advocacy will see our Party and our Council become even more accessible to young people and families right across Ryde and beyond. Cr Lara-Watson, like so much of the Ryde Liberal team, is thoroughly community based. Their ability to know their neighbours, engage with new audiences, share good ideas and be responsive to community needs is the ultimate recipe for political success. I look forward to working closely with Sophie this term, to make the place I truly love, Ryde, an even better place. Congratulations!

#### **NSW MID-WESTERN VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate the nominees and winners at this year's NSW Mid-Western Volunteers of the Year ceremony and thank them for their important contribution. Volunteers play a vital role in our democracy – providing support, care, and access to vital services, and contributing to the creativity and connectedness of our communities. A special congratulations to the overall category winners for the Mid-Western area. Audrey Storer, who volunteers at Addi Road and brought together over 300 young people to help distribute food and hampers to people in need; Leigh Berwick, who volunteers at Wests Boomers Baseball Club, bringing together families and increasing female participation; Geoff Bain, who transports seriously ill children and their families in regional NSW to their medical appointments with the Little Wings Organisation; and to the Dress for Success Referral Agency Working Group, who assist women experiencing unemployment to secure rewarding long-term work. It is so wonderful that so many organisations in the electorate of Newtown benefit from the contribution of volunteers and that so many locals in our community step up to volunteer. We thank them all for their efforts.

#### **MARRICKVILLE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to thank the volunteers in the Marrickville branch of the State Emergency Service for their service to the people of New South Wales. It was a pleasure to recently join with Marrickville SES members at one of their regular Tuesday night meetings and hear about their activities and training to keep our local inner west community and other communities in need safe. The team at Marrickville SES selflessly dedicate their time to complex operations including missing persons searches throughout the state, while also continuing their training to ensure they are prepared to respond in the event of an emergency. In particular, I note that the unit's recent Navshield participation has increased their capacity to contribute to bush rescue operations across the state. A special congratulations to the team who came fourth in the Navshield one-day Emergency Services division, including Scott Brownless, Melinda Barbagallo, and Heath Hasemer. Your continued participation in this vital service keeps the entire community safe, and we thank you for your dedication.

#### **PEG HARVEY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Peg Harvey, born Margaret Alison Northmore. Peg Harvey was a member of the of the Berrima District Historical and Family History Society Inc. for twenty-seven years, holding a variety of administrative roles during this period as well as participating in research - inclusive of cataloguing and indexing important items to the district. Mrs Harvey, along with her husband, first volunteered at the Berrima District Historical Society [BDHS] in 1997. Mrs Harvey took on roles as the Minute Secretary, Treasurer, BDHS Secretary, Membership Secretary and Public Officer. Mrs Harvey served as a member of the BDHS Management Committee, from 2001 to early 2024. Mrs Harvey was awarded with Life Membership of the BDHS in 2017 and a Certificate of Achievement by the Royal Australian Historical Society in 2021. Mrs Harvey also held a stalwart role within the Bowral & District Hospital Auxiliary, and volunteered with Meals on Wheels. I take this time to respectfully acknowledge the many roles undertaken by Mrs Harvey and her significant contribution to the Southern Highlands. Vale Mrs Harvey.

#### **RDA-MOUNTED GAMES**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise the RDA (NSW) Mounted Games and RDA (NSW) State Dressage Championships which were held at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre in August. The event sees a variety of sporting games and races which call upon both the rider and horse to demonstrate their agility. Jo Grove, Coach at RDA (NSW) Goulburn Centre was ecstatic to congratulate the team who proudly took the honour of being declared the winners of the Champion Rider Junior, Champion Rider Trot, second Prix Caprilli Dressage Test, first and third in the Rider in Action Course. Jo proudly acknowledged the Horse Care Team, Stable Management and Designated Rider Volunteers and timekeeper at the Championships. This of course would not be possible without the event coordinators and sponsors. I extend my sincere congratulations to Jo and the team at RDA Goulburn, and of course, the talented riders and their ponies who proudly represented our city. I recognise the dedication and skills to accomplish the feat, you have proudly represented your community.

### JUNIOR HOCKEY REPRESENTATIVES

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Junior Hockey Stars, Henry Galland, Ollie Croker, Georgia Kemp-Robertson, and Chelsea Cartwright. Henry, Ollie, and Georgia attend school in Crookwell and Chelsea in Goulburn. All four have represented Goulburn District Hockey in tournaments in past years and have demonstrated their skills at a high level, capturing the eye of selectors. Competing in Newcastle for the MacKillop and South Coast teams where, again, they were able to showcase their skilful athleticism, stick skills as individuals but also their remarkable teamwork. Now they have been selected to represent New South Wales in the Under 12s Primary Schools Sports Association [PSSA] Hockey team. They will compete in Cairns from the 19th August, against other talented young hockey players from across Australia. I take this time to congratulate Henry, Ollie, Georgia, and Chelsea on their selection and wish them the very best in their upcoming tournament in Cairns. You have all made the Crookwell and surrounding areas very proud of your achievements, well done.

### LOCAL BUSINESS AWARD – OUTSTANDING EDUCATION SERVICES – UNICO EDUCATION TRAINING

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Unico Education Training for winning the Local Business Award for Outstanding Education Services. This well-deserved recognition highlights the centre's exceptional dedication to providing quality education and support to students, helping them to achieve their academic goals and reach their full potential. Unico Education Training has built a strong reputation within our community by offering tailored educational programs, tutoring, and academic support for students across a wide range of subjects. They work with experienced and passionate educators who are devoted to fostering a positive learning environment where students can thrive both academically and personally. This prestigious award is a true reflection of the hard work and dedication of the team behind the centre's success, as well as the strong relationships they have cultivated with students and parents within our community. Their impact on the community is inspiring, as they continue to empower young minds to pursue knowledge and achieve success in their educational journeys. Congratulations again to Unico Education Training on this award, we look forward to seeing the continued positive impact they have on the lives of local students.

### CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF VISIONARY CARE: SPECSAVERS BANKSTOWN

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—As Specsavers Bankstown marks its 15th anniversary, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and admiration to this vital community pillar. For over a decade and a half, Specsavers Bankstown has played a pivotal role in preserving the sight and improving the lives of countless residents. Their dedication goes beyond providing top-notch eye and hearing care—it extends to saving lives through early detection of serious conditions like diabetic retinopathy. With a commitment to accessible healthcare, Specsavers Bankstown offers bulk-billed eye tests and a wide range of services, including advanced 3D eye scans and comprehensive hearing assessments. Their multilingual staff and use of state-of-the-art technology ensure that everyone in our diverse community receives the highest standard of care. The store's contributions to public health are underscored by their partnership with the KeepSight initiative, helping those with diabetes safeguard their vision. Their continuous support and professional excellence truly reflect the spirit of community service and compassion. Thank you, Specsavers Bankstown, for your dedication and outstanding service. Here's to many more years of vision and hearing care, and to a future where every individual in our community can see and hear their best.

### KHALIL KOUAYDER – GREENACRE TIGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

**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 Khalil Kouayder, the secretary of Greenacre Tigers Football Club, who was named Volunteer of the Year for Central Sydney. In his day job, Khalil is a Physical Education teacher at Sir Joseph Banks High and has also dedicated around 15 years to the sport of rugby league in the local community. Since taking on the role of secretary for the Greenacre Tigers in 2016, he has demonstrated the utmost dedication to the club. His strong work ethic is evident in his consistent presence at every training session and games over the weekends, ensuring the team's success. He is known for inspiring team members and for building a sense of community among players and supporters. He currently trains the A Grade team in all games and fills the role of ground manager and First Aid Officer as required. As a role model, Khalil instills the core values of good sportsmanship and what it means to represent the club with pride. Thank you, Khalil, for your amazing work and thank you for the influence you continue to have on young children to enjoy their sport.



### ST MARYS SPRING FESTIVAL

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—The St Marys Spring Festival is a popular annual celebration, and it has returned this year with a warm reception. I had the pleasure of attending the festival on Saturday, September 7th. The festival has been a cherished tradition in the community for many years. Originally starting as a small local event, it has grown into a major annual celebration that showcases the vibrant culture and spirit of St Marys. The street parade was the highlight of the day. The festival was a fantastic representation of the local talents we have within our community, with live music and market stalls on showcase. There were events and games for the whole family that were appreciated by all in attendance. Thank you to the volunteers, businesses, groups, and artists that helped make this event a huge success. Congratulations to all parties on another successful St Marys Spring Festival.

### DIYA MATTHEWS

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—I would like to recognise the amazing artwork submitted to the Inaugural R U OK Day National Student Art competition by Diya Matthews of Xavier Catholic College, Llandilo. Each student was asked to respond to the prompt, 'What does a R U OK? conversation mean to you?' From a large number of submissions from students across the country, Diya's work, titled 'A Conversation Can Change A Life', was selected as one of the five winners. This is an invaluable initiative and I am elated to see local students partaking in important conversations around mental health through artwork. Congratulations Diya on your beautiful artwork and I can't wait to see what the future has in store for you!

