

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday 15 October 2024**

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

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

### *Members*

#### **MEMBER FOR HOLSWORTHY**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome members back to the Parliament after spending time in their electorates. I hope it is not out of place to wish a happy birthday to the member for Holsworthy.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Thank you. I am 25.

**The SPEAKER:** I think the member is overstating it, but we will take 25.

### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the Chamber members of the Jamberoo branch of the Australian Red Cross, who are guests of the member for Kiama. I saw them fleetingly earlier today. I acknowledge members of Rio's Legacy, the GWS Foundations and Mounties Group, including Ryan Fowler, chief executive officer of Rio's Legacy, who are guests of the member for Campbelltown. They are hosting an afternoon tea at 2.00 p.m. in the Fountain Court. I assume that is due to the inclement weather; I understand that it was to be in the Speaker's Garden. They will be hosting the afternoon tea to celebrate the launch of Mounties Care Cottage, Western Sydney's first children's hospice. It is a very worthy cause. I welcome to the Chamber students from Queensland University of Technology and Sydney Boys High School. Surprisingly, I also welcome guests of the member for Lake Macquarie, being members from Southlakes University of the Third Age.

### *Announcements*

#### **ABORIGINAL LIAISON OFFICER**

**The SPEAKER:** Importantly, I introduce members to a new staff member. I acknowledge Damon Goolagong, our Parliament's new Aboriginal Liaison Officer. Welcome, Damon. He is sitting in the gallery, accompanied by our Senior Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Joe Stewart. Damon, it was lovely to meet you yesterday.

### *Members*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I inform the House that the Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault will answer questions this week in the absence of the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion.

*Bills***CRIMES (DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL VIOLENCE) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
BILL 2024****POLICE AMENDMENT (POLICE OFFICER SUPPORT SCHEME) BILL 2024****MUSIC FESTIVALS AMENDMENT BILL 2024****CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDERS REGISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2024****LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (RURAL AND REMOTE COUNCILS) BILL 2024****REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024****STRATA MANAGING AGENTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****UNIVERSITIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****PORTS AND MARITIME ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024****ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Assent**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of messages from the Governor notifying Her Excellency's assent to the bills.

**ROAD RULES AMENDMENT (MOBILE PHONES AS NAVIGATION AIDS FOR PROVISIONAL  
LICENCE HOLDERS) BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that I have received a written authority from the Hon. John Ruddick, MLC, advising that the member for Murray will have carriage of the bill in the Legislative Assembly. I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later time.

*Rulings***DIVISIONS**

**The SPEAKER (12:06):** During the division on the third reading of the Ports and Maritime Administration Amendment Bill 2024 on 20 September 2024 a procedural question was raised about whether the Government Whip, the member for Leppington, should be counted in the division and, if he was, on which side he should be counted. After reviewing the parliamentary record and the footage, I have ruled that the member was outside the Chamber and should not be counted in the division.

[Interruption]

Members will come to order. The member for North Shore will come to order. In arriving at my determination, I reflected that to be considered to be within the Chamber the entry of a member should not delay the closing of the bar or door or require, to any degree, that the bar be raised to any extent to facilitate access. I have ordered the Clerk to amend the relevant *Votes and Proceedings* to reflect my ruling. I am not asking for a commentary from members; I am just giving my ruling. The member for Rockdale is not being helpful.

**Mr Mark Coure:** He never is.

**The SPEAKER:** That was uncalled for. Pursuant to my ruling, I further remind members that for the orderly conduct of this House no members shall proceed to the table and speak unless they are explicitly recognised and invited to do so by the Chair.

*Question Time***PUBLIC PROTESTS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:10):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. When will the Minister introduce a bill to require regular, repeat protesters to pay for police resources?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (12:10):** It is important to note and reiterate what police have told us, and that is that public safety is the

top priority for the NSW Police Force. We know there is a huge strain on our Police Force. I have said that time and again. The Minns Government inherited this problem from the former Government after 12 years of inaction, 12 years of not paying police properly, 12 years without a recruitment plan and 12 years of not retaining police. We have seen our police day in and day out in our communities, keeping people safe. Last weekend, which was a long weekend, police had an enormous job before them. I stood with the police commissioner and the assistant police commissioner in charge of shelter, who took us through the work that they had to do that weekend. We had the grand final, three different festivals going on in the city, a protest and another event on Sunday, and the vigil on Monday. That was not outside of the fact that they were also doing critical work on our roads and harbour to make sure the long weekend was enjoyed by every person in New South Wales.

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: It is taken under Standing Order 129 and relates to direct relevance. The Minister is now halfway through her allotted time and has made no attempt to answer the question about payment for repeat, regular protests.

**The SPEAKER:** It is a difficult question to answer. If the member for Dubbo does not like my comments, he may leave the Chamber. The way the question was posed makes it difficult to answer, but the Minister can be directly relevant. Opposition members will not ridicule my ruling. I uphold the point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** As we heard from the assistant commissioner in charge of shelter, last year alone there were 2,000 protests in the city that the police had to attend and man. Who is going to determine which protests have to be paid for?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat, unless she has completed her answer. Does the Leader of the Opposition have a point of order?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** I seek an extension of time.

**The SPEAKER:** An additional two minutes is granted.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I have concluded my answer.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (12:14):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the Social Media Summit hosted by the Minns Labor Government and the South Australian Government?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:15):** I thank the member for Coogee for her question. The Social Media Summit was, as best as we can recall, the first of its kind held by two State Governments on a matter that does not relate to cross-border issues or Federal-State relations. It dealt with a policy issue that was not particularly germane to our jurisdictions but affects everybody in Australia and, in fact, the world. The bottom line—supported by overwhelming evidence presented at the summit—is that there is currently a global unregulated experiment on young people when it comes to social media usage. The statistics are alarming and hugely confronting. They seem to indicate that people aged 15 and 16 are spending at least three hours a day on social media. The best-case scenario as a result of the ubiquitous use of social media in our community is a giant waste of time amongst the next generation. At worst, particularly for women and young girls, it can be devastating for their mental health.

Dr Jean Twenge, one of the summit participants, suggested that major depressive episodes amongst adolescents aged 12 to 17 have doubled over the past 10 years. Emergency room visits for self-harm in the United States have doubled for girls aged 15 to 19 and quintupled for girls aged 10 to 14. Hospitalisations for self-harm in Australia have almost identical results. These are quite confronting statistics, and I apologise to members and visitors in the public gallery, but it is important to get the facts and the data on the table. Suicide rates have doubled across those age groups.

The reality is that in the late 1990s there was a spike in the rates of self-harm and suicide, particularly amongst young people, in New South Wales. As a result of those terrible statistics, governments across political parties and jurisdictions put enormous amounts of resources and programs in place to destigmatise mental health in our community and those rates dropped. It was a huge public policy success story from 1998 to 2010. From 2010 to 2023, we went back to where we were in the late 1990s. It is particularly acute amongst young people because of the information they are getting as a result of an algorithm that makes it impossible for them to put down their devices. They cannot separate themselves from what they see on their social media devices. More

often than not it is harmful and addictive, and leads to people to make terrible personal decisions in their lives. *[Extension of time]*

The most heartbreaking part of the two-day summit in Sydney and Adelaide was when we heard from parents who have lost their children as a result of bullying, harassment and intimidation on social media in particular. It is so much bigger than the experience of intimidation and harassment in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The real sense of hopelessness from the parents who had lost children was heartbreaking and serves as a reminder to elected officials that we need to do something about the problem. The best comment at the social media conference was made by Professor Twenge, who said that if it is the case—and I think it undeniably is—that there is a direct relationship between the use of social media and declining rates of mental health, that is good news, because it means that we can do something about it.

Generally speaking, trying to make an impact on the rate of self-harm and suicide amongst young people is complex. It has to do with socio-economic advantage, access to clinicians and biological factors. But if self-harm and suicide occur because young people are on their devices for too long and engaging in and consuming harmful content, then we can do something about it. To the Commonwealth Government's great credit, it has realised that a national age ban and restriction of social media needs to be put in place across Australia.

Some people will say, "You're all just Luddites. This is what has happened with technology in the past. It happened with the introduction of computer games, PlayStations, television and radio." But the truth is that ubiquitous use of social media is more analogous to motor vehicles. When the internal combustion engine was developed and there were no road rules, deaths were widespread across the world—but we did not ban cars. We introduced road rules and age restrictions to keep people safe. That is all we are proposing when it comes to social media use.

#### TOBACCO AND E-CIGARETTE RETAIL

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (12:19):** My question is directed to the Premier. The sale of illegal cigarettes and vapes is rife in regional and rural New South Wales. It is robbing taxpayers of billions of dollars, funding crime gangs and hurting small businesses in this State. What has the Premier done to shut down those illegal operations?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:20):** Obviously we have engaged with the Commonwealth Government to introduce changes to rules in relation to who can buy vapes and those products in New South Wales. Those law changes are massive and widespread. They mean that the sale of vapes on every corner is to be regulated, which is a good thing. We expect that those who continue to sell illegal vape products, particularly those with nicotine, will meet the full force of the law in the State.

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (12:21):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will she update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to ensure that more children in New South Wales have access to a quality, fee-free preschool education?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (12:21):** I thank the member for Liverpool for this very important question. Before I answer it, I give a shout-out to the almost 80,000 New South Wales students who started sitting their HSC exams today. It is about 12.30 p.m., so an hour ago they walked out of their first exam, which of course was English paper one. A record cohort of 76,000 New South Wales students is sitting what is the most internationally recognised and equitable senior secondary examination process in the world. I acknowledge all the work and study they have put into it. I also thank our teachers, whose work has helped every single one of those students from when they walked through the school gates in kindergarten, unable to sit down or line up, to the other end of education and the young adults they are now.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** They're still not sitting properly.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** One could argue that teenagers are also pretty bad at sitting down. Thirteen years of schooling can be a really hard slog, and that is why the Minns Labor Government has embarked on the biggest ever investment in and expansion of public preschools in New South Wales history. Yesterday was a momentous occasion, with the Premier joining the member for Liverpool and me at Gulyangarri Public School to open the very first public preschool built by this Government.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The Minister was asked what the Government is doing. That preschool was designed, funded and started by the Opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition knows that is not a point of order. The Minister has been directly relevant. She is able to make other comments. The Minister has the call.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I was going to get to this later in my answer but, seeing as the Leader of the Opposition brought it up, I will address it head-on. The former Government was great at putting out media releases but absolutely terrible at delivering. Let me be clear: Those opposite had planned to outsource this preschool, probably to Transurban or whoever Damien Tudehope had shares in at the time. But we planned Gulyangarri preschool, construction started under our Government and we delivered it—and, most importantly, it is free. It is public. Members opposite never designed or delivered a public preschool for that community or any other. [*Extension of time*]

After not building a single public preschool in 12 years in government, all that members opposite have to say is, "Actually, no, we started it."

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Opposition really should have sat this one out.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** As the Premier said yesterday, as a government, we are willing to give the previous Government credit when it did things, like the metro.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** But, on public education, those opposite are going to have to cop it because they did absolutely nothing.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Oatley to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A for a period of 10 minutes.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Oatley left the Chamber at 12:25.*]

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The truth of it is that we are delivering 100 public preschools in communities that need them so that the transition from early learning to kindergarten is seamless. Members opposite are very sensitive about this. Shock, horror—building fee-free public preschools is very popular because it is the right public policy.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Fee-free public preschools are the best way we can ensure that young learners in our community have the best start. I acknowledge the work of so many members of this place who have advocated for these public preschools to be in their community, such as the member for Liverpool. The preschools have been subject to independent assessment to make sure they are going into areas where they are truly needed. One preschool has been done and there are 99 to go. Every single one of them will be open by day one, term 1, 2027, and the children of New South Wales will have access to thousands and thousands of public, fee-free spaces.

### **BOWRAL AND DISTRICT HOSPITAL**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (12:26):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. The Minister met with representatives of my community at Bowral and District Hospital about their disappointment with the planned upgrade. He said that we could work towards a clinical services plan. Why is my community being offered a business-as-usual plan and not a new clinical services plan?

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Ah!

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:27):** Members opposite should not say "Ah!" That is stupid. Let me walk members through it. I cannot draw it, so The Nationals will find this a bit hard, but I will do my best.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the Minister to go directly to his answer.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I thank the member for Wollondilly for her question. All members in this place would agree she is a fantastic advocate for her community.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Her community is undergoing extreme challenges in relation to growth, and she has a range of different centres. I know the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is dealing with a range of issues

in and around her area. The member for Wollondilly is a fierce advocate. I also acknowledge members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association who are in the gallery today. We look at clinical services plans to make sure we are catering for the current and future needs of a particular area. The current clinical services plan for the area in and around the Bowral region was updated in 2021 and goes out to 2031. I will make contact with the fantastic chief executive of South Western Sydney Local Health District, Sonia Marshall, to line up a time when the member and community representatives can be updated on that plan in more detail. That is certainly something I expect from local chief executives. It is certainly what the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the member for Heathcote, the member for Shellharbour and I get in our local health district in terms of access and updates. That is important.

That hospital is a very challenging piece of infrastructure. There is a \$55-odd million stage two development that is currently underway. That will wrap up towards the back end of 2025, from memory. It is a challenge because that hospital is around 100 years old. I think all of us can imagine the types of challenges and what we are doing there. There will be a considerable investment, and there is a considerable investment that has continued from the former Government into our Government into that space. That is going to continue. One of the challenges we have identified in the clinical services plan is making sure that the plan reflects the need for more virtual care to take place in and around that area. The local member and residents from that area, who I met with and have had a number of discussions with, have talked to me about some of the challenges of having to go from places like Bowral into the larger centres in places like Campbelltown. [*Extension of time*]

Ironically, in some degree, this is a bit of an anomaly in relation to that local health district. Bowral forms part of the South Western Sydney Local Health District. That is a challenge sometimes simply because we operate a network system of hospitals. That means that within our own hospital network down in the Illawarra, people get moved around various different hospitals depending on their clinical need. That happens in south-western Sydney as well. The challenge for the member's constituents, though, is a real one in relation to that being a significant travel distance. The member for Campbelltown and the members from south-western Sydney will know all too well that Campbelltown is one of the busiest hospitals in Australia at the moment. We need to do more in relation to Bowral. I am happy to engage directly with the member and the chief executive of the local health district. I want to make sure that the community understands that I can see how there are some challenges in that part of the world in relation to accessing health care. I can understand that; it is real. We will work through that.

We are working through the \$55 million redevelopment. I know that a range of different community consultation has taken place in relation to that in a range of different forums, whether it is online or walk and talks. I do not say for one moment that we get that engagement at all times perfect, by no means. If we need to do more, if we need to have a refocus on the clinical services plan, if we think it needs to be updated, then we can certainly have a look at that. In the short term, I want to prioritise, as I would for any local member, making sure that the member for Wollondilly gets direct contact with her local health district chief executive. They are responsible for the delivery of some of the services, and I will make sure that is put in place for the member for Wollondilly.

## RENTAL MARKET

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (12:32):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. Will the Minister please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plan to build a fairer rental market for both tenants and owners?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:32):** I thank the member for Parramatta for her question and for her ongoing advocacy for the people in her electorate. After all, 56 per cent of the people in her electorate are renters. No doubt other members have a high percentage of renters too. I am proud to inform the House that the Government will today introduce a comprehensive rental reform package that will make a huge difference to the lives of renters in this State. The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 will make the most significant reforms to the rental market in over a decade. The reforms will overhaul rental laws to benefit the more than 2.2 million people who rent in our State.

Our comprehensive package includes ending no-grounds evictions to give renters and owners more clarity by introducing sensible reasons to end a fixed or periodic lease; making it easier for renters to keep pets in their homes; ensuring renters have a free way to pay their rent, including bank transfers and the Commonwealth Government's Centrepay system; and protecting renters from having to pay for their own background checks when they apply for a property. Our bill will also deliver cost-of-living relief by capping rent increases to just once a year for all lease types. I know renters in every single electorate across the State will very much welcome the protection from frequent rent hikes.

It must be said that the reforms are only possible under a Minns Labor Government. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government failed to act on the issue, and renters have been living with instability and uncertainty ever since. It should also be noted that those opposite had an election commitment to end no-grounds evictions but only for periodic leases, a policy they seem to be sticking with in opposition. Such a position will leave renters on fixed-term leases with greater uncertainty and instability in their rental property. Only a Minns Labor Government has the resolve to make such historic changes to the rental system by ending no-grounds evictions across all types of leases. We want renters across the State to have security of tenure in their homes. We want landlords to have the certainty that comes from clear, simple rules. [*Extension of time*]

We have listened to the more than 16,000 responses and submissions from the public, as well as feedback from renter advocates, industry stakeholders and tenancy experts. We have listened and we have acted. We are proud to say that this extensive consultation has been vital in shaping the legislation that the Government is introducing today to modernise the rental market. The reforms are focused on getting the balance right. For too long, landlords and renters have been pitted against each other. But we know that landlords want good tenants and tenants want good landlords. A better and fairer rental market benefits everyone. That is why we have consulted widely and thoroughly to make sure the bill gets the balance right for the people of New South Wales.

The Minns Labor Government is fulfilling its promise to make renting fairer. The reforms are needed to help families build their lives around a home so that they will not be asked to leave without a reason. They are needed to stop our young people abandoning this great State because they cannot afford another rental increase. The reforms are needed because pets are part of the family whether a person is a home owner or a renter. Under the reforms, landlords and property owners will still be able to make the decisions they need to protect their asset. We are delivering a fairer balance and greater certainty to the New South Wales rental market at a time when it is sorely needed. I urge those opposite to be on the right side of history and support the huge overhaul of the rental laws to make sure our landmark reforms help the more than 2.2 million people in our communities and more who will become renters, and make the laws contemporary, fit for purpose and meet the needs of our great State.

#### PATHWAYS TO PREVENTION STRATEGY

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (12:37):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. The Pathways to Prevention strategy outlines a governance structure with a taskforce, a board, an advisory council and the New South Wales Women's Safety Commissioner. Will the Minister clarify the distinct roles and responsibilities of each of the different entities?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:38):** I thank the shadow Minister for her question. I note that the question is probably based on the diagram that an upper House member asked about in budget estimates, which would have been difficult for Hansard to put into the transcript. I can absolutely provide further detail on the governance structure of the primary prevention strategy. It is a complex structure, but it will make our response to primary prevention of domestic and family violence in this State work.

This is the first dedicated primary prevention strategy that we have ever had in this State. There has never been the kind of investment in primary prevention in this State that this Government has made—\$38.3 million worth of investment in primary prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence. That is the funding committed to that strategy. That is on top of what is already happening in our schools in relation to respectful relationships education. We are absolutely committed to making sure that our primary prevention strategy deals with the harmful attitudes and behaviours that can lead to a culture where—

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. I will hear from the member for Port Macquarie on a point of order.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. I appreciate that the Minister is giving a summary of the strategy, but I specifically want to understand the difference between the taskforce, the board, the advisory council and the Women's Safety Commissioner.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie will resume her seat. I will make a short, clear ruling. The member will remain silent. I call the member for Port Macquarie to order for the first time.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** What did Pru Goward do? She gouged them all.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not need assistance from the member for Canterbury. The question asked the Minister to clarify the distinct roles. The Minister said, "I absolutely can."

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** And she hasn't.

**The SPEAKER:** It is a distinction. I am being pedantic about this. The Minister clearly indicated that she can and that she dealt with this matter in budget estimates. The Minister has been directly relevant; she is just not answering the question in the way the member for Port Macquarie wants. The member could have asked the Minister to elucidate those points, but she did not. There is no point of order. The Minister has answered the question directly. She will continue her answer.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am happy to meet with the shadow Minister to discuss it.

### NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (12:41):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing. Will the Minister update the House on the work of the Minns Labor Government to ensure that the State has a thriving social scene, no matter the time of day?

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (12:41):** I thank the member for Strathfield for his question. Like me, I am sure he is excited—and we shouldn't hide it—because today Minister Graham is introducing in the other place the second tranche of vibrancy reforms. Those reforms are about turning the dial back up on culture and entertainment in our cities, towns and suburbs. They are about cutting pointless red tape that has stifled creativity and innovation for our venues, artists and communities. The second tranche of reforms has four distinct themes. They are about helping music venues, significant events and cultural spaces to thrive; further emphasising the creation of vibrant precincts and making it easier to do business outdoors; undertaking further reforms to align liquor and planning approval systems; and, finally, creating a cultural State environmental planning policy.

We want the environment for venues, artists and communities to flourish by simplifying the regulation of entertainment noise, removing red tape for local councils to host special events and supporting outdoor activation. Our bill will act on the Government's commitment to restore vibrancy in New South Wales by providing additional support for live music and hospitality venues; increasing the emphasis on vibrant, activated precincts; further modernising the regulatory framework for licensed venues; and making it easier for the Government to support significant events. By removing the outdated, ridiculous restrictions that prescribe no entertainment for locals, we are encouraging patrons to indulge and enjoy entertainment across our State. In a vibrant city like Sydney, we should not be held back by the fun police. Recently we saw a prime example of this when the Sydney Fringe Festival had a no-dancing condition applied to one of its events. As the Premier rightly remarked, Sydney is not the town from *Footloose*; we should be promoting vibrancy, not holding it back.

We are also making changes so that music cannot be prescribed at pubs. This means that DJs can now take back control of the music from development applications and that performers will not be forced to just play covers. I am sure the member for Tamworth, the shadow Minister, will be happy that he will no longer be restricted to just playing Kenny Rogers covers; he can throw in a few original tunes as well. As part of these reforms, we will be ending the antiquated rule that requires people living within five kilometres of a registered club to become a member in order to buy a meal or a drink. We have already scrapped the practice of putting conditions on liquor licences with outdoor dining that prevented patrons from standing while drinking. [*Extension of time*]

The bill will be accompanied by non-legislative reforms, spearheaded by the creation of a cultural State environmental planning policy, ensuring the greatest use of cultural, creative and hospitality spaces within the State. These reforms complement what we have achieved already. We know that the first tranche of vibrancy reforms have had a positive impact on restoring New South Wales night-life. The first round of vibrancy reforms reduced regulatory barriers and streamlined approval processes. Those reforms added incentives for venue operators to provide more live music and for councils to support more activated communities by making outdoor dining and street activation easier to grow thriving, unique local precincts.

Since the introduction of those reforms, live music and entertainment venue numbers have soared. As at 30 September, New South Wales has seen a 77 per cent increase in live music and performance venues taking up incentives that give them a licence fee reduction and additional trading hours. The first tranche of reforms also saw major changes to the way that noise is managed at licensed venues across New South Wales. These changes were focused on protecting live music venues from unreasonable complaints. Under the changes brought in by this Government, Liquor and Gaming NSW is now the lead regulator for entertainment noise complaints about licensed premises. Thresholds for when a complaint can be upheld against a venue have also increased, as well as making order of occupancy a key consideration in the deliberation process. The Government will continue to look at more reforms. We hope this bill passes the Parliament. I have my happy socks on. It is a good time for people in New South Wales to celebrate.



## IMMIGRATION POLICY

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (12:47):** My question is directed to the Premier. If Queensland Premier Steven Miles can call for a cut to immigration, why can't he?

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:47):** We do not want to follow Queensland; we will carve our own path. For goodness sake, members opposite take their riding instructions from the Queensland Labor Party now. At the end of the day, the Commonwealth Government has made a decision about inbound migration. It has already determined that it will be reduced. It is going from a high of half a million to 300,000 to, I suspect, 240,000 a year. That is a percentage reduction of 50 per cent in 12 months. The Commonwealth has already done it. Does the Opposition want me to call for it after the Commonwealth Government has already committed to it? I do not understand what the—

**Mr Paul Scully:** They are leading from behind, as usual.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Yes, taking advice from the Queensland Government. It is interesting that when I was first elected we saw a litany of then Coalition Ministers jump up and say, "We will never declare Sydney is full." Do members remember that? They said, "The low road of immigration changes is not for us." I remember specific criticism from former Ministers Constance, Baird and Perrottet slamming former Premier Carr for calling for a reduction in immigration. So something has changed over there.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** They do not have a position on migration, they do not have a position on Rosehill, they do not have a position on the equality bill and they do not have a position on any of the major issues affecting New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** They do not have a position on rental reform. They do not have a position on the Government's proposition to get more money out of private health insurers. The only thing they are united on is an attempt to stop housing from being built in New South Wales. Am I wrong? We are two years into this Parliament and the only thing the Coalition has stood up on is to reduce housing supply. We are going to keep building homes for the next generation of young Australians and defy all attempts by members opposite to stop us from building those homes.

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

## HEALTH INSURANCE LEVIES

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (12:50):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister please advise the House about the Minns Labor Government's work to ensure that the taxpayers of New South Wales are getting their fair share from private health insurers?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:50):** That is a good question from a good advocate for the people of south-west Sydney, particularly for services like Karitane, which we were recently able to expand. I know the member has had a strong relationship with that service. This is an important piece of legislation that we have embarked on and started the process for this week. We do not have to use it, but I make clear to the people of New South Wales that the Treasurer and I will not sit idly by and see \$140 million ripped out of our system that taxpayers are then forced to find when private health insurance companies are currently making some of the largest profits in the country. With the demands on health care, with the demands on health staff and with the demands on services across New South Wales, it is time that insurers paid their fair share. I outline that very clearly.

In New South Wales it costs around \$1,075 a day to operate one bed. That is a rough number. We charge private health insurers \$892 for that single room rate. That is important. I am pleased that around 44 of the 53 private health insurance companies have come on board and said, "That's fair. We'll pay our own way." A small group is not happy with the 17 per cent subsidy provided—the difference between \$1,075 and \$892. That group wants to pay just over \$400. That would equate to about a 56 per cent subsidy from taxpayers.

I note comments made today by some private health insurers that this will increase premiums. We must be careful of that. Under that theory—and let us pretend that theory works—premiums should have reduced over the past few years because insurers have not paid their way. That is fairly easy to understand. If the theory is that this will increase premiums, then the reverse of the theory is that premiums should have been going down when

insurers were not paying. That has not happened. I am interested in the Opposition's position on this matter. I have done some checks of *Hansard*, and when Treasurer Baird introduced this bill in 2012 or 2013 the now Opposition supported it. [*Extension of time*]

Many members opposite supported it then. Those of us who have been in Parliament since 2011 were in opposition for a long time. For the people in the gallery, members opposite were in government in 2013 and they supported this legislation then, so I am assuming that they will support it this time. As the Premier said, trying to find where members opposite sit on matters is a bit difficult. I would have thought that, from those few facts, they would back in this legislation.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Every person in the Chamber knows that health care is under extreme pressure. That is a fact. We know that healthcare workers carrying out services are in extreme demand at the moment. We also know that the cost of health services is increasing. At a time when the Government is already providing a 17 per cent subsidy and 44 out of 53 health insurers have said that they will get on board, I would have thought that members opposite would read the tea-leaves and realise that it might be a good idea to back public health care, back the delivery of health services and back the community who expect those services. We will continue to hold discussions and negotiations with private health insurers. The Treasurer and I have made that very clear. We do not need to enact this legislation, but I make it clear to insurers that the time is coming to get on board and pay their way. The people of New South Wales have subsidised them for too long.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** In the same way that Treasurer Baird demanded fairness in the system, so too do the Treasurer and I.

#### SYDNEY METRO

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (12:55):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. The Sydney Metro operator has stated that it is actively exploring 24-hour services to benefit hospital workers and late-night traders, yet the Government insists that there are no plans to extend the timetable. Why is the Government blocking the opportunity for Sydneysiders to have a truly modern transport system that supports our growing city?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:55):** I welcome the interest of the member for Ryde in delivering a world-class, reliable and resilient public transport system. It is interesting because, while the member was not in Parliament at the time, when members opposite were in government they failed to support the transport workforce to deliver the services needed. They failed to recruit the bus drivers needed to run the system.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Instead of investing in trains that fit the tracks, they bought overseas-made trains and ferries that failed the taxpayers and passengers of New South Wales.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** The good news for Sydneysiders and the people of New South Wales is that we are delivering a reliable and resilient public transport network. We are dealing with the mess left to us by members opposite, including by leveraging the opportunities of the new Sydney Metro not just for people in the city and on the North Shore but also across our entire public transport system. Every week more than a million passengers jump on the Sydney Metro. It is fantastic to see that more people are choosing public transport more often. That is a really good thing. People are also moving from heavy rail to metro and from bus to metro, because of a couple of things. We are making sure that those connections work. We have introduced 375 new bus services on the lower North Shore and in the north-west to connect people to that service.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** What is interesting is that the north-west metro—

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure it is interesting, but the Minister will resume her seat. I will hear the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business. The member for Bankstown will come to order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The question was about the Sydney Metro and the extension of services. The Minister has not gone anywhere near answering that question.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Manager of Opposition Business. The Minister has been directly relevant.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** The north-west metro has been open for five years. It was opened by those opposite. But did they increase bus services to get people to those services? No. Did they plan for the increased patronage that was going to come when the city section was opened? No. What are we doing? We are planning for the future and we are making it easier for people to travel on public transport. That includes looking at options like event transport and night-time transport. Government members care about public transport. All that Opposition members care about is politics.

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:59):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Women. Today being International Day of Rural Women, will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to ensure that women across New South Wales are able to thrive regardless of their postcode?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:59):** I thank the member for Lismore for her question and for her exceptional advocacy and commitment to women in her local electorate and also to women more generally. International Day of Rural Women honours the contributions and celebrates the achievements of women in regional, rural and remote parts of our State. Those women are the heart and soul of their communities. They are strong and resilient women; they are the glue that binds their communities together. I have had the enormous privilege of bearing witness to the wonderful and extraordinary contributions made by the many local community-based volunteering organisations across New South Wales, including the Country Women's Association and the Rotary. Each year in New South Wales we honour individual women through the New South Wales Rural Women's Award and the Hidden Treasures Honour Roll.

On the International Day of Rural Women, we also acknowledge the unique challenges that regional and rural women face. We absolutely reaffirm our commitment to supporting women, no matter their postcode, particularly in relation to family violence. Its devastating impact has been front of mind in this place over the past year. This Government—and my fellow regional and rural MPs, in particular—is deeply aware of the fact that many regional and rural women are disproportionately affected by this issue. Several factors contribute to that disproportionate nature, including isolation as well as the fear of stigma and shame, which can be exacerbated by living in smaller communities. That stigma and shame can deter women from seeking help.

The Minns Labor Government is working hard to ensure that rural and regional women who are escaping domestic and family violence have the wraparound supports that they need to leave domestic and family violence, and to recover and to heal. Our \$245.6 million commitment in this year's budget, in addition to our existing commitment, includes expanding the Staying Home Leaving Violence program across the State, ensuring coverage in even the most remote local government areas [LGAs]. It also includes expanding men's behaviour change programs, ensuring that those programs are available more widely. We have also recently announced the expansion of the Specialist Workers for Children and Young People program. [*Extension of time*]

Of the 28 new LGAs that were announced as part of that expansion, 26 are in regional and rural New South Wales. The Core and Cluster program also prioritises non-urban communities, with 26 of the 39 refugees in tranche one and two in rural and regional New South Wales. Importantly—and I acknowledge the question that was asked earlier in question time—our first dedicated primary prevention strategy is focused on working with local communities, local schools, local organisations, local sporting clubs and local workplaces to stop the violence before it starts. The strategy has been designed to allow that work to be led by and to speak to the diverse communities across the State.

What works in inner-city Sydney does not necessarily work in rural New South Wales, so we need a tailored approach. We need place-based work. We need to work with local communities to understand their challenges and to find solutions. The Government is also supporting women in rural and regional New South Wales through our Women's Strategy. We are making sure that women are job ready to perform in and to re-enter the workforce with our Return to Work Pathways Program and our investment in the Future Women Jobs Academy, which has women in remote communities as a priority group. We are investing more in women's health through the expansion of statewide networks of menopause hubs, our expanded commitment to women's health centres. As I look around to my regional and rural colleagues, I think about how important that work is.

### WAGGA WAGGA ELECTORATE HIGH SCHOOL

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (13:04):** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Noting the ongoing concern of residents in Wagga Wagga for planning for a new high school in the northern suburbs, and noting the Minister's commitment to investigating this issue, will the Minister provide an update on those investigations so far?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (13:05):** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his important question. He is such a strong advocate for rebuilding public services in his community. Many members of this place—including the member for Wagga Wagga—who represent growth areas and communities whose populations have rapidly expanded would remember being told many times by the former Government that new and upgraded schools were, in fact, not needed or that they would not be needed for an extended period. It was lost on the former Government that people who move into those areas tend to have young children who then need to go to school. I have previously spoken about our enrolment growth audit in this place, which earlier this year exposed the failure to plan for the future, particularly in those growth areas. We acknowledge that failure in the planning of growth areas. Communities have been let down in that respect.

I share the frustrations of the member for Wagga Wagga, because it is also personal for me in my community. I was pleased to meet with the member last month to update him on what the Department of Education is doing to plan—finally—for his community's future growth, including in the northern suburbs of his electorate. The department has undertaken its analysis of enrolment trends in Wagga Wagga. What that analysis showed will not surprise the member, or anybody who lives in the northern suburbs. It showed that a future high school will be needed if the expected development goes ahead. It is important that the Government acknowledges that for communities in those growth areas. We validate the community's concern that a high school will be needed in the future.

I am pleased to confirm that the department has begun an investigation process for potential future high school sites, because the first step for building education infrastructure in those communities is finding a site to build the high school. It is a commercial process. I have asked the department to provide a further update next year on that work. The department has confirmed that it will engage with local stakeholders, including the council, to ensure that its planning is aligned with demand in the northern growth area. That will be backed up by a historic investment in new and upgraded schools. I also assure the member and families in his communities that we are focused not only on planning for the future but also on the here and now. That means ensuring that we are helping existing schools achieve their potential. [*Extension of time*]

More than 1,000 teachers in Wagga Wagga have benefited from the historic pay rise given to teachers last year by the Minns Labor Government. After years of uncertainty, more than 250 temporary teachers and support staff in Wagga Wagga were made permanent by our Government. After years of denial about the teacher shortage, it is also pertinent to remind the House that, as at term 3, vacancies in Wagga Wagga are now down 37½ per cent. I thank the member for his advocacy. I really look forward to working with him on resolving this issue for the northern suburbs of his electorate, the growing communities of Wagga Wagga, because every child, no matter where they live in New South Wales, deserves a right to public education. We will be working with the member for Wagga Wagga to deliver that for his community.

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

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (13:09):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Sport. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government's Local Sport Defibrillator Grant Program is making a difference for communities across New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Oatley will not get another warning. If he continues to be disorderly, he will be directed to leave the Chamber again. Members will stop leading on the member for Oatley by interacting with him. Members will come to order and listen to the Minister's answer.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (13:10):** I thank the hardworking member for Bega for his question. He is a fellow former Rockdale Rugby junior, like me. There are not too many of us. He is an outstanding Parliamentary Secretary for Health and an amazing local member. I was proud to announce in April this year that his community would receive grants towards much-needed defibrillators. Access to a defibrillator immediately following a cardiac arrest can mean the difference between life and death.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** It's a good program we started, isn't it?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** This is really serious. Nine out of 10 people who have a sudden cardiac arrest outside of hospital will not survive.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** That is the truth. But those chances dramatically increase when patients have access to a life-saving defibrillator. While we on this side supported this program in opposition, we also understood that the defibrillators were not reaching our lower socio-economic communities in the numbers

required. Program analysis from the Office of Sport found that those local sports clubs that were least able to afford defibrillators were missing out on the grants. That is why, when we came into government, we looked at how we could ensure those funds were going to the clubs and communities that needed them most.

**The SPEAKER:** I direct the member for Oatley to remove himself from the Chamber until the end of question time. He will do so quickly or he will be out of the Chamber for the whole sitting day.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Oatley left the Chamber at 13:11.]*

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** The program was amended so that clubs, associations and councils in the State's lowest socio-economic areas—according to Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas data—were eligible. I am pleased to share the results of those changes with the House. I echo the member for Maitland by saying that Labor is the party of the bush. Nearly 75 per cent of grants went to regional and rural communities. That is especially important, as we know that in regional communities the nearest hospital is not always around the corner. For regional communities to have access to the life-saving devices will be a massive game changer.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** That is an outstanding outcome for the program. I must confess I have spoken to members of the National Party. They absolutely love having us in government, because their communities are finally being looked after. They received 50 per cent more defibrillators under us than under their own Coalition Government in the last round of the program. *[Extension of time]*

But there is more. The member for Kiama was telling the world that the new criteria was wrong and that his electorate had been ruled out. He got three grants in his electorate. He might want to brush up on which postcodes are in his electorate. But he did not stop there. He went on to say that it was blatant pork-barrelling. That is a very serious claim—if it were true. The only problem is it is not. After the grants had been determined, we did some analysis: 42 per cent went to Coalition-held electorates, 21 per cent to Independent electorates, and 37 per cent to Labor electorates. Whenever an apology is ready, I am sure we would all love to hear it.

Through last year's process, we became aware of edge cases, where sporting clubs may be sitting just outside the boundary of an eligible postcode. We have improved the eligibility criteria such that clubs that can show a connection to an eligible postcode or can prove financial hardship are also able to apply for this round. But that did not stop the member for Badgerys Creek from jumping on the outrage train. Her scare campaign was ready and raring to go. The media release was locked and loaded. She just forgot to read the eligibility criteria. She said that eligibility for the program was only offered to specific postcodes. Again, that is factually incorrect. Members on that side of the House seem to have contempt for the truth. We would, of course, love to give defibrillators to every club in New South Wales, but we have inherited the largest debt in our State's history and we are doing the best we can to look after the communities across New South Wales.

#### *Documents*

### **REGISTER OF DISCLOSURES**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with clause 21 of the Constitution (Disclosure by Members) Regulation 1983, I table the Register of Disclosures by Members of the Legislative Assembly as at 30 June 2024 (Volumes One and Two), together with the Primary Return of the Member for Northern Tablelands lodged on 18 September 2024. I order that the document be printed.

### **NSW ANTI-SLAVERY COMMISSIONER**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2018, I announce receipt of the report of the Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner in response to report No. 2 of the Modern Slavery Committee entitled *Ethical Clothing Extended Responsibilities Scheme 2005 (NSW)*, dated 25 September 2024 and received on 26 September 2024. I order that the document be printed.

*Committees***JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES FROM  
PRIVATISATION****Government Response**

**The CLERK:** I announce receipt of the Government response to the report No. 1/58 of the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation entitled *Protecting Local Water Utilities From Privatisation*, received out of session on 30 September 2024 and authorised to be printed.

*Documents***AUDITOR-GENERAL****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with the Government Sector Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the following reports:

- (1) Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Supporting students with disability*, dated 26 September 2024 and received that day.
- (2) Financial Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Internal controls and governance 2024*, dated 2 October 2024, received out of session on 2 October 2024 and authorised to be printed.

**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with the Industrial Relations Act 1996, I announce receipt of the report of the Industrial Relations Commission for 2023, received out of session on 2 October 2024 and authorised to be printed.

**AUDIT OFFICE OF NEW SOUTH WALES****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, I announce receipt of the report of the Audit Office of New South Wales for the year ended 30 June 2024, received out of session on 10 October 2024 and authorised to be printed.

**PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COUNCILS****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with the Professional Standards Act 1994, I announce receipt of the report of the Professional Standards Councils for the year ended 30 June 2024, received out of session on 11 October 2024 and authorised to be printed.

*Committees***LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Reports**

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 20/58*, dated 15 October 2024. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

**MODERN SLAVERY COMMITTEE****Reference**

**Dr JOE McGIRR:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that on 10 October 2024 the Modern Slavery Committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into modern slavery risks faced by temporary migrant workers in rural and regional New South Wales, 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:

**Rhodes Affordable Housing Project**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government and the City of Canada Bay Council to reject the mixed-use and infill affordable housing project at 9 Blaxland Road, Rhodes, received from **Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua**.

**Mount Omei Arts Precinct**

Petition requesting that the Government call on the National Parks and Wildlife Service to undertake conservation works and planning for the Mount Omei Arts Precinct, received from **Ms Charishma Kaliyanda**.

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

**Tweed Valley Early Childhood Intervention Service**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to financially support Tweed Valley Early Childhood Intervention Service Ltd, operating as Shaping Outcomes, following its relocation to the new Tweed Valley Hospital, received from **Mr Geoff Provost**.

**Daylight Saving Time**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to reduce Daylight Saving Time from six months to four months, received from **Mrs Helen Dalton**.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

*Bills***RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2024****First Reading**

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

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (14:30):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. This bill will introduce the most significant changes to rental laws since the current Residential Tenancies Act became law in 2010. This bill is the next step in fulfilling the Minns Labor Government's commitment to make renting fairer, by ending no-grounds evictions for fixed-term and periodic leases, and making it easier for renters to keep pets. The bill will also limit how often rent can be increased, ban renters from being asked to pay for background checks, and ensure renters have a free and convenient way to pay their rent.

The changes build on the momentum we started immediately after forming government, when we passed the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 to fix loopholes in rent-bidding laws and facilitate a portable bonds scheme. Around one-third of the New South Wales population are renters, and renting is becoming a longer-term option for more people of all ages and life circumstances. For many years, renters have lacked the stability and security to enable them to make a rental property into a home. Renters who are forced to move regularly cannot forge strong links to a community and often need to move away from schools, family and friends.

Unexpected moving costs can also add to cost-of-living pressures. Further, the very existence of an ability to end a tenancy without a reason makes renters fearful of asserting their rights or even raising any issues with their landlords. How can a renter feel comfortable requesting a much-needed repair or raising concerns about the

safety of their home with the threat of a no-grounds eviction hanging over them? For this reason, ending no-grounds evictions is the foundational reform to enable all other rental reforms, and to support the rights and requirements under the Act to operate effectively.

Let me be clear: These comprehensive reforms are only possible under a Labor government. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government failed to act on this issue, and renters have been living with instability as a result. The Liberals and Nationals had an election commitment to end no-grounds evictions for periodic leases only. That would have created two classes of renters, one protected from the threat of no-grounds evictions and one without that protection. It would have also led to perverse outcomes such as renters being pushed onto rolling short-term leases. We have seen that happen in other States. Only a Labor government has the resolve to make such historic changes to the rental system by ending no-grounds evictions across all lease types.

The impact of no-grounds evictions is only heightened in the current difficult rental market. We know this rental market is the toughest that renters have seen for decades, with demand for housing far exceeding supply. Vacancy rates across New South Wales are between 1.5 per cent and 1.7 per cent, which is much lower than the 3 per cent vacancy rate considered to provide a healthy, balanced rental market. The reforms in this bill were developed following extensive public consultation, which saw over 16,000 survey responses and more than 400 written submissions from renters, landlords, real estate agents, tenant advocates and industry representatives.

The NSW Rental Commissioner, Ms Trina Jones, also met with renters, landlords, agents, advocates, academics and others to understand the issues and further develop the reforms. We have consulted widely and thoroughly to make sure the bill gets the balance right for the people of New South Wales. The changes in this bill will benefit renters and landlords. Unfortunately, it is all too common for renters and landlords to be pitted against one another. But it does not have to be that way. A better and fairer rental market benefits everyone. Clarity and certainty in the laws that apply to renting, and the ability for everyone to have a stable home, will only strengthen our communities. It may not be possible to please everyone, but we have listened to what people have told us. We have delivered a bill that gets the balance right.

I will now turn to an outline of the key elements of the bill. The Act already sets out a range of reasons for which a landlord can end a lease: for example, if the renter has breached the lease, or if the landlord has sold the home with vacant possession. However, currently a landlord can also end a periodic or fixed-term lease once that fixed term ends, without giving any reason. This is known as a no-grounds eviction. This bill will significantly improve the lives of many renters in New South Wales by making sure there is a valid and justifiable reason for ending any lease. It will ensure that if a property continues to be offered on the rental market, a renter who is doing the right thing will be able to stay. It will provide stability to renters while ensuring that landlords who need to regain possession of their property are able to do so. Importantly, the bill will end no-grounds evictions for both fixed-term and periodic leases.

The bill replaces sections 84 and 85 of the Residential Tenancies Act with new grounds for termination. The new termination grounds in sections 87E to 87M of the bill are as follows: The property will be offered for sale with vacant possession; the property will no longer be used as rented residential premises for at least 12 months; the landlord or a member of their family will live in the property for at least six months; the property will undergo significant renovation or repair that requires the property to be vacant and the works are planned to commence within two months; the property will be demolished and the works are planned to commence within two months; the tenancy is part of an employee or caretaker agreement that has ended; the property is purpose-built student accommodation and the renter is no longer a student; the renter is no longer eligible for a subsidised affordable accommodation program or for transitional housing; and the property is part of a key worker housing program and is needed to house a key worker.

These grounds were developed in response to feedback received through extensive consultation and will ensure landlords who genuinely need to end leases and regain possession of their properties are able to do so. It should be noted that this bill does not remove a landlord's ability to evict a renter who has breached their tenancy agreement. Landlords will still be able to end a tenancy if a renter does not pay their rent, seriously damages the property, uses the premises for an illegal activity, or seriously or persistently threatens or abuses the landlord, their agent or contractors.

The new grounds recognise that landlords may wish to use a property for a different purpose for a period of time, prepare it for sale, renovate the property or house a family member. The Government recognises that these are all legitimate reasons for a landlord to end a tenancy. Some of the grounds have specific requirements built into them to ensure that tenants are not being evicted unnecessarily. For example, if a landlord is terminating on the basis that the property will undergo renovation or repair works, the works must be planned to commence within two months of the termination. This will prevent tenants being evicted for a renovation that may be planned to commence in 12 months time. Further, this ground cannot be used when the landlord is subject to an order from Fair Trading or the tribunal to fix damage or disrepair caused by a breach of the landlord's obligation to maintain



the premises in a reasonable state of repair. This will prevent a landlord from deliberately allowing a property to fall into disrepair and then evicting the renter.

For the vast majority of landlords, the new grounds in the bill will be seen as reasonable and sensible. The Government maintains that the new grounds could only be viewed as problematic by the minority of landlords and agents who do not want to do the right thing. We have always strived to balance the needs of landlords with the right of renters to have a secure home. The bill before the House achieves that balance. Along with the new termination grounds, the bill also introduces a range of supporting measures that will guard against the misuse of the termination provisions and give the community confidence that the laws are being adhered to.

Exclusion periods will apply for each termination ground. This is a period after the termination within which the property cannot be re-let on the tenancy market. Penalties will apply for a breach. The aim of the exclusion period is to deter misuse of the termination grounds. For example, the exclusion period will prevent a landlord from simply terminating a tenancy under the guise of moving into the property themselves only to put it back on the rental market soon after. The exclusion periods are different for each ground and reflect the period for which the property would not be expected to be back on the tenancy market if the termination for that ground was genuine. For example, if the termination is on the basis that the property is being prepared for sale, it will not be able to be re-let for six months.

To protect agents from unknowingly breaching the exclusion period, new section 87 also requires landlords to tell agents about a tenancy exclusion period applying to a premises. It also specifies that an agent will not be in breach of an exclusion period requirement if they were not aware, and could not reasonably have found out, that an exclusion period was in place. The Government recognises the landlord's circumstances may change. For example, they may not be able to sell the property, or planned renovations works may not be able to proceed, under circumstances beyond the landlord's control. In these situations the landlord can apply to the secretary for an exemption from the re-letting exclusion period. The secretary will assess whether the landlord is genuinely unable to proceed with the plans that led to the termination and can grant an exemption that will enable the property to be re-let.

Evidence will be required to guard against the misuse of termination grounds. New section 85 allows the regulations to require supporting documentation or information that must accompany a termination notice. The requirement to provide evidence will deter landlords or agents from using a termination ground that is not genuine, and will provide renters with confidence that the termination provisions are being used appropriately. Offence provisions will also guard against misuse of termination grounds. New section 85 makes it an offence to provide false or misleading documents or information when giving a termination notice. New section 86 also makes it an offence to give a termination notice on a ground that is not genuine. It will be a defence if the landlord or agent could not have known that a ground for giving a termination notice was not genuine or that the supporting information was false or misleading. Significant penalties apply for these offences: 100 penalty units, or \$11,000, for an individual and 650 penalty units, or \$71,500, for businesses.

Along with the new grounds for termination, the bill provides for an extension of the existing notice periods for termination of fixed-term leases while retaining the 90-day notice period that currently applies to periodic leases. For all of the new termination grounds, the notice period for terminating a fixed-term lease is 60 days if the lease is for six months or less, and 90 days if it is for longer than six months. These longer notice periods will provide renters with much-needed additional time to find a new home. However, we have listened to feedback highlighting that longer notice periods for renters are only useful if the renter does not have to pay double rent for an extended period.

Currently, if a renter under a fixed-term lease finds a new home, this does not change their liability to pay rent until the end of the fixed term. If they make use of the longer notice period and secure a tenancy in a new home early in the notice period, this could leave them paying double rent for a longer period. They could break their lease, but this risks paying a break fee and possibly receiving a bad reference. For this reason, the bill proposes at new section 110 that a renter under a fixed-term agreement who has received a termination notice may give the landlord an "early exit notice" that allows them to leave the tenancy with 14 days notice. The renter who leaves after the 14-day period has elapsed is not liable to pay rent after that time.

The changes to end no-grounds terminations will apply to all rental agreements, including those that commenced before the changes come into effect. This will ensure that all renters are able to benefit from these new protections. The reforms to end no-grounds terminations are sensible and they are balanced. Limiting the reasons for evictions to these grounds will improve certainty for renters and provide them with the confidence to raise problems with their landlord without fear of a no-grounds eviction. At the same time, the changes acknowledge that the property is a financial investment for the landlord and that changing financial or life circumstances may mean that the landlord needs to change how the property is used.

I now turn to the changes in the bill to make it easier for renters to keep a pet. Currently in New South Wales landlords can refuse permission for any pet in a rental property, unless it is an assistance animal such as a guide dog. The landlord does not have to justify or give any reason for their refusal, and a renter who keeps a pet at a property without the landlord's approval may be in breach of their lease. The Government recognises that pets provide profound emotional and psychological benefits, with studies consistently showing that pet ownership can reduce stress, combat loneliness and promote overall mental health.

We know pets form part of the modern family. A recent analysis by *The Sydney Morning Herald* found that of Greater Sydney's 34 local council areas, 16 have more dogs than children aged under 15 years. The same analysis showed cats outnumbered children in the City of Sydney and the Inner West Council local government areas, while Woollahra has 1.1 cats per child. In a world where many face isolation, including in rental settings, changes that support the keeping of pets in rental homes will foster a greater sense of belonging and wellbeing for renters. We went to the election promising to make it easier for renters to keep pets in a rental home. Consistent with our broad reform agenda, the reforms in this bill relating to pets are sensible and balanced. Our approach values the right of renters to make their property into a home while also recognising a landlord's right to manage their investment.

Schedule 1 [9] to the bill inserts a new division 8, which relates to the keeping of pets. New section 73B provides that renters who have entered into a residential tenancy agreement are still required to seek a landlord's consent to keep a pet in their home, other than for an assistance animal. A consistent process for applying for this consent from the landlord is set out in new sections 73C and 73D. The application for consent must be made in the form approved by the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service. This is to provide a simple process for renters and to ensure they are not sharing more information than necessary. The application must also be made jointly by all co-tenants, as keeping an animal will likely impact everyone living at the premises. The landlord's response to the request must also be in a form approved by the secretary. This means less guesswork for landlords and agents, and digestible information for renters.

New section 73D outlines the landlord's obligation to respond to an application within 21 days. They must either grant consent, with or without conditions attached, or refuse consent on one or more of the prescribed grounds for refusal. The 21-day time frame provides adequate time for the landlord's consideration and response. If a landlord does not respond within the 21-day time frame, consent is automatically assumed. This is necessary to prevent renters from being left in limbo or waiting too long for a response. If consent is refused, the landlord must provide the reasons for refusal and outline why the landlord considers that the ground for refusal applies. This will provide transparency for the renter and support an application for dispute resolution between the parties, if required. If the consent is granted subject to reasonable conditions, the landlord is required to include those conditions in their response, which would then form part of the terms of the residential tenancy agreement, if accepted by the renter.

The Government understands that some landlords may have genuine reasons to refuse a pet. New section 73F lists the reasons for which the landlord may refuse a renter's request to keep a pet. These reasons are: keeping the animal at the residential premises would result in an unreasonable number of animals being kept at the premises; the premises is unsuitable for keeping the animal because the fencing is not appropriate, there is insufficient open space or the nature of the premises means the animal could not be kept at the premises humanely; keeping the animal at the residential premises is likely to cause damage that would cost more to reasonably repair than the amount of the rental bond for the premises; the landlord resides at the premises and does not want to live with a pet; keeping the pet would break another law, local council order, strata scheme by-law or community rule; or the tenant has not agreed to a reasonable condition proposed by the landlord.

The bill allows further detail on the grounds for refusal to be provided in the regulations, including by clarifying or defining terms used in the grounds. To provide flexibility for different situations, new section 73E also allows a landlord to consent to a pet, subject to reasonable conditions. Section 73E specifies some conditions that are considered reasonable: for example, requiring an animal to stay outside if it is the kind of animal not normally kept inside, such as a chicken. Other conditions that would be reasonable to include are conditions that require the renter at the end of the tenancy to undertake professional carpet cleaning if it is reasonable for the type of animal and the premises and to have the property fumigated if the animal is a mammal.

New section 73G provides an avenue for a renter to appeal to the tribunal against a landlord's refusal to give permission to keep a pet. The renter can appeal if they believe the landlord's reason for refusing consent is not applicable to their case or the conditions the landlord has proposed are unreasonable. The tribunal must dismiss a renter's appeal if satisfied that the grounds for refusal are applicable or the conditions are reasonable. Alternatively, if the tribunal is not satisfied that the grounds for refusal are applicable, the tribunal must make an order allowing the renter to keep the animal and may make the order subject to conditions. If the tribunal considers a condition proposed by the landlord is unreasonable, the tribunal can remove, vary or substitute a condition.

As with the changes to end no-grounds evictions, the changes to the rules about keeping pets will apply to all tenancy agreements, including those entered into before the changes commence. Any consent to keep a pet that is already in place will not need to be applied for again but will become a consent under the new laws. The changes I have outlined will make it easier for renters to keep pets in their homes. They are balanced reforms which recognise the interests of both landlords and renters and provide simple commonsense reasons for refusing a pet. By making it easier for renters to keep pets, we recognise the many benefits that pets bring and that pets can help renters to turn their house into a home.

I now turn to the remaining provisions in the bill which will make renting in New South Wales fairer, simpler and more affordable. Currently, under sections 41 and 42 of the Act, a landlord is prohibited from increasing rent more than once in 12 months if a renter has a periodic lease or a fixed-term lease of two years or more. However, this protection does not apply to fixed-term leases of less than two years or when there is a change in the type of lease. That means that in some scenarios, a landlord could increase the rent several times in 12 months. We think it is unfair for renters to be subjected to frequent rental increases. Predictability and certainty is important so that households and families can plan ahead and know what their costs will be.

To address this, the bill will broaden the protection against rent increasing more than once in a 12-month period to all types of leases, including fixed-term leases of less than two years. Successive leases between the same parties will be treated as a single agreement so that as long as one renter remains the same in successive leases, the rent will not be able to be increased more than once in 12 months. The changes will align New South Wales laws with the National Cabinet Better Deal for Renters agreement. The changes will apply to all leases except those fixed-term leases of less than two years that are already in effect. Those leases will be allowed to run until their term is expired, but all new fixed-term leases will be subject to the rent increase protection.

In another reform that will save renters money, the bill will ensure that renters can pay their rent conveniently and without additional cost. The Act currently requires landlords to offer renters a payment method that is free and reasonably available. While that requirement should be uncontroversial, we have heard time and again that renters are offered inconvenient payment methods as the only free way to pay their rent. It is not practical or fair to ask renters to find time each rent cycle to visit their post office or an agent's office during work hours when other free alternatives are available. Complaints to Fair Trading indicate that offering those inconvenient methods means renters are forced into paying their rent using more convenient options that incur a fee, such as through a rental app. Those methods often streamline administration for agents but at a cost to the renter, such as an administration fee.

When paying rent via an app, a renter may also be required to provide more of their personal information than they would otherwise agree to give. It also undermines the prohibition on landlords and real estate agents requiring renters to use a particular service or business. Schedule 1 [3] to the bill moves that prohibition from clause 5 of the regulation into the Act to provide clarity about the requirement. The bill requires a landlord to offer renters the choice of using electronic bank transfer and Centrepay to pay their rent. The landlord is also required to ensure they enable the payment by whatever method is chosen by the renter. The section also prohibits a landlord from charging any fees or passing on costs incurred by the landlord or the landlord's agent to the tenant.

Consistent with the current Act, the bill does not prevent landlords from accepting other forms of payment for rent such as cash, cheque or payment through an app so long as the renter and landlord both agree for rent to be paid that way. The method of payment may not be changed without agreement from both parties. The bill increases the penalty for breach of the requirement to offer a free method of payment. The penalty has been increased as NSW Fair Trading has found that the existing penalty is not significant enough to prevent agents from restricting renters' ability to choose a genuinely free and convenient rent payment method.

The final reform will clarify that tenants cannot be asked to pay for background checks. The Act currently prohibits a landlord, agent or other person from requiring or accepting payments from a renter other than a holding fee, rent, a rental bond and an amount to cover any fee payable for registration of a tenancy agreement. Despite that provision, Fair Trading has heard several complaints about renters being asked or encouraged to pay for background checks. We know that renting and moving are already costly endeavours, and renters should not be burdened with additional, unnecessary expenses. The bill will clarify that the prohibition on being asked to pay for background checks applies to all prospective renters regardless of whether they eventually enter into a residential tenancy agreement. A breach of that provision will be an offence.

Finally, the bill will appoint the Rental Commissioner as a permanent member of the Rental Bond Board. That aligns with the commissioner's role in advising the Government on rental issues and working with both government and community to protect renters and to rebalance the rental market. The bill is a significant step forward in implementing the Minns Labor Government's commitment to creating a modern, fair rental system in New South Wales. Over the past 18 months, the Government has taken significant steps to provide greater balance in the rental market. We appointed the State's first Rental Commissioner, Ms Trina Jones, who is a tireless

advocate for renters. We passed legislation to close a loophole to put a stop to solicited rent bidding, as well as to lay the groundwork for the nation's first Portable Rental Bonds Scheme. The scheme will be a game changer for renters, who will be able to save thousands of dollars by transferring their bond between rental properties.

We invested \$8.4 million in the new Rental Taskforce as part of this year's budget, with inspectors and support teams to help renters and to act on serious breaches of rental laws. We launched a new free Rent Check website to make it easier for renters to check whether the rent they are being asked for is fair. The reforms in the bill are the most important building blocks for improving the lives of the more than 2.2 million people across the State who rent. They will also provide clarity and certainty for everyone, and help renters create stable homes. I thank all members of the community who participated in the consultation process on the reforms, and all stakeholders representing renters, landlords, agents and others who provided input and advice to help the Government develop the reforms. Their insights, contributions and collaboration give me confidence that together we can improve the rental system for both renters and landlords.

In the months to come, I look forward to bringing further bills to this Parliament to implement the remainder of our commitments and continue the important work on the rental market. I recognise some of the stakeholders in the public gallery today, including those from the Tenants' Union and Shelter NSW, who played an instrumental part in delivering the reform package in the bill. I also acknowledge advocates from the property sector who have been collaborative and productive in providing us with the feedback to deliver this balanced rental law that modernises the rental system for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **STATE INSURANCE AND CARE GOVERNANCE AMENDMENT (GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS) BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 25 September 2024.**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (14:59):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (Governance Arrangements) Bill 2024. I am pleased to confirm that the Opposition will support the passage of the bill. It is part of the ongoing reforms to icare, an entity responsible for administering workers compensation and other critical insurance schemes in New South Wales. Those reforms are much needed as icare has been the subject of significant scrutiny regarding its governance and operational effectiveness in recent years. The Coalition has long championed transparency and accountability within government bodies such as icare. The Coalition laid the groundwork for these reforms while in government, and we are proud to see many of our recommendations reflected in the bill.

The bill seeks to strengthen icare's governance framework through several important changes. First, it removes the chief executive officer from the board as a voting member—a move that will ensure a clearer separation between governance and management. That sensible reform aligns with best corporate governance practices and will allow the board to better hold the executive team accountable for icare's performance. Additionally, the bill adds a representative from NSW Treasury to icare's board, typically the secretary or a senior delegate. That critical step will ensure a deeper alignment between icare's strategic direction and the Government's broader financial and policy objectives. The inclusion of Treasury in the governance structure will enhance oversight and ensure that icare remains financially sustainable and responsive to government priorities.

Another key element of the bill is the requirement for ministerial approval before the appointment of a new CEO. However, in many respects that provision is little more than window-dressing because the Act already requires the board to consult with the Minister before appointing a CEO, and it is unthinkable that the board would proceed with an appointment if the Minister opposed it. While formalising ministerial approval, that change does relatively little to alter the reality of how appointments have been managed in practice. The bill also mandates that icare's annual statement of business intent be tabled in Parliament. That is an important step for transparency, giving Parliament, stakeholders and the broader public a clear view of icare's performance and strategic objectives. Transparency is the cornerstone of public trust. By ensuring that those documents are made publicly available, we are rebuilding confidence in icare.

While the Treasury review is largely positive about icare, including its findings on pay scales and governance improvements, many of the fundamental issues remain unresolved. They include the rising premium costs for the Nominal Insurer, the abolition of the Net Asset Holding Level Policy with the inclusion of the Treasury Managed Fund in OneFund, and the continuing rise in the impact of psychological claims, with poor return-to-work rates for both the Nominal Insurer and the Treasury Managed Fund. The bill does not address those core issues. They continue to place significant strain on both icare and the broader workers compensation system.

While the Opposition supports the bill, members must acknowledge that it builds upon the solid foundations established by the previous Coalition Government. It was the Coalition that expanded icare's role to ensure that injured workers were a priority, and the bill seeks to continue that legacy. The Coalition initiated many of the governance reforms now being legislated, and we are pleased to see the Government following our lead on those important issues. However, as I mentioned, the bill addresses only some of the challenges facing icare. Deeper issues related to premium costs, operational effectiveness and service delivery must be tackled if icare is to fulfil its mandate effectively.

In closing, Coalition members will always support good governance and transparency. We welcome the bill as a step in the right direction, but we urge the Government to continue addressing the broader challenges within icare. I thank the Minister and her staff for their efforts in bringing the bill to the Parliament. Of course the bill is not the end of the road, but it is a valuable next step in ensuring that icare is more accountable, transparent and responsive to the people of New South Wales. Once again, the Opposition supports the bill, and I commend it to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:03):** I make a brief contribution in support of the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (Governance Arrangements) Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Work Health and Safety for bringing this important legislation to the House. The bill embodies icare's principal objectives, as established by the Government, and is aimed at promoting efficiency, transparency and accountability in icare's operations. Those are fundamental goals for any organisation responsible for managing critical social insurance programs, and they are at the heart of this reform.

One of the most significant changes introduced by the bill is the removal of the chief executive officer from the icare board of directors. Under the new governance structure, the CEO will no longer be a voting member or managing director of the board. Instead, the CEO will focus solely on the day-to-day management of icare, while the board will take on a clearer role in setting the strategic direction and holding management accountable for its performance. That sharper distinction between governance and management will enhance the board's ability to act independently and with greater oversight—an essential step in improving icare's effectiveness.

The bill also mandates that the appointment of the CEO by the board will require ministerial approval. That provision brings icare into closer alignment with other State owned corporations, such as TCorp, which already have similar governance frameworks in place. While it maintains the independence of the board in appointing the CEO, it introduces an additional layer of accountability by ensuring that the responsible Minister has oversight over that critical decision. The board remains responsible for setting the CEO's employment terms, conditions and remuneration, but the added level of ministerial involvement ensures that icare's leadership is always aligned with broader government priorities.

Furthermore, the bill appoints the Treasury secretary or a nominated Treasury officer to the icare board. That critical step will ensure that the board has a deep understanding of the broader government context and priorities. Appointing a senior Treasury representative will better position icare to navigate the complex financial and economic landscape that its insurance and care schemes influence. That will not only improve the alignment between icare's strategic goals and the economic objectives of the Government but also help icare respond more effectively to government priorities.

Another key reform in the bill is the requirement for icare's annual statement of business intent to be tabled in Parliament from 2025-26 onwards. That change enhances transparency by providing greater visibility into icare's performance targets, key measures and challenges. Tabling the statement of business intent will allow key stakeholders—including the Parliament, the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Law and Justice, employers, employees and others—to better understand how icare is performing against its objectives and the specific challenges it faces within the workers compensation schemes. That will reinforce public confidence in icare's commitment to delivering high-quality services and maintaining its statutory obligations to the people of New South Wales.

It is vital to recognise that icare, as the New South Wales Government's social insurer, plays a pivotal role in creating strong social, financial and economic outcomes across our community. The reforms in the bill are necessary to ensure that icare remains a trusted and effective organisation. The transparency measures, combined with enhanced governance and accountability, will help restore and maintain public confidence in icare's operations, particularly in its ability to manage workers compensation schemes and other social insurance programs that are critical to the wellbeing of New South Wales citizens. The bill also responds to recommendations made by the Auditor-General of New South Wales and acts on key findings from NSW Treasury's review of icare's operational expenditure. It builds upon earlier reforms such as the appointment of employer- and employee-body-nominated directors to the icare board and the establishment of principal objectives for icare.

By taking swift and decisive action on these recommendations, the Minister for Work Health and Safety has demonstrated a strong commitment to best practice in governance and operational transparency. The bill provides the foundation for icare to become a more transparent, accountable and efficient organisation. The practical governance changes introduced by the bill will support icare in being more responsive to government priorities and reinforce its accountability to stakeholders, including Parliament, government, employers, employees and policyholders. In conclusion, the bill demonstrates the Minister's commitment to pursuing best practice in governance at icare. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (15:09):** I contribute to debate on the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (Governance Arrangements) Bill 2024. I acknowledge the members who have contributed to debate and thank them for their contributions. Icare is an important government agency that oversees insurance and care services to statutory authorities and people with injuries under various compensation schemes. Icare manages insurance on behalf of the New South Wales Government, including the State's workers compensation schemes, the Dust Diseases Care scheme, the Lifetime Care and Support scheme and the Home Building Compensation Fund. Icare also provides insurance to many of the State's assets and government agencies. As a result, icare manages over \$296 billion of State assets and, importantly, provides workers compensation cover to 3.5 million workers and 338,000 businesses. Therefore, it is critical that icare's operations are as transparent and accountable as possible.

The Minns Labor Government began its reform of icare immediately upon coming to government, and the bill will improve icare's governance arrangements. The bill amends the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015, which provides for the framework governing icare to strengthen governance arrangements between the board and management; better support icare to be responsive to government priorities; and strengthen accountability and transparency by icare to its stakeholders, including government, Parliament and the broader community. The bill ensures that icare's governance arrangements reflect its newly established principal objectives established by the Parliament last year, including to promote efficiency, transparency and accountability in the conduct of its operations.

The bill will make four practical amendments to the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015. First, the bill will remove the chief executive officer from the board of Insurance and Care NSW—icare—as a managing director. The bill will remove the chief executive as a voting member and, in doing so, will support a better delineation between the board and management and their respective roles and responsibilities to set icare's strategic direction and hold management to account for performance and responsibility for day-to-day business operations—governance 101.

Secondly, the bill appoints the Treasury secretary, or nominated Treasury delegate, to the icare board. The secretary of NSW Treasury, or delegated NSW Treasury official, is appointed to the icare board through the bill. This appointment to the icare board will assist the board to better understand government priorities and support its decision-making through an informed understanding of the government context. Thirdly, the bill requires ministerial approval of the appointment of a CEO by the icare board. The bill clarifies the requirement for the icare board to consult with the Minister ahead of the appointment of the icare chief executive. In future, the board must seek the Minister's approval before the chief executive is appointed.

Fourthly, the bill requires that from 1 January 2025 onwards icare must table its statement of business intent in Parliament. The responsible Minister must arrange for the statement of business intent to be tabled within 14 sitting days. This will provide greater transparency regarding icare's performance targets against key measures and challenges facing workers compensation schemes in line with a recommendation made by the New South Wales Auditor-General contained in a 2024 review of workers compensation claims management. Overall, the amendments to the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 will ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability in the conduct of icare's operations. Icare plays an essential role in ensuring people's injuries are rightfully managed and compensated. It is therefore imperative that icare's operations are also held to the highest standards. I recognise the efforts of current Government members while in opposition. I also congratulate the Minister and his staff for their work on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:14):** I am pleased to support the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (Governance Arrangements) Bill 2024. In doing so, I note that since coming to government last year the Minns Labor Government has immediately begun its reform of Insurance and Care NSW, also known as icare. The bill is a continuation of that reform. Icare manages insurance on behalf of the Government, including the State's workers compensation scheme. That is a very big and important part of icare's job. It also manages the Dust Diseases Care scheme, the Lifetime Care and Support scheme and the Home Building Compensation Fund. Icare also provides insurance to many of the State's assets and government agencies. As a result, icare manages over \$296 billion of the State's assets and, importantly, provides workers compensation cover to 3.5 million workers and 338,000 business, or thereabouts. Therefore, it is critical that

icare's operations are as transparent and accountable as possible. That includes icare's governance arrangements, which the bill improves.

I thank the Minister for Work Health and Safety for her work in bringing this important bill before the House. The bill proposes four practical measures to improve icare's governance and reinforce icare's accountability to Parliament, government, employers, employees and other policyholders. The first measure removes the chief executive as a voting member of the icare board. That sends a clear signal that the board's role is to set icare's strategic direction and hold management to account for icare's business management and day-to-day operations. That connection between the chief executive and the icare board was a peculiar feature. That was a consequence of the way the former Government set up icare, which led to the controversy around icare and the way it managed particularly the workers compensation scheme for the working people of this State. It is absolutely crucial that we get that right. This part of the bill is a simple step that will help achieve that.

The second measure proposes the appointment of the NSW Treasury Secretary, or a nominee, to the board, which will mean that the make-up of the icare board will look similar to TCorp. The icare board will be better supported to understand government's priorities and the board in turn will benefit from a deeper understanding of the government environment and context. Close Treasury engagement through membership of the icare board is warranted, given icare's role as a government self-insurance provider. The third measure clarifies that the board will require the responsible Minister's approval to appoint the chief executive. That change brings icare closer in line with the way TCorp and other State owned corporations operate, while preserving the independence of the board and its responsibilities for appointing the chief executive, setting that chief executive's employment terms and conditions, remuneration and performance.

The final change is a new requirement for icare's statement of business intent to be tabled in Parliament. The statement of business intent sets out icare's planned approach to achieving its legislative objectives in line with the Government's expectations. That is an important accountability measure that was absent in the way icare was established under the former Government. Members will recall that the establishment of icare was a real focus of former Premier Dominic Perrottet's attention during his time in Parliament. It was his baby, and he needs to own the consequences of the way it was set up. It was set up to fail the people of New South Wales and the bill today corrects that, as will other changes that the Government will introduce in due course. The statement of business intent's new requirement is a welcome change and improves transparency for key stakeholders, including the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice, and employers and employees across New South Wales, to whom icare owes a statutory trust.

The bill demonstrates the Government's unrelenting commitment to implement the recommendations of the McDougall review conducted in 2021 and to lift icare's performance to benefit workers with injuries and give greater confidence to employers across the State. It builds on changes already made to appoint employee and employer representatives as directors to the icare board—again, an important governance step that the Minns Labor Government has introduced—and establish principal objectives for icare. The bill also responds to recommendations and findings made by the Auditor-General of New South Wales and the NSW Treasury in its review of icare's operational expenditure. In opposition, I had a huge complaint about the way workers compensation was managed by the former Government. This Government is doing a whole bunch of things, of which this bill is another small step, to make sure that the working people of this State have a workers compensation system that is fairer and gives them industrial justice. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (15:20):** On behalf of Ms Sophie Cotsis: In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (Governance Arrangements) Bill 2024. The member for Willoughby noted that the Opposition's support for the bill is a valuable next step in the reform of icare, and other members spoke in their contributions about the need to reform icare being a Government priority. The member for Mount Druitt noted that removing the CEO from the board should improve governance at icare and make the board more accountable for the direction of icare. The member for Parramatta noted the importance of the changes in the bill to the overall reform of icare.

The member for The Entrance outlined that it was this Government's priority to improve governance arrangements at icare's board and management, provide better support for icare to be responsive to Government priorities, and to strengthen icare's accountability and transparency to its stakeholders, including the Government, Parliament and the broader community. The bill demonstrates that priority. The member for Willoughby also raised the issue of premium pricing and return to work rates. The Government has begun its work to address those issues. Much more will be said about it in due course, but that work is in train. On behalf of the Minister, I again thank members for their contributions to the debate and also acknowledge the overwhelming support in this place to reform icare. We have all seen the need for reform.

While I am speaking on behalf of the Minister in reply, I particularly thank the Minister for her wonderful work. This bill will improve governance at icare, and shows the Government's commitment to reforming icare.

I thank Business NSW, Unions NSW and, in particular, the Injured Workers Campaign Network for their engagement in drafting the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** On behalf of Ms Sophie Cotsis: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **STATE EMERGENCY AND RESCUE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 25 September 2024.**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:23):** On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I respond to the Minister's introduction of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. At the outset, I affirm that on this side of the House we support the legislation and the positive steps that it takes to enhance the safety and efficiency of emergency management in New South Wales. The bill addresses areas that are essential for the wellbeing of our communities, especially as we face increasingly frequent and severe emergencies. By empowering our emergency services personnel with the ability to temporarily close roads in the face of hazards, we are not only streamlining incident management but also prioritising the safety of both the responders and the public.

The bill will create a new power for emergency service organisations to temporarily close a road or related area, such as a footpath or shoulder, to traffic due to an obstruction or danger to traffic. It is important to note that that power cannot be exercised if the closure is inconsistent with a direction given by Transport for NSW or by a New South Wales police officer or the relevant roads authority. The person who closes the road or related area is required to notify New South Wales police and Transport for NSW as soon as possible after the closure—I will come back to this section of the bill. This is a practical measure that acknowledges the realities faced by many first responders, particularly in remote and regional areas where immediate action can make a significant difference.

The inclusion of education services as a functional area under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act is another commendable step. Our schools, TAFEs and educational institutions are integral parts of our community. Formalising their role ensures better coordination during emergencies, such as bushfires or floods, when timely decisions about closures and evacuations are critical. I also highlight the bill's focus on supporting our emergency management volunteer workforce. Our volunteers are indeed the backbone of emergency response in this State. They selflessly give their time and skills to protect others, often under challenging and dangerous conditions. The new function for the State Emergency Management Committee to plan for the development and maintenance of our volunteer workforce is a forward-thinking move. It recognises the need for sustainable volunteer numbers and adequate training to meet the growing challenges posed by climate change and other factors contributing to more frequent disasters.

In acknowledging these positive aspects, it is important to also emphasise the bipartisan nature of the support for our emergency services. Regardless of political lines, we all share a common goal, and that is the safety and resilience of our communities. I believe this legislation reflects that shared commitment. I also take this opportunity to join the Minister in expressing our profound gratitude to all emergency services workers and volunteers. Their dedication and courage are exemplary. As someone who has served alongside them, I have witnessed firsthand the sacrifices they make and the unwavering spirit they bring to their roles. As we approach a summer that may test our resources once again, let us ensure that they have our full support and the tools they need to carry out their vital work. I commend the collaborative efforts that went into drafting the bill. It is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together towards common objectives.

Following his second reading speech, I raised with the Minister a potential issue in that the person who closes the road or related area is required to notify New South Wales police and Transport for NSW as soon as possible after the closure. We proposed that another person within the emergency services organisation, rather than the prescribed "responsible person" as defined in the bill, should also be able to notify the police and Transport for NSW on behalf of the responsible persons and organisation. The amendments proposed are sensible and necessary. The Minister agreed and will move the amendments during the consideration in detail stage. I thank the Minister and his team for bringing the bill to the House, and I thank them for their collaboration in getting the



best possible outcome for the volunteers and the emergency services personnel and for the best possible result for the residents of New South Wales.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (15:28):** I speak in support of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024, which seeks to streamline and improve the management of incidents and emergencies in New South Wales. The bill introduces various amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, herein referred to as "the Act". It creates a new power for emergency services organisations to close public thoroughfares, including streets, roads and lanes, to traffic in the event of a temporary obstruction or danger to traffic. Safeguards surrounding the power include that it can only be exercised in the absence of direction from a relevant authority. Further, if it is exercised, the respective emergency service organisation is required to notify the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW as soon as is practicable following the closure of the thoroughfare.

The bill also creates a new function for the State Emergency Management Committee to support emergency services organisations and other relevant organisations to plan for the capability and capacity development of the emergency volunteer workforce. Other amendments include expanding the definition of "directing officer" to include "Local Emergency Operations Controller" and "Regional Emergency Operations Controller". That will enable emergency operations controllers to issue directions related to the taking of emergency safety measures irrespective of rank.

By amending the Act to recognise education services as a functional area, the bill works to ensure the education sector is integrated into our State's emergency planning arrangements. Other changes relate to updating references and removing redundant provisions, including updating "New South Wales Volunteer Rescue Association Inc" to "VRA Rescue NSW Limited", replacing the references to "Department of Justice" with "Premier's Department", and removing the reference to section 60, which was repealed last year. Our emergency services volunteers go above and beyond to protect us. By strengthening emergency services legislation, we improve the ability of our emergency services organisations to perform the invaluable work that they do in supporting our community, particularly in emergency circumstances. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:30):** I make a brief contribution in support of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the good Minister Jihad Dib for introducing the bill to the House. The bill amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to streamline and improve the management process of incidents and emergencies within New South Wales. It will establish a new power to enable emergency services workers to temporarily close roads in relation to hazards. It will also create a new function to aid the State Emergency Management Committee to support our emergency services and other organisations, and to plan for the development and maintenance of the capabilities and service delivery capacity of the emergency management volunteer workforce, as well as establishing education services as a functional area under the Act.