### EMILY GRIFFITHS

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—I would like to congratulate Emily Griffiths from Penrith City Archers, Werrington on her recognition as Junior Sports Star of the Year at last week's 2024 Penrith Valley Sports Foundation Awards for her amazing efforts in archery. In April, Emily competed at the Archery Australia National Youth Championships where she won an incredible five gold medals. Local sporting clubs are integral to our community, and it is incredible to see what Emily has already achieved at the young age of fourteen. Thank you to Penrith City Archers for all their hard work and mentorship. It is clear Emily is right on target and I can't wait to see what the future has in store for her.

### SEAN WALSH

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst)**—Thank you Speaker. I am delighted to acknowledge the achievements of Sean Walsh, a 19 year old man from Killarney Heights who has a bright future in leadership. I was proud to meet Sean and help sponsor him to attend a Leadership Conference in Canberra. This 4 day conference was held at the Australian Parliament House and the Hyatt Hotel. He and the other 186 young people from around the country were able to gain great insight from the various speakers. Sean was particularly impressed by Lieutenant General David Morrison's presentation, as he spoke about the way he had learnt from his various faults and mistakes made during his life. This was very reassuring to the audience when considering the way people in office can overcome difficulties. Sean is a very impressive young man and will no doubt make a great future leader in the community. It is great to see the calibre and passion of our young people and I congratulate Sean on taking the initiative to attend the Conference. Thank you.

### MARGARET PENGELLY

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise..... Margaret Pengelly was recently recognised for her long-standing and outstanding contributions to children at Parkview Public School and in particular, her contributions to Early Education achievement and community connections over the last 17 years. Margaret was presented with an NSW Department of Education Nanga Mai Award at the Sydney International Convention Centre gala function in 2023. This award celebrates and recognises the outstanding achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, community members and schools that demonstrate excellence across a diversity of areas. It is also believed Margaret is the first teacher in Leeton to receive a Nanga Mai Award. The award is the highest accolade for Aboriginal education given out by the NSW Department of Education. Ms Pengelly's role at Parkview Public covers many different areas, including helping to co-ordinate the Bright Beginnings program, assisting with kindergarten classes, as well as running the school's breakfast program. Margaret has also been responsible for driving many positive changes within the school and is well respected by the school principal, who said she was a deserving recipient.

**LAURA POTTS**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise..... Laura Potts grew up in a small village in England. She has always had a love of sports and fitness, and followed a path to study Physiotherapy in the UK. She graduated in 2015 and began working as a Physio in the UK. In 2017 Laura and her partner set off travelling Australia and took a great liking to Hillston and its community, where they settled. They both became involved in local sports and committees which was a great asset to the small community. Laura's passion for fitness and helping people change and improve their lives motivated her study for Cert III & IV in Personal Training. This was part of the Empowered Scholarship program through Hutcheon and Pearce in partnership with Active Farmers and Fit College. Graduates of the program then go on to work with Active Farmers for a minimum of two years in their local communities. Active Farmers is a grass roots organisation that brings farming communities together to assist with mental health and well-being.

**LEETON FRIENDS OF LURO**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise..... The Friends of Luro was a not-for-profit community volunteer group working with remote rural communities in the Luro sub-district of East Timor. Their goal was to raise funds and develop projects that would benefit sustainable improvements to the Luro area. A major initiative was to provide educational scholarships and funding for traineeships to local students. Leeton, through Friends of Luro group, supported a safe home for students during political instability in East Timor. They have also provided a maternity facility, materials for making mosquito nets, water filters, sewing machines and laptops. High Schools in the Leeton Shire and Leeton Rotary clubs have also played big roles in helping secondary school students gain a higher education so they could achieve their career goals. Friends of Luro treasurer said without the support of these groups over the years, many students would simply not have been able to continue their schooling years and education. The organisation was started 20 years ago but have recently wound up after two decades of dedication, help, fellowship and fun.

**DEMENTIA ACTION WEEK**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—This week marks Dementia Action Week and is an opportunity for us to raise awareness and increase understanding of dementia in our communities. This year's theme is Act Now for a Dementia-Friendly Future and it is being led by Dementia Australia. There are more than 421,000 Australians who have dementia, with almost 132,800 in NSW. Raising awareness and understanding of dementia can have an extraordinary impact on the day to day lives of those with dementia, as well as their families and carers. Raising awareness and understanding assists in making people with dementia feel welcome and understood. I remind all that Dementia Australia runs the National Dementia Helpline, which is available free of charge to anyone concerned about dementia 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 1800 100 500. I thank and commend Dementia Australia and all who work to improve the lives of people with dementia.

**FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARE WEEK**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—The 8th to the 14th of September 2024 marked Foster and Kinship Care Week. With the week having recently concluded, I take this opportunity on behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek to recognise the amazing carers across our community who provide safe and loving homes for children and young people in out-of-home care. The support, stability and opportunities these carers provide to enable children to thrive is life changing. I extend my thanks on behalf of the electorate to the service providers, families and staff for their tireless work in putting children first.

**R U OK? DAY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Whilst 12th September was R U OK? Day, it is important to ask the question any day of the year. A conversation could change a life! I encourage everyone in my electorate of Badgerys Creek and beyond to find out more information on how to ask by visiting <https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask>. Anyone who might be or who knows someone who might be having suicidal thoughts is urged to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 for 24/7 crisis support. If someone's life is in danger, it is important to call 000. I thank everyone who has taken part in this important initiative by raising awareness and sharing information.

**HISTORIC GROUP N ASSOCIATION**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Sunday 25th August, I was happy to meet with players and officials from the Historic Group N Association at Sydney Motorsport Park, Eastern Creek to present them with a Local Sport Grant. The Historic Group N Association of NSW is a community with a shared passion for historic Group N cars, a motor racing category, with sub-categories Group Na, Group Nb and Group Nc, for touring cars built from prior to 1957 through to December 1972. On this track day, classic cars from the Historic Group N

Association were among hundreds of vehicles across the Combined Motor Club. This year, the Historic Group N Association successfully applied for a Local Sport Grant of \$2010.50 to deliver driver training, teaching important skills around competitive race car driving, and proper discretion for both the track and public roads. This training will help encourage more drivers into the sport, which is regulated by the nationally-recognised governing and sanctioning body, Motorsport Australia. My heartfelt thanks go out to Stephen Pitman, President, John Battersby, Vice-President, and all drivers and enthusiasts at the Historic Group N Association for their impressive vehicles and continued efforts in our local Prospect Electorate community.

#### **2024 NRL KEN THORNETT MEDAL**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was fantastic to attend the Parramatta Eels 2024 Ken Thornett Medal Awards on Tuesday, 10th September 2024. The prestigious Ken Thornett Medal is awarded annually to the Parramatta Eels NRL Player of the Year, in memory of the legendary Eels fullback. The Awards evening recognises players from the Eels' NRL, NRLW, NSW Cup and Jersey Flegg sides, as well as the Club Person of the year, representative honours and debuting and departing players. Congratulations to Reagan Campbell-Gillard on winning the prestigious 2024 Ken Thornett Medal as the Eel's NRL Player of the Year. "RCG" is a very deserving recipient who's played his heart out at every game. This Award brings an honourable end to his time with the Eels. I also congratulate all the players who received awards recognising their achievements and sportsmanship at our Club this year. Thank you to all the Parramatta Eels players, the CEO Jim Sarantinos, Chairman Sean McElduff, the Board, and staff for your dedicated efforts to support the Club and Parra fans. We are lucky and proud to support a team of players who bring their best efforts, sportsmanship, and footy to the field.

#### **ASPECT WESTERN SYDNEY – DANIEL BRZOWSKI**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Throughout the months of August and September, I was fortunate to have Daniel Brzowski, join my Prospect Electorate Office Team. Daniel is a Year 11 student from the Aspect Western Sydney Satellite Class at Gilroy Catholic College. Offering instrumental support to our team, Daniel visited our office with his dedicated and passionate teacher, Amanda Mazarello. Aspect Western Sydney is connected with a wider network of Aspect Schools across NSW and Australia. They provide dynamic and individualised learning for students on the autism spectrum. For over 50 years, Aspect's satellite classes and independent schools have provided exceptional care and education to help students excel. During his work experience, Daniel assisted my office to send birthday cards to community members, helped draft speeches, organised certificates and grant presentations recognising community achievements and even learnt how to use the office camera! Daniel went above and beyond to help my staff, stepping out of his comfort zone to learn about new experiences. I encourage all Members to connect with their local Aspect school and host a work experience student. It was a pleasure to host Daniel for work experience and I thank him for his contribution to our community.

#### **GEOFF CAPE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Geoff "Capey" Cape who is celebrating forty years dedicated service to Local Government and the Narromine Community. Commencing with Narromine Shire Council on 6 September 1984 as an apprentice plant operator, it was the beginning of what has been a remarkable journey for Geoff. Over the years his roles at Council evolved as he took on a variety of responsibilities. After completing his apprenticeship, he worked as a labourer with the construction crew, concreting and installing kerbs and gutters and operating a variety of equipment such as backhoes and rollers. Demonstrating his can-do attitude and versatility he even helped install water mains! In 2019 when Narromine Shire Council purchased a second trailer for their semi-trailer, Geoff became Council's first Road Train Operator, a role he continues in today, and takes immense pride in. Geoff is a vital asset to not only the Council team, but also the community. Congratulations Capey on this significant achievement! Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for Narromine Shire Council and the community!

#### **MUDGEES LAKERS UNDER 16 BOYS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate the Mudgee Lakers Under 16 Boys Basketball team who were invited to play in the Junior State Cup in August. The team comprising of Jordan Geddes, Logan Geddes, Ashton Cleaver, Lachie Williams, Tom Briggs, Lachie Doran, Jason Lucas, Max Hampshire, Hunter McGrath, and Cooper Riley and coaches Peter Doran and Julian Geddes, will go down in history as the first Mudgee team to play in the Junior State Cup in sixty years! They were invited to play in the competition after featuring in the final of the Western Junior League earlier this year. Two pools of four teams faced off against each other, with Mudgee in pool B playing first against Hawkesbury Jets, followed by Northern Bears on the Saturday, and then Newcastle Falcons on the Sunday. The winners of each pool then met in the grand final. Coming up against tough competition, the boys were up for the challenge, putting to good use their intensive

training. Whilst they were unsuccessful in the State Cup final, the boys should be extremely proud of their efforts at not only the Cup, but throughout the entire season. Well done!

#### **NARROMINE AERO CLUB**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate the committee of the Narromine Aero Club on the success of their recent 'Top Gun on the Tarmac' evening. The community minded and proactive committee were successful in gaining funding to bring an outdoor cinema experience to Narromine, making it a free event for the entire community to enjoy. From all accounts, the evening was a resounding success, with approximately 200 people gathered on the tarmac, relaxing and enjoying the movie on the big screen. The organising committee ensured that all the finest of details were taken care of, from the delicious BBQ run by the Narromine Lions Club – to the traditional movie snacks, including fresh popcorn and choc tops! For added comfort, the committee even arranged bean bags for hire, with all proceeds from the rentals going to a local charity, further demonstrating the community spirit that defines Narromine. There has been wonderful feedback about how much the event was enjoyed by people of all ages. I commend committee for their hard work in organising such a special event for the community. It's initiatives like these that not only offer much-needed entertainment but also strengthen the bonds between us all.

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF NORTH RYDE**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Rotary Club of North Ryde for their outstanding Bunnings BBQ fundraiser, which successfully raised \$3,000 for the Riding for the Disabled Association [RDA] Ryde Centre. This event was one of their most successful to date, with over 1,000 sausages sold, totalling an impressive 86 kilograms. The day's success was made possible not only by the Rotary Club's efforts but also by the wonderful volunteers from the RDA, whose contributions were invaluable. I offer heartfelt congratulations to the Rotary Club for their ongoing dedication and unwavering support of the Riding for the Disabled Association. Your good work continues to make a lasting and meaningful difference in the community.

#### **ANNUAL COX'S ROAD MALL SCHOOLS COMPETITION**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce the winners of the Annual Cox's Road Mall Schools Competition, with prizes presented on the 6th of August. I would like to commend Cox's Road Mall for their generous support of local schools, offering prizes ranging from \$750 to \$5,000. A special mention goes to Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, which took home the top prize of \$5,000. Congratulations once again to Cox's Road Mall for your remarkable contributions to the community. Your ongoing efforts to support local education are truly commendable, and I encourage you to keep up the excellent work.

#### **WORLD LEAGUE FOR PROTECTION OF ANIMALS GLADESVILLE**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring attention to the wonderful work done by the World League for Protection of Animals in Gladesville, who recently rescued a sick and abandoned cat. Thanks to the generosity of our compassionate locals, the cat is now being nursed back to health, with most of its fur having grown back, and is nearly ready for adoption. The team mentioned that three donations have already been made towards the cat's vet bills. This is just one example of the countless rescues they carry out each week for animals in need. I commend their tireless dedication and the ongoing support from the community in caring for these vulnerable animals.

#### **ROCKDALE WALKSOCCER - CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELLBEING OF SENIORS IN ROCKDALE**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—I take this opportunity to congratulate and acknowledge the dedication and community achievements of WalkSoccer Rockdale. Walking Football NSW is a not-for-profit association, run by volunteers, whose mission is to get seniors around the state involved in a fun and safe activity, which we call WalkSoccer. WalkSoccer was built on the foundations of safety, fun and inclusivity. Games are played on a small pitch, with the rules having been rewritten to minimise the chance of injury. Running is not allowed and there is no contact and no heading. The ball is kept below waist-height and no dangerous force is allowed when kicking. The average age of players at Rockdale is 68 years with the eldest player being 82! WalkSoccer provides an opportunity for our older community to feel wanted as part of a socially active group, enjoying the outdoors, having a laugh and most importantly getting exercise. Many friendships have formed throughout the community of seniors, that may not have occurred without WalkSoccer. I congratulate WalkSoccer on their remarkable achievements in bringing people together through sport and culture and wish them the very best for their ongoing success.

### **NORTH SYDNEY YOUNG WRITERS' AWARD**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I am constantly blown away by the wealth of talent that young people in my local community continue to demonstrate, particularly in the creative fields. The North Shore Young Writers' Award, officially the Nan Manefield Writers' Award, showcases exceptional talent in creative writing. Young people aged 11 to 18 were invited to submit either a short story or poem not exceeding 750 words. This year's award marks 35 years of Stanton Library and North Sydney Council celebrating the writing talent of people in our community. I congratulate this year's winners, Kathryn Rendulic, Kayla Khoo, Sophie Christianson, Sheryl Monteiro, and Louis Williams. I also congratulate those who were recognised as highly commended, Tony Chen, Amanda Linh, Isla Campbell, Maggie Langsworth, and Zachary Robertson. I acknowledge this year's judges, Erin Gough, Helena Fox, Jaclyn Moriarty, Will Kostakis, and Sue Whiting, who had the monumental task of judging hundreds of entries across five categories. Congratulations to all those involved in another successful year of the North Sydney Young Writers' Award.

### **MOSMAN PREP FURNITURE DONATION**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to recognise the social action efforts of Mosman Preparatory School. Mosman Prep has teamed up with Team Vista, a not-for-profit organisation operating in Tanzania. Vista works to end educational poverty in communities in Moshi, Tanzania, and to empower young people to improve their lives and support those around them. Mosman Prep recently completed a new furniture installation and found a way to put their old furniture to good use; by donating it to Team Vista for use at schools in Kaloleni Ward in Tanzania. More than 300 children will benefit from this thoughtful donation. I commend Mosman Preparatory School on living up to their motto 'Non Nobis Solum', meaning 'not for ourselves alone'. It is heartening to see institutions in the North Shore community going out of their way to serve the needs of others. I thank Team Vista for all the amazing work their team has already done, and are continuing to do in Africa.

### **MOSMAN COMMUNITY MARKET**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to congratulate the Mosman Historical Society on a successful Community Market, held at The Barn in Mosman Bay earlier this month. The Barn holds a special place in the historical significance of Mosman being one of the last remaining early colonial maritime architecture in Sydney and was once part of the old Mosman whaling station. It is now home to the 1st Mosman Scout Troup, which was also Australia's first scout troupe. The Barn was painstakingly restored over many years and after much fundraising by Mosman local Colleen Godsell. Colleen is well known by many in our local community having been involved with the local scouts and The Barn for many years. I commend Colleen's daughter, Maddy Godsell, who organised the day and who has been running the Sharing Shelf in Mosman, which provides essential food items to those who may need it. The day was complete with free food, free dog treats for our furry friends, and live music. Community events such as these are what makes our local area the best place to live, and I look forward to seeing the next community market at The Barn.

### **BROKEN HEEL FESTIVAL**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Since 2014 the owners of the Palace Hotel have held the Broken Heel Festival. Inspired by "Priscilla Queen of The Desert" it is a celebration of difference, drag and divas in the desert oasis of Broken Hill. Since its inception the community has embraced the diversity of LGBTIQ+ people and participated in a weekend of celebrities, show stopping music, street parades and fun. The addition of the "Silver City Stiletto" travelling from Sydney to Broken Hill brought so many people eager to participate in this outback extravaganza. Growing up in a remote community can be an isolating and lonely experience for people who see themselves as different, but this festival brings people from all walks of life to celebrate diversity and inclusion. Whilst the owners of the Palace Hotel have announced they will pause the Broken Heel Festival during renovations, I hope that the Broken Heel Festival will continue as it has been a huge drawcard for Broken Hill and its tourist economy. I thank Selina LaRovere-Nagas and Esther La Rovere for your vision and efforts to bring the Broken Heel Festival to the Palace Hotel.