The bill establishes a new power for responsible people in emergency services organisations: the ability to temporarily close a road or road-related area to traffic where appropriate due to an obstruction or danger to traffic. That power is not limited in its functions related to emergencies. It can be used whether a state of emergency is in place and it can be used for minor incidents such as a tree that has fallen on a road or a vehicle collision. That power will be made available to all emergency services organisations as we recognise their shared role in managing incidents and emergencies. The Act already defines "emergency services organisations" to refer to the Ambulance Service of NSW, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Police Force, NSW Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Surf Life Saving New South Wales, New South Wales Volunteer Rescue Association Inc and Volunteer Marine Rescue NSW.

A "responsible person" is defined in the bill as the person in charge of members of the emergency services organisation who are present at the site of an obstruction or danger to traffic. Further, the bill retains the existing definitions of "road" and "road-related area" as defined in the Road Transport Act 2013. Two restrictions will be placed on the new power. Firstly, the power cannot be applied if the closure is inconsistent with a direction given by an officer of the NSW Police Force, Transport for NSW or the relevant roads authority. Secondly, it is a requirement for the person who closes the road or road-related area to notify the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW as soon as is appropriately possible after the closure.

Emergency services organisations will work alongside Transport for NSW and any other relevant members of the State Emergency Management Committee to put in place the appropriate arrangements for the use of the new power to manage the closure of roads. The State Emergency Management Committee will have a new function under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act that will enable it to support emergency services organisations and other organisations in the planning, development and maintenance of the capabilities and service delivery capacity of the emergency management volunteer workforce.

The bill amends the definition of "functional area" under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act to include education services. Functional areas relate to a category of services involved in the prevention of and preparation for responses to or recovery from an emergency. The functional area of educational services will include public schools, independent and Catholic schools, TAFE and non-TAFE skills providers as well as higher education and early childhood education facilities. The bill also amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act to include local emergency operations controllers and regional emergency operations controllers under the definition of "directing officer". The bill will clarify that police officers appointed as "directing officers" will have the ability to exercise powers of direction under the Act relating to emergency safety measures. Currently only the Minister for Emergency Services, the State Emergency Operations Controller or a police officer of or above the rank of sergeant is able to exercise those powers.

The bill makes various administrative amendments for the purpose of removing redundant provisions. It replaces references to "Department of Justice" with "Premier's Department" and references to "New South Wales Volunteer Rescue Association Inc" with "VRA Rescue NSW Limited". The Volunteer Rescue Association has changed its corporate structure and adopted a new legal name. The amendment recognises that change. The amendments in the bill make small but significant improvements that will enhance safety on our roads for emergency services operators as well as road users. Importantly, the bill will increase coordination and planning in developing and maintaining the emergency management volunteer workforce. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:37):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. I support the bill and thank the Minister for its introduction. The only observation I will make is in relation to new section 60M, which deals with temporary road closures. Whilst I certainly welcome the extension, the bill does not go quite far enough. We have recently seen heavy rains across Sydney. As was noted by the assistant commissioner on television this morning, we saw another three rescues that involved persons who had deliberately driven through floodwaters. It does not matter whether it is a Liberal government or a Labor government. It does not matter who the commissioner is. The message is not getting through: "You wouldn't drive into a bushfire so why would you drive into floodwaters?" Tragically, a few years ago I went to the funeral of a friend of mine, Regina Newman, who took a wrong turn at Broughton Vale and ended up on a causeway. Her car was swept off that causeway and she died.

I want to do more to send a strong message that driving through floodwaters, when one does not know the depth or velocity, should be discouraged. I have always said that people should be fined for driving through floodwaters. I have a private member's bill before the House and I ask the Government to consider adopting the measures contained within it whereby deliberate and reckless behaviour that can be proven will result in a fine so that we can dissuade people from driving through floodwaters. My recommendation is that that money can go back to the hardworking men and women of the SES. That measure will ensure that volunteers do not have to put their lives on the line to rescue people who should not have put themselves in that position.

That can happen unwittingly to people and it can happen accidentally. Obviously, I would not recommend fining those people. But other jurisdictions around the world, including the United States and Japan, charge people the full cost of a rescue if they are caught. That can include people who have gone up mountains with Sherpas or people who have been caught in floodwaters, and there are examples of jurisdictions that have done that. What the Minister is doing is sensible; it is a good tidy-up. But we could go further and send a really powerful message about not driving through floodwaters. The bill will provide that if there is a "road closed" sign in place and people disobey it, then they can be fined. But, under the current law, the situation is that if there is not a "road closed" sign in place, then no fine can apply.

While the bill gives the agency additional flexibility to dissuade people from driving through floodwaters, especially in a country area like mine—and, indeed, in the electorate of the member for Cessnock—where there are a lot of country roads, there may not be time to whack up "road closed" signs everywhere in order to tell people, who should know better, not to do so. I appreciate the intent of the bill, but there is an opportunity to go further and put in place fines to hopefully make people realise that moral hazard element. Often people think, "I'm not going to get fined so I'll drive through," but then they put themselves at risk and potentially their families as well. I ask the Government to consider that in future amending bills, or to support my private member's bill—there is a first time for everything. I can live in hope! I support the bill. It is a good example of a good Minister doing good work. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (15:41):** As Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, I am pleased to support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. I thank Minister Jihad Dib for introducing this important bill and for his ongoing commitment to ensuring New South Wales has agencies and services that are fit for purpose and equipped to respond to emergencies. Since being appointed Parliamentary Secretary earlier this year, I have seen firsthand the Minister's focus and emphasis on multi-agency coordination and interoperability between our emergency services. One of the key themes of the bill

is that emergency and rescue management requires a multi-agency response. Complex emergencies require a network of agencies that work closely with one another, sharing information and providing support to each other.

During times of crisis, that can make a meaningful difference to the workloads and stress levels of our hardworking emergency services workers and volunteers. It can also help to ensure that the response to such emergencies cuts across the various institutions and organisations that are usually required to be involved. The "all hazards and all agencies" approach in New South Wales requires our emergency services organisations and other relevant government agencies to work closely together, regardless of the emergency they are managing. The bill contains several amendments to promote that core principle and avoid the siloing of information and responsibility in responding to critical incidents.

The first change establishes a new power for emergency services organisations to temporarily close a road to traffic due to obstruction or danger to traffic. The Government is proposing that this new power be available to all emergency services organisations such as Marine Rescue NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW and VRA Rescue NSW. The Government has recognised that management of incidents and emergencies is a shared responsibility and routinely requires a joint agency response. Our emergency services organisations are already well equipped through training and exercises to manage incidents together. The new power to close a road or road-related area will further foster and support these multi-agency responses. For instance, currently the NSW State Emergency Service Commissioner has the power to authorise an emergency officer to direct a person to not enter an emergency area.

However, it is not clear that this power includes the ability to close roads or prevent access to an emergency area. With these new proposed road closure powers, where there is an obstruction or a danger to traffic in an emergency area, a responsible person from the NSW SES or supporting agency, such as Fire and Rescue NSW, Marine Rescue NSW or Surf Life Saving NSW, will have a clear power to prevent traffic from becoming exposed to that danger or, indeed, to prevent traffic from exacerbating the danger. The proposed amendments to improve the ability of our agencies to work together more effectively will support improved recruitment and retention of volunteers and ensure emergency services workers have the appropriate powers to do their job effectively.

The second change the bill proposes is to create a new function for the State Emergency Management Committee, or SEMC, to support our emergency services and other organisations to plan for the development and maintenance of the capabilities and service delivery capacity of the volunteer workforce. Emergency volunteering in New South Wales has strong foundations. I have had the privilege of meeting with and hearing the stories of our incredible emergency services volunteers in the past few months. Some of them volunteer across multiple services because they are so acutely aware of what their community needs and are passionate about keeping people safe. That was also highlighted in the recent Review of Emergency Volunteering report that was published in June this year. However, our volunteer services are grappling with the challenge of recruitment and retention, particularly in regional and rural areas of New South Wales.

Recently I represented the Minister to open the newly built NSW SES North Western Zone Headquarters in Tamworth and to launch the first ever SES Women's Network to better support our women volunteers and SES workers. I was pleased to hear that following a recent recruitment push by the SES, approximately 800 people put up their hands to say that they want to help keep their community safe. That should be commended. Putting the community first and ensuring that community safety is preserved, especially during times of emergencies and crises, should be commended, acknowledged and celebrated. That should also be better supported through legislation to ensure that our agencies have the systems and processes in place to recruit and retain volunteers. The bill proposes that the SEMC be given an explicit function to support planning to address that challenge. Addressing our volunteer retention and recruitment issues across the board is a key priority. We must consciously turn our minds to that.

Thirdly, the bill establishes education services as a functional area under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act. Additionally, the bill makes other miscellaneous amendments to improve the management of emergencies and keep in line with updates to government machinery and changes to emergency services organisations. The bill ensures that we look creatively at ways to improve and build capacity within our emergency services volunteer workforce. A few months ago I visited the SES unit at Warringah. That unit organised a training session for women in the community to equip them with the skills to complete tasks that are required when there is an emergency, such as filling sandbags and telling people about what is in floodwaters and the importance of keeping away from floodwaters, so that some of the more complicated tasks and skills that require further training and support can be done by the trained volunteers and workers of the SES.

Such initiatives ensure that when our communities face emergencies and when we are in times of need, a broader cross-section of the community can be called upon to provide support and ensure that our communities are kept safe. I support the bill. The amendments champion a multi-agency approach to emergency and rescue management, which is exactly what we need. The Minister has outlined that that is a focus for him as we navigate

the future of emergency services. I acknowledge the hard work of the Minister, his staff and the department in introducing the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (15:49):** I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. The bill contains various proposed amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. Some of the amendments are minor housekeeping provisions. However, the proposed road closure power will support the effectiveness and efficiency of rescue service delivery. There are two main reasons I support this proposed legislative amendment. First, it will promote consistent road closure powers across the emergency services organisations. Currently, a majority of emergency services organisations do not have this power and, for the organisations that do have the power, the provisions vary. For example, under the Fire and Rescue NSW Act 1989, a Fire and Rescue NSW officer in charge may cause any street or public place in the vicinity of a fire or hazardous material incident to be closed to traffic during the incident. This excludes other incidents that Fire and Rescue NSW might respond to, such as when providing rescue services.

For the NSW Rural Fire Service, under the Rural Fires Act 1997, an officer in charge may close any street or public place in the vicinity of a fire, incident or other emergency, noting that permission is required from rail authorities in some circumstances. However, for other emergency services organisations, like VRA Rescue NSW, their volunteers do not have any power to close roads. This is despite the VRA providing critical rescue services by attending to road crashes and conducting industrial, domestic and animal rescues in rural and remote areas of the State. Current road closure powers are not accessible to some of our emergency services organisations, who need it just as much as any other organisation. For the organisations that do have the power, there are differences in when, where and how it can be exercised. This amendment will provide our emergency services organisations with clear and consistent road closure powers to manage road incidents safely.

The new powers come with a proviso, which is that the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW be notified as soon as practicable after the road has been closed. This will ensure that action to get roads open again can be carried out as soon as possible and that the impact on traffic flow is minimised. The amendments also recognise that the NSW Police Force, Transport for NSW and the relevant roads authority are the most appropriate bodies to manage road closures. On this basis, the new powers cannot be exercisable if the closure is inconsistent with a direction given by one of those bodies. The second reason I support this legislative amendment is that it will support the safety of our emergency services workers, volunteers and communities during the management of road incidents. Our emergency services workers and volunteers are driven to support communities during times of need. It is not uncommon for them to use any reasonable means necessary to get the job done. This could include using their own vehicles as barriers to provide protection when dealing with hazards on the roadway.

While no doubt effective and necessary, it is not clear that doing so is legal and it is likely it could be managed in a safer manner. Our role is to support our emergency services personnel with appropriate powers to do the jobs they are expected to do, and these proposed road closure powers are exactly that. I also note that new section 60M will not commence on assent. This is, I understand, to provide time for our emergency management agencies to update the management of road and traffic incidents memorandum of understanding [MOU]. The MOU will be updated to set out coordination and supporting arrangements, such as training requirements and notification processes. This is appropriate and sensible and will help to ensure that the new powers are managed in a safe and effective way for our emergency services personnel and also for the road users.

I support this bill, as the new road closure power is a practical way to ensure that there is consistency across the emergency services organisations in dealing with the management of road incidents. It will help to ensure that incidents on our roads are dealt with in the safest and most effective manner, ensuring the wellbeing of our volunteers, our workers and, importantly, all our communities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:55):** I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024, and I thank our wonderful Minister for Emergency Services for bringing the bill to the House. Whilst the bill contains a range of proposals to amend one of the State's key emergency management laws—the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989—I will highlight how this bill particularly supports small regional centres with emergency services planning. Officers appointed as local emergency operations controllers—or LEOCONs—for a local government area must be stationed within or near the area and have emergency management experience. The Act does not require that they be of a certain rank. This is arguably inconsistent with the requirement at section 60KA, which is that "directing officers" be above the rank of sergeant.

The Act requires, at section 30 (2), that a local emergency operations controller must be a police officer stationed within the region in which the relevant local government area is located or a region that in the opinion of the relevant regional emergency operations controller—or REOCON—is nearby. Under this section, they must also be a person who in the opinion of the regional emergency operations controller has experience in emergency management. I understand that in remote and regional areas it can be more difficult to identify officers who are experienced in emergency management and above the rank of sergeant. This amendment ensures that officers

appropriately appointed under the Act as local emergency operations controllers will have the emergency management powers they need to effectively perform their role.

The role of regional emergency operations controller is established under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and is held by the relevant region commander of the NSW Police Force. Region commanders are senior police officers above the rank of sergeant, typically assistant commissioners, and so can currently issue directions under part 4 of the Act. The inclusion of REOCONs within the definition of "directing officer" will align the power of direction under part 4 with their functions as emergency controllers. It will also clarify the specific emergency management roles and police ranks that can exercise the power. As per section 30 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, the appointment of local emergency operations controllers is entrusted to the relevant regional emergency operations controller. The REOCON must be a region commander and of a rank not less than an assistant commissioner of police. A police officer appointed as a LEOCON must, in the opinion of the relevant REOCON, have experience in emergency management.

This could include, but is not limited to, completion of emergency-management training; participation in emergency management exercises; attainment of formal emergency management qualifications; involvement in the prevention of, preparation for or response to significant incidents or emergencies; involvement in multi-agency emergency management committees; and experience from another emergency services organisation. REOCONs will also assess the factors and risks of the relevant local government area when determining a suitable LEOCON for the area.

Factors that might be considered include consideration of the frequency of emergencies, the profile of the community and potentially even the local standing of the police officer. Once appointed, the NSW Police Force will support LEOCONs with access to specific training, including the mandatory emergency management training pathway, which is a structured course consisting of a combination of face-to-face and online training modules. I support the bill, as its amendments are a sensible recognition of how emergency planning occurs in small regional centres. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:00):** I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. I have listened to the contributions of the other members, who all spoke very much to the experience of the regions, where there are frequent disasters. I am not saying that disasters do not happen in city or metro areas—of course they do—but we have a lot of experience with disasters in the regions. This bill makes it more efficient for decisions to be made and improves the safety of communities and the people charged with looking after us during emergencies and disasters.

The bill amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, which I am now quite familiar with, to create a new power for emergency services organisations to close a street, road, lane or thoroughfare to traffic due to a temporary obstruction or danger to the traffic. The power can only be exercised in the absence of a direction from a police officer, Transport for NSW or the relevant roads authority. The officer who closes the road, street or lane is required to notify the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW as soon as practicable after the closure. That makes sense, of course.

The bill creates a new function for the State Emergency Management Committee to give them greater power and authority to support emergency services organisations and other organisations to plan for the development of the capability and capacity of the emergency volunteer workforce. The independent inquiry into the floods of 2022 and the O'Kane-Fuller report had quite a bit to say about this issue. I have had some experiences with volunteers on the ground where there were questions around who was in charge and who could do what and where. Volunteers can be better deployed. We need to see them as an asset and a resource that we can use in disasters and during recovery.

The bill includes "Local Emergency Operations Controller" and "Regional Emergency Operations Controller" within the definition of "directing officer". That ensures that emergency operations controllers can issue directions for emergency safety measures irrespective of their rank. There is a necessity to operate in quite a hierarchical way, but we need better flexibility for the people who are actually on the ground and can see what is happening to be able to take action and not have to wait for someone higher up, particularly when there is an emergency at hand.

The bill also recognises education services as a "functional area" to ensure the education sector is integrated into emergency planning arrangements. Again, I can speak to a particular experience I have had in this area, where nine schools in my area were flooded, with some still not open. Within the whole disaster area and disaster recovery, people do not always recognise their own direct role in recovery. We need to do more to say that everybody has a place at that table and to think about the whole process from planning and preparation, not just ipso facto with the disaster. There is a need for further reform, which I will talk about with the Minister. I have some more thinking and ideas about other areas that could be included.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** I'll see you later.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** He is running away from me. I have been in conversation with Professor Robson, previously the head of the Australian Medical Association, about including the medical profession as part of essential services when disasters happen. We will do more work on that. It needs some more consideration, but I totally back them. The bill will also update references and remove redundant provisions. It is a particularly necessary bit of tidying up, because it is a law. The bill will update the name of "the New South Wales Volunteer Rescue Association Inc" to "VRA Rescue NSW Limited". That is a good thing.

The bill will also replace references to "the Department of Justice" with "the Premier's Department". It will remove the reference to section 60, which was removed from the Act last year. I do a call-out for the regions; maybe I have a bit of a bias. I started my contribution by acknowledging the frequency of disasters in the regions. They do occur predominantly in the regions, but not entirely so, as our city and metro cousins are also impacted. But I want to put on the record that we need to do everything we can to recognise the key role of the regions across the emergency services and disaster recovery sectors, including resourcing at all levels. I commend the amending bill to the House.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:06):** I make a brief contribution to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. I echo the words of my parliamentary colleague the member for Lismore. As regional members, we are usually very heavily impacted by disaster events. I recently sat in on a briefing with the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and Minister for Emergency Services. They are good news, bad news briefings. I found out that the Central Coast was listed as the number one location for natural disasters in New South Wales.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** It is. I've got the map.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** It is indeed. The good news, which I have been relaying to the people of the Central Coast, is that within the next decade or two it will become the second most impacted region in New South Wales. It is good to hear that the Central Coast will become number two for natural disasters, including floods, fires, erosion and everything else in between. I think the northern beaches might become number one. The Central Coast is the best place to live, work and play. The Prime Minister can vouch for that. I look forward to sending him a new constituent letter in the not too distant future. In all seriousness, this bill is a good piece of legislation. I thank the Minister for taking on board the feedback from the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, the member for Coffs Harbour.

Every member of this place has spent time with our emergency services teams, whether it be during storm events, floods or fires. The volunteers do a truly outstanding job, from one end of New South Wales to the other. Recently I visited the Gosford SES unit, which is arguably one of the busiest SES units in New South Wales. I commend the Gosford and Wyong units for the service they give. These incredible groups of people literally walk into danger as everybody else heads the other way. They are a phenomenal group, whether they volunteer for the RFS, the SES or the VRA. On the Central Coast, the VRA team are one of the busiest in New South Wales. Recently I had the chance to catch up with them as well. They continually strive to better themselves—not that they need to, because they do an incredible job. They often respond to accidents on the M1 and in our State forests. They do a brilliant job.

Every member of this place commends the great work done by our volunteers. It was only a matter of weeks after I was first elected in 2015 that we saw the massive impact of an east coast low on the Central Coast. Watching our teams come together for the first time as a member of Parliament was very impressive indeed. I watched our SES coordinate evacuations but also section off dangerous areas to residents whose houses were potentially going to fall into the ocean. Obviously, this was not expected. The SES and VRA also do a fantastic job during flood events up around the Tuggerah Lake area. These volunteer community organisations come together every single time and give hours and hours to support our community. But that is nothing compared to the hours of training their members undertake every week, on the Central Coast and across New South Wales, to make sure that they know exactly what to do and when to do it, and how to respond appropriately to events such as temporary road closures.

Often we have dangerous flood conditions on local roads. I will never forget a briefing I received from one of our RFS officers that 30 centimetres of moving water, which is basically one ruler's length in height, is enough to sweep a vehicle off a road. It does not take metres of water to move a vehicle off a road and into a flooded river. Every time there is a heavy rain event we continually remind people that if it is flooded, forget it. Like swimming between the flags, it is common sense. After all those warnings, I still find it amazing that we see people who think they know better than the local emergency services. Local knowledge can be key to saving someone's life. Obviously, we have seen a huge amount of rain recently, which seems to be continuing. I implore

everybody to listen to the advice provided by our emergency services because, when people do not, the team members of the SES and VRA have to put their lives at risk to get them out.

If a person uses their common sense and avoids floodwater, it both keeps them safe and means they are not putting our volunteers unnecessarily in harm's way. The bill is a good bit of legislation with regard to temporary road closures. As the member for Lismore stated in her contribution to this debate, it is also a tidy-up of legislation to make the delivery of services easier for our fantastic emergency services teams. I again thank the Minister and his team for putting the bill together. I also thank the shadow Minister, who is seated behind me in the Chamber, for his contribution. The bill is all about everything we do as governments, oppositions and parliamentarians to make it safer and easier for those incredible volunteers to keep people safe during very difficult circumstances.

I give a huge shout-out to all the volunteer organisations on the Central Coast. They are there every time we need them. People do not actually care what colour the uniform is; it is about having someone there to provide them with safety, comfort, advice and support during those events. We know such events will continue to occur and that we have to learn to live with them and manage them appropriately and responsibly. I thank both the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Minister for Emergency Services for the briefings they provided me regarding the ongoing challenges the Central Coast will face. We have to be realistic about it. We have to make sure that our people are well trained and given the tools and the ability to make sensible decisions to keep people safe. I thank all of our volunteer services, but also the paid members of the SES, the RFS, the VRA and Marine Rescue. Those incredible groups of people do a great job keeping everybody safe. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (16:13):** I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024. The bill contains various proposals to better reflect emergency management arrangements in the current environment and improve the management of emergencies in New South Wales. Specifically, I address the proposal to create a new function of the State Emergency Management Committee, or SEMC, to support emergency services and other organisations to plan for the development and maintenance of the capabilities and service delivery capacity of the emergency management volunteer workforce. The proposal demonstrates that the Government is proactive in planning for the future of emergency management and the future of emergency volunteering.

In recent years we have seen an increase in the frequency and severity of emergencies impacting New South Wales. Like many electorates represented in this House, the Bega electorate was severely affected by the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, followed by a serious flood event. Some 12 months ago a bushfire affecting the Coolagolite-Bermagui region opened the raw wound of the 2019-20 bushfire experience. In fact, one year and five days ago, on 10 October 2023, I gave notice of a motion to move that this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the damage and trauma suffered by the Bermagui community caused by the recent Coolagolite bush fire emergency.
- (2) Congratulates the emergency services and agencies of New South Wales in response to this natural disaster.
- (3) Commends the Australian and New South Wales governments for their natural disaster declaration and their disaster recovery funding response supporting the Bega electorate.

I acknowledge the Minister for Emergency Services is in the Chamber and was involved in supporting the Bega electorate at that time. I witnessed the coordination of the Bega emergency control centre and commented on the capacity of our professional and volunteer emergency service workers. Although the bushfire was out of control for a while, there was total control of the emergency services in the emergency operations centre. I acknowledge that work, and my community thanks those emergency volunteer workers on the fire front.

At times, consecutive, concurrent and compounding events have stretched the resources of the Government. We are also seeing a growing population. The combination of both trends illustrates the need to prepare today so that we are ready to respond to the emergencies we will inevitably experience in the coming years. The emergency volunteer workforce is the backbone of New South Wales emergency management arrangements. We need to support our emergency volunteering sector where and when we can.

That is in line with the findings and recommendations of the Review of Emergency Volunteering reports 1 and 2, released earlier this year by the Minister for Emergency Services. The review made 13 recommendations to better plan for and strengthen emergency volunteering for both formal and informal volunteers, build volunteering capability and improve support for emergency services volunteers. One of the recommendations was that the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and the New South Wales State Emergency Management Plan be updated to recognise the contribution of formal and informal emergency volunteers. That is in recognition of the critical role that emergency volunteers play in supporting communities impacted by disasters.

All members will recall the significant role volunteers, both formal and spontaneous, played during the 2022 flood events, which made all the difference. The proposal to create a new function for the SEMC will formally recognise the role of volunteers in one of the State's key emergency management legislative frameworks. The new SEMC function aims to deliver a coordinated, proactive, multi-agency approach to support our organisations to grow the workforce. This is in conjunction with the work New South Wales is progressing with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions.

I note that on 6 September the Minister for Emergency Services briefed his State and Territory counterparts on the review and its recommendations during the National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting. As an outcome, New South Wales and the Commonwealth are co-leading a program of work to support emergency volunteering, including the development of a draft national strategy. I support the bill. The proposed new function for the SEMC is a proactive approach to ensure that the value of volunteers is appropriately recognised and that there is coordinated support and planning for emergency management volunteering into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (16:18):** In reply: I welcome our special guests who have joined us in the public gallery. They have come into the Chamber at the best time, as this is the most exciting thing they will see today. I welcome them to the Parliament of New South Wales, not only the oldest but also the best Parliament in Australia—and they are seeing the best members in the Chamber as well. I thank the member for Coffs Harbour, the shadow Minister, and the members for the electorates of Fairfield, Mount Druitt, Kiama, Liverpool, Penrith, Shellharbour, Lismore, Terrigal and Bega for their contributions to the debate on the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill 2024.

I was in the electorate of the member for Bega on 4 October 2023 because of bushfires, which the region had not experienced for quite some time. It was one of the first times I had been in a bushfire zone as a Minister. I echo the sentiments of what the member for Bega said. I think the Prime Minister, the Premier and a fair few other people were there in support of the community. What was evident was how well the emergency services responded. I am really proud of how well we respond in the time after a natural disaster to make sure communities are up and running. That is certainly a change we have seen. We were quickly able to establish some natural disaster declarations, which freed up some money.

It is a great privilege to be the Minister for Emergency Services. I acknowledge the shadow Minister for Emergency Services; we work well together. Like any Minister and shadow Minister, we spar on occasion, but generally we have the belief that if we can work on something together and we can make it better, then we do. When it comes to emergency services, the really important thing is that volunteers are recognised by everybody in this Chamber, regardless of the political colour a member represents or whatever it might be. Over time, one of the things I have been keen on is looking at how we can make continuous improvement. I have spoken a lot about Kaizen. Kaizen is the continuous improvement philosophy that I undertake in my life. Everything I do is to improve, improve and improve. We have great emergency services, and we can do better. We are looking at better interoperability between them and how we can ensure the budget, equipment and protections align better to support the community.

The bill reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to good policy, good practice and governance through the regular review of legislation and response to identified needs. I appreciate the members of Parliament who took their time to speak to the bill. They spoke in volumes about their emergency services. It was very nice to hear them say good words about this sensible legislation and so forth, but I was most impressed with the way all members spoke about their emergency services and the people who put themselves in harm's way so that we can be safe and well protected. It takes a pretty special person to do that. I will have more to say on that a little bit later.

As has been said, the bill makes various amendments to ensure that the State's legal framework and governance for emergency and rescue management operates effectively, and that it is kept up to date and is responsive to the developments in the emergency services sector. I am going to address some of the issues that were raised by members during the debate. The shadow Minister and member for Coffs Harbour spoke of the practicalities of giving notice for road closures. He would know that as a volunteer with the RFS there are times when volunteers are closing roads for people's safety. That is why we do it. The member for Terrigal spoke about how 30 centimetres of floodwater is enough to make a car drift down a road. People do not think that is the case. If someone who has the local knowledge and expertise needs to close a road, I will always defer to them than a person who thinks that they know.

After discussions with the shadow Minister, we will be moving an amendment to the bill to address the concerns he has where someone may not have the opportunity as well as with the agency. I will talk more to that a little bit later. I think that is a really good example of how if everyone owns the legislation, maybe we will all



take responsibility for it and look to improve it. Every time I look at my screen, the member for Mount Druitt is delivering a speech. He speaks about all legislation, which is so fantastic. It is great to see him up there in action. The member for Fairfield and the member for Mount Druitt spoke about the purpose of the bill, which is about the practical changes that improve the readiness of our emergency services personnel. The member for Fairfield was in the forces; he has an understanding of how emergency services operate. I am not sure whether he mentioned it but the member for Mount Druitt, and Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism was on his local emergency management committee, so he has a really strong interest in that.

As the shadow Minister said, the House should always endeavour to find common ground to support our volunteers. I will speak to that again. The member for Kiama spoke about road closures and the dangers of driving in floodwaters. It absolutely bears repeating that if it is flooded, forget it. I do not know how many times we have to tell people to not drive on a flooded road. No matter how big your car is, no matter how good a driver you are, 30 centimetres is enough and we do not want you taking those risks. What you are doing is you are putting your life at risk and the lives of other people. Then the other bit that really frustrates me is you are taking away the resources of the volunteers who should be doing something else instead of having to do a rescue based on you making a poor choice. I am going to make stickers I think to put on cars. "If it is flooded, forget it!" That can be my goal for 2025. We are going to see if we can get that. "If it's flooded, forget it!" There will be some other words I want to put in as well.

The members representing the electorates of Penrith, Shellharbour, Lismore and Bega also highlighted key issues of the bill, including supporting our volunteers, closing roads when necessary to do so, enabling a multi-agency approach to emergency management, requiring our emergency services to knowledge share on supportive volunteers, legislating the role of education in emergency management planning, and recognising lived experience of the smaller regional towns in emergency management.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** How long?

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I had a bit of a chuckle with the member for Lismore and Parliamentary Secretary. She said, "How long is your speech?", and I said, "Probably three minutes". She did not think I could speak for only three minutes, and I think she is going to win this bet.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** I said at least 10 minutes.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I think I will probably go for about 45 minutes. Only joking—35 minutes. I acknowledge the member for Lismore, who speaks with experience in this place like no other. She lived through some of the most harrowing experiences when her town flooded with 22 metres of water. That created this enormous strength, the pocket rocket that we know as Janelle Saffin, who knocks on our doors—does not knock, just barges in—and tells us what we need to fix. Nobody understands the impact on communities in this place more than the member for Lismore. The member for Penrith has had flooding in her electorate recently, and the member for Bega had bushfires. That lived experience makes an enormous difference. I thank the member for Lismore for all of the advice and guidance she provides us, and the support she provides to our emergency services.

In this bill the Government is proposing a range of sensible and practical measures to streamline and improve management of incidents and emergencies in New South Wales. It will ensure that one of the State's key emergency management laws, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, is fit for purpose. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Terrigal. The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and I talked about the State Disaster Mitigation Plan. We have said that Terrigal is not going to be in the best of states in terms of the disasters that are coming its way. But we are planning for that. How do we mitigate the impact of natural disasters? How do we better plan? I thank the member for Terrigal. I know personally how much he supports his local emergency services. He often speaks about that. He spoke about the great work of the emergency services.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the incredible emergency services, particularly the volunteers. The emergency services that I have responsibility for are Fire and Rescue NSW and then the volunteer organisations like the RFS, the SES, VRA Rescue NSW, Surf Life Saving and Marine Rescue NSW. The volunteers are incredible people. I will speak ad nauseam about them putting themselves in harm's way when others do not. We flee the problem; they run towards it. It is a special kind of person who gives up their time away from their family and work to try to help others. It shows that they believe in that value of something bigger than themselves. I think that is a really special feature of what people can be.

Volunteers do incredible work. We have done a lot of work in that volunteering space to look at what we now might call spontaneous volunteering. Every single person wants to give back, but we need to find the right way for them to give back and make a contribution. I think as a country and, particularly, as a State we have no

shortage of people who want to help. We have to get better at making sure that people who want to help have something that works for their skills, time frame, and the bits and pieces that work for them.

I have talked about the volunteers, but let us not underestimate the impact on their families. The families deserve just as much recognition as the employers. A bill like this cannot be brought about by one person or by one office. From my office, I thank James Connolly, my deputy chief of staff, who worked incredibly hard on it. I also mention two public servants in the gallery, Nathan Vincent and Shannon Dang, and the entire Premier's Department in the emergency management space for putting it together. I foreshadow that an amendment will be moved. I again thank everybody who contributed, and I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Jihad Dib.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (16:30):** I move Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-179B:

#### **No. 1 Notification of road closure**

Page 4, Schedule 1 [10], proposed section 60M (3), line 9. Insert ", or another person from the emergency services organisation," after "person".

Since I introduced the bill last month, my office and I have consulted with several members of this House. I thank those members for their interest in the bill and for their willingness to work together to ensure that we get it right. In discussions on the bill, the shadow Minister questioned whether notifications could be made by a member of the relevant emergency services organisation other than the responsible person. The Government thinks that is a sensible suggestion.

Permitting other members of an organisation to make notifications allows for the situation where, for example, an officer at the incident radios into their control centre and a person in the control centre then makes the relevant notifications to the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW. It also highlights that the person undertaking that task may not be who to contact, so it will be left in the hands of the agency. I think that is a really good suggestion. The Government therefore moves the amendment so that either the responsible person or another person from the emergency services organisation will be required to notify the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW. I thank the shadow Minister for Emergency Services for prompting the amendment and for his attendance in the Chamber today.

Visitors to the Parliament and people who tune in via the World Wide Web to watch the live broadcast—which at this moment may be my mum, the shadow Minister's mum and perhaps somebody else—usually see the bits and pieces where we argue with one another. But the Parliament operates best when we work together to achieve good, sensible outcomes, and this is a really good example. The shadow Minister could have gone about it in a different way, but he spoke to me and we sorted it out. It does improve the bill. It should not be about one-upmanship or playing politics, especially on things like this, so I acknowledge the shadow Minister for that. It also highlights what can happen when members of this House work together, because the average punter is interested in the good outcome rather than the game.

I expect that the making of notifications will be set out in emergency services organisation procedures such as the Management of Road and Traffic Incidents Memorandum of Understanding, which I mentioned in my second reading speech. A working group comprised of emergency services organisation representatives and Transport for NSW has been established to progress those updates. The Government moves the amendment to provide additional flexibility in the making of notifications about road closures. The amendment clarifies that either the responsible person or another person in an emergency services organisation must, as soon as practicable after closing the road or road-related area, notify the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (16:33):** On behalf of the Opposition, I echo the Minister's words. I have gotten along with the Minister for a long time, and I do not think that needs to change now that we are on opposite sides of the aisle when it comes to legislation that is as important and sensible as the bill and its amendment. The thought of the amendment came about when I saw that volunteers across the State are in various stages of training. When a change like this comes from the top, it filters its way down to the volunteers. I was

trying to think through how we can train 100,000 volunteers across the State in these new operating procedures, especially when it is something as serious as closing a road. Getting the organisation with paid staff to make that notification, rather than the volunteers, made a lot of sense. The Opposition supports the amendment.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-179B be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

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

### **Third Reading**

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **PUBLIC HEALTH (TOBACCO) AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 25 September 2024.**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse) (16:36):** I speak for the Opposition in support of the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. The Opposition will move some amendments in relation to illegal tobacco, which I will come to later. First, I acknowledge the health Minister for his commitment to this issue. I recognise that the bill before the House today is one of many measures that he has introduced to try to reduce vaping, especially amongst young people. I share his concerns and hope that we can do so much more, in a bipartisan way, to help solve this significant public health issue.

From 1 July new Commonwealth laws came into effect banning the importation, manufacture, supply and possession of vaping goods. But there are plenty who flout those rules and continue to sell nicotine vapes to our kids. Why do they keep doing that? It is because the punishment is so much less than what they stand to gain by marketing the products to children. They profiteer from the sale of those addictive and damaging products. On Saturday night I went into a convenience store just down the road with one of my boys. When I walked in, there were five teenage girls at the counter looking for vapes. The manager of the store reached underneath the counter and pulled out a variety of different colours and flavours, and they all purchased them. My son pointed out, "Mum, he's also selling Galaxy Gas," which is a nitrous oxide capsule often used to whip cream and for other culinary uses. But it is dangerous to our kids, and it is marketed to our kids.

Stores that deliberately market vapes and other hazardous products to our children should feel the full force of the law. I reported that store to NSW Health in an online form that is available to all members of the public via the Service NSW app, and I encourage other people in communities across the State to do the same if they see what I saw. We know that what I saw was not an isolated incident; it is happening everywhere. They are being sold at convenience stores and tobacconists, which is why the bill is important. I am invested in this issue on a number of fronts—as the shadow health Minister, who is interested in the significant public health impacts of rising nicotine use in our community, and as a local member whose communities have gotten in touch with me and expressed concern about the tobacconists that are popping up everywhere.

School principals have expressed concern about those shops turning up just down the road from their schools. I am also invested as the mum of three teenage boys, the very market that those vapes are being targeted at, and as someone who was the head of an organisation in the preventative health space before I entered politics early last year. One of the main things that Life Education did was to try to educate young people about the dangers of vaping. I was the CEO of that organisation. Many people remember Healthy Harold. For over 40 years Life Education was part of a concerted public health effort to reduce smoking levels, and it reached a near zero level until vapes came on the market. I am one of the many people now despairing at the reversal of that very important work.

There has been a substantial rise over the past five years in the number of people who vape, particularly among people. The Cancer Council's Generation Vape research project found that 90 per cent of young people aged 14 to 17 years found accessing vapes easy, 37 per cent of young people aged 18 to 24 years were current vapers and 80 per cent were buying vapes from retail stores. Tobacconists are popping up everywhere. They are brightly lit carbon-copy shops that sell American chips and lollies and everyone thinks, "How do they survive?"

They are everywhere. NSW Health data estimates that approximately 19,500 tobacconists are registered across New South Wales. That is an increase from 14,500 just four years ago. To give an example, in Sydney's inner west alone there are 824 tobacconists.

Smoking rates are going down, contrary to the rise in tobacconists. Since 2019 the Federal Government has lost \$25 million in tobacco excise that it had factored into the budget. Yet nicotine levels are rising in wastewater samples across Sydney and are at record levels in regional New South Wales. Why? Illegal vapes are being sold and there is also a black market in illegal tobacco, colloquially known as chop-chop. I have a packet with me, but I will not use it as a prop. It was given to me by a friend who bought it for \$13, as easy as pie, by going into the local tobacconist. The equivalent packet would cost \$40, at a minimum. I was shocked to learn that these days Winnie Blues cost about \$60. In a cost-of-living crisis, it is very easy for people to go into a store and buy a packet of that cheap tobacco, but there are consequences to that.

John Crozier, a leading Sydney vascular surgeon from Liverpool, is concerned that vaping is leading to increased smoking rates. He has been speaking to his patients about this important and dangerous issue. He is also worried about the legitimate retailers. Many legitimate retailers that are losing money on other products they are not selling are trying to do the right thing. Mr Crozier's biggest concern is the public health impact on the heart and lungs. While there are many legitimate law-abiding businesses, we also know that behind the scenes there is an intricate web of organised crime that is importing both vapes and illegal tobacco. That is why the Opposition believes that the bill cannot address vapes without addressing the other half of the illegal trade, and that is tobacco. Australian Border Force Commander Ken McKern said:

There are well documented links between the distribution and sale of illicit tobacco in Australia and serious and organised crime syndicates.