### **HEATHER BLACKLEY**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Local Condobolin resident Heather Blackley has recently celebrated her retirement with friends and colleagues over a lunch at the Railway Hotel in Condobolin. Heather has retired after working 40 years in Community Services in Condobolin but will continue to be part of the Community Centre, Lachlan Arts Council and Condobolin CWA. Forty years of service is a magnificent achievement and truly shows how dedicated you are to the local community. I would like to congratulate Heather on her retirement, and I thank her for her selfless attitude and commitment to the Condobolin Community and surrounds.

### **MURWILLUMBAH DISTRICT HOSPITAL CELEBRATES 120 YEARS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I Congratulate Murwillumbah District Hospital Executive Director/Director of Nursing Tracey Lea and her staff on a remarkable 120 years of providing healthcare to the local community. Murwillumbah's hospital was established on 20 May 1904 as the Tweed Cottage Hospital with a government grant of \$500 towards the total building cost of \$1,614, with the community funding the balance. It was renamed the Tweed District Hospital in 1910 and renamed Murwillumbah District Hospital in 1972 to avoid confusion with the newly-opened Tweed Heads District Hospital in Tweed Heads. One common denominator over the years has been the highly dedicated and committed staff, and the enormous contributions of volunteers. The Hospital Auxiliary was formed in 1926. This September was chosen for a week of celebrations, just completed, to mark MBH's proud history of development and deep connections with local people. The public flocked to MBH to view displays of staff stories, volunteering through the years and historical photos. Celebrations culminated in a barbecue for current staff and their families last Saturday, where staff recreated an iconic photo from 1939. Some of this information was sourced from A Potted History of Murwillumbah District Hospital by Millie Higgins.

### **ST BRIGID'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, KYOGLE, SHINES IN WAKAKIRRI**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—More than 85 students from St Brigid's Primary School, Kyogle, recently won a Queensland state award in Wakakirri, Australia's largest national performing arts festival for schools which celebrate diversity. Under the facilitation of Year 1 teacher and parent Mrs Hayley Kennedy and Ms Matilda Beetge, students have been rehearsing their Wakakirri Story-Dance, a 3-7 minute performance that theatrically tells a story using a combination of dancing, creative movement and acting to pre-recorded music. St Brigid's Primary students, accompanied by their teachers, performed Castles at the Logan Entertainment Centre on Wednesday 7 August and were among 12 of 28 schools called back for an encore performance at the awards showcase night, also held at Logan, on Thursday 5 September. Wakakirri Ambassador Nathalie Cottee described their August performance as "a visually and emotionally stunning, thought-provoking journey." Castles won several show awards – production award for costumes; storytelling award for a great story; storytelling award for strong use of the festival motif; storytelling award for story theme and concept; and production award for editing. St Brigid's Primary also received the prestigious Harmony and Cultural Unity Story State Award. The Catholic Schools Office [CSO] supported both trips.

### **LISMORE ART CLUB HOLDS ITS 64TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—The Lismore Art Club this month is holding its 64th annual show at Flourish Art Gallery in South Lismore, making it the longest running art exhibition in the Northern Rivers region. I had the honour of opening this exhibition on opening night, Friday 6 September, and was impressed by the standard and variety of artworks on display. The exhibition runs until Friday 27 September. To stage 64 successive exhibitions is a truly remarkable achievement for our local not-for-profit art club, first established in 1960. Throughout the decades of change, the club has maintained an enthusiastic membership. In 2024, Lismore Art Club continues to be a vital part of the local arts scene, providing opportunities for learning, collaboration and artistic expression. Lismore Art Club President and local artist Jeht Burgoyne told The Northern Rivers Times weekly newspaper that it's a fantastic club to be part of. "Whether you have just a hint of creativity or are a seasoned artist, the club warmly welcomes everyone, from beginners to professionals alike," Jeht says. "The enduring legacy of the club stands as a testament to the vibrant and resilient creative spirit that defines the Lismore community."

### **CITY OF NEWCASTLE**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—On Saturday, 14 September, people in communities all over NSW went to the polls to elect their local government representatives. As it is the closest level of government to the community, councillors have an enormous impact on the day to day lives of many. Councillors make decisions about planning, service delivery and amenities for our communities. This is an enormous responsibility, as many of us in this chamber know from first-hand experience, and I want to take this opportunity to recognise all those who put their hands up to represent their friends and neighbours on City of Newcastle council. I would like to congratulate those elected or re-elected across the wonderful City of Newcastle, and to thank those who were unsuccessful for giving their all to their campaigns. I know how challenging running for public office so often is. I wish to acknowledge Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes on her decade of leadership, and I thank her for her contributions. I look forward to working with the new Council.

### LAKE MACQUARIE CITY COUNCIL

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—On Saturday, 14 September, people in communities all over NSW went to the polls to elect their local government representatives. As it is the closest level of government to the community, councillors have an enormous impact on the day to day lives of many. Councillors make decisions about planning, service delivery and amenities for our communities. This is an enormous responsibility, as many of us in this chamber know from first-hand experience, and I want to take this opportunity to recognise all those who put their hands up to represent their friends and neighbours on Lake Macquarie City Council. I would like to congratulate those elected or re-elected across the wonderful City of Lake Macquarie, and to thank those who were unsuccessful for giving their all to their campaigns. I know how challenging running for public office so often is. After two terms, Mayor Kay Fraser announced her retirement ahead of this election. She has given so much to our City, and I thank her for contributions. I wish her successor, Adam Schultz, all the best. I look forward to working with the new Council.

### LOCAL WINNERS OF THE 2024 MINISTERS' AWARDS FOR WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The Women in Local Government Awards recognise female councillors and council staff who make invaluable contributions to the communities they represent and serve. As a former local government worker, elected councillor and mayor, I was honoured to help celebrate recipients alongside Local Government Minister Ron Hoenig MP recently, including three from the Charlestown electorate area. Alicia Lopez, Chief Information Officer at City of Newcastle, was awarded the Alternative Pathways Award in the Metro category. The award is granted to a female staff member who is breaking down gender stereotypes. Jazmin Webber, Apprentice Carpenter at City of Newcastle, was awarded the Young Achiever's Award in the Metro category. The award is granted to an outstanding female staff member aged 25 and under. David Hughes, Director Built and Natural Assets at Lake Macquarie City Council, was awarded the Champion of Change Award in the Rural and Regional category. The award is granted to a general manager or senior manager who have excelled in supporting and encouraging women's participation at their council. Congratulations to all winners and nominees.

### SAVOUR THE TWEED

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—The Tweed's finest chefs, restaurants and hospitality experiences will be on display with the Tweed's first food festival, Savour the Tweed, scheduled for 30 October to 3 November 2024. Presented by Tweed Shire Council and organised by The Tweed Tourism Company, this festival will showcase the amazing food experiences here in the Tweed. Some 26 chefs from the Tweed region will be displaying their incredible talents and there will be activities such as exploration of food history, walking tours, a kids' cooking class and pop-up events. Importantly, Savour the Tweed will offer a range of affordable experiences alongside fine dining events. It's no secret the Tweed is home to amazing local produce and Savour the Tweed will also shine a light on the diversity of the region. This five-day festival will celebrate the food of the Tweed and everything this region has offer.

### TAYLEN HOWARD

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—Congratulations to young motorbike rider Taylen Howard who won two Australian titles in two classes at the Australian Junior Track Championships held recently in Forbes. Taylen, from Bogangar in the Tweed Electorate, competed in the 85cc 2-stroke and 150cc 4-stroke class. Taylen's very strong performances in the rounds gave him the opportunity to pick his gate in the final. This set Taylen up for a brilliant final where he won with a convincing gap between the runner-up. Congratulations Taylen on two Australian titles!

### CYCLING WITHOUT AGE Burringbar

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—The Northern Rivers Rail Trail continues to thrive with Cycling Without Age opening a chapter in Burringbar offering free trishaw rides for people with reduced mobility and disability. Cycling without Age Burringbar is a wonderful volunteer-run, not-for-profit community service that operates between Burringbar and Mooball, further enhancing the accessibility and inclusivity of the rail trail. The trishaws accommodate up to two passengers, allowing those who might not otherwise be able to use the rail trail to enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of one of the Tweed's most popular outdoor experiences. This in turn promotes social and environmental connections for passengers. I applaud Tracey McDonagh, the Community Captain at Cycling without Age Burringbar, for all her hard work in bringing this chapter of Cycling without Age to fruition, and to all the volunteer trishaw riders who make the service possible. This is a wonderful example of the

community-minded nature of the Tweed, where people selflessly donate their time and energy to helping others. Well done to everyone involved in Cycling without Age Burringbar for bringing this service to the Tweed Rail Trail.

#### **ARMENIA DAY FESTIVAL, CHATSWOOD MALL**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—It is always a joy and privilege to stand with and celebrate the culture and contribution of our wonderful Armenian Australian community. A sizeable number of these citizens reside in my community of Willoughby and the Armenia Day Festival in Chatswood Mall is always a popular annual fixture. The 2024 Festival once again attracted large crowds to Chatswood Mall on 24 August, and it was terrific to see such a show of community support. Joining Willoughby Mayor Tanya Taylor, His Eminence Archbishop Haigazoun Najarian of the Armenian Orthodox Church, councillors, community leaders and other dignitaries, it was wonderful to savour this rich display of Armenian art, culture and cuisine. I thank the performers, entertainers, caterers and everyone from the Armenian community who worked so hard to make this event a great success. The spirit, pride, culture and resilience of the Armenian people continues to be an example to us all.

#### **WILLOUGHBY ROOS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE GRAND FINAL**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On 31 August, I had the joy of watching the mighty Willoughby Roos win a Grand Final at the iconic North Sydney Oval. Officially known as the Willoughby District Junior Rugby League Football Club, the Willoughby Roos are one of the oldest Rugby League Clubs on the North Shore with a history dating back to 1913. Open to all boys and girls, the Willoughby Roos play in the North Sydney Rugby League competition from under-six's to under-fourteen's. On Grand Final Day, it was their U14 Silver team that shone, and my family was so impressed by their stunning victory. I also acknowledge their opponents, the North Sydney Brothers, for playing a hard-fought match with skill and sportsmanship. I express my congratulations to the U14s as well as the U13 Bronze team on its Grand Final win. I thank the North Sydney Junior Rugby League Club for a fantastic afternoon and a wonderful season of football.

#### **NORTHS FINAL IN SHUTE SHIELD**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I wish to congratulate the Northern Suburbs Rugby Football Club for an outstanding season, finishing second in the 2024 Shute Shield. In what was a nail-biting Grand Final clash at Leichardt Oval on Sunday 31 August, Northern Suburbs went down to Eastern Suburbs by the slimmest of margins at 36-35. I congratulate Eastern Suburbs on their victory, winning their first Shute Shield title since 1969. That said, Northern Suburbs can be immensely satisfied with their excellent performance in the 2024 season, adding to their long history of playing top-quality rugby union. Formed in 1900, Northern Suburbs has a decorated history, producing 42 Wallaby representatives and winning seven premierships in First Division. Like their Rugby League counterparts, the mighty North Sydney Bears, Northern Suburbs are proud to have the beautiful North Sydney Oval as their home ground. Many Northern Suburbs players live within Willoughby and I am proud of the close ties this legendary rugby union club has with my local community.

#### **DAVID ABELA**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises David Abela of Kiama, who has been honoured with a NSW Volunteer of the Year Award for his contribution to Camp Quality. David's commitment to bringing hope and joy to children and families battling cancer is an example of the compassion that defines our people in our region. Through his tireless work, David has helped create lasting memories and moments of happiness for those who need it most. His dedication has touched countless lives, bringing smiles and comfort in the face of adversity. This award is not just a recognition of his hard work, but a reflection of the impact on those he serves. David's work reminds us of the difference one person can make in the lives of many. I am immensely proud to see him honoured for his contributions, and his impact will continue growing, spreading joy and hope wherever he goes. Congratulations, David, on this well-deserved award. Your work is a beacon of light in our community, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your altruistic service.

#### **JOELIE ROBSON**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Joeline Robson of Gerringong, who has been honoured at the NSW Volunteering Awards for her exceptional work with Disaster Relief Australia. Joeline's unwavering commitment to helping those in crisis situations has had a profound impact on countless lives, proving that even in the darkest times, the light of human kindness can guide the way. Joeline's work with Disaster Relief Australia is a testament to her dedication to service and her deep compassion for those in need. Joeline has consistently demonstrated resilience and leadership. Her ability to bring comfort and aid to those facing unimaginable challenges is truly inspiring. Through her efforts, Joeline has not only provided immediate relief to those affected by disasters but has also contributed to the long-term recovery and rebuilding



of communities. Her work reminds us of the importance of compassion, and the incredible difference that one person can make. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Joelle Robson for this well-deserved recognition. Her tireless dedication to helping others in their most vulnerable moments is a shining example of the best of humanity. We are all immensely proud of her contributions and grateful for her service.

#### **BARBARA ADAMS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Barbara Adams of Jamberoo, who has been honoured as the Regional Senior Volunteer of the Year and the overall Regional Volunteer of the Year at the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. Under Barbara's leadership as President, the Jamberoo Red Cross has flourished, raising over \$100,000 and organizing cherished community events, such as the Jamberoo Australia Day celebrations and the town's Christmas decorations. Her tireless dedication and passion for serving others have made her a cornerstone of our community. Barbara's efforts go beyond fundraising; she has brought people together, strengthened community bonds, and created lasting traditions in Jamberoo Red Cross. Her commitment and hard work have not only benefited the Red Cross but have supported people far beyond our region. Barbara will proudly represent our region at the state finals in December, and I am sure that she will continue inspiring others with her dedication and community spirit. I extend my congratulations to Barbara for her well-deserved recognition and thank her for her invaluable contribution. Barbara, your work embodies the very best of our community spirit, and we are all incredibly proud of you.

#### **PINE PROPERTY 10TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge a major milestone for a local business in my electorate of Manly. Pine Property, which specialises in buying, selling, leasing and managing retail, commercial and industrial real estate, is celebrating a decade of service to the local community. Founder and Director, Patrick Kelleher founded the business 10 years ago with little more than a phone and a dream. Despite the challenges of running any small business, along with the vagaries of a specialised real estate sector, the agency continues to grow as it strives to be the best local commercial real estate service on the Northern Beaches. In reaching the 'Decade Milestone' Patrick is the first to acknowledge he wouldn't have built the business without the trust, support and partnership of staff, clients, suppliers, the local community, family and friends. I congratulate Pine Property on their achievements to date and look forward to what the next 10 years may deliver for my community of Manly.

#### **LEGACY WEEK 2024**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the exceptional and enduring work of Northern Beaches Legacy. Legacy was founded in 1923 on a simple promise from one digger to another, to "look after the family". More than 100 years later, Legacy supports 40,000 individuals and families of veterans who gave their lives, or their health, in serving our country. Earlier this month, I took part in the annual Legacy Week, which began in the 1940s to show support and raise funds for the widows, widowers and their children, whose loved ones have served our country. I am advised that this year alone, Northern Beaches Legacy raised \$36,700 which is a fantastic result. Legacy needs our ongoing support as it continues to deliver developmental opportunities for children of service men and women and helps ensure social connection and financial security for the Legacy families. This important organisation also cares for and supports families who are suffering from the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental health illnesses. Legacy is supported by over 3,400 volunteer members, but I am confident that more would be made most welcome. I commend the work of Northern Beaches Legacy to the House.

#### **MACKELLAR GIRLS – FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge an outstanding achievement by the Northern Beaches Secondary College, Mackellar Girls Campus in my electorate of Manly. The campus is a government-funded single-sex secondary day school for girls within Sydney's Northern Beaches area. It is a well-respected school, which strives for excellence in every area – including sport. In this regard, I am pleased to report the school has been named State Champions after winning the final of the New South Wales Combined High Schools football knockout. It's been reported the final was an excellent game to watch which delivered the Mackellar Girls a 2-0 win over Muirfield High School. Congratulations goes to the players, coach and supporters for an outstanding result, which has made the school community – and the broader community – extremely proud. May the school's successes continue.

#### **THE GLASS SLIPPER PARTIES**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I'm thrilled to congratulate The Glass Slipper Parties on winning the Outstanding Event Services category at the recent 2024 Local Business Awards. These awards celebrate the immense contribution local businesspeople make to our communities, and this annual event celebrates their hard

work and dedication. Being a finalist in such a prestigious event is a remarkable achievement, and with the high quality of all nominees, the judges certainly had a tough task. The Glass Slipper Parties has earned this accolade by making children's dreams come true, creating magical and unforgettable experiences through personalized party packages. Whether it's princesses, superheroes, discos, or pamper parties, they always go above and beyond. Their highly skilled entertainers, who come from performing arts backgrounds, bring talent, energy, and a special connection to every event, making children feel extraordinary on their big day. After being finalists in 2020 and 2022, this win is well-deserved recognition of their commitment to excellence. I'd also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Central Coast community for their ongoing support of local businesses like The Glass Slipper Parties. Congratulations again, and here's to many more magical celebrations in the future!

#### **INDIGO EARLY LEARNING CENTRE - FORRESTERS BEACH**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate Hannah Crossley and the entire team at Indigo Early Learning Centre at Forresters Beach for their incredible achievement of winning Best Early Childhood Service at the Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards held in Sydney recently. The Australian Women's Small Business Champion Awards are the largest celebration of women in small business, and with over 60 accolades presented this year, being selected as a champion from a national pool of thousands is truly remarkable. It's a testament to the dedication, passion, and hard work of your outstanding team. Indigo Early Learning Centre has been recognised for creating a unique, special place where children can learn, grow, and explore in a nurturing, nature-based environment. This award highlights the high standard of care and education you provide, and you should all feel immensely proud of your accomplishments. Congratulations once again on this wonderful accolade and for the exceptional work you do, raising the bar for early childhood services here on the Central Coast.