Organised crime syndicates use illicit tobacco income to fund other illicit activities that cause significant harm to our communities – such as illicit drugs.

Organised crime syndicates pressure tobacco retailers across Australia to buy and sell their illicit product. They use gangs to enforce compliance including torching tobacco shops, stand over tactics and shooting.

We have heard stories about Victoria, where more than 100 tobacconists have been subject to arson attacks. There are fears that that type of gang activity is creeping into New South Wales. We have seen a spate of arson attacks on Central Coast tobacconists in recent times. We must act decisively. While it is a good bill, if enacted it would substantially increase the penalties for offences involving vapes but leave untouched those offences involving other illegal tobacco products. This may have the unintended and perverse consequence of skewing the incentive structure for criminal organisations, moving away from supplying vapes and towards black market cigarettes, especially when the fines are about 10 times lower. That is why we will move amendments, and I will speak to those at the appropriate time.

I turn to the content of the bill, which is to support enforcing the Commonwealth's vaping reforms. From 1 July 2024 the importation, manufacture, supply and possession of vaping goods was banned by the Commonwealth under the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024. Under those new laws, vapes are available for therapeutic use and can be supplied by pharmacists, medical practitioners and nurse practitioners. The bill creates offences and increases penalties for the unauthorised supply and possession of vapes. The bill does not intend to criminalise the possession of vaping goods for personal use, which is an important point to stress. The Parliament's inquiry into e-cigarettes made it clear that we should not seek to criminalise personal use of vaping because we know people struggle with nicotine addiction and we also do not want young people who struggle with vaping addiction to get caught up in the criminal justice system.

The bill proposes to amend the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 to introduce offences modelled on the Commonwealth Government's recent vaping reforms and make consequential amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008 and the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000. The bill will create an offence for the supply of vapes, except where it is by a person who is authorised to do so. The maximum penalty is seven years imprisonment or 14,000 penalty units, which is about \$1.54 million.

The bill also creates offences for the possession of commercial quantities of vapes, with penalties ranging from 330 penalty units up to 14,000 penalty units and two years imprisonment or up to seven years imprisonment. The penalties increase based on the number of vaping goods in a person's possession. Commercial quantities have the same meaning as in the Commonwealth Act, being, from 1 October 2024, nine vaping devices, 60 accessories and 400 millilitres of liquid. There are separate retailer possession offences to stop retailers from circumventing the new commercial quantity offence provisions, noting that the commercial quantities are low. Those offences prohibit a retailer from having more than two vaping devices, three accessories and 60 millilitres of liquid in their possession while in retail stores. Finally, these laws are entirely necessary and are supported by the Opposition.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (16:46):** I contribute to debate in support of the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the contribution to debate made by the shadow Minister for Health and member for Vacluse, as well as the bipartisan support for the bill. The bill affects the vulnerable youth of New South Wales and our community generally. I will concentrate on the public health issues. The main issues related to public health are nicotine addiction, the gateway of vaping to cigarette smoking and the health effects of e-cigarette devices and inhalants. Some 82 per cent of New South Wales residents think more needs to be done to protect children from vaping. E-cigarettes cause smoking uptake, nicotine addiction, poisoning, seizures, trauma, burns and lung injury. As a public health issue, the recreational use of e-cigarettes should not be initiated. Current smokers should neither start nor use e-cigarettes. Smoking e-cigarettes causes acute harms and uncertain long-term consequences.

Vapes contain up to 100 compounds including nicotine, heavy metals and micro-particles to name a few. Those compounds can cause irreversible damage to the health and development of young people. Evidence shows that exposure to nicotine can harm adolescent brain development, with consequent effects on attention, learning, mood and impulse control. In 2019 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported over 2,000 cases of severe acute lung injuries linked to the use of e-cigarette devices and inhalants. The latest generational vape data has identified that 32 per cent of 14- to 17-year-olds have vaped. Two-thirds of those young vape users did not know that certain vapes contain nicotine. We know that vaping nicotine is strongly associated with the development of nicotine dependence.

A serious public health consequence of childhood and adolescence vaping is the potential gateway effect towards cigarette smoking or other drug use. Approximately 12 per cent of our high school students smoke cigarettes. Approximately 80 per cent of individuals who start smoking during adolescence will continue to smoke, and one-third of those individuals will die prematurely from smoking-related diseases. Therefore, the youth population is a critical target for public health efforts to reduce smoking. Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarettes is integral to supporting the health and wellbeing of New South Wales residents. Tobacco smoking is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in New South Wales, causing the loss of 6,285 lives in 2020. Data from 2015 and 2016 indicated the social costs of smoking for Australia to be \$136.9 billion, indicating a substantial economic burden due to smoking.

Despite New South Wales reducing tobacco smoking rates to 8.2 per cent, smoking rates remain high amongst socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Significant gaps in tobacco rates and the need for ongoing and enhanced support are demonstrated in regional and rural areas, and amongst First Nations people. More than one-quarter of Australians live in regional and remote areas, and those people often have poorer health and welfare outcomes compared with people living in major cities. One contributor of those poorer outcomes is the significantly higher percentage of smoking. In 2019, 13 per cent of Australians aged 14 plus living in major cities reported current smoking, compared with 19 per cent of those in outer regional areas and 23 per cent of those in remote and very remote areas. Data from Australia's National Drug Strategy Household Survey suggests that prevalence for people living in outer regional and remote areas is still higher than that of major cities a decade ago.

As with other drug management, the solution starts with the three principles of reduction of harm, reduction of demand and reduction of supply. NSW Health has taken a strong and proactive approach to protecting young people from the health harms of vaping. On 16 November last year, the Minns Labor Government hosted a round table to hear from experts in the field and those in schools to plan for the actions we can take to address the issues of vaping in schools. The Government has committed an additional \$6.8 million in funding over the next three years, which will allow NSW Health to increase compliance and enforcement activities and to support young people who are addicted to vaping. It has taken a comprehensive approach to protecting young people from the harms of e-cigarette use, including through stakeholder and clinical engagement, education, communication and research.

The Federal Albanese Labor Government has implemented a set of new measures aimed at tightening the control of e-cigarettes across Australia. As of 1 January, the importation of all disposable vapes, with or without nicotine, is prohibited at a Federal level, and all doctors and nurses can prescribe therapeutic vapes for smoking addiction. From 1 March, the importation of all non-therapeutic vapes is prohibited regardless of nicotine content, including importation for personal use. Furthermore, legislation has been introduced to require plain pharmaceutical packaging, limited flavourings and reduced prescribed levels of nicotine.

As of 1 July, the manufacture, supply and commercial possession of all disposable and non-therapeutic vapes is prohibited with the exception of products intended for smoking cessation which satisfy the Therapeutic Goods Administration's pre-market notification requirements. From 1 October, therapeutic vapes with a nicotine concentration of 20 milligrams per millilitre or less will be available for purchase from pharmacies by patients 18 years or older without the need for prescription, providing the pharmacist is satisfied that certain conditions

are satisfied for the supply without a prescription. An extra \$25 million of funding will be provided for Australian Border Force enforcement.

The Minns New South Wales Labor Government and the Albanese Federal Labor Government have taken action on harm reduction, demand reduction and supply reduction on this serious public health issue, which is affecting our children and young people. The Minns Labor Government is committing \$4.3 million over the next three years to bolster compliance and enforcement to ensure that the State meets responsibilities for retail, wholesale, manufacturing and pharmaceutical controls on vaping products. We are also providing \$2.5 million over the next 12 months to increase services to help young people quit vaping, including a new digital platform, enhancements to the iCanQuit platform and an online learning module for youth services across the State.

New South Wales is currently on track to double the number of seizures of illicit vapes from last year. From 1 January to 30 June 2023, NSW Health seized a record-breaking 187,000 products, up from 61,000 in the previous year. Since January 2022 to June 2023, NSW Health has conducted over 5,000 inspections and seized around 369,000 nicotine vapes and e-liquids, with an estimated street value of over \$11.8 million. Paradoxically, as a health professional who had a father who lost his leg due to smoking-induced peripheral vascular disease and his life due to the effects of smoking, I was a smoker for about 15 years and experienced the difficulty of abstaining. With comic irony, Mark Twain said, "Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it thousands of times." It reflects the highly addictive nature of nicotine products. It reinforces the responsibility of government to protect its community from serious public health risks. [*Extension of time*]

Whether it is illegal drug use, socially accepted drug and alcohol use, or the use of other products with adverse public health effects, both the free and illicit markets will always be looking at the next big opportunity to circumvent the actions of the Government to maintain the demand for their supply and profits. The intention of the bill is to reduce harm, reduce supply and reduce demand for harmful and addictive vaping products. I commend the Minns Labor Government for establishing the NSW Drug Summit, which will be held on 4 and 5 December. I look forward to attending the summit and I look forward, with anticipation, to the implementation of its findings.

The bill supports the national vaping reforms that seek to protect children and young people from the harms of vaping. The bill introduces offences relating to the supply and possession of vaping goods unless a relevant exception exists, which are modelled on the national reforms. The bill also models the exceptions to the supply and possession offences off the Commonwealth vaping reforms. It will ensure that adults who want to use vaping goods as a method to quit smoking tobacco cigarettes can continue to access those goods through a therapeutic pathway. The bill provides an important platform to ensure that the enforcement of supply and possession of vaping goods can occur in New South Wales to protect children and young adults—our young people—from the harms of vaping. The bill introduces several new strict liability offences into the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act, which apply unless vaping goods are authorised for therapeutic purposes or fall under an exception.

The new offences in both Acts are substantively the same. They include supplying vaping goods in New South Wales, with a maximum penalty of \$61,600; possessing a kind of vaping good in commercial quantities less than 100 times the commercial quantity, with a maximum penalty of \$36,300; possessing a kind of vaping good in quantities of at least 100 times but less than 1,000 times the commercial quantity, with a maximum penalty of \$73,700; possessing a kind of vaping good in quantities of at least 1,000 times the commercial quantity, with a maximum penalty of \$128,700; and retailers possessing vaping goods in quantities less than commercial quantities on retail premises, with a maximum penalty of \$17,600. The proposed offences align with the Commonwealth laws and do not require the prosecutor to prove a mental element of the offence, ensuring a proportional approach that matches the severity of the offence. The bill introduces several new strict liability offences into the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 for supply or possession of vaping goods. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** It being 5.00 p.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for the public interest debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Public Interest Debate*

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (17:00):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the New South Wales Government and the South Australian Government partnered to deliver a first of its kind two-day, two-State Social Media Summit which brought together leading experts, policymakers, young people, community voices, and mental and physical health experts.

- (2) Notes 87 per cent of respondents to the New South Wales Government's "Have your say" survey support implementing age restrictions for social media use.
- (3) Supports raising the age for access to social media from 13 to 16.

I am pleased to move this matter of public interest motion today. As has been noted in the motion, there is overwhelming support in our community for social media reform. The two-State Social Media Summit that was held between 10 and 11 October was the first of its kind. I note that I did see the Leader of the Opposition there. Over 1,500 people gathered together in person and online across our two States—a diverse group of experts, policymakers, academics, parents and young people and the wider community—to discuss the impact of social media on the wellbeing our children and young people. Social media has become a pervasive influence in the lives of young people, often shaping their behaviour, self-esteem and social interactions.

While social media provides a platform for connection and self-expression, over the course of the summit we heard directly from experts about its harmful effects on mental health, social development and overall wellbeing, which are increasingly evident. Given the mounting evidence of its damaging impact, there is a pressing need for regulation to protect young users. Over the course of the summit, a number of ideas were raised by experts, and there is increasing evidence that social media is linked to rising levels of anxiety, depression and other mental health issues among young people. The constant exposure to curated and often unrealistic portrayals of others' lives can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Adolescents, who are particularly susceptible to peer influence and social comparison, feel pressure to conform to certain standards of beauty, lifestyle or success that are often unattainable.

The addictive nature of social media algorithms keeps users engaged, exacerbating those issues by fostering cycles of validation-seeking and reward-seeking behaviour. Consequently, young people may struggle with body image issues, social anxiety and even suicidal thoughts due to the negative effects of prolonged social media exposure. Statistics from around the world that were presented at the summit painted a sobering picture. We heard that, while social media is often promoted as a tool for fostering connections, it can actually impair the development of real-life social skills in young people. Many adolescents find themselves communicating more frequently online than face to face, leading to difficulties in building meaningful and offline relationships.

Over-reliance on digital communication is limiting young people's ability to navigate social cues, develop empathy or resolve conflicts effectively. Additionally, online anonymity has been found to encourage cyberbullying and other harmful behaviours, which can have lasting effects on victims' emotional and psychological health. Another significant issue raised was the exposure of young people to harmful or inappropriate content on social media. The spread of misinformation, violent content or sexually explicit material can have detrimental effects on impressionable young minds. Algorithms designed to maximise user engagement often promote sensationalised or extreme content, leading young people down harmful rabbit holes.

Furthermore, social media platforms have become avenues for promoting dangerous behaviours such as self-harm, disordered eating or substance abuse. Communities that encourage such behaviours easily thrive online. Without proper regulations, the unchecked spread of harmful content continues to put young users at risk. The summit reached a consensus on a determination to do something about social media. We are in control of our own futures in our democracy and we need to bring young people with us on the journey for the solutions. Global tech giants are reaping staggering profits via a business model that entrenches those threats. We need to demand better. Doing nothing is not an option; the status quo is not an option. We need to demand transparency from social businesses, backed up by regulation.

We need more data and information about how social media is being used, when and by whom, so that we can understand impacts better and know if what we are doing is making a difference. The summit also brought forward ideas about what young people can do. They want a seat at the table in bringing about change. They have made that clear. Those ideas include shifts in personal habits and phone usage, in particular using phones less; parents, teachers and guardians enforcing norms around age limitations and delaying phone and social media use; and changing norms around communication and interaction, providing young people with more opportunities to practise skills and gain experiences—just to name a few.

In addition to the summit, the New South Wales Government is doing a lot more. The summit is just one of the many measures that the Government is putting in place to minimise the negative impacts of social media devices on young people. In October last year we banned mobile phones in public schools, and feedback around that has been overwhelmingly positive. We have also created a \$2.5 million research fund to investigate the impacts of excessive screen time, video games and mobile phone use on young people and their learning. We are recruiting 250 additional school counsellors as part of NSW Labor's election commitment to student wellbeing and conducting a review into the evidence-based practice of school policy—just to name a few. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (17:07):** I support the motion moved by the member for Coogee. I thank her for her advocacy and, importantly, for continuing the conversation on social media use. We need to keep talking about this issue; it is so important. I know that she, along with the Premier and the Government, has genuine concerns about the impact of social media use on young people and is committed to raising the age for access to social media. Those concerns and that commitment is shared by the Opposition. Before I go further, I note that the Opposition will move an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting after paragraph (2):

- (3) Commends the 36 Months campaign for promoting the importance of raising the age of access to social media from 13 to 16.

This is an issue that unites many of us in this place. It also unites many parents, who are calling on governments around the country to help them tackle the issue. I congratulate and thank all the campaigners, parents and young people who have shared their stories and ideas and advocated to increase the age of access to social media. Their tireless work and passion on this issue is why we are debating this matter today. In August the Parliament gave bipartisan support to a motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition to back the 36 Months campaign and raise the age of access to social media from 13 to 16. Once again, I thank the team at 36 Months, Rob Galluzzo and Michael Wipfli. We secured bipartisanship in August when that motion was passed, and I am certain we will see it today. As I have said before, we cannot delay action on this issue.

I note that the Albanese Government has said it will bring in a bill before the end of the year to introduce age restrictions for social media. I commend the Federal Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, for emphatically supporting that. He was a very early adopter of the concept of raising the age to 16, and he would do that in his first 100 days of government. We must act because this is one of the most important issues of our time. We are witnessing a reprogramming of childhood. Play-based development is being eroded to a large extent by phone-based activities. The alarming increase in anxiety and depression in young people directly correlates with the use of social media apps on smartphones. From 2008 to 2022, rates of self-harm nearly doubled for girls aged 15 to 19, and they tripled for girls aged 14 and under, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data.

In 2009 Facebook introduced the "Like" function, which added to the interactivity of social media. Likes and flame emojis give kids a sense of support and adoration, but they also give dopamine hits. The headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey found that more than half of young people believe their mental health is getting worse, with 42 per cent citing social media as the main reason for the decline. A New South Wales Department of Health survey found that 93 per cent of parents are trying to limit their children's screen time and phone usage, but it is easier said than done. Many of us in this place know that, as parents, our best intentions for our kids' social media use do not always come to fruition. I acknowledge local not-for-profit organisation Wait Mate in my electorate. Wait Mate is an initiative, founded by Davina Berger and Amy Friedlander, that gives parents the ability to connect with other like-minded families and sign a pledge to keep their kids off phones. It is such a positive initiative. I applaud those grassroots initiatives, which complement the work that must be done by governments.

We know that raising the age of social media use is not the start and end of the issue. There is much more work to do, including educating parents and kids, and demanding that social media giants give us the power to turn off the algorithms. There are people out there who say that concerns about social media use in young people is a moral panic, but it is not and we know that. We can see that by the agreement across the Chamber on this issue, the heavy support from the community to raise the age and the success of the Social Media Summit. Improving the mental and physical health of our young people is so important. Our kids deserve the best start in life. By supporting raising the age, we can create a healthier, happier future for the next generation. I commend the motion to the House and encourage all members to support it.

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (17:12):** We are all guilty of it—I am a little bit addicted to my phone. I readily admit that when I get up in the morning I have to resist the urge to look at my phone to check my socials. It is part of our lives as politicians. But if we, as self-controlled adults, cannot control our own behaviour on social media, then what hope does a 10-year-old or a 12-year-old have to self-regulate their behaviour on social media? I congratulate the Minns Government and the South Australian Government on hosting the Social Media Summit, which many members attended. The charts presented by the first keynote speaker, Professor Jean Twenge from the University of San Diego, were just shocking. She analysed data on the mental health harm done to young people as a result of social media, and I note that other members have mentioned that harm in this debate.

Since 2010 there has been a 221 per cent increase in the rate of self-harm hospitalisations of girls under 14—and the slides just kept coming. In the United States the rate of major depressive episodes went from 8 per cent in 2006 to 20 per cent in 2022, which is more than double. On social media and depression in the United Kingdom among 14-years-olds, for those who did not use social media, the rate was 10 per cent; for those who



used social media for one to two hours, the rate rose to 16 per cent; and for those who used social media for five hours plus, the rate rose all the way to almost 40 per cent. The harm is clear, and it is real harm; it is not trivial harm. We are talking about suicidal behaviours, we are talking about self-harm and we are talking about depression.

And this is the established harm; we have not yet gone into the unknown harm. We do not know the long-term effect this will have on a young person's self-esteem and how that will affect their long-term development trajectory. Nobody knows that yet, nor do we understand the opportunity cost of social media. For a young person who spends most of their time on social media, there is an opportunity cost for everything they miss out on. More study is due to be done on that. At the same time as this tremendous harm has been occurring to our young people and kids, the wealth generated by social media giants is just staggering. Meta made a profit of US\$134 billion in 2023 and the wealth of its majority owner and founder, Mark Zuckerberg, reached US\$206 billion in 2024.

I say this: If the social media giants profit from our kids, the least they can do is make sure our kids are protected. I invited the Strathfield Youth Advisory Board to a workshop. We held a mini social media summit in Strathfield, and the insights were amazing. One of the insights was that there are some good things about social media. Without social media we would never have encountered "Rontent" in this place, and our lives would be poorer for that. But they did mention some positives, such as the ability to connect with people whom we otherwise would not connect with. The connection and chatting elements were okay, but most damaging were the reels and other short-form content that is driven by the algorithms. That is the addictive part. The suggestion was that if we can turn off the short-term reels and leave on the chatting and communication functions, that would do a lot to address the harm of social media.

It is not only government regulation that has a role to play; we all have a role to play as parents, community members, mentors and leaders in this place to minimise the harm that social media does to our young people. I congratulate the New South Wales Government on holding the Social Media Summit and commend the motion to the House.

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (17:17):** I support the motion and acknowledge the importance of this local debate on what is a global issue. The tapestry of modern society is interwoven by social media. It is how we connect, share ideas and learn about the world around us. Yet, as a younger MP, I often wonder whether we are doing enough to protect our youngest citizens as technologies advance and social media platforms manifest. Most members, like most people in our communities, have heard terrible human stories about the dangers of being online. However, this motion should not and must not be a take-down of new technology, the internet or the proliferation of social media. Rather, it should be a cautionary moment for reflection, considered debate and thoughtful yet hasty reform: reform that captures our instincts for technology and social advancement, with the safety and protection of children at its core. I believe that the Social Media Summit represented the start of this process. I hope it will encourage members to listen to the parents, grandparents, educators and young people who have expressed concerns, offered ideas and shared experiences about the impact of social media on their mental health, self-esteem and social skills.

I am particularly grateful to the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Vaucluse, who initiated this discussion some months ago. In response to that debate, I spent the last few months engaging with residents in the Ryde electorate about social media. I have been overwhelmed by the response. It was clear that the vast majority of people who chose to engage supported an increase in required age, either outright or with conditions. These respondents were particularly concerned about the mental health impacts of social media use among young people. They noted a stark increase in observed cases of anxiety and depression. They also raised issues of cyberbullying, harassment and young audiences' increased exposure to inappropriate content. Underpinning these concerns was a belief that not all young minds are mature enough to handle the pressures of social media and that, as a society, we need to do more to address the negative consequences of social media, for children's safety.

Those who expressed doubt about raising the age were generally more critical of whether it would be an effective policy solution, as opposed to holding a philosophical objection. Theirs was a desire for greater education, coupled with the need to maintain open communication with young people about social media. I agree with both points and believe they should be incorporated as part of any reform advanced by this Parliament. In fact, the lack of education around social media is often cited as a concern for those with elderly relatives, who themselves are over-represented as victims of online hacking and scams. The reality is that social media is a vital tool for supporting learning and social connections. It is necessary that, at whatever age people begin to use the platforms, they are equipped to do so properly. If we land this education piece, increasing the age to 16 is one way of ensuring we protect young people while helping them develop the resilience needed to handle the complexities of the online space.

When we first debated this issue as a Parliament, I remarked that young people are much smarter than us and are likely to find ways around any imposed age restrictions. I maintain that view today. In many respects I admire the innovation and tenacity of generations Z and alpha. They give me great hope for the future. To those concerned about this roadblock I say this: This Parliament's role should not be to try and legislate for every outlier and externality. Our job is to try to do as much good as we can with what we have, when we are able. To do that, we must resist calls to do nothing when only imperfect solutions exist. The pursuit of perfection is a noble course, but it should never become the enemy of progress. That is why I support calls to raise the age.

A considerable cohort of young people, by virtue of an age limit existing, would respect that restriction. I also believe it will help parents and teachers in their efforts to enforce limits and educate their children and students. Young people should not have to navigate these waters alone. I believe we owe it to them to get our heads around their reality and to set the guardrails today that will empower them to do the same for their children tomorrow. I commend the motion and look forward to working constructively with all members, policy experts and the local Ryde community on a more fulsome policy discussion.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:23):** I support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Coogee in relation to the Social Media Summit. I acknowledge the Opposition's support for this extremely helpful initiative, which was jointly held by the New South Wales and the South Australian governments. Over 1,500 people gathered in person and online across Sydney and Adelaide, bringing together a diverse group of experts, policymakers, academics, parents, young people and people from the wider community to discuss this important topic: social media's impact on our children's and young people's wellbeing. A number of contributions to the debate have mentioned evidence of links between increased use of social media and greater instances of mental health issues, loss of sleep, reduced in-person interaction and less practice of social skills.

To provide context to this discussion, it is important to acknowledge the developmental stage being experienced by our young people in that important 13 to 16 age group. As some members may know, the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain that controls advanced decision-making and enables us to evaluate risks and make informed decisions—continues to develop until a person's early twenties. The idea that young people aged between 13 and 16 can effectively make decisions and weigh up risks in response to what they come across on social media and to effectively set boundaries and frameworks for themselves is an absolute furphy. That is why we are seeing some of the evidence presented before us at the Social Media Summit.

When we look at what social media exposes young people to, we see inappropriate, harmful, violent, extreme, misogynistic and hateful content. Young people cannot know how to respond to minimise the damaging impact that that harmful content can have on their wellbeing and their fundamental development. Social media is currently not a safe place, with limited regulation or accountability for who is using those platforms. It is interesting to see the approach of global tech giants that, as has been mentioned, are reaping staggering profits via a business model that entrenches this harmful exposure to these sorts of behaviours. I reflect on the strategies used by, say, big tobacco in decades past, which pushed back on governments' limitations to the harms it exposed our broader community to. If we can respond to tobacco and other issues that expose our community to harm, we should respond in the same way to social media, by regulating and entrenching some boundaries and frameworks as to what our children are exposed to.

Even before the Social Media Summit, there were 21,205 submissions from people who expressed their views on social media via the New South Wales Government's Have Your Say survey. Some 87 per cent of those respondents supported an age restriction, with most support for an age restriction among those aged 16 years and below. Some 91 per cent of parents wanted more to be done to teach young people and parents about the harms of social media, and over 90 per cent of respondents say that social media companies are responsible for online safety. Additionally, 35 per cent of parents of 13- to 15-year-olds, especially those in single parent households, reported that social media had a negative or very negative impact on their children's lives.

This was reflected in a discussion I had with the Liverpool Youth Action Group, who, in a similar way to the Strathfield Youth Advisory Board, came together to discuss the role of social media in their lives. In a similar way to the respondents of the survey, they acknowledged that social media had some benefits in enabling them to connect with people they may not have otherwise been able to connect with in their day-to-day lives. But, by and large, most of them highlighted the real and significant challenges posed by the anonymity that social media affords, in increasing and amplifying the cyberbullying that people are exposed to. With that, I commend the motion to the House. I thank my colleague the member for Coogee for bringing this important motion to the House.

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (17:28):** I thank the member for Coogee for bringing this motion to the House this afternoon. It is refreshing to see all members on the same page. It is an important motion and an important public interest debate. The show of bipartisan support demonstrates how seriously all members, no matter our political persuasion, take the issue of social media. Prior to becoming a member of this

place, I was gloriously absent from any social media. I am a bit of an outlier in that regard. Obviously I am now on social media. Like the member for Strathfield, I find myself waking up at all hours of the night, reaching for my phone and looking at comments. Unlike the member for Strathfield, whose comments, I am sure, are all positive, my comments are not. As a 44-year-old, some of the comments hurt. I know that they are not personal and are generally made for the sake of trolling. But I think about my three children—a 13-year-old girl, 10-year-old boy and eight-year-old girl—and I am really scared about the impact social media will have on them and all other children.

My eldest daughter, Luce, has an Instagram account. When she started high school, my wife and I sat down and spoke with her at great length about the dangers of social media. Being a country girl, Luce has friends all around the State. She has friends at home, friends in Sydney and friends everywhere. Social media is a great way for her to connect with those friends. But I agree with what the member for Strathfield said about reels, which are certainly addictive for teenagers. As much as we can in this place, we do need to control the age that our kids can start using social media. A lot of people say that kids will find a way around the rules, and I am sure some will. But that should not mean that we do not try.

I commend the Government and, in particular, the member for Vacluse for her work in this space. Before becoming a member of this place, I was a member of the advisory committee for a school in Moree that runs from kindergarten to year 10. It is an old-fashioned central school. The teachers were forever telling the advisory committee about the problems social media was causing. Interestingly, it was the year 7 and year 8 kids who were causing the problems. By the time the kids get to year 10, they seem to grow out of causing some of those issues. When we consider that evidence, year 7 and year 8 students in the country—12-, 13- and 14-year-olds—are clearly not equipped to deal with social media during that time when their minds are developing.

It is important that we raise the age for social media to 16. I am sure my eldest daughter will want to kill me after she reads my contribution, if she does, but it is important. Social media needs to be regulated. It is having an impact. We need only talk to any teacher to hear that. My wife is a teacher. She tells me about the impact it is having on our kids. I again thank the member for Coogee for bringing this motion to the House. I again thank the member for Vacluse for all her work in this space. We should raise the age to 16. Let's get it done.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (17:32):** In reply: I acknowledge the contributions of the members representing the electorates of Vacluse, Strathfield, Ryde, Liverpool and Northern Tablelands. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his very personal contribution. It is not often in this place that we get an all-in love-in, but this is one of those moments. We often get the best policy development when we get bipartisan support for really critical issues. Today it has been demonstrated that there is a deep desire from members on all sides of the Chamber to make change. Being a teenager is hard enough. I cannot imagine what it would have been like to deal with not just high school and all the trials and tribulations of managing emotions and hormones, but also the issues of managing social media.

The issue is so evident. Statistic after statistic demonstrates the damages caused by social media because it is completely unchecked and unregulated. We have a very deep responsibility to regulate this issue. There are good sides to social media: It allows people to connect and communicate. But a number of members noted the way the algorithms work in terms of their addictiveness and in spreading misinformation. I reflect on the Bondi Junction Westfield incident, which happened in my community earlier this year. There was a spreading of images. On the day it happened, I was with my 13-year-old niece. I found out because she opened her Snapchat, and she was receiving the most grotesque and awful images, which were spreading through social media.

That is happening because the social media giants are completely unchecked. No member of this place is saying that we should ban social media platforms. But we are saying that there needs to be a very clear regulatory framework to protect people, particularly our vulnerable young people. We want to give them back some youth. The evidence has shown that since we banned phones in schools in October last year students have started communicating more and are more vibrant at school. That is one change, and raising the age is another. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**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.**

*Bills***PUBLIC HEALTH (TOBACCO) AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:37):** I speak on behalf of the Opposition on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I indicate support for the excellent amendments foreshadowed by the member for Vacluse, which she outlined in her contribution earlier, leading for the Opposition on this bill. I listened to the contribution of the member for Vacluse and noted the concerns she raised around the illegal importation and sale of tobacco. While this is a good Government bill—as outlined by the member for Vacluse—there is an opportunity to go further and not only tackle the scourge of vapes, but also put in significant penalties for the sale of illegal tobacco, currently known as chop-chop. It has an innocent enough sounding name, but it is a very serious issue in our communities.

The member for Vacluse highlighted a recent incident that occurred on the Central Coast. Alarming, it was a repeat of incidents that have occurred down in Victoria, where there is undesirable criminal activity around the sale of illegal tobacco. Sadly, New South Wales and the Central Coast are not immune. Concerns have been raised by the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. I thank its president, Matthew Wales, for raising those concerns on behalf of the business chamber and the legitimate businesses that it represents on the Central Coast. Sadly, we are seeing turf wars arise because, as outlined by the member for Vacluse in her contribution to debate, a significant amount of money is being made through sales of illegal tobacco. On Friday 9 August ABC Central Coast reported on a suspicious fire at the tobacco shop in Ettalong, a day after the shop was vandalised. Everyone can see what is going on.

We know the risks of vapes, especially for young people. We have seen this massive rise in the use of vapes. People think they are fun and safe, when the reality is they are not any of those things. This bill sends a clear message that vaping is unlawful. It aligns New South Wales enforcement with Commonwealth laws that came into effect on 1 July, which is a good thing. Under those new laws vapes are available for therapeutic use and may only be supplied by pharmacists, medical practitioners and nurse practitioners to help people deal with their nicotine addiction. Nicotine addiction is very real. It is an incredibly complicated process to wean off cigarettes. Growing up in a family with a number of smokers, I saw how tough it was for them to give up.

Obviously, the responsible use of vapes can in some way assist smokers in transitioning away from cigarettes. However, as was outlined by the member for Vacluse, stores are literally doing under-the-counter illegal sales of these things and putting our young people at risk. The Cancer Council knows it, our health practitioners know it and most parents know it. Criminal elements are involved in the sale of these products to young people. Of course, vaping is also very addictive yet is very trendy. Sadly, we know how dangerous it can be. What studies have revealed about the materials in vapes is deeply concerning. Some vape canisters effectively have antifreeze in them. Young people are ingesting poisons, unaware of the risks they are taking.

I congratulate the Government on bringing this bill to the House. The proposed reforms are good. They create an offence and increase penalties for the unauthorised supply or possession of vapes, which, again, is a very good thing. As outlined by the member for Bega in his contribution to debate, the bill also amends the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutics Goods Act 2022 to introduce offences modelled on the Commonwealth Government's recent vaping reforms. It makes consequential amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008 and the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000. Originally, all of those measures were put in place to help protect people against the dangers of smoking, and will be expanded to protect people against the noxious by-products of vaping.

The bill also creates an offence for the supply of vapes, except by a person authorised to do so, being a pharmacist, medical practitioner, nurse practitioner or other authorised person. Under the bill, the maximum penalty is now seven years imprisonment and 14,000 penalty units, which I believe is about \$1.5 million, and appropriately so. The bill also creates an offence for the possession of commercial quantities of vapes, with penalties ranging from 330 penalty units up to 14,000 penalty units, and up to two years imprisonment or seven years imprisonment, respectively. Penalties increase based on the number of vaping goods in a person's possession. Commercial quantities have the same meaning as under the Commonwealth Act from 1 October 2024, being nine vaping devices or 60 accessories and 400 millilitres of the liquids.

There are separate retail possession offences to stop retailers from circumventing the new commercial quantity offences provision, noting the commercial quantities are low. These offences prohibit a retailer from having more than two vaping devices, three accessories or 60 millilitres of liquid in their possession while in the retail stores. It is important to note that the bill does not intend to criminalise the possession of vaping goods for

personal use. Those goods are used responsibly by people trying to stop smoking and for other medical reasons. The proliferation of e-cigarettes threatens to undo decades and decades of public health process to cut nicotine addiction in Australia, which was clearly outlined by the member for Vacluse, and shadow Minister for Health, in her contribution. Single-use vaping devices are incredibly addictive and deliberately designed to appeal to young people.

We have seen the target marketing with e-cigarettes. People are easily able to purchase e-cigarettes online without knowing what chemicals or toxins are in them. They are harmful to people's health, especially young people. Nicotine has been proven to cause all sorts of developmental issues. Given this legislation is increasing those penalties, the member for Vacluse has foreshadowed some very sensible amendments, which I urge Government and Independent members to seriously consider supporting. There is not just a rise in vaping and illegal activity around vaping but a rapid growth of illegal tobacco sales. As the member for Vacluse suggested, when a person can buy a packet of illegal cigarettes for \$13 versus a packet of the trusted old Winnie Blues for almost \$60, there is a massive disparity between the illegal and legal content.

Illegal cigarettes are known as "chop-chop", an innocent-sounding name for an illicit product that does all sorts of damage to people. Organised crime is involved because massive amounts of money can be made. The proposed Opposition amendments send a clear message to those organised crime consortiums that they are on notice and will be penalised to the full extent of the law for selling illegal tobacco, just as they would be for selling illegal vape material. I thank the Government for bringing this bill to the House, and I thank the member for Vacluse, and shadow Minister, for the sensible Opposition amendments she has foreshadowed. I commend both the bill and those amendments to the House. We need to continue to send the message to all involved that they will not be able to ply their trade with materials that do long-term harm, especially to some of our most impressionable young people.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:47):** As Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General, and member for Prospect, I support the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Health for his preparation of this bill and consultation with key stakeholders over quite some time to develop effective reform to better protect our communities from the dangers of vaping. The bill is an important legislative instrument to curb vaping across New South Wales. It supports the national vaping reforms, which seek to protect children and young people from the harms of vaping.

Amending the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966, the bill will regulate the supply and possession of vaping goods, consistent with recent amendments to the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Act 1989, to ban the supply and commercial possession of disposable, single-use and recreational vapes in New South Wales. It introduces offences relating to the supply and possession of vaping goods, unless a relevant exception exists, which are modelled on the national reforms. The bill will equip NSW Health inspectors with the means to enforce those offences in New South Wales using their existing enforcement powers. It will ensure enforcement can occur effectively in New South Wales retail settings by New South Wales officers under New South Wales law and, where appropriate, in consultation with other law enforcement bodies.

As Deputy Chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety, I led an inquiry into e-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales with my colleague the member for Mount Druitt, and Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism. We received over 59 submissions from government agencies, public health organisations, advocacy groups, medical professionals and members of our community, and heard from 26 witnesses over the course of two public hearings. We recognised the significant risk posed by vaping and the challenges in enforcement. The committee considered the benefits of implementing reform in step with the Australian Government to provide an improved and uniform regulatory framework. The CEO of Lung Foundation Australia, Mark Brooke, referred to vaping in his submission to the law and safety committee's inquiry as "one of the most significant public health crises facing our country".

Vaping has been known to cause various harms to human health, including nicotine toxicity; e-cigarette or vaping use associated lung injury; irritation, scarring and precursors to poor lung health; increased risk of cardiovascular disease; worsening of mental ill-health symptoms; dental disease; burns and injuries; and nicotine dependence. The use of vapes is particularly concerning given the uncertainty about materials contained within each device. Vapes can contain chemicals like propylene glycol, nicotine and flavouring ingredients, which, when mixed and heated, may cause a chemical reaction and produce new substances harmful to human health. A recent study undertaken by the University of Wollongong analysed the chemical content of 750 e-cigarettes. Of the 750, 428 were collected from retailers illegally supplying products over the counter and 322 had been confiscated from students in New South Wales high schools.

While many of the devices claimed to contain no nicotine on the product label, 98 per cent of them actually did. According to Professor Rowena Ivers of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners NSW and ACT, some vaping devices can deliver up to 700 per cent of the nicotine content that a consumer would get from

tobacco smoking. That high content results in nicotine addiction developing rapidly. I also note that in that study there was talk of a significant amount of metals in vaping products, some of which had melted because of batteries and other things being used. The amount of poisons and carcinogens being ingested by young people, and other users generally, was quite horrific.

The Government recognises that legislation is needed to help curb the widespread emergence of e-cigarette use or vaping, particularly amongst young people. The bill will improve New South Wales enforcement efforts by mirroring the Commonwealth legislation in New South Wales legislation. All vaping goods will be included in the national vaping reforms regardless of nicotine content levels. That will make it easier to enforce, as the requirement to test products and prove nicotine content will be removed. New South Wales inspectors generally will not require a warrant for entry, search and seizure of e-cigarettes, resulting in more efficient enforcement activity. That will also ensure New South Wales inspectors have the best tools available to them to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. It is anticipated that the new legislation, with its high penalties and restrictions on public access to e-cigarettes, will encourage higher compliance rates and fewer breaches of the legislation.

E-cigarettes and vapes were initially sold to governments and communities as a therapeutic good, an innovative product to help long-term smokers finally kick the habit and quit. Therefore, if they truly are therapeutic goods, it is entirely appropriate that we regulate them as such. The bill will not take away the ability for patients to legitimately access therapeutic vapes to help quit smoking or manage nicotine dependence. Under the reforms, only pharmacies will be permitted to sell vaping goods, with all other retailers prohibited from doing so. From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, NSW Health inspectors conducted some 2,300 retailer inspections, seized over 425,000 e-cigarettes and other products containing nicotine worth an estimated street value of over \$13.7 million, and seized over 8.3 million cigarettes and over 2,600 kilograms of other illegal tobacco products worth an estimated street value of over \$9.8 million.