#### **TIM FAULKNER**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—A huge congratulations to Central Coast local Tim Faulkner from the Australian Reptile Park and Aussie Ark on being honoured with a remarkable tribute—a new Tasmanian Tiger species named after him, *Badjcinus timfaulkneri*. This extraordinary honour reflects Tim's lifetime dedication to Australian wildlife, particularly endangered species like the Tasmanian Devil. For the past 15 years, as owner, manager, and director of the Australian Reptile Park, Tim has been a passionate advocate for wildlife conservation and education. His daily work can range from feeding a saltwater crocodile, cuddling a koala, to even milking a funnel-web spider—showing his hands-on commitment to the animals in his care. Tim's incredible contributions extend far beyond the park. As president of the Aussie Ark sanctuary, he has played a key role in conserving the Tasmanian devil, earning him the title of Australian Geographic Conservationist of the Year in 2015. Under Tim's leadership, the Australian Reptile Park has become much more than a wildlife attraction—it's a beacon for conservation, saving endangered species and protecting lives through their antivenom program. Tim, we are so proud of you and your continued dedication to Australian wildlife. Congratulations on this well-deserved honour!

#### **NORTH SHORE DISTRICT SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION: GRAND FINAL DAY 2024**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Saturday 7 September 2024 I attended the grand final day for North Shore District Softball Association [NSDSA] at St Ives. As patron, I was honoured to present awards, patches and my best wishes. As the 2024 winter season comes to a close, I recognise all the volunteers, including coaches, managers, scorers and umpires for the great volunteer work they do. I also recognise parents, who volunteer to take their children to softball every Saturday. Congratulations to all players who participated throughout the season. A very special thank you to the leaders of NSDSA led by President Dione Taylor and Secretary Fiona Gow, as well as Kate Armstrong, Julia Benson, Sabrina Caffin, Selene Ellison, Michelle Fryar, Stacey Hutchinson, Shaun Joffe, Duncan Lapsley, Tracy Mighell, Lynne Townsend and Marijke Walker. Looking forward to softball returning as an Olympic sport in 2028 in Los Angeles, and NSDSA players being a part of it!

#### **CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT STUDIES: JOHN BONYTHON LECTURE 2024**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Wednesday 4 September 2024 I attended the Centre for Independent Studies [CIS] annual John Bonython Lecture. In 2024, the John Bonython Lecture was presented by Nicholas Eberstadt, a scholar and political economist who focuses on global health, poverty, foreign aid, and population changes. He currently holds the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute [AEI]. The focus of his lecture was on global depopulation. The CIS is leading independent policy think tank focused on classical liberalism. I am proudly a member and alumnus of their Liberty and Society Conference. I recognise Chief Executive Officer Tom Switzer and Chairman Nicholas Moore AO for organising this annual event. I also recognise board members, founder Greg Lindsay AO, and the master of ceremonies for the evening, April Palmerlee. The CIS creates an opportunity for like-minded people to connect, discuss and engage with policy. Politics is about the battle of ideas. Thank you to the Centre for Independent Studies for their ongoing contribution.

### ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On 9 September 2024 I visited St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Asquith, joined by James Wallace. The purpose of the visit was to discuss exercising leadership with Year 5 students, and that every single one of us can exercise leadership. I recognise the students, who were very knowledgeable about our system of government and who asked excellent (and challenging) questions. The visit to St Patrick's was extra special, given I am a proud alumnus having attended from 1990 to 1996. As I said in my Inaugural Speech to the NSW Parliament: "My formal education started at St Patrick's Catholic School in Asquith. Our school motto was "Faith". When meeting people, we were taught to add "and may God bless you" at the end of every greeting. Both acts profoundly impacted the way I look at and feel about people." I can confirm current students continue this impactful tradition when they greeted James and I. I recognise Principal Todd Vane-Tempest, Religious Education Co-ordinator Kylie Lloyd-Jones, and Year 5 teachers Loretta Rapa and Tahnee Reynolds. Thank you for making James and I feel so welcome, and in particular for me, a trip down memory lane.

### EXPLORE AND DEVELOP ANNANDALE

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I would like to recognise Explore and Develop Annandale for its outstanding contribution to early childhood education in our local community. The centre provides a nurturing environment for children from birth to 5 years of age, laying a strong foundation for their lifelong learning journey. The centre works within a philosophical framework of a sustainable future and is guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. The centre aims to foster belonging through meaningful relationships with children, families and the community. Belonging is also reflected through professional relationships between educators, and with the early childhood community. Owned and operated by Su Garrett, the centre is one of the few in NSW who have been awarded the rating of Excellent, by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], the highest rating a service can achieve under the National Quality Framework. The work of the dedicated team at Explore and Develop Annandale is a testament to the importance of quality early childhood education, and I commend the team for their ongoing commitment to excellence.

### STYLES STREET CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY LONG DAYCARE CENTRE

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I acknowledge the wonderful team at Styles Street Children's Community Long Day Care Centre in Leichhardt. Styles Street is an award-winning day care centre educating children aged from 2 to 5 years old. I was grateful for the opportunity to visit the Centre last month to see their new playground, which provides a fantastic space for the children to play and learn. For many years, Styles Street Children's Community Long Daycare Centre has offered exceptional early childhood education in an inclusive and nurturing environment. The work of the dedicated staff, including Director Radha Babicci, and Room Leaders Rhonda, Cherie, Laura and Tracy continues to make a lasting impact on the families at the centre and the wider community. I thank them all for their fantastic work and for their outstanding contribution to our community.

### FOREST LODGE AND GLEBE COORDINATION GROUP - FLAG

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the house the Forest Lodge and Glebe Coordination Group, known as FLAG to those in our community. FLAG provides a platform to address and respond to community needs. The monthly forum is an opportunity for representatives from services, community organisations, universities and local community members to come together, build connection, and foster collaboration. In 2023, a fantastic web page called The Green Plot was established by FLAG, to promote the joy of gardening sustainably. This year marks the 20th anniversary of FLAG, and I am delighted to acknowledge all the participants involved who have served our community, including current Chair, Megan Fletcher, community representatives Gaylene Harkin, Tania Thompson, Annette Celar, Wayne Bellman, Ley Baker, and Farah Moshiri, and representatives from Glebe Youth Service, St Helens Community Centre, Mission Australia, Counter Point, JNC, Australian Red Cross, UTS, University of Sydney, and City of Sydney Council, among other local groups. I look forward to the next 20 years!

### WATTLE GROVE NEWSAGENCY

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognise and commend the Wattle Grove Newsagency, a vital part of our community that has been serving residents for the past year under the new ownership of Ratana and Sokbet. Although the newsagency itself has been a fixture in the shopping village for around 10 years, Ratana and Sokbet have continued the tradition of providing essential services, including quality stationery, lottery tickets, newspapers, and toys and accessories. Their commitment and dedication to the community are evident through their support of the Free the Bears [FTB] initiative, for which they have received a certificate of appreciation. Additionally, they provide valuable assistance to elderly customers, young families, and the broader community, ensuring that the needs of Wattle Grove residents are met with care and convenience.

I thank Ratana, Sokbet, and their team for their dedication and diligence and look forward to seeing their continued service to our community.

#### **BEYOND THE BADGE**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to acknowledge a local not-for-profit organisation, Beyond The Badge for their tireless efforts in supporting our ex-emergency services personnel and veterans. It is not unknown that being a first responder and military personnel is a physically and mentally exhausting job, with service men and women putting their lives on the line every day for our community. I commend the support that Beyond The Badge provides in helping our retired first responders and veterans find their way back into the workforce and fulfil their new sense of purpose. The organisation offers a number of customised programs and services to ensure our ex-first responders can smoothly transition from their career of service into their future endeavours. I would like to thank the founders and directors Mr Sean Haran and Mr Simon Bradstock for their commitment to Beyond The Badge and the services that the organisation provides. Their work to help those who have kept our community safe is to be applauded.

#### **QUALITY MEATS WATTLE GROVE**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I rise to acknowledge and commend Quality Meats Wattle Grove, a longstanding and cherished local butcher shop that has been serving the community for over 25 years. This family-owned business, led by Tom and Hang, has built a reputation for providing high-quality meat to the locals. Their commitment to excellence is evident in the loyalty of their customers, who value the superior quality of their products. Quality Meat Wattle Grove has contributed to the community, having also made significant contributions to the community, supporting local charities and the Moorebank Soccer Club. Their involvement in these causes demonstrates a deep commitment to giving back to the community that has supported them for decades. I extend my gratitude to the entire team at Quality Meats Wattle Grove for their exceptional service and continued dedication to the Wattle Grove community.

#### **EAST MAITLAND RSL AUXILIARY 90TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the many members past and present of the East Maitland RSL Auxiliary on their 90th Anniversary. The Auxiliary was formed in 1934 and has since played a pivotal role in the operation of the sub-branch, supporting past and present servicemen and women, by raising funds. What an achievement! The 90th Anniversary Certificate was received by June Campbell from Pauline James OAM who presented it on behalf of RSL NSW. Servicing the Returned Services members from every conflict Australia has been a part of into the 21st Century is no small achievement. Auxiliaries were first formed in Australia by the mothers, wives, widows, sisters, daughters, and aunts of the men who served in World War I. The group not only fundraise but go and visit veterans in hospitals and aged care facilities and assist the sub-branches with catering for branch events. Thank you to members, past and present on your outstanding service to the veteran and wider community.

#### **ADSSI CEO RETIREMENT**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I would like to recognise the contribution Jenny Allan, CEO of Aged and Disability Support Services Incorporated [ADSSI] has made, in part, to the Maitland area and the NSW community in general. Jenny has been part of the leadership team at the home care services company for twenty years, the last 14 as CEO. She has announced her retirement from November this year. ADSSI is the umbrella organisation that provides aged and disability support services in the Hunter region as Beresfield Community Care, Dungog & District Neighbour care and Maitland Community Care Services. This organisation works every day to co-ordinate services and volunteers to assist thousands of people to live safely and independently in their homes. ADSSI staff regard Jenny as an extremely supportive, hardworking and dedicated leader. And under her leadership ADSSI's services have expanded across much of the Hunter Valley. What a tremendous legacy to leave at the end of a career. Best of luck, Jenny.

#### **FUTURE OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP FORUM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—You cannot be what you cannot see. Congratulations to Maitland Grossmann High School and Rutherford Technology High School on their active encouragement of female students to pursue STEM careers. STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) have a heavy male bias in careers. Both Maitland Grossmann High School and Rutherford Technology High School recently had teams of students taking part in a Future of Female Leadership Forum where they met and heard from 100 female leaders, innovators and CEOs. In their first session, the students were addressed by Redballoon founder Naomi Simson and NSW Minister for Women Jodie Harrison. Sessions featured apps development, presentation skills, solving maths problems and then speed mentoring with prominent women in STEM. In the second session, the students worked on entrepreneurship, branding, and professionalism.

This term, the students will work on an innovation pitch that will support our transition to sustainable transportation. They will then pitch this to a board of mock investors later this month. Excitingly there are 43 young women from Maitland taking part in this program. Congratulations to all involved.

#### **CRAIG HAMILTON AND DECLAN EDWARDS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—It is my greatest pleasure to congratulate local community members, Craig Hamilton and Declan Edwards, for their success at the Newcastle Business Club 2024 Annual Awards. Craig received the Individual Award for his extraordinary contribution to mental health advocacy in Newcastle. A longtime mental health advocate, Craig has significantly raised mental health awareness at both the local and national level, particularly through his powerful storytelling in the 2023 documentary 'The Promise'. Declan's company, BU Happiness College, was recognised with the Organisation Award for its outstanding dedication to improving the mental health and well-being in our community. BU Happiness College's commitment to supporting and collaborating with local businesses has played a pivotal role in fostering safer and more supportive work environments. I would like to thank Craig and Declan for their outstanding leadership, passion, commitment to the Hunter community.

#### **HUNTER REGION SPORTING HALL OF FAME**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—The Hunter Region Sporting Hall of Fame recognises a select group of Hunter athletes for their outstanding achievements and services to Australian sport at the international level. This year, local athletes, Amelia Matheson, Ben Demery, and Chris Nicholson were honoured at the 32nd Hunter Region Sporting Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. Amelia earned the honour for her contributions to ice hockey as both an athlete and mentor. In addition to her impressive international career, Amelia also made history as the first female coach in the Australian Ice Hockey League. A Paralympian and World Champion, Ben was celebrated for his incredible international career tandem cycling career with pilot Shaun Hopkins. A particular career highlight was winning two silver medals at the 2008 Paralympic Games. Chris was acknowledged for his successful sailing career spanning over two decades. Representing Australia at the Sydney and Athens Olympics, Chris is also the Head Coach of the Rockwool Sail GP Team and was awarded Australian Yachtsman of the Year for 1993/94. I commend all three athletes on this incredible achievement and their ongoing commitment to the Hunter sport community.

#### **ROBERT SAMS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—I would like to acknowledge Robert Sams CEO of Lifeline Direct for his great service to the Hunter community. After more than twelve years of leading Lifeline Direct, Rob will be stepping down from his role as CEO at the end of this month. Under the objective of working 'in community, for community and with community', Rob's leadership has been instrumental in raising mental health awareness to help reduce the stigma around suicide and empower individuals to take action. In 2021 Rob joined the ranks of more than 3,500 people as an accredited Crisis Supporter to ensure people reaching out for help didn't have to face their darkest moments alone. Rob's leadership and advocacy within the mental health sector has been invaluable to the Hunter community, and I wish him all the best for his future endeavours.

#### **STAMATIA MARDAKIS**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I am so pleased that my staff were able to assist Stamatia, a valued member of our community, in getting her fence repaired. I have had the pleasure of meeting Stamatia in my office and in my community of East Hills and she always comes with a smile despite facing several personal battles. Stamatia is not only a wonderful person but also a breast cancer survivor. Her journey has been one of strength and resilience. Despite the challenges she has faced, she has never lost her positive outlook on life. She sees her purpose in life as bringing joy to others. Whether it's through her warm words or kind actions, she constantly gives of herself to those around her. A member of the Greek community, Stamatia's ability to see the good in every situation, even after going through such hardships, is inspiring. It has been a privilege to meet her and to help in some small way. I'm grateful that we could support her, just as she continues to support and uplift those around her.

#### **MILPERRA NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I would like to thank all the dedicated people who kept the Milperra Neighbourhood Watch group running over many years. This month, one of the last remaining Neighbourhood Watch groups in Bankstown has sadly closed. The group played a vital role in maintaining local safety and awareness, acting as a community asset for so long. Neighbourhood Watch groups empower residents to work together, share information, and collaborate with authorities to protect their neighborhoods. The closure reflects the challenges many community organisations face, such as declining membership and increasing demands on time. Despite these obstacles, Milperra Neighbourhood Watch continued to support local safety

efforts and contributed to a stronger, safer community. I would like to thank Mike Weatherly, and also Steve Jacka from Bankstown Police for his support to the group, providing crime statistics and write-ups. In a final act of generosity, the group is donating leftover funds to Milperra School, reflecting the community spirit they've championed for years. Thank you all for your service to our community.

### **LINCOLN INSTITUTE INAUGURATION**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—I was honoured to speak at the inauguration of the new Lincoln Institute of Higher Education Sydney CBD campus at 175 Liverpool Street, Sydney. I was joined by the President of the Vedanta Centres, Swami Dhyanananda, the Deputy Consul General of India, and the Vedanta Centre Minister in Charge, Swami Sridharananda ji. Lincoln Institute is an important institution providing the knowledge, skills and training necessary for the future of their students. I represent one of the youngest electorates in NSW and higher education providers such as the Lincoln Institute play an important role in skilling up younger Australians and powering economic growth. The Vedanta Centre in Ermington was established in 1984 as an extension of the Ramakrishna Mission. The Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math at Belur Math in Kolkata deputed a Swami in October 2000 to take charge of the Centre, which was subsequently declared an official Branch of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, India. As a nearby resident, I recognise the Centre's contribution to the rich multicultural tapestry of Greater Sydney. Our neighbourhood is particularly enriched by the presence of the Centre. I extend my best wishes to the Institute and the Vedanta Centre of Sydney.

### **PARRAMATTA HIGH SCHOOL LEOS**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—I rise to shine a light on the achievements of the Leo's Club at Parramatta High School, a wonderful initiative of the Parramatta Lions Club under the leadership of past President Graham Estreich. The Parramatta High Leos strive is the largest Leos Club in the country. With over 100 members, they aim to address the needs of their local community head on by volunteering and raising funds for organisations such as Mission Australia to deliver much-needed aid for their local community. The Leo's Homeless Care Pack initiatives have 50 dedicated Leos, helping prepare and deliver care packs every month for some of the most vulnerable members of our community. These care packs include food, first aid kits, clothing and other personal care items to assist those experiencing homelessness. They also handwrite messages for the recipients, and partner with groups like Salvation Army, Red Cross and others to deliver these care packs. The Leos also have some upcoming projects including tree planting and participating in the Sydney Marathon and more. Thank you to Past President Yathushan Muraleetharan, President Shaurya Verma, Secretary Dhriti Kancharla and Treasurer Manreev Saini for all your hard work.

### **AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND TRAINING SERVICES**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Australian Nursing and Training Services who won the Most Outstanding Education Services category in this year's Georges River Local Business Awards. The 2024 Georges River Local Business Awards provided the opportunity for our community to recognise the many local businesses whose outstanding service makes a difference to our daily lives. Located in Hurstville, Australian Nursing and Training Services provides high-quality, professional training and has successfully helped thousands of students start their careers. The organisation's extensive training programs have provided job opportunities for many local residents, especially those from disadvantaged and multicultural backgrounds. ANTS is well known to our community as a leading training provider, renowned for their individualised support system, friendly customer service and continuous improvement. This well-deserved recognition is truly a testament to their continuous dedication and hard work. I wish to congratulate ANTS and express my deepest appreciation for their unwavering commitment to excellence which has had a significant impact on the healthcare industry and our local community.