Those results attest to the dedicated efforts our enforcement officers are applying to disrupt the availability of vapes in our community. It is vital that we improve their enforcement powers to see a greater number of the products seized to prevent harmful and addictive impacts of vaping in New South Wales. Vaping is a public health menace, and the rapid rise in vaping among young people is extremely alarming. The Australian Secondary Students Alcohol and Drug Survey shows that about one in eight 12- to 15-year-olds and one in five 16- to 17-year-olds have vaped in the past month. Alarming, the study reported that 23 per cent of students tried vaping for the first time when they were 12 years old or younger. Children under 12 years of age used to visit their local convenience stores to grab a packet of Twisties or a lolly bag, but now they are purchasing vapes—and vapes are marketed towards that demographic.

Vapes are eye catching to our young people. They are colourful, covered in cartoon characters and often shaped like fruits or emojis. With flavours like gummy bears, popcorn and bubblegum, manufacturers are aiming to deliberately entice young people to buy and become addicted to vaping. Cancer Council NSW expressed concern about the gateway effect, with young people who vape being three times more likely to take up tobacco smoking than those who have not vaped. Strong and decisive action is needed to arrest and reverse the increase in vaping and to prevent long-term adverse effects on population health before it is too late.

During the inquiry into vaping held by the law and safety committee, hearings were held in-camera with young people. Those transcripts will not be released and I will not go through them in detail. The evidence was quite terrible, and I remember one in particular. It was a 16-year-old girl who had been very sporty and involved in local sports activities and at school et cetera. She changed schools, became quite isolated and was looking for new friends. At 10 years old, she started vaping as a way to try to make friends. At 11 years old, she became an addict. She was just one example of many of her peers who had done exactly that. [*Extension of time*]

This poor 11-year-old, who is now 16 years old, had major health problems. Her sporting abilities went out the window because she was now so addicted to vaping. She linked it in with her social events, as did her friends. Every day they would vape at the school or outside the school. It got to a situation where her health had deteriorated a great deal. She was very brave. She came and gave evidence before the committee at an in-camera hearing and was supported by the Advocate for Children and Young People. If anything could convince me that vaping is terrible, particularly for young people, it was the fact that this healthy young woman, who had a huge future ahead of her, was already poisoned by vaping and now probably has a lifetime of trying to rebuild her health.

The use of tobacco advertising began in the 1850s in Australia, when colonial tobaccoists advertised tobacco products during the gold rush. As early as 1896, the first statistics highlighting a correlation between tobacco use and cancer were presented in the *Australasian Medical Gazette*. In 1896 they realised for the first time that tobacco was poisoning people and causing cancer in Australians. In 1903, New South Wales introduced a law to curb smoking by juveniles, enforcing the legal age of smoking as 16 years. We have been fighting this

harmful substance for over a century, and it is core to our values as a Labor government to fight the dangerous health impacts of such substances.

Just over 50 years ago, a Labor government introduced the first restrictions on tobacco advertising when in 1972 Federal legislation was implemented banning tobacco advertising on television and allowing health warnings to be printed on tobacco packs. Just over 10 years ago a Labor government introduced world-leading plain packaging laws on tobacco products. Today it is our turn to act in New South Wales. I ask this of all members in this House: If you had the opportunity to step back in time to regulate tobacco use at its beginning, would you? Would you go back and prevent generations of Australians from being impacted by that hidden danger? The evidence around the dangerous trend is clear: Vaping is leading our youngest generation to long-term nicotine addiction and major health impacts.

As parliamentarians in this place today, we all have the responsibility to act now to safeguard the health of young Australians for generations to come. As a government, we know vaping poses increased risks to our children and young people. We know vaping is an early catalyst to a lifetime of nicotine dependence. The bill is an important step to improve New South Wales' enforcement efforts to combat vaping before it is too late. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (18:00):** I speak in support of the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I do so because I hear time and again from parents across the communities that I represent that they are very worried about the rise of vaping, especially among young people. I too was a member of the law and safety committee, of which the member for Mount Druitt was the chair and the member for Prospect was the deputy chair. The e-cigarette inquiry heard substantial evidence during the course of the public hearings and in-camera hearings. Over 59 submissions were made to the inquiry. I learnt a lot about the significant risks of harm that vaping products instil. We have heard from other speakers that vaping products are attractive. They are engineered to promote and encourage young people to take up vaping through their use of flavours and colourful packaging adorned with cartoon characters. They are predominantly designed for and targeted at young people.

One of the things that the member for Prospect raised during his speech, which I also reiterate, was the evidence that was heard during the hearings about some of the ingredients or products used in the manufacture of a lot of illegal vapes. They are predominantly produced and manufactured in China and then imported. From the evidence that we heard, the vapes contain significantly higher levels of nicotine than any packet cigarettes. One witness told the hearing that smoking a disposable vape was the equivalent of 600 puffs of a cigarette, so there are high levels of nicotine.

But it is not just the nicotine, which is obviously highly addictive and dangerous and is one of the main ingredients in those vapes. There are also things like arsenic and weedkiller. Other carcinogenic chemicals and ingredients were also found in those vapes. I am sure most people—most young people especially—would have no idea of the contents of the vapes that they are ingesting into their bodies. Antifreeze and engine coolant were also found in some vapes. Putting it in that perspective, if the level of carcinogenic materials that are in vapes was more broadly communicated across the community, I think many people would think twice before taking up vaping.

Vaping is quite prevalent amongst young adults as well. One of my sons vapes, which I do not really like, but it is quite popular among young people. One of the risks associated with vaping is how easily addictive it can be because of the high levels of nicotine in the vapes. As the member for Prospect said, the young person who we heard evidence from in camera got addicted very quickly. That is consistent with what we heard from many of the other witnesses during the inquiry—that it is a highly addictive drug and that, once one is addicted, the addiction is very difficult to break. I am glad the Government is taking action to address this issue.

The bill amends the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 to introduce offences modelled on the Commonwealth Government's recent vaping reform. From 1 July 2024 the importation, manufacture, supply and possession of vaping goods was banned by the Commonwealth under the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024. Under the new laws, vapes are available for therapeutic use and can be supplied by pharmacists, medical practitioners and nurse practitioners. To facilitate the role of New South Wales in supporting the enforcement of those new offences, the bill adopts the offences relating to supply and possession of vapes.

The changes in the bill will align New South Wales legislation with the Commonwealth legislation, while specifically referencing New South Wales offences that ban the supply and possession of vaping products unless otherwise authorised for therapeutic use. That will reduce the complexity of our inspectors' powers to enforce vaping goods laws and will streamline the compliance and enforcement response, ensuring a more efficient and effective use of resources. The resourcing of inspectors is certainly an issue in my community. One health inspector covers a huge area in western New South Wales and struggles to do compliance, check and attend

premises, and go through the process. Often it is put back on the local police to go around to tobacco shops, corner shops or wherever vaping products may be sold. More focus and more resources, especially in regional areas, needs to be placed on the inspectors so that they can do the appropriate compliance.

Mirroring the Commonwealth legislation ensures that our inspectors have the best tools available to them to get on with doing what we need them to do, which is to ensure that vapes are not illegally getting into the community. It is anticipated that the higher penalties and restrictions in the new legislation will encourage higher compliance rates and fewer breaches. I am passionate about ensuring that inspectors get out into the community to clamp down on illegal vapes. As a legislator, I take my responsibility very seriously to do what I can to protect our vulnerable citizens—and our young people especially—from the harmful tobacco and poisons found in vapes. The bill is an important step in the right direction to improve enforcement across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (18:07):** I speak to the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the previous speakers and thank them for their contributions to the debate. The widespread sale of e-cigarettes across the nation and its concerning health effects inspired the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024, which came into effect in July this year. From 1 July 2024 the Commonwealth legislation has prohibited the import, manufacture, sale and possession of commercial quantities of e-cigarettes, regardless of whether they contain nicotine, unless they are for therapeutic use. Supply of e-cigarettes by medical practitioners, nurse practitioners and pharmacists is permitted.

The New South Wales Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024 mirrors the Commonwealth offence provision relating to vaping products to better support enforcement. To support and streamline enforcement by New South Wales tobacco inspectors, it is proposed to mirror those offences and penalties in New South Wales legislation. That will allow our inspectors to use their existing enforcement powers to ensure compliance. The bill is focused on vaping reforms and will not include a change to tobacco penalties; the Government is considering those matters. These reforms will streamline enforcement efforts on many fronts. Only pharmacies will be permitted to sell vaping goods, with all other retailers prohibited from doing so. People who have been lawfully supplied vapes for personal therapeutic purposes through a pharmacy or GP will not be prosecuted. That change will make it easier for our health inspectors to remove illicit vapes in a retail setting and not target users or empower police to search people for vapes. All vaping goods are included in the national vaping reforms, regardless of nicotine content.

Mirroring the Australian Government's offences in New South Wales legislation will make it easier for New South Wales to enforce the law because there is no requirement to test products and prove that e-cigarettes contain nicotine. Mirroring the offences in New South Wales legislation will mean that New South Wales inspectors will generally not require a warrant for entry, search and seizure for e-cigarettes, resulting in more efficient enforcement activity. Mirroring the Commonwealth legislation will ensure that New South Wales inspectors have the best tools available to them to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.

The New South Wales bill will not regulate manufacturing, and penalties are slightly different from the Commonwealth legislation. The Commonwealth will take responsibility for enforcing restrictions on importation, manufacture, sponsor supply and advertisement. The inclusion of that in our bill would put us out of step with all other medicines and therapeutic goods and the way they are regulated across the country. Currently, penalty unit values in New South Wales are almost three times lower than the Commonwealth and often there are difficulties in translating the exact value across the two pieces of legislation. Penalties in the New South Wales bill will be mirrored as close to the number as we can. The penalty unit amounts in the current New South Wales bill will be increased by a factor of 2.8. Those differences will reduce the complexity of our inspectors' powers to enforce vaping goods laws and will streamline the compliance and enforcement response, ensuring a more efficient and effective use of resources.

To highlight the importance of the bill and the necessity to improve and support enforcement, the Ministry of Health seizure statistics outline that from 1 July 2024 to 31 August 2024, 18 inspections were conducted in the Western Sydney Local Health District, whereby a total of 2,106 illicit nicotine products, 107,813 illicit cigarettes and 10.8 kilograms of illicit tobacco were seized, totalling a value of \$180,801. These reforms will improve inspections and seizures and ultimately provide a safer space for people and youth in the State. I thank the Minister for Health, Ryan Park, for introducing the bill to amend the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966, the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022, the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008 and the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000. It is important that we get the settings right. It is important that we keep our communities safe. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (18:12):** I express my strong support for the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. The Commonwealth's vaping reforms came into effect on 1 July this year, banning the sale of vaping products nationwide, and this bill is another vital step forward. It aligns New South Wales law with



the national reforms and strengthens our ability to enforce those rules on the ground. It is time to get serious about vaping. This legislation introduces specific supply and possession offences within New South Wales to ensure that our inspectors have the authority to crack down on illegal vapes and nicotine products—just as the Commonwealth reforms intended.

E-cigarettes, or vapes, are an emerging public health crisis, hooking young people into nicotine addiction. I know firsthand what is going on in high schools. After decades of progress in reducing smoking rates, we are now seeing those gains under threat. It is alarming to witness a new generation exposed to chemicals and toxins that pose serious health risks, including cancer, lung disease and cardiovascular complications. These devices are not harmless. The aerosol in vapes contains over 200 chemicals, many of which are toxic. Health issues linked to vaping include lung damage, dizziness, throat irritation and nausea. I heard on Radio National about a young 15-year-old schoolboy in South Australia who took a number of puffs on a vape while at a party and became unresponsive for many hours. That is a parent's absolute nightmare.

New South Wales has long been a leader in tackling tobacco-related harm. Through NSW Health, governments have implemented a robust strategy to protect young people and the community from the dangers of both e-cigarettes and traditional tobacco. That includes education campaigns, quit programs, the enforcement of smoke-free areas and targeted initiatives for at-risk communities. The bill will ensure that we build on that momentum. By introducing new supply and possession offences modelled on Commonwealth law, we are giving New South Wales authorities the tools they need to act swiftly and effectively in enforcing these regulations. It is about ensuring these dangerous products do not end up on our streets or in the hands of young people.

While I commend the Government's efforts, we must recognise that there is always room for improvement. In Griffith, my home town, serious drug and alcohol issues persist. This moment presents the New South Wales Government with a perfect opportunity to invest in a much-needed drug and alcohol unit at the new Griffith Base Hospital redevelopment. A critical service to address the growing substance abuse challenges in the region and provide vital support to the community. We need that drug and alcohol unit at our hospital now. Finally, I foreshadow that I have two small amendments to the bill to correct drafting errors, which I hope the Parliament will support. With those changes, I am confident the bill will significantly strengthen our public health efforts. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (18:16):** I contribute to debate in support of the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill aims to amend various pieces of legislation to align with the recent Commonwealth vaping reforms. The Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety, of which I am the chair, recently held an inquiry and produced a corresponding report on e-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales. The inquiry highlighted the severity of the risks associated with e-cigarette use within our community. It emphasised the need for the New South Wales Government to support the Commonwealth Government's vaping reforms. The inquiry also stressed the importance of working closely with Federal agencies to align enforcement and compliance efforts.

The bill introduces changes to support New South Wales officers to enforce the offences that ban the supply and possession of vaping goods unless authorised for therapeutic use. It is an important measure to help improve New South Wales enforcement efforts in relation to the recent Commonwealth vaping reforms, which ban from 1 July 2024 the importation, manufacture, supply and possession of vaping goods, unless a relevant defence or exception applies. The bill introduces offences relating to the supply and possession of vaping goods, which are modelled on the Commonwealth offences. The bill does not include offences relating to importation and manufacturing because the enforcement of these matters generally falls within the remit of the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Vapes available on the illicit market are illegally imported into Australia without complying with any of the standards that apply to therapeutic vapes sold by community pharmacies. Those vapes are known to contain harmful chemicals that can cause throat irritation, breathlessness, headaches, nausea and lung damage. It is vital that we give New South Wales officers the tools they need to stop the retail sale of illicit vapes in our communities. Research in New South Wales shows us that, among young people who vape, the majority started at the age of only 14 or 15, and the proportion of people aged 16 to 24 who regularly vape has increased from 1.7 per cent to 18.9 per cent in the past 10 years.

The latest research in Australia indicates that 12- to 17-year-olds who have vaped are almost five times more likely to take up tobacco smoking than people who have not vaped. Without a strong response to the problem of youth vaping, we risk subjecting a new generation of children in New South Wales to the dangers of nicotine addiction, undermining decades of progress made through the Government's advocacy and awareness campaigns and successful "quit smoking" supports. NSW Health has an active compliance program for tobacco and vapes, and takes strong enforcement action on the illegal supply of vaping products. Enforcement action is taken by NSW Health if retailers are found to be breaching the law. That includes display and advertising, restrictions on

tobacco products, vaping products and non-tobacco smoking products, selling illegal products or selling any tobacco or vaping products to minors.

NSW Health carries out vaping enforcement activities across the whole State, working with our local teams on the ground. In the 12 months from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, NSW Health conducted over 2,300 retail inspections and seized over 425,000 nicotine vapes, 8.3 million illegal cigarettes and 2,600 kilograms of other illegal tobacco products, all with a street value of over \$23.5 million. At a State level, NSW Health and the NSW Police Force collaborate to combat illegal vape sales, including by conducting joint enforcement operations at a local level. Through national forums, NSW Health is also collaborating with regulators from other jurisdictions, such as the Australian Border Force and the Therapeutic Goods Administration. That includes working together on joint enforcement actions. Changes to the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Act have introduced harsher penalties for people who sell illegal nicotine vapes.

The bill will introduce supply and possession offences in New South Wales legislation to align with the Commonwealth changes, which will allow for consistency in the use of enforcement powers across New South Wales and ensure our inspectors can do their jobs efficiently and effectively. The bill is not a ban on vapes across the board. It is a guarantee that clinically necessary vapes will be available, with the guidance of a healthcare practitioner, to anyone in New South Wales who wants to quit smoking and improve their health. At the same time, the bill will send a clear message that the illicit sale of vapes will not be tolerated. It is a critical step towards reducing the risk to the people of New South Wales, particularly the youth who are exposed to the dangers of nicotine addiction. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:22):** I contribute to debate on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I was born in the 1980s, an era when many people smoked, as Temporary Speaker Greenwich was also telling me. I would like to say that I did not smoke in the '80s, but I was the youngest of three children. Having cigarettes in the household meant that, from time to time, kids thought it was funny to get younger kids to try to smoke cigarettes out the back of the sheds at home. That is the type of behaviour—the notion that, from a young age, kids will think that smoking is cool, fun or interesting—that, over the subsequent decades, society has tried to stamp out in order that the addiction embedded in many of our parents, grandparents and peers would not follow through into future generations.

The sad reality we face today is that the proliferation of tobacco products and vaping is creating significant problems for future generations of Australians, and we need to do lot more than we currently are to address it. This bill takes steps towards addressing some of the challenges with vaping, but it does not do enough. We all need to commit to doing a lot more. Before I turn to the detail of the bill, I will outline some of the key issues and concerns related to vaping and e-cigarette use. In recent years we have seen a dramatic increase in the use of e-cigarettes or vaping. Of particular concern is the increased use among young people.

What was once marketed as a safer alternative to traditional smoking—and I remember there were times in our own party room when we discussed whether or not we should support vaping as a way for people to get away from an addiction to cigarettes—has now become a new public health crisis of its own. It is ensnaring this new generation in the dangers of nicotine addiction and exposing them to chemicals that we are only beginning to understand. While nicotine addiction is a major concern, it is far from the only risk posed by vaping. E-cigarette aerosols, often mistakenly referred to as "harmless vapour", contain a cocktail of chemicals. Not only can they harm the respiratory systems of the people who are utilising the vapes; they also have passive impacts on the people around them.

The Australian Medical Association believes that vaping is a significant public health issue for Australia, as children and young adults use vapes as their first nicotine-based product. Those young people are not trying to quit, as they have never smoked before. It is the gateway into future addiction. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance, and young people are particularly vulnerable to its effects. Beyond addiction, nicotine has been shown to impair brain development in young people, affecting areas responsible for learning, memory and attention. The long-term health effects of vaping are unknown. However, early evidence suggests that vaping may increase the risk of chronic lung diseases, cardiovascular problems and even cancer.

Another troubling issue is the vaping industry's deliberate targeting of young people. Through slick marketing, colourful packaging and appealing flavours like bubblegum, mango and cotton candy, e-cigarette manufacturers have created products that are tailor-made for adolescents—not even young people in their late teens but young children. Social media in particular has become a breeding ground for vaping culture, where influencers promote these products to their followers. It is a calculated strategy by the industry, which seeks to replace the declining number of traditional smokers with a new generation of nicotine consumers.

I will now outline the purpose of the bill and the proposed reforms. The bill will align New South Wales with the Commonwealth by including specific New South Wales offences that ban the supply and possession of

vaping goods, unless authorised for therapeutic use. From 1 July 2024 new Commonwealth laws became enforceable, which means that all vaping products, regardless of nicotine content, can only be prescribed by a medical or nurse practitioner and dispensed from a pharmacy in Australia. The proposed reforms outlined in the bill will create offences and increase penalties for the unauthorised supply and possession of vapes.

The bill will create an offence for the supply of vapes except where it is by a person who is authorised to do so, being a pharmacist, medical practitioner or nurse practitioner. The maximum penalty is seven years imprisonment, or 14,000 penalty units. The bill creates offences for possession of commercial quantities of vapes, with penalties ranging from 330 penalty units up to 14,000 penalty units, and two years imprisonment up to seven years imprisonment. The penalties increase based on the number of vaping goods in a person's possession. There are separate retailer possessions offences to stop retailers from circumventing the new commercial quantity offence provision, noting the commercial quantities are low. These offences prohibit a retailer from having more than two vaping devices, three accessories and 60 millilitres of liquid in their possession while in the retail stores.

It is important to note that the bill does not intend to criminalise the possession of vaping goods for personal use. Given that this legislation is increasing penalties for the possession and sale of vaping goods, there is an opportunity to also increase penalties in relation to the main tobacco-related offences. I recognise the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Vaucluse, which would ensure that we can work towards impacting the main tobacco-related offences. Alongside the challenges of vaping, we are seeing a rise in illegal tobacco, which is significantly cheaper than the tobacco that is taxed, regulated and produced in line with the laws and requirements of Australia. That tax revenue also goes towards addressing the health impacts of tobacco and nicotine addiction.

Other jurisdictions in Australia have also seen the rise of the tobacco wars. Victoria in particular has seen significant challenges, as has Queensland. It is also now occurring in South Australia. The tobacco wars are not being fuelled by innocent vape or tobacconist stores selling a bit of candy and a bit of illegal tobacco on the side. They are run by gangs, organised crime and individuals who are using the proceeds from what many people within our community think is a legitimate product—it is legal to smoke—utilising people's reliance on that product, or the fact people are seeking out a cheaper alternative to that product, to fill their coffers to fund other more significant organised crime activities. We need to make sure that we are taking this seriously and taking every opportunity to look at the entire suite of challenges, not just vapes alone.

I also raise the issue of tobacconist stores and the proliferation of them in our communities. Because it is not enough to create legislation and say, "Offences and penalties will be introduced", we need to think about the number of stores, the accessibility of them and their placement around schools and other premises where there is a lot of risk, and we need to think about whether there is the capacity for compliance and enforcement. There are huge issues in other jurisdictions, particularly Victoria and Queensland, in enforcing compliance with the legislation that they have put into place.

Five tobacconist stores operate within 300 metres of my electorate office, most of which have opened in the past two years. The stores generally have quite loud, brash signage saying, "Tobacconist". They do not say they are a convenience store or a mini-mart. They say they are a tobacconist. They often do not even have a fit-out. They might just have basic concrete flooring and a couple of chip and lolly packets on the sides of the walls. Everybody knows that they are there to funnel illegal products: vapes and illegal tobacco. Yet nothing is done to prevent the opening or licensing of a store. Rather than being required to have a licence or registration to sell tobacco like in other jurisdictions, all a store has to do is notify NSW Health.

We need to look at novel ways of making changes. I recognise that newly elected North Sydney councillors Jess Keen and Efi Carr are looking at whether there is the capability to require development applications to be lodged in the same way that we require for other prescribed premises. My office is across the road from a primary school. So if there are five stores within 300 metres of my electorate office, they are also within 300 metres of all the students from that school. They are in the major transport hub of Neutral Bay and exposed to many individuals, particularly young people, encouraging them to access those types of products. We know that those stores trade in illegal disposable vapes, e-liquid nicotine refills and illegal cigarettes.

I note that the Minister's second reading speech indicated that in July NSW Health and the Therapeutic Goods Administration conducted 60 retailer inspections, which seized 12,000 vapes, 2,000 nicotine pouches, over 730,000 cigarettes and 135 kilograms of flavoured and loose-leaf tobacco. But, as the member for Vaucluse has acknowledged, that was 60 inspections at 19,000 locations across our State. If that is what has been seized in 60 locations in a very small, short blitz, we know the problem is immense and has proliferated well beyond that. I want to see the Government and every member in this Chamber focus much more strongly on additional ways to ensure compliance and enforcement and keep our community safe. While I believe the bill is a step forward in addressing the spread of these unhealthy practices, there is still much more we need to do as a State. The Opposition supports the legislation but will also hold the Government to account to do a lot more.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:32):** I strongly support the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. While vaping goods, irrespective of nicotine content, have been banned since 1 July in New South Wales and Australia as part of the Commonwealth reforms, the purpose of the bill is to introduce supply and possession offences in New South Wales legislation that are aligned with the Commonwealth reforms. The changes will enable New South Wales officers appointed under New South Wales legislation to use their existing enforcement powers to enforce the new offences. E-cigarettes—also known as vapes—pose a serious public health threat, hooking a new generation of users to a lifetime of nicotine addiction, especially when stores are close to schools—as they are in my electorate of Heathcote—with flashing lights in the windows to try to attract the young ones. They are a danger to decades of progress in New South Wales and across Australia in reducing tobacco smoking rates.

We have done so well in addressing tobacco addiction in the past and now we have this new public health issue of vaping. We have gone backwards in State public health. All e-cigarette users are exposed to chemicals and toxins that have the potential to cause harm. When someone uses an e-cigarette, the aerosol they inhale can contain over 200 chemicals, some of which have been shown to be harmful to health and can cause cancer and heart disease. Whilst the evidence is still emerging, known health harms associated with vaping include throat irritation, breathlessness, coughing, dizziness, headaches, nausea and lung damage. Rechargeable vapes can also explode, causing serious burns and trauma.

The New South Wales Government has been a leader in addressing this emerging public health threat. NSW Health has a comprehensive program of activities to help protect young people and the broader community from the harms of e-cigarettes and tobacco. That includes funding for public awareness and education campaigns, quit smoking/vaping support, compliance with and enforcement of smoke-free retailing laws, and targeted programs for groups with high smoking or vaping rates. In 2023-24 the Minns Labor Government invested an additional \$6.8 million over three years to boost enforcement efforts against the sale of illegal vapes and to increase support for young people to quit vaping. Earlier this year the Government launched the \$3 million "Every vape is a hit to your health" public health campaign targeted at young people. The campaign connects young people to more information about vaping and quitting, and gives them the support they need.

But more must be done. The bill introduces specific supply and possession offences, which are modelled on the Commonwealth legislation, in the New South Wales poisons and therapeutic goods legislation to help facilitate stronger compliance efforts against e-cigarettes. They will enable New South Wales inspectors to efficiently and effectively carry out compliance and enforcement activities across the State, which is essential if we are to change this habit. NSW Health's comprehensive e-cigarette and tobacco compliance program has seen impressive results. In the 12 months from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, NSW Health conducted over 2,300 retail inspections, seizing over 425,000 nicotine vapes, 8.3 million illegal cigarettes and 2,600 kilograms of other illegal tobacco products with a street value of over \$23.5 million. The legislative changes in New South Wales will assist those efforts. I thank the Minister for Health and the wonderful staff in his office and from NSW Health for working on this very important issue. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (18:36):** I support the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024, which is related to vapes. But the bill has problems, particularly in relation to the compliance regime. The Government is relying on health inspectors to roll out the compliance program in the bill. In New England in the north-west of the State there is one health inspector for the whole area. That inspector is located in Grafton. It is completely unrealistic to expect one inspector to cover the entire area. Enforcing laws and controlling the supply of vapes as well as tobacco will also be a significant challenge in upholding the bill's reforms. Vapes are sold at tobacconists that are popping up like daisies across New South Wales. They are appearing on every street corner.

There are pop-ups with fake shopfronts. There is very little up the front but that is where the tobacco and the vapes are being sold. They are significantly hurting legitimate small family businesses in our region, which have been providing necessary goods and services to community members for a long time. We are finding out from the small business sector, particularly in my area, that those small businesses are suffering a loss in retail trade. It is not just through cigarettes. Someone will come in and buy a packet of cigarettes and then they will pick up a pie, a drink, a paper, a bit of lunch or something else from the shop.

What is occurring is that person is no longer buying their cigarettes from a superette, for example, and is instead going to a tobacconist. The flow-on effect is hurting small businesses. It is putting pressure on small businesses. They are facing increasing costs in running their business, they are losing revenue and there is a threat of losing staff. The significant economic impact is quite dire. I have been contacted by a number of small businesses in my area. One business in my area that is suffering as a result of tobacconists popping up all over the place said:

The detrimental impact of community cohesion, health outcomes, safety for neighbouring businesses and loss of trade for longstanding, reputable existing businesses within the tobacconist industry.

Another business said:

The impact is dire with loss of trade, uncertainty for staff jobs and the stressors on hard working, law abiding small business owners is at breaking point.

Tobacconists that also sell vapes are significantly impacting our local businesses. The bill states that health inspectors will take up the role of ensuring compliance, yet there are no health inspectors to do the job. My suggestion is that it should go to small business. It should go to Fair Trading and SafeWork. The Government should look at increasing fines. It would then be able to recoup the revenue so there is no loss to government to set up a compliance regime through SafeWork. In my view, NSW Health does not have the resources. Other members will talk about how enforcing existing laws and controlling supply are significant concerns. It is about protecting small business.

When looking at recommendations for support and action, the bill clearly does not go far enough. There should be a parliamentary inquiry into what is happening in towns and cities across regional New South Wales. We have heard about the number of tobacconists that are popping up all over the place. Even in Tamworth, Gunnedah, Moree and Port Macquarie, they are having a significant impact. We need stronger regulatory enforcement and increased penalties for offenders. It is a significant, growing problem. It needs to be addressed, and the bill does not go anywhere near far enough on vapes. NSW Health is not in a position to crack down on that particular emerging issue. It is growing fast. The Government is looking to do something about it, but it is not going far enough. It needs to support the longstanding family businesses that are being hurt by tobacconists that are popping up like daisies. Enforcing existing laws and controlling supply will not be addressed by the bill.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (18:42):** On behalf of The Greens, I oppose the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill is enforcement and compliance legislation that will mirror the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024 relating to the supply, possession and use of vaping products. The bill will prohibit the supply of vaping products, other than as therapeutic goods, and limit suppliers to health professionals and pharmacists as authorised under the relevant Commonwealth laws. It will restrict the possession of commercial quantities to those authorised to manufacture, import or supply vaping products. A retailer will only be able to possess non-commercial quantities for personal use or with necessary authorisations.

Further, the bill will make amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008 and the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000. Significantly, it will amend the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 to enable authorities to issue extreme penalties for the unauthorised supply of vaping products. In effect, it will provide new pathways for agencies in New South Wales to enforce the Federal reforms regarding the possession and supply of vaping products, but that is work that they are already equipped to do and are already doing. The Federal legislation on vaping requires that vaping products that contain nicotine can only be accessed through a prescription from a healthcare professional, including doctors or nurse practitioners, or a pharmacist.

From 1 July 2024 importing nicotine vapes for personal use without a prescription became illegal, with the sale and advertising of those products being regulated with the aim to limit young people's access, improve product safety and assist harm reduction. A proper harm reduction approach would do more than just impose penalties that will push people towards black-market suppliers. Prohibition is not the way to end the nicotine vape black market or to reduce the harms of vaping for young people. I want to be clear that we are all working towards the same goal. We do not want to see more children addicted to nicotine. I am a parent. I speak to my community, and I know the harm that vapes are causing, but we cannot ignore the fact that the horse has bolted for many young people. Many are already addicted to vaping, and we need to be careful not to push those young people towards the black market. We also do not want them choosing cigarettes because they are easier to access.

The Government needs to take a different approach if it is serious about reducing the harm that vapes and vaping products can cause, especially to our young folk. That must include things like consulting with young people to better understand their information and support needs; co-designing solutions with young people in recognition that they face unique challenges with vaping and nicotine use; recognising the shared responsibility in managing nicotine dependence within the community, including with parents, carers, teachers and other education, sports and health settings; supporting parents, carers, teachers, community groups and health practitioners to support young people; exploring holistic support services across health, mental health, sports and education settings; making resources available for parents and guardians seeking guidance on how to support their children through the recovery process; and exploring different opportunities for information and support delivery, including services with vaping cessation as a goal and services that offer an alternative of harm minimisation for nicotine dependence.

None of that will be advanced by the bill, which seeks to tighten the rules impacting the regulated market for vaping products and to establish a regime of extreme penalties that would push the black market further

underground. For those reasons, The Greens do not support the bill. The Government needs to take a different approach that centres this important work in the principles of harm reduction. It is a missed opportunity. In making these comments, I acknowledge the work of my Greens colleague in the Australian Capital Territory Government, Ms Emma Davidson, who is the Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Population Health. She has made a number of important contributions in this policy area. I also acknowledge the work of The Greens spokesperson for health, Dr Amanda Cohn, and The Greens spokesperson for drug law reform and harm reduction, Ms Cate Faehrmann, who will have more to say on the bill when it is considered in the other place.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:47):** I welcome the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. In listening to previous contributions, in particular from the member for Tamworth, I dwelt on two aspects of the issue that we face. One is certainly the significant public health issue caused by vaping. I remember quite clearly having the privilege of sitting alongside a researcher in respiratory medicine at a function. He was lamenting how Australia had come so far in its challenges in battling tobacco and nicotine addictions only to go backwards. It was quite alarming to hear that from a researcher who had just returned from Europe. He had been growing his expertise in Europe only to come back to Australia and find the harm that we are doing in our country with vaping and illegal tobacco.

It was interesting to hear the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. He spoke about the various impacts of nicotine and vaping, in particular around adolescent brain development. He also spoke about the gateway effect. We certainly have a significant public health issue. It also interested me that the member for Tamworth said that as a result of the proliferation of vapes and illegal tobacco, we have the proliferation of retailers that have sprung up in our communities. From the contributions of regional members, it seems that a lot of regional communities have been impacted. Those retailers are often associated with organised crime. Again, there is impact in that regard.

Earlier this year the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety published its report entitled *E-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales*. I have spoken before about how Graham Baxter, the NSW Health Tobacco Control Officer, said that the current framework is not fit for purpose and fails to take into account the active involvement of organised crime in the illicit tobacco and e-cigarette market. That is the second element when confronting vaping and illegal tobacco. As a consequence of the proliferation of those retailers, as the member for Tamworth rightly pointed out, there is an impact on the incomes and livelihoods of legitimate retailers. I have certainly been approached by a number of business retailers in my electorate, particularly from some of our smaller communities, who have been significantly impacted by the proliferation of vape and illegal tobacco stores.

In making my contribution, I have touched on the challenge we face. I have spoken previously in this House about how officers from Strike Force Cecum conducted a two-day operation in early July across Albury, Lavington and Howlong. To give an indication of the extent of the problem in our community, during that two-day operation police charged 23 people with 48 offences, 12 search warrants were executed and over 92,000 cigarettes were seized with an estimated street value of over \$142,000, along with 505 vapes worth an estimated \$30,000. Again, I recognise the nexus that exists between illegal tobacco and vapes. I thank the Minister for Health for bringing the bill to the House and for the work of his team. However, I also acknowledge the member for Vaucluse, the shadow Minister for Health, for bringing to this House amendments that deal with illegal tobacco as well, because we recognise the nexus between vaping and illegal tobacco.

In that regard, I return to the *E-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales* report. Amongst its 13 recommendations, the committee called for the New South Wales Government to consider introducing a positive licensing scheme for tobacco retailers. Members have spoken previously about the ease with which one can become a tobacco retailer in New South Wales. In fact, New South Wales is the only jurisdiction yet to license tobacco retailers. Another recommendation the committee made was for a review of New South Wales tobacco legislation to ensure alignment with new Federal legislation. I think credit is due to the Minister for Health for introducing the bill, because it speaks to that alignment. In the take-note debate on the report earlier this year, I spoke from a border electorate perspective about the need for alignment with other jurisdictions. Having alignment with the Commonwealth on this issue is important. That is the keystone of the bill.

The committee also called for the Ministry of Health to commence the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 as a matter of priority. I understand some of the penalties in the bill will supersede that. The bill creates offences and increased penalties for the unauthorised supply and possession of vapes. It does so through proposing amendments to the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 to introduce offences modelled on the Commonwealth Government's recent vaping reforms and making consequential amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, the Public Health (Tobacco)

Act 2008 and the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000. The bill does not seek to criminalise the possession of vaping goods for personal use.

In that sense, for me, it harks back to the words of University of Sydney associate professor of public health Becky Freeman, who spoke of the need to make illegal cigarettes and vapes harder to come by. It is about controlling supply. In fact, Associate Professor Freeman said that the answer is in enforcing existing laws. If there is one thing that I want to draw out from the comments by the member for Tamworth, it is the challenge around enforcement—particularly in regional areas. My community faces that real challenge, and there is a limited number of public health officers who can attend to those issues. I encourage the Government to examine closely how we can ensure enforcement of the laws that it is bringing to the House.

I thank the health Minister. In supporting the bill, I take this opportunity to reflect on the fact that we are facing a public health challenge alongside a proliferation of retailers with connections to organised crime. There is also a nexus between vaping and illegal tobacco. Therefore, whilst the bill attends to vaping, I encourage the support of the House for the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Vacluse. Failing that, I encourage the Government to make sure that it addresses illegal tobacco moving forward. I echo the comments of the member for Tamworth in imploring the Government to make sure that we consider how to enforce the legislation to ensure it has an impact on the streets in removing this scourge from our community. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (18:56):** As of 1 July 2024, the importation, manufacture, supply and possession of vaping goods has been banned by the Commonwealth under the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024. Under those laws, vapes are available for therapeutic use and may only be supplied by pharmacists, medical practitioners and nurse practitioners. The intent of the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024 is to create offences and increase penalties for the unauthorised supply and possession of vapes, which I support. Single-use vaping devices are addictive and deliberately designed to appeal to young people. E-cigarettes expose users to chemicals and toxins that are harmful to their health. Nicotine may cause changes to brain development in young people. Vapes were originally made to assist users to stop smoking, but history will tell us that it has had unintended consequences across the board. Our youth have taken to vapes in alarming numbers. The proliferation of e-cigarettes threatens to undo decades of public health progress when it comes to reducing nicotine addiction in Australia.

It is quite clear that e-cigarettes are the gateway to smoking. We know that tobacco products are responsible for more than 20,000 Australians dying prematurely each year due to smoking. We also know that tobacco use is estimated to cost the Australian economy more than \$137 billion. Given the legislation is increasing penalties for the possession and sale of vaping goods, there appears to be a missed opportunity for the Government also to increase penalties in relation to tobacco-related offences. Tobacco products are addictive and cause premature death. Up to two-thirds of all deaths among long-term consumers can be attributed to smoking. While the use of manufactured cigarettes may be declining, there is an increase in the use of chop-chop. I touch briefly on this issue as chop-chop has become an enormous problem in this State, particularly in regional areas, and more needs to be done.

Chop-chop is finely cut, unbranded black market tobacco, which is distributed and sold without government intervention or taxation. Due to its comparative cheapness, some smokers have adopted it as an alternative to, or an addition to, smoking manufactured tobacco. Australian chop-chop users report significantly worse health than smokers of authorised tobacco, with carcinogens and mycotoxins causing a range of adverse responses in the liver, kidneys and skin. These carcinogens and mycotoxins also cause illnesses, including allergic reactions, chronic bronchitis, asthma and lung disease.

The sale of illicit tobacco has the potential to seriously undermine our public health, and we must not ignore the fact that illegal tobacco sales are also linked to serious and organised crime syndicates. The profits from illegal tobacco sales are used to fund other illicit activities that cause significant harm to our community. But these illegal shops are also undermining our local small businesses. A local business owner in my electorate told me that he is losing \$15,000 a week to those illegal sales. Compliance and response need to be strengthened because, as the member for Tamworth indicated in his contribution, one inspector for a large geographic area is not enough. Those inspectors are doing a great job, but they are overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. Urgent attention and investment by the New South Wales Government is needed to address this illicit trade.

I commend the shadow Minister for Health for the work she is doing in this area and for bringing amendments to strengthen the bill. We cannot afford to ignore this issue any longer. It is time for us to take a stand against the sale of illicit tobacco and vapes in our communities. We must protect the health and safety of the people of New South Wales and ensure that our communities are not funding criminal activities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (19:00):** I support the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Health in bringing the bill forward for debate today. I also acknowledge the contribution by the shadow Minister for Health on this very important topic. The bill is focused on vapes and will bring New South Wales's legislation into line with Commonwealth legislation. It also outlines the penalties for the unlawful sale of vapes. I remind the Government that unless it fully intends to police the new laws and regulation, this is a bit of a pointless exercise.

In my electorate of Clarence, there is an explosion of illegal tobacco stores. I say "explosion" because the numbers are staggering. Those stores are robbing the public purse of billions of dollars across Australia. There is no regulation of where those stores can be located. They can be located close to childcare centres or schools. As I see it, they seem to be totally unregulated and have no respect whatsoever for the law. These illegal stores are also robbing local legitimate businesses of a genuine business, as outlined by other speakers. Those businesses—businesses that pay their taxes and the duties on cigarettes—are suffering. In regional New South Wales and right across the State, there is a very important issue that needs the attention of the Parliament and the Government. The Government cannot simply tackle what will be the illegal supply of vapes without addressing the illegal supply of black market cigarettes.

The bill creates offences and increases penalties for the unauthorised supply and possession of vapes in New South Wales. I congratulate the Government on that move. It is a move I support. The Opposition will always support, in a bipartisan way, any moves by the Government to help people kick the habit of nicotine addiction. The amendment will create an offence for the supply of vapes except when it is authorised by a person, being a pharmacist, medical practitioner, nurse practitioner or person authorised to supply the vapes. The proposed legislation has a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment, or 14,000 penalty units. It is important that the bill does not intend to criminalise the possession of vaping goods for personal use.

The explosion of e-cigarettes and illegal cigarettes threatens to undo decades of public health progress in cutting nicotine addiction not only in New South Wales but right across Australia. Single-use vaping devices are addictive by their very nature. They are designed to appeal to young people who may not know the dangers that vaping brings to them personally and those around them. E-cigarettes and vapes expose the users to dangerous chemicals and toxins that are harmful to the health of young people. We all know that nicotine is an extremely addictive toxin that will be a gateway to not only cigarettes but also, possibly, other addictions. My contribution was short but it is important. I acknowledge the Minister in the Chamber. I commend him for bringing the bill before the Parliament, but he should not stop there. He should bring the bill in and go hard on illegal cigarettes at the same time as he is going hard on illegal vapes. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (19:05):** I contribute to debate on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. The bill creates offences and significantly increases penalties for the illegal supply of vaping products. The bill does not intend to criminalise the possession of vaping goods for personal use but rather to address unauthorised supply of vapes. That is particularly important when considering the impact of e-cigarettes on minors and young people. I have spoken to many parents who are concerned about the availability and supply of vapes, especially for young people and students. Creating an offence for the supply of vapes, except where it is by a prescribed person who is authorised to do so, will result in the maximum penalty being increased to seven years imprisonment or 14,000 penalty units, or both, in line with recent Commonwealth changes.

I note the presence of the Minister for Health in the Chamber this evening. I listened to his second reading speech. He said that the issue of e-cigarettes is one of the most significant public health concerns for young people. I agree with the Minister. Those products are deliberately targeted at young people. I have listened to the struggles of parents of teenagers who are grappling with a nicotine addiction. This is a serious public health issue. I support greater penalties for those who flout the rules and sell nicotine vapes to our kids, destroying their health and wellbeing. Parents have approached me personally with their concerns. They have told me that their child's school has had to take the drastic step of closing the bathrooms and only opening them during recess and lunch breaks in order to stop students from vaping in them. This is as much a public health issue as it is a regulatory and enforcement issue.

I recently hosted a community forum with the Burwood Police Area Commander, Superintendent Christine McDonald, and police officers from the Burwood Police Area Command about local crime and safety issues. I acknowledge the police Minister in the Chamber. I publicly back in our local commander and police. I thank the Minister for her work and I thank our local police for the wonderful work that they do each and every day in our community. At that meeting concerns were raised regarding the accessibility of vapes and illegal tobacco products. The common theme in that discussion was that the accessibility of vaping products means it is far too easy for a person, including a young person, to walk into a store or contact an individual deliberately doing the wrong thing and get a disposable vape, illegal tobacco or illegal cigarettes because they are being sold under the counter and on the black market.



I encourage people to contact their local public health unit or police with more information if they see this occur, because it is on all of us to curb nicotine addiction. I understand that the Opposition will be seeking to amend the bill and I support that position. I commend the shadow Minister for Health for her strong advocacy and the amendment that she will move on behalf of the Opposition to strengthen the bill. I note her presence in the Chamber and thank her for her work. I also commend the Minister for Health for introducing the bill to the House and note his presence in the Chamber. I put on record that I support the bill. I hope we can continue to work together across the Chamber, in a bipartisan way, to address this significant challenge impacting young people across our communities.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:09):** I contribute to debate on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024, introduced by the Minister for Health. The bill aims to stem the spread of unhealthy practices like vaping, especially among our youth—a goal that I fully support. The alarming increase in e-cigarette use among our youth is a significant public health concern that demands our immediate attention. The new Commonwealth laws, effective from 1 July 2024, are a commendable step forward. Those laws mandate that all vaping products, regardless of their nicotine content, can only be prescribed by medical or nurse practitioners and dispensed from pharmacies. It is now illegal for other retailers in New South Wales to sell e-cigarettes or e-liquids, including through online sales.

Enforcement efforts have shown some success. Between 1 and 9 July 2024, NSW Health and other agencies conducted 60 retailer inspections, seizing approximately 12,000 vapes, 2,000 nicotine pouches, 730,000 cigarettes and 135 kilograms of flavoured and loose-leaf tobacco. The total estimated street value of these seizures is over \$1.29 million. Those figures highlight the scale of the problem and the necessity for robust action. The purpose of the bill is to amend legislation to align New South Wales with recent Commonwealth vaping reforms, introduce specific New South Wales offences banning the supply and possession of vaping goods unless authorised for therapeutic use, and support officers in implementing the vaping ban within the State.

I acknowledge the work of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety for its inquiry and report on e-cigarette regulation and compliance. I also recognise the shadow Minister for Health for her advocacy on reducing vaping harms, particularly among young people. While I support the intentions of this legislation, I must express my concern that it does not go far enough. The deliberate targeting of young people by vaping product manufacturers and retailers to create a new generation addicted to nicotine is a grave issue that requires more comprehensive measures. The key provisions of the bill—prohibiting the importation, manufacture, supply and possession of vaping goods unless exceptions apply, and allowing vaping goods only for therapeutic purposes—are necessary but insufficient.

The offences and penalties outlined, including up to seven years imprisonment and substantial fines, are strong deterrents. Yet the exceptions in the bill might inadvertently allow loopholes that can be exploited by those intent on profiting from the addiction of our youth. We must strengthen this legislation by closing any potential gaps that could undermine its effectiveness. This could include tighter regulation of online platforms to prevent illegal sales, increased funding for enforcement agencies to conduct more frequent inspections and crackdowns, educational programs in schools to inform students about the risks associated with vaping, and support services for young people struggling with nicotine addiction, ensuring they have access to the help they need.

The Opposition will be moving two amendments to significantly toughen penalties for tobacco supply. Many of our communities are suffering from illegal tobacconists, who are flouting the rules and drawing more young people into a life of smoking. They are undercutting small businesses and bankrolling illegal activities, and we believe the penalties need to be much harsher. The health and wellbeing of our young people are paramount. While the bill is a step in the right direction, it is imperative that we take more decisive action. Let us not settle for half-measures when the stakes are so high. I urge the Government to support the Opposition's amendments, which will bolster this legislation and provide a more comprehensive strategy to combat the vaping epidemic among our youth.

I acknowledge the Minister, who is in the Chamber, and his team. They have done a significant amount of work on the bill. I know the Minister will not be offended by me saying that we are of roughly the same vintage. We remember going for a meal at the pub and coming home reeking of cigarette smoke. It was not all that long ago. I honestly thought we had confined those practices to history, but they seem to be making a comeback in our communities. Again, I urge the Government to consider the Opposition's amendments.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (19:13):** I make a brief contribution on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024, which amends the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 to regulate the supply and possession of vaping goods, consistent with recent amendments to the Federal Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 and other Commonwealth legislation to ban the supply and commercial possession of disposable single-use and recreational vapes. I acknowledge the Minister, who is in the Chamber, and his team for their work and advocacy in this particular area. I am an ardent anti-smoker. I do not like or care for it. I understand what the Minister is

seeking to do, but I will make a couple of observations in relation to the general approach. I acknowledge the concerns raised by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in its public announcement on 2 July 2024, highlighting the lack of consultation with the Federal pharmacy industry.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has reluctantly accepted these changes and is now focusing on supporting pharmacists who choose to supply vapes. I acknowledge the president of the New South Wales branch, Dave Heffernan, and the Federal president and my good friend, Trent Twomey. Pharmacists play an important role in our communities. They are not just medical professionals; they also run small businesses. It is important for the Government to listen and respond to the men and women who run these small businesses because they have felt attacked and not listened to, not by the State Minister for Health, but by the Federal Government. They feel very supported by the Minister in the Chamber but not necessarily by his Federal counterparts. That has caused a lot of pressure for pharmacists and their businesses over the past 12 months.

I acknowledge the important role that community pharmacists play in health care. The services they offer are often free to customers who come through their doors. The chief operating officer of Chemist Warehouse, Mario Tascone, rightly questioned the potential liability for any health risks associated with vaping. Legalising vapes does not make them safe, just as legal cigarettes are not safe. The potential liability should be a significant concern for the Government. I put on record my concern about that liability. Furthermore, what will the pharmacies that choose to dispense vapes look like? Will we see pop-up, vape-box chemists and the creation of a new and bespoke retailer? Is it fair to other retailers, such as supermarkets and legal tobacco dispensaries, that have complied with our laws for years?

In his *Crikey* article on 4 October 2024, James Martin argued that the pharmacy model is set for failure and questioned why Australia feels the need to create this cumbersome process for the 1.5 million Australians who already vape. He suggested a more pragmatic harm-reduction approach, similar to models that have worked well in other countries. This involves treating vapes like other adult consumer products, sold by specialist licensed vendors, in plain packaging and with strict age verification. I have some sympathy for those comments and caution the Government that the bill will not stop the illegal trade of cheaper, inferior products. It will not significantly reduce smoking, as vaping is not simply a cessation tool. It will not deal with vaping and its illegal trade and the associated loss of revenue.

While I have no issues with the harmonisation principles of the bill, it should not be viewed in isolation. It should address the spectrum of related issues, including health, education, crime, illegal tobacco, gang wars, the exclusion of genuine retailers and the pressures on pharmacies, which I highlighted earlier. I want to mention the issue of illegal tobacco, which other members have mentioned. It is really important that the Parliament examines that as the next step. I note also that the South Australian Government has moved its enforcement functions from Health to Fair Trading, which is set up to regulate products and produce, and ensure that companies comply with the rules. That has been discussed in New South Wales, and it will be discussed elsewhere and potentially by a parliamentary inquiry at a future stage.

Australia is the only country that is taking what many might consider to be a nanny state approach instead of addressing the broader issues comprehensively. While I will support the bill, I ask and encourage the Government to consider some of the other issues I have raised. I cannot see less red tape or fairness for businesses and consumers in many of the changes that will come into effect. Certainly, I am concerned and worried about the impacts of many aspects of the bill on small businesses. Having said that, for the reasons that the Minister and others have outlined, I will support the bill.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (19:18):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. I am pleased to speak in support of it as an important step towards improving the health of people in New South Wales, particularly young people. Vaping is a growing risk to young people and a pathway towards the deadly addiction of tobacco smoking. Stricter controls on the sale of vaping products can only serve to restrict their availability while ensuring more professional management of the products. I congratulate the Government and the Minister in particular on their work in this area. There is no question in my mind that vaping helps some people in their effort to cease tobacco smoking. But in the bigger picture, it provides a pathway to tobacco smoking, particularly among young people. Unless we control it, it will only serve to undo decades of strong public health work to reduce the rate of smoking in this country.

It is worth remembering what an achievement that has been over many decades. Rates of smoking in Australia in the '70s were in the order of 40 per cent to 50 per cent. In some suburbs in Sydney, that has now dropped to 6 per cent. It is 17 per cent to 20 per cent in my area, sadly, and as high as 40 per cent amongst First Nations people. I have no doubt that has a significant impact on their health. We need to stop people smoking and control vapes, because I believe they lead young people to take up smoking and will undo the work that we have done. I also hope that better regulation of the supply of vaping products will provide a foundation for tackling the organised crime element that is becoming increasingly prevalent in the black market tobacco trade, with the many

associated problems that such activity delivers. I have spoken in this place on that issue and campaigned on it this year.

Certainly, higher penalties are part of what legitimate retailers in my community are telling me we need. While I welcome higher penalties and tighter controls on vaping products, the elephant in the room remains tobacco smoking—particularly, as I have said before, the explosion of illegal tobacco sales across the State. Many speakers have spoken on that tonight. I have recently completed extensive consultation with industry and health stakeholders on my proposed bill to require tobacco sellers to be licensed and to increase the penalties for those who flout the laws. I am delighted to say there has been widespread support for a licensing system, with many legitimate operators saying that it will be an important step towards tackling a problem that is enriching criminals while decimating the incomes of honest retailers. I know that the Minister is aware and supportive of that.

At the same time, illegal tobacco is costing the nation dearly, with the Federal Government stating in a recent report that it is staring at a \$25 billion hole in its budget because of lost tobacco excise, which is sadly seen as having the effect of encouraging criminality because the cost of legitimate tobacco has gone through the roof. It is critical that we do not allow criminals to scoff at our laws. As the black market continues to spread its tentacles throughout the State, there is an increasing risk of violence erupting, as we have seen in Victoria. That is not to mention the potential for money laundering with the cash sales required for those illegal retailers.

Licensing will be just one weapon in the armoury against that criminality, and more will need to be done. Licensing will also allow the retention of control over health messaging to smokers and new recruits to the addiction. Of course, I would much prefer that nobody smoked and there was no need to legislate controls, but we need to make sure the rules around tobacco purchases are complied with. That includes messaging so the health impacts are reinforced. We need to support legitimate retailers and make sure that they comply with the requirements, which are part of our actions as a society to reduce the rate of smoking. In my view, a licensing system will be a firm way of supporting legitimate retailers.

Accepting that smoking will not go away, even if there has been some success in reducing rates, a big-picture approach is needed. That includes vaping, of course, which is the subject of the bill. Coming back to that, it is important that we have steps in place to control vaping. This legislation, which I understand to mirror Federal legislation, is an important part of our Government's response to that. I commend the bill to the House and look forward to taking that big-picture approach to the large challenge before us.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (19:24):** In reply: I thank honourable members for their contribution to the debate on the Public Health (Tobacco) Amendment Bill 2024. In particular, I thank my parliamentary colleagues the Parliamentary Secretary for Health and my good friend the member for Bega, and the members representing the electorates of Prospect, Parramatta, Mount Druitt and Heathcote. I thank crossbench and Opposition members who spoke on the bill: the member for Vacluse and shadow Minister, and the members representing the electorates of Wagga Wagga, Balmain, Terrigal, Orange, Murray, North Shore, Clarence, Albury, Goulburn, Drummoyne, Coffs Harbour, Tamworth and Kiama.

I acknowledge and thank a number of people who have worked hard to prepare this important bill. Certainly, it is not a silver bullet; I never once pretended it was. But it is a reforming piece of legislation on what I still believe to be the biggest public health challenge our young people face. I thank Jason Emmett at the Parliamentary Counsel's Office and Hugh Percival and Gemma Broderick at NSW Health for their work on drafting this legislation. Meredith Claremont and the Population and Public Health division have been working to enforce the laws and manage the dedicated team of enforcement officers across New South Wales, who go out and respond to the sorts of cases the member for Vacluse rightly highlighted as an issue she experienced with her family recently. From my office, I thank senior policy advisers Dr Vivienne Moxham-Hall and Lynden Bartrim, who have been supported by my director of policy, Jenelle Rimmer, and my chief of staff, Matthew McLean. Their Minister is extremely passionate about this significant piece of work, and I thank them for the work hours and investment they put into this, as well as the ongoing stakeholder engagement that we have developed.

As members know, the bill introduces offences to the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2022 regarding the supply and possession of vaping products, modelled on the Commonwealth Government's recent vaping reforms. Importantly, that will allow New South Wales officers to facilitate enforcement of the Commonwealth offences by using their existing powers under those Acts. The bill also amends the Criminal Procedure Act 1986, allowing the offences to be dealt with summarily. The bill also removes the references to e-cigarettes from the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008, as they are no longer required.

Finally, the bill amends the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000, which was introduced a long time ago but has made a difference to the environment in which we all operate. That will ensure that vaping remains prohibited where smoking tobacco is also prohibited. The bill responds to the widespread emergence of recreational e-cigarette use, which represents a significant public health risk—particularly, as I have said consistently to stakeholders both publicly and privately, for young people. Those changes will ensure that New South Wales officers can effectively implement and enforce Commonwealth prohibitions on the supply and possession of vaping products for recreational purposes. There will be future legislation around illegal tobacco and licensing.

I thank the shadow Minister for raising some of those issues, as well as the member for Wagga Wagga and all the members who spoke on this important piece of legislation. Certainly, it will not be a silver bullet. But it is a part of our attempt, working across the political divide, to get on top of this issue. If we are honest with each other, I think we will admit the issue has probably been in front of legislators for too long. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mrs Helen Dalton and Ms Kellie Sloane.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** 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 5 be agreed to.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:29):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2024-186B in globo:

**No. 1 Cross-reference**

Page 5, Schedule 1[2], proposed section 20(9), line 46. Omit "(9)(b)". Insert instead "(8)(b)".

**No. 2 Cross-reference**

Page 12, Schedule 2[1], proposed section 85B(9), line 43. Omit "(9)(b)". Insert instead "(8)(b)".

I will not make a contribution. The amendments deal with typos and small errors.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (19:29):** I thank the member for Murray. Like the shadow Minister, the member for Murray has engaged with us on this bill. She has been thorough. We are very appreciative of that. The Government supports the amendments, which clarify—just so the House is aware—that vaping goods in their final dosage form, which are supplied for the purpose of smoking cessation management, is the form in which they can be administered without change. These are sensible amendments and the Government supports them.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** The question is that amendments Nos 1 and 2 of the member for Murray on sheet c2024-186B be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (19:30):** By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2024-181A in globo:

**No. 1 Increased penalties for certain offences under Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008**

Page 19, Schedule 4. Insert after line 18—

**[2A] Sections 6, 7 and 8**

Omit "100 penalty units" wherever occurring.

Insert instead "1,400 penalty units".

**[2B] Sections 6, 7 and 8**

Omit "500 penalty units" wherever occurring.

Insert instead "7,000 penalty units".

**No. 2 Proceedings for offences under Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008**

Page 22, Schedule 4. Insert after line 25—

**[40A] Section 54**

Omit "1,000 penalty units" from section 54(2).

Insert instead "7,000 penalty units".

**[40B] Section 54(3)**

Omit "12 months". Insert instead "2 years".

As I indicated in my contribution to the second reading debate, the Coalition is seeking to increase penalties for tobacco-related offences, as well as the increased penalties for vapes in this bill. There is a precedence for this in Queensland, where, in its legislative response to the Commonwealth laws, the Government simultaneously introduced fines for both vapes and illicit tobacco.

If enacted without amendment, this bill would substantially increase penalties for offences involving vapes, while leaving offences involving other illegal tobacco products untouched. This may have the unintended and perverse consequence of skewing the incentive structure for criminal organisations to move away from supplying vapes towards black market cigarettes. The proposed amendments immediately address those unintended consequences by maintaining parity between comparable offences involving vapes and illegal tobacco products. Just like vapes, the sale of illegal tobacco is a significant threat to the health and safety of the New South Wales public. We should not miss this opportunity to pass robust laws for both illegal vapes and illegal tobacco.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (19:32):** I thank the shadow Minister and member for Vaucluse for moving these amendments, and for her participation and engagement in this debate. I thank her also for her long history in her previous role of health promotion, education and awareness, which are extremely important to me. The Government does not support the Opposition amendments, which seek to increase penalties for tobacco-related offences from 100 penalty units or \$11,000 for an individual breaching sections 6, 7 and 8 to 1,400 penalty units or \$154,000; and 500 penalty units or \$55,000 for a corporation breaching sections 6, 7 and 8 to 7,000 penalty units or \$770,000.

This bill is focused on vaping reforms and does not include changes for tobacco penalties. I make it clear to members and to the community that the Government supports strong penalties for people who breach tobacco offences. The Government has not ignored tobacco legislation. There is a plan to increase tobacco penalties, which is being progressed in a separate bill. The Opposition amendments would increase penalties by more than 10 times, which could have perverse implications. It would mean that the offences against tobacco are mismatched with the offences to prevent the sale of vapes. The increases to the penalties are extremely large, from 100 penalty units to 1,400 penalty units for a person and from 500 penalty units to 7,000 penalty units for a corporation. Those changes should be subject to consultation and analysis for any issues with non-compliance with tobacco packaging and sales.

The increase to the jurisdiction of the Local Court is also extremely large, from 1,000 penalty units to 7,000 penalty units. Work should be done on whether there are any cognate provisions with similar penalty units. Further, given the other amendments are not supported, this amendment is not necessary. The increase in the length of time in which proceedings can commence from 12 months to two years should be subject to further consideration, including for procedural fairness. As I said consistently both in the lead up to this debate and during the debate, the Government does support strong penalties and is looking at introducing legislation around licencing, which the member for Wagga Wagga is very keen on, and an increase in penalties in relation to the Public Health (Tobacco) Act. We are currently in active consultation with key stakeholders and other departments to ensure consistency across the tobacco Act in how these penalties can be enforced.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2024-181A be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....34  
Noes .....48  
Majority..... 14

**AYES**

Ayyad, T  
Butler, R  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Dalton, H

James, T  
Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Layzell, D  
McGirr, J  
Moylan, B  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R

Singh, G  
Sloane, K  
Speakman, M  
Taylor, M  
Thompson, T  
Tuckerman, W  
Ward, G  
Williams, L

## AYES

Davies, T  
Griffin, J  
Henskens, A  
Hodges, M

Provest, G  
Regan, M  
Saunders, D

Williams, R  
Williamson, R (teller)  
Wilson, F

## NOES

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

Hagarty, N (teller)  
Hannan, J  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kamper, S  
Kirby, W  
Leong, J  
Li, J  
McDermott, H  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
Minns, C

O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Quinnell, S  
Saffin, J (teller)  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Smith, T  
Stuart, M  
Tesch, L  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Watson, A  
Whan, S  
Wilkinson, K

## PAIRS

Roberts, A  
Toole, P

Hoenig, R  
Washington, K

**Amendments negatived.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 5 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 5 as amended agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## HEALTH INSURANCE LEVIES AMENDMENT BILL 2024

### First Reading

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Ryan Park, read a first time and printed.**

### Second Reading Speech

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (19:43):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024 provides for an increase in the prescribed rate of the health insurance levy. The purpose is to recover revenue being lost because health insurers are not paying the full single room rate when their members stay in single rooms in public hospitals. Health care can be an emotional issue. I know it is for me and for many members in this place. Insurance schemes are notoriously complicated and open to interpretation and argument, so let me begin with some facts. The average cost for public health to accommodate a private patient in a single room is \$1,075 per day. The current single room rate gazetted for New South Wales public hospitals is \$928 per night, which is obviously lower than the cost and represents about a 17 per cent

subsidy. The biggest insurers—those that cover around 70 per cent of people with private insurance in New South Wales—are only paying the shared room rate of \$436 a night, some with an additional nominal amount.

There are 53 private health insurers operating in New South Wales. Of those, 44 do pay the gazetted single room rate when their members are treated in single rooms. Both personally and on behalf of the Treasurer, I thank those that are paying their fair share and doing the right thing. For months now we have been in negotiations with the nine insurers, including the four biggest, that since 2019 have been hiding behind a loophole that makes it hard for us to enforce anything about the shared room rate of \$436. As I pointed out, 44 private health insurers pay \$892 for a single room when that is what their members receive. It is a rate that allows us to recoup most, but not all, of our costs, to ensure that the New South Wales health system can provide quality care across our State.

The nine insurers who do not pay are in breach of an agreement they signed in 2013 with then Treasurer Baird to pay the single room rate. They are draining the New South Wales health system of \$140 million per year, money that all members of this place know is needed for patient care and the demands on our health system. Instead, that money goes directly to insurer profits. Despite their previous agreement, despite the majority of insurers doing the right thing, and despite the damage that underpayment does to the very health care their members rely on, those funds have not negotiated in good faith. They are not honouring their agreement. Today the Government introduces this amendment to the health insurance levy to recover an equivalent amount from insurers by the means available to New South Wales.

It is worth revisiting how we got to this point. In 2019, under the former Government, several health insurers unilaterally decided to underpay NSW Health for single rooms their members were given in public hospitals. These health insurers began paying only the shared room rate, sometimes with a small arbitrary amount on top—which they determined—but nothing near the gazetted rate they signed up to and which NSW Health relies on. At the time, NSW Health tried to work with those insurers to restore funding. I acknowledge the work of the former Government in this space. To be fair to it—and as all members recall—the COVID-19 crisis hit in early 2020. Protecting the health of the New South Wales community rightly took absolute priority—and didn't our public hospitals and staff do us incredibly proud! We relied on them, and they certainly did not let their State down.

However, this situation cannot continue. NSW Health has met with health insurers multiple times over the past year, particularly over the last few months, but vague acknowledgements have not led to action. Last month, mealy-mouthed words became a public campaign of disinformation. The health funds have pre-empted the move we are making today and are running a scare campaign, alleging that the legislation before the House to recover our costs is in fact an increase. That is not right. The underpayments from health insurers cost our community \$140 million per year. This bill looks to recover the underpaid amounts from health insurers through the health insurance levy. The bill gives the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance power to increase the levy prescribed rate from the current \$1.77 a week to \$3.27 a week if the negotiations with the health insurers remain unsuccessful. I emphasise that we are continuing our negotiations, and we hope to have it resolved without the use of this legislation.

The health funds were able to anticipate this move because it is what former Treasurer Mike Baird resorted to when he faced similar underpayments. In 2013, under Treasurer Baird's leadership, the Parliament took the same approach to insurers underpaying for single room accommodation. Those opposite will recall—and I certainly do after being in Parliament for a few years after that point—that under Mike Baird the Parliament passed the State Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget Measures) Act 2013 to take the very same steps to recover revenue if insurers did not do the right thing. At the time, health insurers reversed their intended underpayments and the relevant sections of that legislation never commenced.

The funds recovered through the levy would cover the shortfall to New South Wales public hospitals so that hospital services can be maintained and enhanced. The bill will ensure that the Government can continue to deliver world-class hospital services to our communities that we love and are honoured to represent in the Parliament, and that health insurers maintain their contribution to the cost of private patients treated in public hospitals as agreed to in 2013. The bill will empower the Treasurer to increase the levy if negotiations are unsuccessful. I emphasise that we remain willing to continue to have those discussions. We would rather health insurers simply pay the subsidised single room rate than pay an increased health insurance levy. But we cannot allow New South Wales public hospitals to go underfunded while insurance profits are propped up.

Let me be very clear, all members of this House appreciate the need for investment in our public hospitals. Every single member of the Legislative Assembly understands that and advocates rightly for their communities and their communities' health services and health needs. As all of us know, our hospitals are under increasing pressure, and we need every dollar available to invest in essential health workers and the services they importantly deliver for our communities. For five years a small group of private health funds have been short-changing our public hospitals and not paying their bills in full. Enough is enough. This is unsustainable, and having offered

insurers a chance to come to the table and resume the longstanding arrangement of paying their bills in full, we are taking the action necessary to recoup this funding.

I urge the funds not to punish policy holders or public hospitals and simply return to longstanding arrangements and pay their hospital bills in full. The revenue lost from funds not paying their full bills could build a new regional hospital each year, fund over 1,000 additional nurses or reduce the elective surgery waitlist by thousands. The legislation is important. If we do not need to use it, we will not. We will continue to fight for the people of New South Wales. We will make sure that we fix this and make sure, importantly, that private health insurers seeing record profits do the right thing and pay their way when it comes to services in our public hospitals. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **LEPPINGTON ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:53):** I acknowledge all the year 12 students in Leppington who sat their first exam for the HSC today. While this time can be immensely stressful, filled with long hours of study, late-night revisions and the weight of expectations, I remind them that they are not alone in their endeavours. The dedicated students of Leppington, whether they are from Clancy Catholic College, Good Samaritan Catholic College, Mount Carmel Catholic College, Eagle Vale High School, John Edmondson High School, Robert Townson High School, Al-Faisal College, Amity College Leppington, Amity College Prestons, Bellfield College, Christadelphian Heritage College, Thomas Hassall Anglican College, Unity Grammar or William Carey Christian School, each bring unique strengths and aspirations to the challenge of the HSC. With the support of their teachers, families and fellow peers, they should embrace the journey ahead knowing that hard work, commitment and perseverance will pave the way to their future. While the pressure may feel overwhelming at times, it is an opportunity for growth and self-discovery. As they embark on this important chapter, I wish them all the best and good luck. You've got this!

#### **BUDDY OLDMAN**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:54):** I congratulate Indigenous boxing champion Darcy Brown, known by his stage name Buddy Oldman, on his remarkable achievement in raising awareness for mental health through his recent challenge. Buddy completed an incredible 86 hours of continuous boxing at the Hurricane Combat Centre in North Albury. He not only pushed his physical limits but also highlighted the critical issue facing our community—the loss of 8.6 Australian lives to suicide each day. As a proud Wiradjuri man, Buddy has used his sporting platform to advocate for mental health awareness, encouraging individuals to speak up and seek help. Buddy's personal journey fuels his commitment to this vital cause as well. I thank Buddy for the powerful reminder of the importance of mental health awareness and the need for open conversations. His efforts inspire many. I thank him for making such a significant and positive impact on our community.

#### **MANDAEAN WOMEN'S UNION**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (19:55):** Mandaean, like many cultural and religious groups that have settled in Australia, have fled persecution to rebuild their lives. The Mandaean Women's Union in Australia, founded in February 2006, has been instrumental in supporting incoming Mandaean refugees. Offering information sessions and courses and hosting events, they have continued to support the needs and challenges of women and their families in resettling. With bases in Liverpool and Fairfield, the union's membership has grown to approximately 200 members. That growth has enabled the Mandaean community to maintain its vital connection to cultural and religious traditions. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the incredible women who have been volunteering their time since the union's establishment: Saba Al Khamisee, Ektfaa Abed, Nedhal Amir and Suham Talal, among many others. I thank them for their contributions to the community.

#### **GLENMORE PARK BRUMBIES**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (19:56):** On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I congratulate and commend the Glenmore Park Brumbies Junior Rugby League Football Club for a very successful 2024 season. This season saw 425 players across 29 teams compete for the Brumbies. Fifteen teams progressed to the finals, with the under-12 division 2 team and under-13 division 1 team qualifying for the grand final. The under-13 division 1 team proceeded to win its grand final. I am thrilled that the club secured so many achievements, capped off by a grand final victory. The club had many highlights off the field too, including an Easter raffle, gala day, oak relay race, trivia night and old boys day. I thank the amazing volunteers who contribute their time, effort and expertise to enable the players to compete and enjoy a community-based environment. I commend the players for representing our local area with pride and I wish the club continued success.



**JONATHAN AGIUS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (19:57):** I am delighted to congratulate my friend and fellow community member Jonathan Agius on his inauguration to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller (OSJ Malta) under the New South Wales priory. The prestigious honour recognises Jonathan's exceptional contributions to our community and his unwavering commitment to service. Jonathan is a local real estate agent with a sense of community embedded in his core. His dedication to our community is evident in his leadership roles as a board member of North West Community Services, the treasurer of the North West Business Chamber and an executive of the Maltese Chamber of Commerce. His tireless efforts to promote economic growth, foster collaboration and support local businesses have had a profound impact on our region. Jonathan celebrated his investiture ceremony on Saturday 12 October at Our Lady of Victories Catholic Church in Horsley Park. I extend my warmest congratulations to him on receiving this honour and my heartfelt appreciation for his community spirit. His induction into the Knights of Malta is a testament to Jonathan's character, compassion, and unwavering commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others.

**BEAU GLYDE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (19:58):** Whistles blow and tries are allowed or ruled as "no try". Young Beau Glyde is making his mark on the football field not as a player but as one of the most important figures: the referee. This year, Beau was given the incredible opportunity to referee the under-12s grand final, which included a young, strapping Lleyton Kemp. It was a game the Tigers ultimately lost, but a remarkable achievement in just Beau's second season of refereeing. With both confidence and skill, which adds up to an accuracy belying his years, Beau's commitment to the game has not gone unnoticed. He has been honoured with the well-deserved award of Group 2 Referee Associations Junior Referee of the Year. Beau has quickly developed a reputation for his ability to manage the game effectively. His confidence and composure on the field have made him a respected figure among players and coaches alike. Beau is destined to be a great ref; with his commitment to fair play and poise under pressure, success is assured. Go get 'em, Beau!

**MICHAEL "BOLCHY" BOLCH**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:59):** I congratulate Maitland Magpies coach Michael "Bolchy" Bolch on his seven-year coaching stint at the club. While Bolchy coached the club, Maitland won two National Premier League premierships—its first in the top league—and made three grand finals. Prior to coaching at Maitland, Bolchy coached Hamilton/Newcastle Olympic for eight years and also had six seasons at Valentine Phoenix. In all, Bolchy has coached for 19 consecutive seasons in the top division, and his teams missed the finals just twice in all that time. In his eight years at Olympic and now seven years at Maitland, Bolchy only missed the finals once with each team. Bolchy has spent 13 out of the past 15 years making it to the finals. In 2025, sadly, Michael will return to coach at Newcastle Olympic. He will be missed in Maitland, but we will use all of the skills and abilities he has nurtured in our players to beat Olympic. I thank Bolchy for his contribution to Maitland football.

**GRACE MORRIS**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:00):** I recognise Grace Morris for her tireless efforts towards fundraising for breast cancer support and research after tragically losing her own mother in 2020 at the age of 51. In 2022 Grace organised an event in Hillston, raising \$42,000 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation, McGrath Foundation, her local Can Assist and the Cancer Patients Assistance Society of New South Wales. Grace assisted in the sponsorship of a raffle in May 2023 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation. Events held by local rugby union clubs, the Hillston Hogs and Hay Cutters, have raised funds including a donation of \$10,000. At the Carrathool Shire Australia Day Awards, Grace was presented the Community Event of the Year award for her success in organising the Hillston Breast Cancer Awareness Fundraiser. Grace is to be commended for her care for her community and her hard work in raising funds for research and awareness of breast cancer.

**RACHAEL PEARSON**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:01):** I speak about Rachael Pearson, who is Apprentice of the Year 2024 from TAFE. As a proud beneficiary of TAFE, few things give me greater joy than seeing the opportunities provided by vocational education being fully utilised. That is why I was so proud to see Helensburgh resident Rachael Pearson named Apprentice of the Year at the 2024 NSW Training Awards. Rachael has excelled in a mechanical engineering apprenticeship and was awarded the 2022 Stan Gilmore Memorial Award for first in Stage 1 Fitting/Machining at TAFE and followed that up in 2023 with being named the Apprenticeship Employment Network Women in Trades Apprentice of the Year. The multi-talented Rachael put her career on hold to co-captain the Parramatta Eels in the NRLW but plans to get back on the tools when her rugby league career ends. Rachael will now represent New South Wales at the Australian Training Awards in December. We

congratulate Rachael on her awards and thank her for being an outstanding example for what is possible with vocational education.

#### TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR WELLS

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (20:02):** I pay tribute to Mr Arthur Wells, who was Narrabri's last surviving World War II veteran and who, at the age of 97, passed away peacefully on 21 September. Mr Wells enlisted on 22 January 1945 as an 18-year-old in the 2nd/1st Australian Guard Regiment, serving for a total of 1,011 days and spending 569 days overseas attached to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Arthur was discharged on 29 October 1947, just before his twenty-first birthday, with a final rank of lance corporal. Mr Wells was serving for the Australian Imperial Force in Japan when Emperor Hirohito announced the surrender of the Japanese in September 1945, officially bringing hostilities to a close. Mr Arthur Wells lived in his own home independently up until his passing. I send my sincere condolences to the Wells family. Arthur's contribution to his country was and still is very much appreciated. May he now rest in peace.

#### LYNNE ENGLERT

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:03):** I congratulate dedicated Warilla Public School crossing supervisor Lynne Englert on her almost three decades helping our most vulnerable road users stay safe when entering and leaving the school gates. Lynne retired last month after helping generations of students to safely get to school and will spend more time travelling and with her family. School crossing supervisors such as Lynne play a significant role in keeping children safe in school zones and also act as important role models for young children in their early years of safety education. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I congratulate and thank Lynne for her extraordinary service. I wish her well in retirement.

#### LAUREL SHARPE

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (20:04):** I recognise Laurel Sharpe, who celebrated her 100th birthday this week. I visited Laurel and her family—Anabelle, Michael and Tina—at Estia Health in Forster to share this special occasion with them. Surrounded by loved ones, Laurel enjoyed a wonderful birthday morning tea, and she proudly showed me her letter of congratulations from the King. When asked about her secret to a long life, Laurel shared a few words of wisdom: no drinking, no smoking and plenty of linedancing. Her life motto? "Que sera, sera"—whatever will be, will be. Laurel's sense of humour had me in stitches. She told me about a family superstition. Her mother would always keep her home from school on Friday the 13th, so when Laurel found herself in room No. 13 at Estia Health, she requested it to be changed to 12A. I congratulate Laurel on a life well lived. I leave members with some of Laurel's cheeky parting words to me. "If you are going to make an impression—I forgot what I was going to say." I wish a happy 100th birthday to Laurel.

#### TRIBUTE TO BRIAN PASSMORE

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (20:05):** I acknowledge the passing of Brian Passmore, who died on 22 September, aged 90. Brian had a remarkable teaching career. In 1977 he was the youngest principal in New South Wales, having been appointed to Bombala. Brian was the principal of Moruya High School from 1984 to 1989. Moruya High School said:

His dedication, leadership and passion for education have left a lasting impact on all those who had the privilege of knowing him.

Brian's commitment to shaping young minds and fostering a supportive learning environment will always be remembered fondly by the Moruya High School community.

His legacy lives on in the countless students whose lives he influenced and inspired during his tenure as principal.

Brian was a veritable renaissance man. He excelled in tennis and athletics as a young man. He was a qualified industrial chemist, a poet, an actor and an author. He was a genuine humanitarian with a strong social and environmental conscience. Vale, Brian Passmore.

#### WAKEHURST ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (20:06):** Today I wish all year 12 students in Wakehurst—in fact, on the northern beaches and across the State—the very best of luck as they start their HSC exams. This is a big moment. Years of hard work and perseverance have led to this point. It has not been easy, especially with everything the past few years have thrown at them. To the students at The Forest High School, Killarney Heights High School, Cromer Campus, Pittwater House, St Augustine's College, Oxford Falls Grammar, Mackellar and the Freshie High Manly Campus—just outside of the area—and St Luke's Grammar School, I say well done for getting this far. The HSC is important but remember that it is just one step and there is a whole world of opportunities waiting for you after this. I give a huge shout-out to the teachers, principals, parents and families who have been there for these students every step of the way. Their support means everything. Good luck to all of you—go in, do your best and know that we are all cheering you on. You guys have got this!