### **FRAMEABEL**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate small business, FrameAbel, who won the Most Outstanding Specialised Business category in this year's Georges River Local Business Awards. The 2024 Georges River Local Business Awards provided the opportunity for our community to recognise the many local businesses whose outstanding service makes a difference to our daily lives. With a talented team, including experienced framers and administrative support, FrameAbel provides personalised service and exceptional craftsmanship. The secret to their success lies in their unwavering commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. They understand the importance of custom framing in preserving precious memories and strive to educate their customers on the best practices for safeguarding their cherished possessions. Owner Paul Abel expressed his gratitude for this recognition, attributing their success to the dedication and hard work of their team and their commitment to providing exceptional customer service. I want to congratulate FrameAbel and its wonderful staff on this well-deserved recognition and acknowledgement of your continuous dedication and hard work.

**FS8 HURSTVILLE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate small business, FS8 Hurstville, who won the Most Outstanding Fitness Services category in this year's Georges River Local Business Awards. The 2024 Georges River Local Business Awards provided the opportunity for our community to recognise the many local businesses whose outstanding service makes a difference to our daily lives. Under the leadership of owner and director Elenora Di Rita, FS8 has consistently delivered high-quality fitness programs to our local community. Their unique blend of pilates, yoga and tone has proven to be a popular choice for clients wanting to improve their health and wellbeing. Beyond their exceptional fitness offerings, FS8 is renowned amongst our community for their exceptional customer service and supportive team of instructors. It is because of their commitment to listening to feedback, adapting to changing needs, and maintaining a high standard of service that they have earned the trust and loyalty of the St George community. I want to congratulate FS8 and its wonderful staff on this well-deserved recognition and acknowledgement of your continuous dedication to providing an outstanding fitness experience for our community.

**YUSEF AL MASRI**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Yousef Al Masri, a Miller Technology High School student, who was deservedly recognized at the Liverpool Young Champions Awards earlier this month. Yousef was recognized for his recent success during science week, where he constructed his own race car, and for his creative approach to technology at his school, where he has sought to use technology to enhance the learning environment of his peers. For his efforts, Yousef was awarded the Liverpool Young Champions Trophy and Medallion in the Technology and Innovation Senior Category. I should also note that Yousef was also recognized last month at the Australian-Arab Cultural Forum poetry competition, where he won first place for in the English language category. He is an example of the extraordinarily multi-talented young people in Liverpool. Having met Yousef on a number of occasions, I have seen his passion and creativity firsthand. I wish Yousef all the best, and I look forward to working with him as a member of the Liverpool Youth Action Group.

**HAZEL POHANI**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I wish to congratulate Hazel Pohani on her success and recognition at the 2024 Liverpool Young Champions Awards. Hazel, a student at All Saints Catholic College in Liverpool, took home the Junior Leadership award. This year has been one where Hazel has truly shown what she is capable of. She has taken on several leadership roles at school. She led her group to be in the top three of the Active Minds initiative, the first group at her school to achieve this. She also earned the Year 6 All Saints Catholic College Grade and Class winner title, received two Community Service Awards, three Christian Values Awards and was a speaker for the magic of maths day – whew! I am in awe of Hazel and her ability to manage her time and energy to juggle all that with her school work and other responsibilities. With so many awards under her belt already, I know Hazel will continue to make a big impact as she starts her secondary schooling. Well done on your achievements Hazel, I hope you keep your curiosity strong and your enthusiasm to challenge yourself high!

**HELP YOU COPE AUTISM EXPO**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Last month I was delighted to attend the largest and first-ever autism expo held in Western Sydney at Cabravale Diggers, hosted by Help You Cope, a not-for-profit charity organisation that aims to support the caregivers of people on the autism spectrum. Often the caregivers of those that live with disabilities can experience stress from lack of awareness of support services, and indeed connection to places that can help them navigate a challenging disability support environment. Help You Cope offers support groups and programs that focus on mental and emotional wellbeing, as well as delivering informative workshops that provide carers with the knowledge they need to look after loved ones. The recent Autism Expo was a reflection of their work to bring together a range of service providers from health and medical services to employment resources and in-home care support. It was great to meet with dedicated carers and hear from providers about services that caregivers in south west Sydney may not otherwise know about. I thank Joline George, founder of Help You Cope, for her efforts in organizing the event as well as her broader dedication to helping caregivers in south west Sydney.

**BRUCE AND AUDREY FLOOD**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the contributions of Abbotsford locals Bruce and Audrey Flood who are being recognised today for providing education services across Australia. Bruce and Audrey have recently spent 6 weeks in Far North Queensland volunteering as tutors working with a remote family whose children are students of Cairns School of Distance Education. It takes them 4.5 days to drive to their destination and then they live with the family for 6 weeks. Their work includes tutoring these remote

students and engaging with the community, through activities such as building and playing sport. It is always wonderful to see members of our community working across the country to make a difference. Education is such an important part of the lives of young people, and it is wonderful to hear of their contributions and the impact they are making. The success of these programs would not be possible without the work of volunteers such as Bruce and Audrey. I commend them for their selfless dedication to empowering future generations. I sincerely thank Bruce and Audrey Flood and I wish them all the very best.

#### **VALE JOHN WHITFORD**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the passing of Mr John Arthur Whitford on Wednesday 14 August 2024, aged 87. John was a proud local business owner, running Whitfords Designer Appliances for decades. Whitfords Designer Appliances was established in 1922 in Five Dock. Starting as a family business, it evolved in the 1950s to a store that Sydney families have trusted for their home appliances. The business stood proudly on Great North Road at Five Dock for years until its relocation to Camperdown to make way for the Five Dock Metro Station. It has grown into a household name for reliable and quality kitchen appliances and known for its genuine and friendly customer service. At the heart of John's business was his dedication to family and community. Whitford Home Appliances has been family owned and operated since its inception and is now operated by his extended family including his grandson Ben. The success of Whitfords Home Appliances is a testament to John's vision and dedication to his business. I extend my sincerest condolences to John's children Peter, Belinda and Andrew, and his entire extended family. Vale John Whitford. May he Rest in Peace.

#### **BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA DAY**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the significance of the Battle for Australia Day and the commemorations held by Miranda RSL Sub-Branch on 4 September. Held annually on the first Wednesday of September, Battle for Australia Day honours the bravery of those who served on land, sea and air repelling the direct threat to Australia between 1942 and 1945. To mark the occasion, the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch hosted a commemorative service at the Miranda War Memorial. The service provided the opportunity for our community to come together and reflect on the sacrifices our veterans made in defending our nation. I recognise Sub-Branch President, Alan Lark, Steven Bull, Shane Hall, Major Jeremy Barraclough, Reverend Jennie Everist, Ann Senior and bugler, Joan Thorp for their contributions during the service and for their efforts in coordinating this commemorative service. Rail services bus. Furthermore, I acknowledge the Defence Force representatives, local RSL and community groups, and students from Sylvania Public School, Sylvania High School and GyMEA Technology High School, who laid wreaths to honour of those who served Australia in uniform. I thank the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch for hosting this important commemoration and reminding us that the "price of liberty is eternal vigilance".

#### **COLLEEN BROOK**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—I congratulate Colleen Brook of Wilberforce, the recipient of a Distinguished Long Service Award for her decades of service to the equestrian industry. She was one of twenty-one recipients from a wide range of sports to receive the award from NSW Minister for Sport on 19 June 2024. Colleen began horse riding at the age of two, following in the footsteps of her parents who were both showjumping judges. Colleen started as a Junior Instructor in the late 1960s, coaching others whilst her own competitive career blossomed. Colleen has won many national titles including the Champion Lady Rider at Sydney Royal, the NSW and VIC Showjumping Championships, the Australian Showjumping Championship in 1985 and the Alice Laidlaw Lady River Over Obstacles at Melbourne Show ten times. She has also represented Australia on the international stage and held the influential role of Coach Educator. Today, Brook coaches at Level 3 in various disciplines including General, Showjumping and Eventing. I thank Colleen for her decades of service, bringing together multiple generations of horse riders. Her selfless effort to help others develop their own skills and understanding are both inspiring and incredibly valuable to the Equestrian Community. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

#### **ALEXANDER CRASS**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)**—Mr Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Hawkesbury's Alexander Crass for his dedication and service to the St John NSW Ambulance service. Alex holds the title of being the oldest serving volunteer, with no intention to cease anytime soon. Crass served in the Navy until 1959 before moving to the Bushfire Brigade and the Railway First Aid Corp. He was then approached by a friend who was superintendent of St John NSW, inviting him to become involved. Alex did so and has proudly served the organisation for 16 years. Committing to weekly training including CPR, defibrillator and bandaging, Alexander remains heavily involved with the service. He speaks of the great satisfaction in being able to assist, comfort and reassure people. Alex's experience in the Navy and Brigade complements his skills in delivering first aid, emergency response and training for others. I thank Alex for his service and supporting those who share his



passion for helping those in need. His comradeship and advocacy for volunteering are invaluable assets in our community. Thank you Mr Speaker.

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