### **PADSTOW RSL FISHING CLUB**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:07):** I congratulate Padstow RSL Fishing Club on a successful Gone Fishing Day at Lambeth Reserve last week. Gone Fishing Day celebrates the love of fishing and passing down the fishing tradition to future generations. It encourages people to get out and about and to be on the water's edge. The Padstow RSL Fishing Club currently offers deep sea fishing and land-based fishing in the Georges River to about 110 members, both young and old. Lambeth Reserve is a beautiful place in my electorate of East Hills for a bit of fishing. Fishing is a sport I have enjoyed over the years, and I hope the participants enjoyed catching some big fish on their day out. I thank all the fishing club members who helped out on the day. I thank the club for promoting fishing in our river-bound electorate of East Hills. Bringing the love of fishing to a new generation of keen anglers is such a wonderful way to get young people out and into nature.

### **MEN'S WORLD SAND GREENS CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:08):** I recognise the inaugural Men's World Sand Greens Championship held at the Binalong Golf Club in September. The Binalong Golf Club was founded in 1857. The course was originally nine holes but now boasts 18 holes and a par of 72. The tournament set Binalong on the world stage and saw a myriad of individuals come together to prepare and execute a range of tasks to showcase the magnificent course and the distinct style of golf, and oversight the success of the overall tournament. I congratulate the following individuals who took leading roles: club president Michael Brayshaw, club secretary Madaline Brayshaw, vice-president Will Grogan, club captain Pat Dwyer, golf secretary Duncan Burleigh, head groundsman Denis Williams, greenskeeper Chris Glover, Mitch Grange, George Elliot, Libby Elliot, Peter Muscat and Caroline Muscat. It was also announced on the day that John Lee and Christopher Glover received life memberships of the wonderful club. I acknowledge that there were many others involved in making this a terrific and awe-inspiring event. I thank and congratulate everyone involved.

### **BRYAN SKEPPER**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (20:09):** I acknowledge former director and chair of the NSW Seafood Industry Council, Mr Bryan Skepper, for his 50 years of involvement in the New South Wales and Australian seafood industry. Bryan's leadership and dedication as the director and chair have left a lasting impression on the seafood industry in New South Wales and Australia-wide. With a career in seafood dating back to 1973, Bryan has achieved numerous accomplishments, most notably playing a leading role in efforts to upgrade the Sydney Fish Market and orchestrating a unified voice for seafood industry participants in the State. In 2019 Bryan was honoured with the industry ambassador award for making a substantial positive difference in the seafood industry and being a highly effective and respected leader. I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating Bryan on his outstanding efforts and contributions to the New South Wales and Australian seafood industry over the past 50 years.

### **SHOALHAVEN CHEER ACADEMY**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (20:10):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales is delighted to recognise Shoalhaven Cheer Academy's adult team, Natural Disaster. The Shoalhaven Cheer Academy All Stars is the Shoalhaven's most prestigious cheer, dance and athletic training centre based in south Nowra. The team is also flying high after an outstanding performance in 2024 at the State cheerleading championships on 27 and 28 July. They were crowned non-tumble grand champions and were also the second highest scoring routine of the weekend, which was a terrific performance. Natural Disaster was formed in 2020 after a wine, cheese and cheer fundraiser when parents came in to try out their children's sport. The group fell in love with cheer and started a team. I acknowledge the Shoalhaven Cheer Academy owner, Eliza Bartlett, and the following team members for their outstanding efforts so far: Katrina, Mackenzie, Wendy, Ashley, Kathy and Tegan. Natural Disaster is now heading off to the national championships and our local community is extremely proud of the team for its professionalism and dancing ability. I say a huge congratulations and well done to Shoalhaven Cheer Academy.

### **RURAL FIRE SERVICE BASIN VIEW BRIGADE**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (20:11):** I take this opportunity to recognise and celebrate Basin View Brigade's seventy-fifth anniversary, a testament to the strength, commitment and resilience of its volunteers. Brigade Captain Gary Creer's words emphasise the importance of taking stock of the brigade's history and achievements, reminding everyone of the sacrifices and hard work that goes into protecting the community. The unveiling of the memorial garden was a touching tribute and a beautiful way to honour both past and present volunteers who have given so much to keep Basin View safe. With 59 active members trained to respond to a variety of emergencies from bushfires to motor vehicle accidents, the Basin View Brigade stands as a pillar of strength and preparedness in the region. Its involvement in significant fire events, including Deans Gap, Wirritin and the devastating Currowan fires of 2019-20, highlights the brigade's unwavering bravery and dedication.

### HARBORD DIGGERS RSL SUB-BRANCH

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (20:12):** I acknowledge the Harbord Diggers RSL Sub-Branch, which on Friday 18 October will host its annual ANZAC Sportsmen of War Luncheon. Each year the luncheon celebrates the nexus between sport and war by commemorating the remarkable stories of local legends from the Manly area who are remembered as legends of both the sporting field and the battlefield. This year distinguished guests and members of the local community will gather to honour Manly boy John "Willy" Williams. John Williams was a champion surfer, medical student, Royal Air Force air ace and allied prisoner of war, whose heroic efforts in escaping German captivity in 1944 would form the basis of the 1963 film *The Great Escape*. I wish the Harbord Diggers RSL Sub-Branch every success for this year's ANZAC Sportsmen of War Luncheon and express my admiration for all the branch does to support our veteran community, both past and present.

### CAO DAI

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (20:13):** Cao Dai, also known as Caodaism, is an interesting and unique religion native to Vietnam. The religion was founded in 1926 during a transitional period when traditional Vietnamese religions and beliefs met with Western influences and French colonialism. Cao Dai is a faith that harmoniously blends elements from the major religions and philosophies of the east and the west. This integration of diverse religious tradition embodies Cao Dai's core values of unity, harmony and peace. To date Cao Dai has approximately six million followers worldwide, primarily in Vietnam and among the Vietnamese diasporas. I had a delightful time on 23 August 2024 attending the vegetarian fundraising dinner to support the construction of the Cao Dai temple in Fairfield, which serves many of my Cabramatta constituents. I thank Mr Cong Minh Mai and the NSW Council of Caodaist Association for its kind invitation. I look forward to witnessing the completion of the temple and the lasting positive impact it will bring to our community.

### MOSMAN NETBALL CLUB

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (20:14):** I congratulate Mosman Netball Club on an immensely successful winter netball season. Since its inception in the 1980s, Mosman Netball Club has gone from strength to strength. Boasting well over 600 members, it is the largest community netball club in Australia. After a season of sportsmanship, comradery and tough competition, Mosman Netball Club won all of the championship trophies, securing first place in under 10s, under 11s, under 12s, under 13s, under 14s and under 15s. Mosman had 11 teams competing over the grand final weekend and nine of them secured gold, with the other teams landing runner-up places. I congratulate all the girls in the winning and runner-up teams. They have clearly put a lot of effort into the season, and it has truly paid off. I also congratulate the Mosman Netball Club coaches, who donate so much of their valuable time. Lastly, I congratulate all those on the club committee, including Maureen Sinclair, a club patron; president Marianne Rogerson; and vice-presidents Alison Francis, Diana Coffey and Claire Kelsey. What a fantastic year for Mosman Netball Club. I cannot wait to see what the next netball season brings.

### 24 HOUR FIGHT AGAINST CANCER MACARTHUR

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (20:15):** I am delighted to acknowledge the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur, which I attended on Saturday morning with my colleagues Anoulack Chanthivong, Nathan Hagarty, Sally Quinnell and other elected representatives, particularly Ryan Park. I thank him for donating \$50,000 towards the cause, which was fantastic. This organisation has been running for 20 years and has raised over \$5 million for cancer sufferers in the Macarthur, particularly in Campbelltown. I do not know where we would be without them. Every member in this place knows that we will all be touched by cancer at some time. This organisation is simply amazing. I thank Warren Morrison, Sue McGarrity and all the organisers and participants. We would be lost without them and their efforts. I thank and acknowledge them.

### DANDELION SUPPORT NETWORK

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (20:16):** Funds were flowing to help Dandelion Support Network create a brighter future for vulnerable families at its fundraising high tea on 14 September at St George Motor Boat Club. More than 80 volunteers donate their time each week at Dandelion to carefully inspect and prepare donated nursery furniture and items before thoughtfully packaging them to support families in need during challenging times. Our community came together in support of this incredible organisation that has a life-changing impact for families escaping domestic violence, people living with mental health issues or refugees starting a new chapter. Not-for-profit grassroots organisations like Dandelion Support Network are an essential part of the fabric and culture of our local community. I recognise the team at Dandelion—namely Kathryn Brennan, Craig Berger, Michael Barker, Dominique Brown, Tracy Edwards, Amanda Treharne, Gabrielle Humphreys, Brenda Lavender, Saskia Duncan, Kaylene Pring and Katrina Lonergan—for their efforts, and especially Danielle Ruming and James Lavender for organising the fundraiser. I thank the team at Dandelion Support Network for uplifting families experiencing difficulties and look forward to visiting their new home in Kirrawee.

**AKASH ENJETI**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (20:17):** I am delighted to acknowledge 15-year-old Akash Enjeti, an extraordinary young innovator from Merewether who has been named a 2024 Rise Global Winner. He is one of just 100 winners worldwide and one of only two Australians to receive this honour. Through a demanding process of interviews, IQ tests and presentations, Akash's winning project, ChillOut, stood out. Recognising that traditional mindfulness techniques do not always resonate with younger audiences, Akash designed the ChillOut mindfulness app to support young people's mental health by incorporating game elements to engage users. As a winner, Akash will attend a global summit next year, connecting with like-minded youth from across the world. Akash's achievement is a testament to his passion for helping others. I am excited to see where his next journey leads him.

**KAREN MURPHY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:18):** I recognise an individual who has made an enormous contribution to the celebration of our multicultural community through her service to the Sydney St Patrick's Day Organisation. Karen Murphy moved to Sydney in 2010 from Ireland and has been a committee member for Sydney St Patrick's Day since 2015. In her time with the committee, Karen has worked hard to promote the Irish community in Sydney. After serving as the committee's president for six years, Karen has recently announced that she will be stepping down from her role. I am sad to see her go as I have had the pleasure of working alongside Karen and witnessed her passion, commitment and drive to share Irish culture in our community. Last year, Karen was awarded the Peter Brennan Chair Award by The Lansdowne Club Australia. The award recognises her significant and selfless contribution to the Irish community in Australia. The significant annual St Patrick's Day celebrations across Sydney are a testament to Karen's legacy and her passion. I thank Karen for all her work and wish her all the very best in her future endeavours.

**FIJI DAY**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:19):** Fiji Day on 10 October celebrates Fiji achieving independence from colonial British rule. I joined thousands of members of Liverpool's Fijian diaspora community at Woodward Park. It was a day of pride and celebration for all Fijians, Fijian Australians and our broader community. I acknowledge His Excellency Mr Ajay Bhai Amrit, the Fijian High Commissioner to Australia, and Sachin Sharma of Fiji Airways for joining us—and I hope that Fiji Airways will be able to connect Western Sydney with Fiji through the Western Sydney airport. The occasion served as a strong reminder of the strength and resilience of Fijians, as well as their rich contribution to the fabric of our multicultural society. There was plenty of food, children's rides, live performances and stalls for everyone to enjoy, including some kava for those who wanted to partake. The event could not have happened without the works of many sponsors and volunteers. I recognise Sashi Lal, who has organised this event for many years, and in-house chef Prakash Chand, as well as the whole team. I look forward to next year's event.

**MOTORFEST COMMITTEE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:20):** I acknowledge the 2024 MotorFest committee, and its incredible contribution to local community organisations, after the success of the recent event. On Saturday 28 September, the committee injected \$50,000 into 11 local charities doing amazing work in our community. The well-deserving recipients were the Australian Skin Cancer Foundation, Give Me 5 for Kids, Dubbo Prostate Cancer Group, Tradies in Sight, LeaderLife, Macquarie Home Stay, Pink Angels, Country Hope, Help A Mate, Dubbo Community Men's Shed and the South Dubbo Veterans and Community Men's Shed. Those organisations operate without any consistent funding and rely heavily on community support and the generosity of donations. The funds will make an incredible difference in allowing them to keep providing their essential services. I give a big thumbs up to the volunteer committee members, who put on such a great event and also continue to give back to the community with such a substantial amount of funding. It is a good sign and great credit to them. MotorFest itself was a great success. Well done to the committee!

**SCHOFIELDS CRICKET CLUB**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (20:21):** I congratulate the Schofields Cricket Club, which celebrated its centenary last Friday. From the first innings to today, the club has been a cornerstone of our sporting community, fostering friendships, teamwork and a love for the game. Generations of players have donned the club colours, sharing unforgettable moments on the field and forming bonds that extend beyond the pitch. Through triumphs and challenges, the Schofields Cricket Club has always been a team where skills are honed, character is built and sportsmanship is celebrated. Importantly, too, the Schofields Cricket Club has been a nurturing ground for young talent, inspiring future generations to embrace the sport and uphold its values. I make special mention of the under-15s division 1 team, which is playing exceptionally well so far this season, and I look forward to

hearing of its success. Historically, the Schofields Cricket Club has always turned challenges into opportunities and setbacks into comebacks. I am sure that in our growing community the Schofields Cricket Club has a strong future ahead, and I wish the club all the best.

### **BONDI AND NORTH BONDI SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (20:22):** As the surf lifesaving season opens, I recognise the outstanding contribution of my two local surf lifesaving clubs, Bondi and North Bondi. They are the oldest surf lifesaving clubs in the world. They patrol our State's busiest beach and welcome millions of visitors every year. Last season, those lifesavers patrolled for more than 40,000 hours. This meant that they were on the beach to conduct more than 440 rescues, 900 first aid treatments and undertake 18,000 preventative actions. Their service saves lives, and it is something that our community and our State is so proud of. I urge everyone swimming at Bondi this summer, or at any patrolled beach, to swim between the flags and listen to the direction of our lifeguards and our lifesavers.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

### **SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:23):** Last week experts, parents, teachers and young people came together for the social media summit held in conjunction with the South Australian Government. It was a unique opportunity to flesh out some of the issues and growing concerns associated with the rapidly evolving digital space, particularly in relation to the impacts on children and young people. The social media summit also presented a unique opportunity for members of this place to engage thoughtfully with our constituents, particularly the young people in our communities, to inform this process of reform.

I recently set up the Liverpool Youth Action Group. The group will function as a direct line of engagement between me, as the member for Liverpool, and young people in my community on all things related to the State Government. As the generation set to inherit what we accomplish in this place, it is vital that they have a say on the matters we debate in this place on a day-to-day basis. The Youth Action Group held its first meeting on a Sunday morning a couple of weeks ago. On the agenda was a discussion about the implications of social media for young people in their day-to-day lives. What eventuated was a thoughtful discussion on the ways that social media can be helpful, as well as its more harmful effects.

For those who may have been paying attention to the recent coverage, social media has been framed as an entirely negative force in the modern world. The Youth Action Group highlighted that the situation is far more nuanced. For example, social media is a key communication tool for many members of the group. In Liverpool, social media is an essential way for many residents to maintain contact with family and friends overseas and stay updated on the wellbeing of loved ones. Recent events in the Middle East have made that even more essential for so many in Liverpool. Members of the group also made reference to social media as an essential means of raising awareness and remaining politically engaged. They highlighted social media platforms as a way in which they stay updated on news and current affairs in a format that is comfortable to them. It also provided many in the group the chance to engage with new ideas or opinions that they would not otherwise encounter.

Turning to some of the more harmful effects of social media, we spent a lot of time unpacking the concept of anonymity on social media. Anonymity was highlighted as a way for people to be more confident in expressing themselves. However, it also seems to diminish accountability and usually heightens the possibility of cyberbullies hiding behind a veil when targeting victims online. For many in the group, they were able to identify, either through their own experiences or the experiences of others, that cyberbullying had a huge impact on young people's mental health. It does not help that many instances of cyberbullying go unreported. Even if they do report it, group members have found existing accountability measures to be largely ineffective and often unevenly applied.

Not to dwell on some of the more harmful features of social media, the group was challenged to think of how to address some of the issues that they highlighted. In the case of anonymity, the group suggested that a tiered system be adopted whereby anonymous profiles would be able to access some, but not all, of the features of social media platforms. A full suite of features would be reserved for users who are able to verify their identity—an interesting thought. Also suggested by group members was a stricter approach to cyberbullying in our justice system, including exploring criminalisation of cyberbullying as a potential deterrent for would-be perpetrators. I acknowledge the presence of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism in the Chamber.

Another suggestion was the review of our education curriculum to better incorporate digital literacy and the promotion of online safety within our school settings. The group found that many existing programs either did not adequately engage with the digital component of bullying or often missed the mark in an attempt to remain engaging or comical. Group members believed that increased parental education and awareness was much needed.

They agreed that parents should be more involved in managing the online activity of their children, but many parents do not understand these platforms well enough to do this effectively, especially those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or those who may live with disabilities.

In our extended discussion, those were just some of the thoughts of the Liverpool Youth Action Group on this important topic. Following the meeting, I compiled the ideas into a submission to the social media summit to make sure that the voices of Liverpool's young people were heard loud and clear. I know that the Government is looking for young people to engage with us on this journey as we strive to make social media a safer place, particularly for our young people as well as for our broader community. I thank the Premier and the Deputy Premier for their close attention to the ideas of our young people.

### SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:28):** I draw members' attention to a particularly special time in our calendar: It is Small Business Month. It is not only an opportunity for small business owners to learn more and grow their businesses but also a time for all of us to celebrate the vital contributions they make to our communities and economy. From coffee shops down the road that know your order every day to homegrown cybersecurity firms working with cutting edge technologies, all small businesses within New South Wales play an incredibly important role in our society. They are truly the backbone of our communities, creating jobs and economic independence for hundreds of thousands of people not just in my electorate of Oatley but right throughout New South Wales. Currently there are over 850,000 small businesses in New South Wales, comprising 97 per cent of all New South Wales businesses. Many are also home-based businesses run by women. Small businesses contribute more than \$500 billion to the Australian economy annually—a staggering figure that underscores their importance not only to New South Wales but also to the nation as a whole.

As important as the statistics are, they only tell part of the story. The true strength of small businesses lies with the individual owners and employees. In New South Wales, the small business sector employs 1.8 million people, representing over 43 per cent of our private sector workforce. They are the families, entrepreneurs and individuals striving to create something sustainable in the face of increasing challenges. Small businesses are local endeavours. They are local people employing local people. They live in the communities—such as my electorate of Oatley—they work in. They know what people need and how they like it. Small businesses are a treasure trove of information and experience. For that, we owe them our gratitude for their contributions to the culture and nature of local communities.

Members on this side of the House have consistently worked to ensure that small business owners have every opportunity to succeed, grow and thrive. In government we took steps to ease the pressures on small businesses by cutting red tape, streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary burdens. From the NSW Small Business Commission to the Business Connect program, the former Government was focused on providing tailored, personalised support to help small businesses start, adapt and grow. Actions like those allow small business owners like my younger brother to thrive. A cabinet-maker by trade, he has managed to expand his operation, upholding the quality standards that his business is known for.

It is well known that being a small business owner is hard work in the best of times; in the current economic climate many small businesses are struggling. The cost-of-living crisis is hitting small businesses hard. Rising costs are squeezing margins and making it increasingly difficult for small businesses to stay afloat, let alone grow. Small businesses need our support now more than ever. The Government needs to ensure that it is creating the right economic conditions for inflation to come down and for consumer spending to rise again. Small business owners continue to feel the pain of higher mortgage repayments, rents, power bills and essentials. Now more than ever we need to keep the doors open because when small businesses succeed, we all succeed.

In my role as shadow Minister for Jobs, Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology, I am committed to ensuring that innovative new ideas are translated into new companies that provide high-paying, quality jobs. I have had the privilege to meet and work with some amazing companies based not just in my electorate but also across New South Wales. For example, in my electorate, ACE Gutters, a family owned and operated manufacturing facility located in Mortdale, is a leader in residential and commercial drainage and home supplies. Companies like ACE Gutters and the hundreds of other small businesses in our local area provide the jobs that put food on the table and give people the chance to strive for a better future for themselves and their family.

During this Small Business Month, I would like to highlight all the fantastic businesses in my electorate, which is why I have been promoting a different local business each day on my social media page. From the Oatley Fruit Market providing fresh produce for locals to the Namaste Curry House in Penshurst, which delivers delicious Nepalese cuisine, there is truly so much on offer in our local community. Community support plays a pivotal role in the success of small businesses. I encourage everyone to shop local this month and to use the services offered by small businesses in our community. Without the help of locals, many small businesses would not survive.

Every dollar spent is a dollar that stays within our community and supports a local family. I thank all small business owners for their passion, commitment and dedication to making our community a better place for all.

### **RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE YOUTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (20:33):** It is a great honour for me to recognise the achievements of my constituents. I have come into this Chamber on many occasions to celebrate the achievements and successes of various athletes and teams in my electorate. Whether it is the Gainsford sisters, Emma and Caitlyn, from the Quakers Hill Pirates, who were both selected to play baseball for New South Wales, or Sebastian Sultana, an alumni from St John XXIII Catholic College, who was selected to represent Australia in the Olympics, these names—amongst those of numerous other young athletes—are a testament to the sporting prowess of the Riverstone electorate.

Today I take the opportunity to reiterate how Riverstone is home to the most youth in the State and how that trend is continuing. A recent audit conducted by Schools Infrastructure paints the picture clearly. The Schofields east region experienced the most substantial increase in the State. In 2016 school enrolments were projected to be 1,500 by 2023; however, the real number was 4,800—exceeding the projected number of students by more than three times. The number of students in Schofields in previous projections was so grossly underestimated that the actual number of students in the area is now higher than the amount that was predicted for 2041. With more and more young people now calling the Riverstone electorate home, it is imperative that they have equitable access to the infrastructure that past generations of Riverstone youth once had.

A quick glance at Google Maps highlights the acute lack of parks in our fastest developing areas. South of Schofields Road there are many parks and reserves that are home to legacy clubs. Those sporting clubs have been around for many years, providing junior and senior teams with a home at which to play the sports they love. On the other side of Schofields Road, in the northern part of my electorate, which is its fastest growing area, there are no new parks. Precinct plans developed over a decade ago indicate provision for them, but uncontrolled residential development, combined with severely limited funds provided to Blacktown council to create them, has resulted in tens of thousands of new residents without sporting fields close to where they live.

Older areas of my electorate, places such as Stanhope Gardens and Quakers Hill, benefit from a balance of pocket parks, playgrounds, nature reserves and sporting fields. That is what a community should have—active spaces that ensure healthy bodies and healthy minds. However, the current situation in the newer suburbs has resulted in the existing clubs being overwhelmed with new players from the suburbs experiencing the most growth. Those sporting facilities simply are not built to cope with the rapidly growing membership. Solutions like upgrades to existing amenity blocks and lighting are needed but, due to an inadequate amount of funding being collected by developers for new growth areas and since sporting fields are not part of the new developments, no developer funding has been allocated. Therefore, a multi-jurisdictional effort is required to bridge the gap and ensure long-term solutions.

The former Government was happy to sell land to developers but did not bother to ensure that new communities were serviced the way they should be. In Riverstone the failure extends to schools, transport, roads and health care in addition to sporting fields. Other crucial public amenities such as libraries and community halls were also apparently considered unnecessary and inconvenient add-ons to new housing. Our Government is making great strides towards addressing the shortfall, with new schools in Nirimba Fields and Tallawong, improved public transport, and funding for Garfield Road East, Bandon Road and the Hambledon Road extension, as well as finally delivering the Rouse Hill Hospital. But we know more needs to be done, especially when it comes to sporting fields.

I have spoken about the power of sport in the past, especially in places like Riverstone, where our community is continuing to grow. When young families arrive to set up home in Riverstone, sporting clubs help facilitate integration into the community. For our children, their time spent on the field, whether it is soccer, cricket, netball, footy, baseball or any other sport, is not just about the game being played; it is also about the lessons being learned. Communication, development, sharing responsibilities, patience, resilience, the joy of winning and the pain of losing are all skills that can be gained on the field and, more importantly, transferred to various aspects of life. Riverstone is home to such bright sporting talent. Our youth deserve equitable access to active spaces that other children across the State have. By taking a multi-jurisdictional approach, we can achieve long-term solutions for the current shortage of parks in the fastest growing parts of my electorate. I am committed to working with my ministerial colleagues, Federal counterparts and council to get the job done.

### **COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:38):** The Coffs Coast is enriched by the contributions of the people who proudly call our beautiful part of New South Wales home. I am extremely grateful to each of them



for helping to make our community the vibrant, dynamic, diverse and welcoming place it is renowned for being. Their achievements continue to put us on the map. I congratulate them for the positive example they set for others. Pride and gratitude were on show recently when Orara High School and the wider community gathered at Sportz Central to thank and farewell their beloved principal, Malcolm McFarlane.

Normally calm and composed, Malcolm was overwhelmed by the heartfelt tributes to honour his years of dedication. The special assembly featured contributions from students, staff, senior police, Department of Education representatives, regional principals, and even a touch of Hollywood, thanks to actor Jack Thompson. The tributes reflected Malcolm's impact during his 35-year career in education and his ability to positively shape countless lives. His passion for writing was also celebrated. A guard of honour was formed as Malcolm departed the building.

It was a magic moment, too, for the Mercer family when Janice Mercer was presented with her Medal of the Order of Australia at Government House by Her Excellency the Governor Margaret Beazley, AC, KC. Janice and her late husband, Merv, were recognised in the King's Birthday 2024 Honours and awards for their services to thoroughbred racing on the Mid North Coast. Married for 67 years, the couple were stalwarts of the Coffs Harbour Racing Club, where Janice has had an affiliation since 1966. Their children were raised around the racetrack. It was not uncommon to see their grandchildren dressed up in Janice's famous knitted cardigans and bonnets.

Some family members have carried on Merv's legacy through their own racing endeavours. Before losing Merv in November last year, Janice used to cut the onions, butter the bread and help cook the barbecue, which they supplied free of charge for race-day stewards. It was funded from the cans and bottles they collected after race meets. Glamorous tasks or not, Janice matched Merv's commitment to the Coffs Harbour Racing Club at each opportunity. In Sydney to accept their OAMs, Janice was supported by her three children, Malcolm, Robyn and Mark, and their families. Janice said that travelling to Sydney to accept their medals was inspiring and motivating.

Stepping onto the world stage, automobile technology mechanic Ross Colquhoun has been named Best of Nation at WorldSkills 2024 in France. The former TAFE NSW Coffs Harbour apprentice, who works at A1 Mobile Mechanical Services, was recognised for his exceptional performance, a reflection of his dedication and rigorous training. Ross was part of Australia's Skillaroos contingent, which placed an impressive fourteenth among 59 countries, based on total points scored. During the four-day competition, Ross had eight modules to complete. These included brakes, which covered a full inspection, fault-finding and rebuilding certain components; engine mechanical diagnostics; wheel alignment and advanced driver-assistance system calibration; gearbox overhaul; engine electrical managed diagnostics; engine measurement and overhaul; circuit creation; body electrical; and electric vehicle diagnostics. Ross was awarded Best of Nation by WorldSkills Australia for achieving the highest individual score—a mighty effort.

When it comes to achievements, Hockey Coffs Coast's finest seniors are also shining brightly on the international stage. Ten players have the honour of representing Australia at the 2024 Masters World Cups in South Africa and New Zealand. The over-35s and over-40s Australian players are in Cape Town for their internationals from 11 to 21 October, while the over-45 age groups are in Auckland from 3 to 14 November. Hockey Coffs Coast players who were selected to play for their respective Australian teams include Nardie Gream, in the over-35s; Tania Pollock, in the over-40s; Adam Ellison, in the over-50s; and David Dart, in the over-50s. Those selected to play for their respective Australia A teams include Kieran Marshall, in the over-35s; Craig Rathbone, in the over-35s; Dean Herbert, in the over-40s; Sam Ash, in the over-40s; Rick Fischer, in the over-45s; and Jonathan Williams, in the over-45s. I congratulate all these outstanding Coffs Coast community members on their remarkable achievements.

#### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:43):** When the Minns Labor Government took office last year, caps were in place on health workers' wages and systemic staff shortages at Maitland Hospital directly impacted patients and their families. I have worked with Minister Park since we were in opposition, when we fought for the \$470 million hospital, and for it to be fully public. We have met numerous times with unions, hospital management, the community and patients, and we have listened. I thank the Minister and his team for their constant and continuing efforts to improve the healthcare situation at our hospital. I thank the Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Health Services Union and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation and their many members and organisers, who have always worked hard to improve health services in our community.

The Minns Labor Government has introduced a broad suite of initiatives to further strengthen the State's regional health workforce. These include implementing safe staffing levels, providing permanent funding for over

1,100 full-time equivalent COVID nurses and midwives on an ongoing basis, abolishing the wages cap and delivering the highest pay increase in over a decade for nurses and other health workers, doubling the Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme from \$10,000 to \$20,000, providing HECS incentives to grow the next generation of health professionals, and providing bulk-billing incentives to regional doctors to reduce the pressure on our emergency departments. But there is always more to do. I am pleased to report that between July 2023 and September 2024 our hospital increased its number of full-time equivalent staff by 10 per cent, growing by 121 full-time equivalent staff and bringing the total to 1,095 full-time equivalent staff.

The Government has worked hard to improve staff retention, build a supportive work environment and focus on growth and development opportunities, and it is working. In 2023 our emergency department at Maitland Hospital had the highest walkout rate in the State. One in four people left the Maitland emergency department before receiving treatment. We have responded. In June this year we opened an emergency short stay unit to increase capacity in the department, improve wait times, and ensure access to appropriate and timely care for patients. Due to staffing constraints at the time, the unit was only open four days a week and at limited hours. But, in great news, the Maitland Hospital's emergency department short stay unit has now increased its capacity by recruiting 16 full-time equivalent staff so it can operate seven days a week.

This is a game changer. It will significantly improve treatment times and patient flow in the emergency department. It will provide a short period of treatment and observation that patients need, without an unnecessary hospital stay. Some \$70 million has been invested in short stay units across the State. I am so pleased we have been able to secure one in Maitland. We have seen a remarkable increase in patient activity. Almost 438 patients were treated in the month of September, up from 278 patients when it first opened in June 2024. Since its opening, we have seen improvements in time to treatment across all triage categories by up to 6 per cent, and a 19 per cent improvement in ambulance transfer of care within 30 minutes, releasing our highly valued paramedics.

Speaking of paramedics, I am pleased to report that, across the State, NSW Ambulance has rolled out eight specially designed vehicles known as Hazardous Area Rescue Ambulances, or HARAs. These are the first of their kind in the world. They will optimise response capabilities during natural disasters and in difficult terrain. One of them is stationed at Rutherford. Flood risk data was used to identify the locations of the HARAs, so it is no surprise that Maitland was high on the list of areas to receive one. The service aligns with extensive existing NSW Ambulance special operations and rescue capabilities. HARAs and trained personnel will work across the State in response to risk area analysis and active emergencies.

These Mercedes-Benz Unimog vehicles are part of a major \$14.8 million funding package by the New South Wales Government to further build our State's flood rescue capabilities. The HARAs are designed to drive through floodwaters of up to 1.2 metres and are equipped with safety features for operation in hazardous environments. The vehicles have also been made to operate over firegrounds, with the inclusion of a burn-over crew protection system, the replacement of flammable components, and critical vehicle infrastructure being wrapped in fire-retardant material. The rear of the vehicle is a fully operational ambulance, with a specially designed stretcher loading system to assist paramedics in patient handling and for patient comfort. I thank the people of Maitland for their patience and advocacy and for working side by side with me, the Minister for Health and the entire Minns Labor Government as we deliver the very best in health services for our community. After all, it is what we deserve.

## WATER MANAGEMENT

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:48):** Today I speak about a land grab. It is a land grab that no-one knows about. It is a land grab that will steal hundreds of millions of dollars of value from families in rural New South Wales. And it is a land grab being done by the New South Wales Government. That is right. The New South Wales Government is going up against hardworking, honest rural families. It is real. It is happening. And it represents an unprecedented attack on rural New South Wales by this Government. Whether you live in the city or in rural New South Wales does not matter. Wherever you live, your home is your castle. We make movies about that fact.

If you live in the suburbs of Sydney, imagine that the Government suddenly decided it wanted to send water from one side of your property to the other and the only way to do that was to flood your backyard. I do not mean that it will put a hose across your backyard. It will flood it. There will be enough water for your kids to drown in and for your cat and dog to drown in, too. Now imagine that the Government wanted to do this every single year. It has offered compensation, but it wants to pay you compensation only once, just for the first year. After that, you will get the devastating Government floods, but you will not get any compensation. And now imagine that, if you do not agree for your backyard to be flooded every year, the Government will just do it anyway. You do not have a choice.

If this was happening to your backyard, would you be angry? Would you be outraged? This is what is happening to thousands of rural farms and properties in New South Wales. It is happening because the New South Wales Government is trying to send massive amounts of water to wetlands. And the Government thinks the only way to get the water to the wetlands is to flood massive amounts of private property across New South Wales. The New South Wales Government calls it the Reconnecting River Country Program. I call it BS. And the people of rural New South Wales cannot and will not ever let this happen. The New South Wales Government cannot be allowed to drown properties in rural New South Wales simply because it has not figured out a better way to manage our rivers or our wetlands.

When my staff members first told me they had received a low-key departmental briefing about this plan, I thought they must have made a big mistake. So we all went back and checked. And it is true. This Government really wants to do this. But it cannot be allowed to happen. The New South Wales Government cannot be allowed to sneak this devastating plan in, and the first anyone in rural New South Wales knows about it is when they see their land flooded or they are cut off from the local hospital or their kids cannot get to school because flooding has inundated their classrooms. And I am not exaggerating. These scenarios are all too possible, especially given the New South Wales Government's appalling track record when it comes to so-called "controlled" floods. I call these planned floods Government floods because the Government is choosing to have these floods. If the New South Wales Government is going to try to cause these Government floods, it needs to own them.

What is so baffling to all of us in rural New South Wales is that the New South Wales Government is planning to flood us and, at the same time, is planning to support the Federal Government's National Water Agreement, which will starve rural New South Wales of productive water. The New South Wales and Federal governments can try to call it an agreement, but no-one in rural New South Wales agrees with this plan. We know that it will be a disaster, which is why we oppose the so-called National Water Agreement and the Reconnecting River Country land grab. I am known for speaking out loudly to defend rural New South Wales, and I know that some in the Government want to pretend that I am the girl who cried wolf, but I can assure you that, when it comes to these two water plans, I am not the girl who cried wolf. I intend to be a wolf that will fight like hell to stop this outrageous, disastrous plan. I say to the Government: You have been warned.

#### BEAUTIFUL MINDS MACARTHUR

**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) (20:53):** October is Mental Health Month. Fittingly, this year's theme is "Let's talk about it", which is precisely what I intend to do. I pay tribute to the late Sandra McDonald and her legacy of mental health advocacy in my community. I also speak in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Beautiful Minds Macarthur and acknowledge Beautiful Minds' efforts to raise funds for upgrades to mental health facilities at Liverpool and Campbelltown hospitals—more on that later.

I was humbled to attend a special event hosted recently by Beautiful Minds Macarthur at Ingleburn RSL Club. The event acknowledged the wonderful contributions of Beautiful Minds' volunteers over its 20-year history, none more so than the late Sandra McDonald, a passionate advocate for mental health in our community and a founding member of Beautiful Minds Macarthur. Sandra lived for many years in my electorate and was indeed a dear friend. A champion for mental health in our community, Sandra was determined to make a difference. And what a difference she made! Sandra was always full of energy, empathy and eagerness to bring about positive change. Above all else, Sandra wanted people with mental illness to be valued, respected and treated with dignity.

Sandra also strove for a world in which mental health was talked about as openly as physical health. Reducing the stigma often associated with mental illness was one of Sandra's key goals, for it was personal to Sandra and her husband, Rick. One of their sons was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and so began a lifetime of advocacy as a parent, as a carer and as a member of the Campbelltown and broader south-west Sydney community. A subcommittee under the former Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales, now known as One Door Mental Health, Beautiful Minds was formed in 2004. Sandra McDonald was the group's first president and held the role for 14 years.

I was fortunate to work closely with Sandra over many years, first as the Mayor of Campbelltown, from 2011 to 2012, and again in my capacity as the member for Macquarie Fields, since 2015. Together, in partnership with Beautiful Minds, we developed and hosted a series of community mental health forums. Beautiful Minds played a major role in the forums, under the leadership of Sandra and, later, Cheryl Paradella, who took the reins of Beautiful Minds Macarthur in 2018 and remains president to this day. The forums were well received. They provided an opportunity for people within my electorate to hear from speakers with lived experience, connect with local services and foster greater awareness of mental health.

Like many in my community, I was very much saddened to learn of Sandra's passing a few months ago. Sandra was the local face of community mental health awareness, whether through a regular column in the local newspaper, the Mad Hatter's annual fundraising dinner, or Waratah Day. Sandra's hard work won her many awards, including Campbelltown Citizen of the Year for 2014 and NSW Senior Volunteer of the Year for 2016. Despite the long list of awards and accolades, Sandra remained humbled by her experiences. I have fond memories of Sandra and know that she found in Beautiful Minds Macarthur a group of like-minded people who became dear friends and even family. Of course, Sandra knew that Beautiful Minds was much bigger than herself, and relinquished the role of president to Cheryl in 2018.

Beautiful Minds Macarthur has continued to advocate for improved local services. In exciting news, Cheryl informed me only last week that Beautiful Minds Macarthur has raised \$60,000 for improvements to mental health units at Liverpool Hospital. These funds will be used to make the mental health units more homely and less clinical, to aid in people's mental health journey and recovery. The money will be used to purchase artwork, furniture, plants and shade. I am told that the improvements will be most welcome. An additional \$20,000 has been raised for improvements to the mental health units at Campbelltown Hospital. All the funds have been raised by Beautiful Minds Macarthur and its volunteers. What an extraordinary effort!

I take this opportunity to thank Cheryl and everyone involved in Beautiful Minds Macarthur for their dedication to improving the lives of so many with mental illness in our community. Twenty years is a fantastic milestone. However, the journey does not end here. There is still much work to be done. We can all do our bit to help raise the awareness of mental health in the community. Let us continue the conversation, to talk about it, because mental health matters.

### **TACKING POINT SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:58):** On Saturday 28 September I was honoured to attend the Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club's fiftieth anniversary celebrations to mark a legacy of service and saving lives. On the Saturday night, members past and present gathered at Tacking Point surf club to celebrate half a century of patrolling Lighthouse Beach and serving our community. During that time, our volunteer lifeguards have been instrumental in saving lives through their decisive actions and rigorous training when attending people in distress. Since 1974 so many families have become eternally grateful for the actions taken by our extraordinary surf lifesaving members. In the morning, the anniversary program began with the annual tradition of the raising of the flags to signify the commencement of the surf lifesaving patrol season. The tradition includes the eight clubs that make up the Mid North Coast Branch of Surf Life Saving NSW from Port Macquarie to Macksville, including four from the Port Macquarie electorate—Port Macquarie, Wauchope-Bonny Hills, Camden Haven and, of course, Tacking Point.

Local Birpai Elder Uncle Bill O'Brien welcomed us to country and acknowledged the special guests, club representatives and volunteers. In the evening, celebrations were marked with a gala dinner at Tacking Point surf club, with entertainment featuring the very talented and award-winning Blokes Notes, who captivated the audience with their acapella-style vocals. It was a privilege to be in the presence of the founding members of Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club, who worked tirelessly to create a safe place for people to swim at Lighthouse Beach. The official opening of the club occurred in the winter of 1974. Past members recalled the beach access road being freshly tarred to encourage families to enjoy a day on the sand and water. The first site considered for a clubhouse was near Watonga Rocks, about 500 metres from where the club is situated today. Wiser heads decided that the most appropriate location was nearer the headland for greater protection from the elements. Today, locals still say that Lighthouse Beach has the only surf club with protection from the northerly wind. Those early decision-makers were right.

I thank the founding members and club life members for their service and commitment to the creation of Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club, including Ken Corbett, Dave Patterson and Warren White, who attended the fiftieth anniversary celebrations. Sadly, founding member Graham Bingham passed away in January 2020, but his efforts will be forever remembered. Ken Corbett, a former chief instructor, is attributed with raising the standards of the club in the early days and bringing a wealth of knowledge from his time on the South Coast. I also acknowledge the late alderman Norman Matesich for his significant role in championing the opening of the club in 1974. I acknowledge his family members who remain active in the club to this very day. During the night, club president and life member Mick Lang and his committee presented a number of awards to acknowledge longstanding commitment and service.

The inaugural Distinguished Service Awards were presented at the fiftieth anniversary dinner to recognise members who embody the spirit of the club and their unwavering service to support and represent the organisation. Peter Hennessey was the first of the night to be presented with a Distinguished Service Award, recognising his participation in surf lifesaving for more than 50 years and acknowledging his achievements at local, State, national and international competitions. He received medals for Ironman as well as single and double ski in the open and

master categories. Desle Mason was also honoured with a Distinguished Service Award. Desle has served Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club for more than 30 years, volunteering in a number of key areas, including as uniform coordinator and assistant age manager for the juniors. I am told Desle is the master of events, coordinating trivia nights, shopping trips, annual presentation dinners, branch carnival catering and vital fundraisers.

The club also bestowed the highest honour of life membership on three members during the evening. Graeme Mason, Mitchell Dawson and Sandra Slattery—the first female to receive life membership—deservingly joined life members Ken Corbett, Dave Patterson, Graham Bingham, Warren White, Bob Rosenbaum, Graeme Nash, Mick Lang, Tony Hallinan and Richard Broomby. I congratulate them all. Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club embodies the statewide mission to "save lives, create great Australians and build better communities". Every day our selfless volunteers do just that through a range of activities and responsibilities, including patrols, training, first aid, policy and procedures, fundraising, networking, meetings, competitions and communications. I congratulate the membership on reaching this outstanding milestone and thank all past and present volunteers of the Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club for their dedication and commitment to keeping our beaches safe.

### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (21:03):** In New South Wales, Mental Health Month is observed throughout October. This year's theme, Let's Talk About It, prompts us all to reflect on our mental health and overall wellbeing, irrespective of whether we have personally encountered mental illness. It emphasises the significance of maintaining good mental health in our daily lives and encourages a proactive approach to seeking help when necessary. I share a personal contribution that I made to my local newspaper five years ago. I said:

One-in-five adult Australians experience mental ill health in any year.

If you are one of the 80 per cent fortunate enough not to personally experience the temporary or long-term distress of mental illness, you will have had a partner, parent, son or daughter who has lived with this problem at some time.

We all have some lived experience of mental health illness.

...

Sharing this common experience reinforces our common humanity and helps us support and advocate for our community.

My great great grandfather migrated to Australia from Germany in the 1860s.

He was a shepherd who settled in the New England region of NSW.

Following personal trauma, he suffered from "melancholic depression" and was admitted to Callan Park Hospital for the Insane in Sydney where he died and was buried hundreds of kilometres from his adopted home. This should not happen to anyone.

My father fought in the Second World War in New Guinea and represented Australia as a Kangaroo.

He became an alcoholic and inflicted violence on my mother in our home.

This should not have happened to her, my brother or my sister, or any woman or child. This should not have happened to him.

My brother became an alcoholic with mental illness. After years involving mental health services and services for the homeless, he died prematurely having lost contact with his family. This shouldn't happen to any man.

I have a niece with severe social anxiety which restricts her normal daily functions.

I have a wife who has suffered from postnatal depression like more than one-in-seven new mothers.

I have two beautiful and loved daughters whose mental ill health crises have caused them to overdose on medication requiring hospitalisation.

This shouldn't happen to any of them.

I came to the Eurobodalla 16 years ago.

I arrived here suffering suicidal ideation and have suffered from it since. I have never acted on these thoughts. These fleeting haunting ideas are shared by five per cent of our population. I can now look at trees as things of beauty and not agents of my fatality.

It shouldn't happen to me, but it has and it continues.

None of this should happen to any of us but it does.

What shouldn't happen is that our most vulnerable community members cannot access local specialist psychiatric services.

What shouldn't happen is that our family and friends with acute mental health illness are admitted to hospitals more than one hundred kilometres from their home.

We need improved primary outpatient community services.

We need support for general practitioners, mental health nurses and psychologists. We need youth mental health services.

We need drug and alcohol services. We need comprehensive perinatal and early parenting mental health services.

We need acute adult inpatient services in a level 4 regional base hospital.

That's what should happen.

As a consequence, the Bega electorate now has headspace services in both Batemans Bay and Bega, providing free, youth-friendly and confidential services for young people aged 12 to 15. I commend the Minister for Mental Health, Rose Jackson, for the delivery of the Bega Valley Safe Haven, a calm, culturally sensitive and non-clinical setting staffed by trained peer workers with lived experience of suicidal crises and mental health professionals to support people experiencing mental health distress.

I call on the Minister to establish a safe haven in the Eurobodalla region. I am pleased to inform the House that the new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital will have four short-stay mental health beds and a safe assessment room. NSW Health wants people to know that they are not alone. Anyone can call for help. For mental health inquiries, people can call 1800 011 511, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In an emergency or for urgent help, people should always call 000 or go straight to their nearest emergency department. They can also contact the Lifeline 24/7 crisis line on 13 11 14 for immediate support. I have spoken about it; now let's talk about it.

### CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (21:07):** Since being elected to this place, I, along with all my colleagues, have ridden the highs and lows. The alleged murder of Molly Ticehurst at the hands of a former partner shook the Forbes community and shook Parliament. It was a horrific crime that had all members pledging to do more to rid the State of domestic violence. At the time, the Prime Minister said that domestic violence was and still is a "national crisis". The New South Wales Parliament passed legislation to make it harder for those facing serious domestic violence charges to get bail. I supported those changes. Personally, I would have made it harder, for instance, with a two-strikes policy. However, the Parliament acted appropriately.

Most people in this place would never have heard of Sarah Miles. Just weeks after the horrific alleged murder of Molly Ticehurst, Sarah was allegedly murdered in a home in Casino at the hands of her partner. The Bondi tragedy again saw the best of this Parliament. Parliamentarians worked in a bipartisan way to pass Jack's law. While this legislation could have been stronger, we worked collectively in this place to ensure that the community of New South Wales is protected. My parliamentary colleagues and I did not get elected to this place simply to warm a seat. I do not think anyone in this place is here just for the ride.

This Parliament and this Government must act to amend section 66EB of the Crimes Act 1900 to offer children, the most vulnerable in our community, the maximum protection against grooming. Recently I received an email from a distraught parent. More recently, Channel 9's *A Current Affair* program ran a story about that email and a teacher from Grafton Public School named Howard Avery. This bloke has been messaging a 12-year-old student at all hours of the night. Quite frankly, the messages are chilling, including, "Why are you still awake you naughty girl?"; "I'll put you in the naughty corner"; "I'll tickle you"; "I can teach you to dance"; and "Hey beautiful". One of the final messages this bloke sent stated, "I hope you don't think it's creepy, me messaging you. If you want me to stop, just let me know." Imagine being the parent discovering these messages on their 12-year-old daughter's phone.

**Ms Anna Watson:** You'd kill him.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** I agree. But under the law, this is not considered grooming. If this is not grooming, I am buggered if I know what is. I have seen the best of this Parliament coming together to change the law. Yet, under the New South Wales law, the behaviour I have just described by a primary school teacher in Grafton is not considered grooming. It has to be. We have to protect the most vulnerable people in our community—our kids. If there is one thing I will do in this place, it is to ensure that this Parliament understands that this type of behaviour is not acceptable. I do not believe anyone in this place accepts that kind of behaviour. I am willing to work with anyone who will listen to change section 66EB of the Crimes Act. I have written to the Premier and will work with him, the Attorney General and anybody who is in a place of influence to change that section and ensure that this place offers our kids the maximum protection under the law to stop this type of predatory behaviour.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (21:12):** As a member of the Government and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General, but also as a father and someone who is fearful of grooming and of perpetrators exploiting our children, I thank the member for Clarence for his private member's statement. Certainly I know that all members of Parliament want to work together in a cross-party manner on this issue, as parties mean nothing when it comes to the safety of children. But our criminal justice system must stand up to protect innocent children and the victims and survivors of crime, particularly in instances like this. Perpetrators against our children such as the member for Clarence described must receive the penalties they truly deserve. I look forward to working with him and other members of this House to make those things happen.

### MANDALONG COLLIERY

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (21:13):** On 26 July the member for Cessnock and I visited Centennial Coal's Mandalong colliery on a tour organised by the NSW Minerals Council. Mandalong is an underground coalmine located on the northern part of the Central Coast, just to the west of Lake Macquarie. Originally it was established to provide coal to the Eraring Power Station, which it still does at the moment, but it has increasingly produced coal for export operations. I thank the Minerals Council for organising the tour, which was very instructive.

There were high hopes amongst the mineworkers at that time. Only in May, the New South Wales Government reached agreement with the owner of Eraring Power Station, Origin Energy, to extend its operation to 2027. Given the Mandalong colliery had been established to provide coal to Eraring, there was an expectation amongst the workforce and the community that it would be in the box seat to be the provider of coal to the power station up until 2027. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, Origin Energy could not reach agreement with Centennial Coal on the supply of coal. As a consequence, on 12 September Centennial Coal announced it would be closing its power station coal production facility, with the loss of 200 jobs, so it could concentrate on the export market. That is a disappointing outcome for those workers, who live in the Hunter and Central Coast areas. Those workers are earning above-average wages, which makes a significant contribution to the economic success of our communities.

The outcome at this mine is a real testament to the folly of privatisation and how it has unrolled for the Central Coast and Hunter communities. To think that a colliery set up by the State to supply coal to a power station now finds itself under separate owners after privatisation, in a situation where that power station chooses to obtain coal from a more distant source, just does not make sense to people. It is one of those horrible outcomes that privatisation has inflicted upon our community. My heart goes out to the 200 workers and their families. However, I do note that there is still a lot of coal under the ground. Mandalong colliery taps into the great coal seams that built Newcastle—the Great Northern, the Wallarah and the Fassifern seams. There is still a lot of coal under the ground there and a lot of demand for our coal overseas. In that sense, there is a bright future for the industry, if we want to support it.

There will be restructuring in this industry and in the old coal-fired power industry. We need to make sure we do better than we have been to handle that restructuring of industry and support workers going through it. We need to ensure that those workers transition to jobs that have similar pay and conditions and that the economic benefits of their wages are maintained for the communities. To date, our handling of industry restructuring has not been as good as it could be, but hopefully we can get better. As the power and coal industries in the Hunter and on the Central Coast continue to restructure, I will do all I can to work with my colleagues in the labour movement and on this side of the House to make sure we do better than we have done to date.

### BARWON ELECTORATE TOURISM

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (21:18):** I speak tonight on the importance of regional events and attractions. I spent the last two weeks in my electorate travelling to places like Ivanhoe for the Dry Times Truck, Tractor, Car and Bike Show—and, yes, I drove a 45-year-old car to get there. Then it was on to Nyngan to see the private investment that has gone into reviving a local hotel called The Nyngan. "Revived" is the right word, as it did 180 covers on Friday night and 130 on the Saturday night when I was there. Then it was on to the Carinda Let's Dance Festival, which is a celebration of all things David Bowie, who visited the Carinda Hotel in 1983 and filmed the *Let's Dance* music video.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** You will have to take us next year.

**Mr ROY BUTLER:** You can go glamping. I then went on to Lightning Ridge, where I stayed in a castle for a few nights. I am not lying; it is all on Facebook. I joined the pistol club for a shoot on the public holiday, and they were pretty happy that the Safe Shooting grants are back on the table, as everyone is. I got to Grawin on the Tuesday and looked at how some grant funding was being spent at the Grawin Club in the Scrub and visited the Sheepyard Inn to speak with Sue and B'anka. Then I went to the Glengarry Hilton to catch up with Jo and sit amongst the sea of tourists who were experiencing the Grawin, which is a very unique part of New South Wales.

I even had a couple of early morning dips in the bore baths at the ridge—there are not many photos of that—again surrounded by tourists and locals alike. The bore bath circuit is just booming. The new one at Collarenebri has multiplied the number of visitors to the town, and local businesses are reporting a major increase in turnover. That is great news for Collarenebri. It does create some main street parking challenges, but that is a small price to pay. If anyone has not been to Barwon and wants to come and see what the largest electorate in New South Wales has to offer, hit me up. I am an excellent tour guide.

After Lightning Ridge, I was in Narrabri and Boggabri. I met the newly formed council in Narrabri and visited the Boggabri Tractor Shed. The tractor shed preserves important agricultural history and, aside from welcoming visitors, is also a great social hub for people who share the interest. I had the Hon. Aileen MacDonald, MLC, come to Narrabri to talk about positive youth engagement programs, particularly in Wee Waa, and the state of small business in regional New South Wales. We had a nice succulent Chinese meal at the On Lee. I thank David and his crew. It was delicious and a must-try location. It is part of a dining scene that has really evolved across regional New South Wales. Twenty years ago, it was Chinese or a pub meal, and that was not bad, but we have far more options and far more quality choices now. Again, hit me up, and I will get you around. My last stop was the Coonamble Carp Muster, an event supported by OzFish, Coonamble - Castlereagh Landcare and the Coonamble Aquatic Club that saw hundreds of carp removed from the Warrana Weir and the river, and a mountain of rubbish collected, all in a family-friendly, fun day.

Events and attractions in regional New South Wales stimulate the visitor economy and drive new money through the entire area. Since June 2020, a key time when people could not travel interstate or overseas, the tourists have kept coming. Events and attractions are not only important to the local economy but also important for social cohesion and mental wellbeing for locals who get involved. The events and tourism expose people to regional communities and have had some role in growing our population since 2020. The State has a role in supporting the growth of tourism and events in regional areas, like the Mundi Mundi Bash held to the north-west of Broken Hill, out past Silverton. It is one of our biggest events and it recently saw 14,000 people travel to the third concert. The State's assistance makes that possible. Just a little bit of support goes a long way. Minister Aitchison agreeing to seal the road into the bash is another example of how a bit of funding facilitates regional events and makes them bigger and better.

We also have a stack of thoroughbred race meets that drive visitors and local businesses. Last season, unfortunately, we saw five race meets cancelled at short notice. One was cancelled just an hour before the start, when the jockey club, the central school and attendees had already spent the money, and already had the barrier attendants, the sausages and everything. To have that cancelled was a really tough blow. Those cancellations are devastating for the communities affected. Thankfully, through the Premier and Minister Harris, we have a new process for Racing NSW, which will work with racing clubs to try to ensure that does not happen again. Again, I encourage everyone in this place to head west and see what we have to offer. We have not broken any visitors yet; you should be okay. Regional New South Wales offers unique and interesting experiences for everyone. It is my privilege to travel about the Barwon electorate, speaking to so many wonderful people and attending or supporting the events. Let's keep it going.

### **SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (21:23):** The Minns Labor Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to excellent community sporting facilities, especially in regional New South Wales. Community sport, whether it be team sport or an individual pursuit, provides enormous health benefits to the people of our State, including strong social connections, especially in regional communities like Shellharbour. While not everyone who takes up sport as a child aspires to be a professional athlete or an Olympian, almost everyone who achieves greatness starts their journey at their local club. I proudly represent one of the State's best nurseries for top athletes. That was highlighted at the Dally M Awards earlier this month, where two former Stingrays of Shellharbour junior rugby league, players Jack Bostock from the Dolphins and Kasey Reh from the Dragons, were named Rookies of the Year in the NRL men's and women's competitions.

The Stingrays of Shellharbour is a wonderful club that has recently received a Level the Playing Field grant to improve facilities at its home ground in Flinders. The grant was well deserved. It will allow female players to access facilities that some other clubs take for granted. The Level the Playing Field Program funds new and upgraded sporting grounds to ensure fair access to facilities for women and girls. The program was inspired by the success of the Matildas at the FIFA Women's World Cup last year and will fund the construction of new and upgraded sports facilities, inclusive amenities and improved lighting across New South Wales. The grants will provide safer, more comfortable and more inclusive facilities, breaking down the barriers that have traditionally prevented many women from participating in sports across the spectrum. Most importantly, the grants will ensure that more local women and girls develop a lifelong love of sport and enjoy the benefits that it brings.

Across the Shellharbour electorate, three local sporting grounds will be upgraded under the program. I thank the Minister for Sport, Stephen Kamper, for his support across New South Wales and in Shellharbour. He has visited our beautiful electorate and has witnessed firsthand what the program means to us. As mentioned, in Flinders, the Stingrays of Shellharbour rugby league club will benefit from a \$1.85 million brand-new amenities building. In Dapto, the Illawarra Stingrays and Dapto Phoenix football clubs will benefit from a \$2 million State Government contribution towards a full upgrade of Lakelands Oval. That is very fitting, as many Stingrays players have progressed to play for the Matildas, including Caitlin Foord and Mary Fowler.



In Shell Cove, the Shellharbour Suns AFL and Shellharbour Cricket clubs will be among those to benefit from a \$2 million State Government contribution towards a brand-new oval and amenities building. That has been a long-awaited announcement. Some other projects funded as election commitments for Shellharbour are already underway or recently completed. Substantial upgrades to the amenities building in Reed Park in Horsley are now complete, with the Dapto Canaries rugby league and cricket clubs able to enjoy facilities taken for granted in other parts of the State. In Lake Illawarra, this upcoming cricket season will see Lake Illawarra cricket players enjoying a brand-new picket-style perimeter fence at Howard Fowles Oval. It looks absolutely fantastic. I live very close to that. Driving across the Windang Bridge, the white picket fence instantly lifts the feel of the whole of the electorate.

Other recent State Government grants, including the Community Building Partnership Program, will fund upgrades to the Lake Illawarra PCYC, Keith Hockey Oval in Shellharbour, King Mickey Park in Warilla and Barrack Heights Sports Field. I am not finished there, and I have already met with the Minister for Sport to ensure that the fast-growing community sporting clubs in the Shellharbour and Dapto areas continue to receive their fair share of State Government funding when it comes to sport. While money for facilities is critical, no community sporting club can operate without volunteers. I thank every mum, dad, aunty, uncle, grandmother, grandfather and friend of all the junior sporting clubs in the Shellharbour electorate for showing up, rain, hail or shine, every weekend to give their time to ensure that community sport continues to thrive. I also thank the officials, both paid and volunteer, for their amazing work every weekend refereeing and umpiring across the Illawarra.

### **PENRITH PANTHERS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (21:28):** I commend and congratulate the Penrith Panthers on their extraordinary achievement of winning a fourth consecutive NRL Premiership, bringing the total number of premierships in our proud club's history to six. This is an historic moment in our region and in the sport of rugby league. At a time when many of us are feeling the squeeze of cost-of-living pressures and other challenges, the grand final victory of the Penrith Panthers truly lifted our collective spirits, especially those in Western Sydney. To witness history in the making as the Penrith Panthers further solidified their place amongst the greatest ever teams in rugby league history was a very special moment that all locals will continue to cherish and one that I will always remember.

In this grand final, as has been the case throughout the season and in recent years, the Panthers showed utter domination and composure on the way to victory. To do so against a quality opponent such as the Storm makes the performance even more astounding. The Panthers' composure was on full display in their response to the Storm's Harry Grant crossing the line and Nick Meaney converting to put the Storm up 6-0. The Panthers remained focused and played the quality that we have come to expect. Coming from behind on the scoreboard and continuing to handle the pressure of a grand final while scores were level or while the Panthers were marginally ahead is testament to the character of the Panthers team.

I congratulate Panthers backrower Liam Martin on winning the Clive Churchill Medal as the player of the grand final after a performance that included scoring a vital try and making 46 tackles. Martin is now a four-time premiership winner, a Clive Churchill Medal winner and has represented both New South Wales and Australia. He has achieved all this at only 27 years of age, which is quite amazing. Special mention also goes to coach Ivan Cleary and co-captains Nathan Cleary and Isaah Yeo for their leadership of the team throughout this and prior successful seasons. I extend a massive thanks to all the Penrith Panthers players, coaches, support staff and their families for this outstanding chapter in our NRL story. With the young age of the players in the squad and great talent coming through the ranks, I am sure the future is bright, with many more great achievements ahead.

While the players and staff excel at their sport, their character and work off the field is also outstanding. The club engages in programs that deliver positive education, health and social outcomes for the people and communities in our region of Western Sydney and beyond. This shows their genuine commitment to the community and is another reason why they have the loyalty of their supporters and the respect of opponents alike. The club's ability to consistently excel is an inspiration for all people to strive towards their best and to consistently put in the hard yards and have discipline to achieve success. The actions of the players off the field as positive role models set an example for others to follow. They show us how we can support our community and help others. On behalf of the Badgerys Creek electorate, I congratulate the Penrith Panthers. I wish them the very best as they chase a fifth consecutive title in 2025. There is no doubt that they can continue to defend their title. To all the departing staff and players, I commend them for their service and wish them well for the next chapter of their lives.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** As a tragic Parramatta supporter, I hope that the member's statement is incorrect.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (21:32):** I agree with Mr Temporary Speaker. Go Parra! Next year will be our year.

### NEWCASTLE ELECTORATE CULTURAL EVENTS

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (21:33):** Home to the highest concentration of artists per capita in Australia, Newcastle has long boasted a proud public art scene. Over the past two months, Newcastle has continued to reaffirm its position as a leading creative and cultural arts hub, hosting the New Annual festival, the West Best Bloc Fest and the *Mary Poppins* musical to national and international acclaim. These local events created vital opportunities for local artists to display their craft, for emerging artists to gain exposure, for students to gain career placement in their field of study and for local community members to engage with high calibre local art. Launched in 2021, the City of Newcastle's inaugural New Annual festival has received critical acclaim as Newcastle's flagship cultural event. In addition to supporting over 1,500 artists, New Annual continues to strengthen Newcastle's position as a centre for art, attracting over 95,000 visitors to the city each year.

Funded and supported by the Minns Labor Government through the Multicultural NSW Stronger Together Grants Program, Transport for NSW Open Streets Program, Create NSW, and the Destination NSW Regional Event Fund, New Annual's continued success is a testament to the Minns Labor Government's commitment to expanding and supporting inclusive, educational and cultural art opportunities in regional New South Wales. Across 10 days, from 27 September to 6 October, New Annual produced 31 extraordinary contemporary and cultural art events. This year's diverse program included several international, national and local collaborations, including dance, music, theatre, visual arts, film, performance art and immersive art. Multi-award-winning indie rock band, Middle Kids, headlined this year's event at the Civic Theatre Newcastle, kicking off its Faith Crisis Pt 1 regional tour.

New Annual continues to play a pivotal role in the development and sustainability of local art sectors, providing Novocastrian artists critical funding to develop new work. Under the City of Newcastle's \$94,500 Made New program, four incredible local acts were able to premiere throughout the festival. They included contemporary dance work *The Cord*, choreographed by acclaimed First Nations choreographer Jasmin Sheppard and commissioned by Newcastle-based professional dance company Catapult Dance Choreographic Hub; *INTRA HUMAN x INTRA DIGITAL* immersive art experience by Art Thinking; *Morphology* from Built In-Kind and Everett Creative community collaboration workshops; and *WonderCity*, Tantrum Youth Arts' participatory art adventure through the city of Newcastle. Moreover, the celebration of First Nations art and culture was a central aspect to this year's festival. First Nations artist Mitch Tambo headlined this year's opening night street festival, blending traditional Aboriginal sounds and language with contemporary beats to a huge crowd.

Newcastle was also home to another highly successful live music event last month: the West Best Bloc Fest. Although this was only the festival's third year, West Best Bloc Fest has established itself as Newcastle's biggest celebration of live music, with 100 bands performing across nine Newcastle venues on 12 different stages along a single block in Newcastle's west, attracting over 1,800 people. Newcastle has a bustling live music scene, and the West Best Bloc Fest is a prime example of our area's celebration of local music. Novocastrians also had the wonderful opportunity to see the Very Popular Theatre Company's acclaimed showing of the world-famous *Mary Poppins* at the Civic Theatre over the past two weeks. Following the huge success of these recent cultural events in Newcastle, I acknowledge the Minns Labor Government's commitment to expanding and supporting inclusive educational and cultural art opportunities in Newcastle.

Following sector feedback across New South Wales, Create NSW recently launched its new Arts and Cultural Funding Program, Creative Communities, which shows recognition of the importance of creative participation to community development and wellbeing. In addition, the Government's policy reforms and investments, including the vibrancy reforms, the Music Festivals Act, and the Permit/Plug/Play Pilot Program grant will provide necessary relief to Newcastle's longstanding entertainment and art sector. I want Newcastle's art, cultural and live music scenes to not just survive but absolutely thrive. I commend the Government's initiatives to make sure we continue to support sustainable, accessible and participatory measures to allow our community to engage with local art.

### RECONNECTING RIVER COUNTRY PROGRAM

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (21:38):** In 2022, farmer Pip Goldman stood on the edge of a vast brown lake that had swamped her property, unable to do anything but watch the slow-moving disaster that had displaced stock, degraded soil, damaged fences and set back the family finances for at least two years. This was a stubborn flood, and the water remained over her land for 173 days before finally slipping back into the swollen Beaver Creek—a tributary of the Murrumbidgee—on the family-owned farm at Collingullie, near Wagga Wagga. It was not the farm's first flood and nor will it be the last. But Pip Goldman believes this flood could have been avoided if water managers had agreed to release flows from the big dams on the Murrumbidgee ahead of major

forecast rains. Overfull dams and heavy rains have always been an enemy of river country landholders in my electorate. But now farmers are facing another challenge: the proposed Reconnecting River Country program.

As I understand it, this program proposes to use additional river country flooding to help the environment and thereby avoid further Federal Government water buybacks. If that is the case, the program must be a viable alternative to buybacks, one that will have least impact on farmers and maximum benefits for the environment. If the program does more damage than buying back the water, then we need to think again and it should not proceed. Everyone agrees that river health is critical. Many are sympathetic to the need to avoid water buybacks. But those facing further potential flooding fear that they are being left—ironically—high and dry by inadequate consultation.

In-person consultation meetings scheduled for Wagga this month were abruptly cancelled for technical reasons and replaced with online forums. That left landholders disappointed and cynical that the move was designed to silence them as a collective group. Worse, some have told me that they were not even aware of the consultation and only found out by accident. That was disappointing. I had been working with the department for some months to ensure proper consultation. That consultation was meant to inform landholders of how the program will work and, importantly, how negotiations would take place for compensation for potential damage to their land and livelihoods—compensation that the previous Government also committed to in principle.

To the credit of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, it listened to the concerns I raised and extended the consultation period by three weeks. It also agreed to hold an in-person information session in Wagga later this month to explain the Reconnecting River Country Program in one session and the Landholder Negotiation Scheme in another. That is welcome, but it highlights the need to properly consult with communities. Landholders must be heard and their concerns must be addressed. Riverside landholders accept natural flooding as unavoidable, but they plan for it perhaps one year in 10. Increases to that will have a significant impact. Landholders are now being told that easements will be required on parts of their properties subject to flooding under the program, whether they like it or not. If they do not accept that, the land can be compulsorily acquired—again, whether they like it or not. Yes, they will be paid market value for the easements and offered mitigation and support, but many questions and serious concerns remain.

One farmer upstream of Wagga has told me of the devastating impact of flood caused by dam releases, which still leaves a costly toll of damaged land and emotional stress. Worse, that property has a dry billabong which, when flooded, cuts off access to a large part of the farm. A payment for the easement might help, but will the compensation adequately cover the severing that can leave part of the farm useless? Will it reflect the mental stress on that farmer? Will it reduce the value of the property, leaving the owner with an unsustainable loss? How will it affect farm financing? I have heard fears that a compulsory easement would slash the value of property, raising fears that banks may pull the financial rug from beneath landholders. How will the compensation arrangements rectify this real and stressful threat? What of those landholders who flatly oppose having easements forced upon them? What will happen to them if they stand their ground? Will they have to stand by and watch that easement taken anyway? Those are just some of the countless questions that have not been answered.

For that reason, I welcome the department's commitment to full and productive consultation. But the words must be matched with actions. In the meantime, farmers like Pip Goldman are left feeling powerless and fearful of damage that they cannot control. Her farm has been in the family for 150 years. She wants to leave a viable, productive property to the next generation, but right now she does not have a clear picture of the future. The consultation must provide the answers, and soon. Failure to do that will leave scars that could last for generations, and that is unacceptable.

#### 41ST AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (21:43):** On Saturday evening I had the pleasure of attending the Northern Rivers Military Ball. It was organised by the 41st Battalion and the Royal New South Wales Regiment, whose headquarters are in my hometown of Lismore. In the formal invitation, Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Danial Healy said that the occasion was one "intended to celebrate the deep-seated military history present in the Northern Rivers". The invite was sent by email from Captain Elizabeth Wells, who is also the adjutant at the Lismore headquarters of the 41st Battalion. I am sure all members in this place know what an adjutant is but, to be sure, I will describe the role. It is a military appointment given to an officer who assists a commanding officer with unit administration, including the management of human resources and much more.

Captain Wells lives locally with her young family and husband. Her husband came from our area. He was welcomed back and she is very welcome to our community. I am sure they are putting down strong roots and will stay in the area. I have spoken about the 41st Battalion before to thank it for its role in flood recovery in 2022, when it was boots on the ground first before anyone else. I will give a bit of background to the history that the commanding officer spoke about in the invitation. The 41st Battalion, or 41 RNSWR, is an infantry battalion of

the Australian Army based in northern New South Wales, with headquarters in Lismore and depots in a number of locations, including Tweed Heads, Grafton, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. I know that pleases Mr Temporary Speaker Kemp.

The battalion was raised in 1965, but it has a much longer history. It carries the battle honours and traditions of the 41st Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, that served on the Western Front during World War I. There was a lot of service from the battalion. It can trace its lineage back to a couple of Scottish Rifles units formed in the 1800s in Byron Bay and Maclean. Now known as the 41st Battalion, it was formed in February 1916 at Bell's Paddock, which is the present day Brookside Shopping Centre and Mt Maria College, near the current Gallipoli barracks in Enoggera in Queensland. Men were drawn from Queensland and northern New South Wales, so there has always been a strong nexus between them. This history can be found on the website.

The unit suffered losses during World War I, with 444 killed and 1,577 wounded. One member of the battalion, Bernard Gordon, received the Victoria Cross. They are very proud to have a member who has received the Victoria Cross. Other decorations include one Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, two Distinguished Service Orders, 13 Military Crosses and Three Bars, 12 Distinguished Conduct Medals, 82 Military Medals and Two Bars, four Meritorious Service Medals, 26 Mentions in Despatches and seven foreign awards. We in the Northern Rivers and on the North Coast are very proud of the battalion. I am very proud that it is based in Lismore. We have a close relationship. It is nice that the Northern Rivers Military Ball is being revived. I hope I see more of it.

### RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (21:48):** Respiratory Syncytial Virus—or RSV, as it is commonly known—is a highly contagious virus that can lead to serious respiratory illness for infants. This year New South Wales has seen a sharp spike in RSV cases. This virus can be particularly dangerous for infants or for the elderly. RSV is the leading cause of hospitalisation in infants nationwide, with children aged zero to four making up over half the cases in New South Wales. This year we have already seen over 35,500 cases in zero- to four-year-olds alone and over 68,000 cases in total. Many concerned people from my electorate and across New South Wales—particularly new parents, expectant mothers and seniors—have raised this issue with me. Many of us who have children know the anguish of rushing them to the emergency department in the middle of the night when they are seriously sick. Flus, fevers, bumps and broken bones are often part and parcel of having a child.

But that does not remove the fear for parents when their young child comes down with a respiratory illness like RSV. A serious case of RSV can leave a baby struggling to breathe, which is an unimaginable experience for parents watching their child go through that. For every 10,000 RSV cases in New South Wales, on average, over 450 children aged 12 months and younger are being hospitalised. A 2023 study showed that paediatric hospitalisation can cost up to \$20,000 in direct costs and up to \$500 a day for families. It is estimated that hospitalisation of children with RSV costs \$159 million annually in direct costs in Australia. But there are ways we can tackle this and help reduce the hospitalisation in infants.

In the past year, the Therapeutic Goods Administration [TGA] has approved a series of vaccines and immunisations for RSV. In 2023 the TGA approved a drug called Beyfortus, which is a long-acting antibody that has been shown to reduce infection. Data from *The Lancet* has shown that Beyfortus reduced hospitalisation by 82 per cent. In 2024 Western Australia and Queensland rolled out this immunisation free for all infants. New South Wales also rolled out the immunisation but to a limited cohort of infants, getting a supply of only 9,000 doses—barely covering 10 per cent of newborns in New South Wales. For anyone not able to access the immunisation for free, it would cost up to \$300 to pay for it privately—if they could find someone who supplied it. I spoke with one expectant mother, a constituent, who had to go out of her way to try to access the vaccine in New South Wales. That should not be the case when it comes to protecting the health of newborns.

Over 20,000 children have now been vaccinated against RSV in Western Australia. It is estimated that for every 25 doses, one RSV-related hospitalisation is prevented. RSV immunisation has already prevented over 760 hospitalisations in Western Australia. Early data from Western Australia shows that RSV-associated hospitalisations among Beyfortus-eligible babies aged under eight months are now down 53 per cent compared with the same period last year. Queensland has also seen dramatic reductions in babies being hospitalised with RSV. In Queensland, of the 364 children under six months hospitalised with RSV since the program's launch in April 2024, only eight had been immunised. That tells the story. As of 12 September, more than 46,000 doses of Beyfortus had been distributed to 79 hospitals, 794 primary care providers and 109 other providers in Queensland.

While it is disappointing that New South Wales opted not to roll out immunisation to a wider cohort of infants in 2024, the compelling data from Western Australia, Queensland and internationally should encourage New South Wales to make sure it has supply for winter 2025. Recently the RSV vaccine Abrysvo was approved for use in pregnancy. South Australia recently announced that it would pursue a dual immunisation strategy. It is

vitally important that New South Wales is ready for the next RSV season by ensuring the free supply of the maternal vaccine, infant vaccine and vaccine for seniors as well. They are the most vulnerable in our community, but it is also about recognising the added pressures that RSV puts on our health system. I hope that the New South Wales Government invests, and invests wisely.

### WESTERN SYDNEY DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:53):** I speak yet again about the disparities that exist between western and eastern Sydney. I have spoken previously in this place about the impacts of COVID-19, health reports highlighting healthcare inequalities and the massive infrastructure divide that has left this Government playing catch-up in Western Sydney. A recent article by former Campbelltown mayor Dr George Greiss and Western Sydney University Associate Professor Awais Piracha, entitled *Children of a lesser God: the need for equitable representation in NSW local government*, brings to light yet another concerning disparity, being the dilution of democratic representation in Western Sydney. The article highlights how democratic representation varies drastically depending on where we live.

For example, Hunters Hill has around 8,000 electors, compared with almost 200,000 in Blacktown. That means the power and influence of a single vote varies depending on our postcode. In Hunters Hill, a local neighbourhood issue could be the determining factor in whether a councillor gets re-elected. The dynamic forces councillors to be hyper-responsive to their constituents. They know that their political future hinges on satisfying small demographics. A poor-performing councillor in those areas might opt for the path of least resistance, pandering to vocal residents and pressuring council staff to prioritise electorally convenient solutions over sensible or fair outcomes. Staff who are aware of the potential impact on their careers may also bend to these pressures. This kind of dynamic fosters nimbyism, which leads to poor decisions that benefit a few at the expense of many. The controversial Hunters Hill waste proposal to dump radioactive material in Kemps Creek a number of years ago is an example. It was a case of pushing the problem away from the politically connected and onto the communities that have less power and voice. Thankfully, on that issue, cooler heads prevailed.

In contrast, bigger local government areas like Blacktown, Canterbury-Bankstown or Liverpool have a significantly different dynamic. The size of those council areas dilutes the impact of similar single-neighbourhood issues. An issue would have to spread across multiple suburbs and garner the attention of metro media in order for it to have a material electoral effect on a councillor come election time. The disparity is exacerbated by the decline of local newspapers, which once upon a time held local politicians accountable and kept residents well informed on local issues. For the most part in Western Sydney, those newspapers are now either non-existent or behind a paywall and often poorly resourced.

Sydney is now the second most expensive city in the world, with a median house price that is unaffordable for the majority of first home buyers. Our efforts to create more affordable transport oriented developments, or TODs, in places like Leppington town centre and Ed.Square are great steps and act as great examples of what urban planning can achieve. But they are located over 40 kilometres from the CBD, showing how far we have pushed growth to the city's fringes due to eastern Sydney's resistance to development. It is clear that the way local government representation is structured plays a direct role in those outcomes. Areas with smaller, more influential electorates are able to block developments that could provide much-needed housing, while areas in the west, where electorates are larger, are more politically diluted and have a tradition of taking new housing, end up bearing the brunt of Sydney's growth pressures.

The Minns Government's approach to housing seeks to arrest that imbalance. However, pushback from councils and candidates at the recent local government elections highlights a need for local government reform to match housing reform. While the issue of reform in local government over the past decade has been dominated by the topic of amalgamation and de-amalgamation, little has been said about the structure and size of council wards. Any reform must seek to create a level playing field where every voter, every issue and every community matters equally. No community should be left behind because of where it is located on a map. That is a necessary step to restore equity, accountability and fair democratic representation in local government. The authors of the aforementioned article summarised:

This imbalance undermines the democratic principle of "one vote, one value" and diminishes the opportunity for some residents to access local governance. It also seems to impact housing production and reforms across the Sydney metropolitan area.

By addressing these disparities, we can better handle the housing crisis and ensure that Sydney is more affordable and accessible, and remains the most liveable city in Australia.

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment. I order that consideration of the Legislative Council's amendment be set down as an order of the day for a later day.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:59 until  
Wednesday 16 October 2024 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

**According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.**

**XAVIER ORCHARD**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Running onto the field to present the game ball during an NRL finals match, is something many young footy players can only dream of. But recently Xavier Orchard, an amazing young sports star from Charlton Christian College achieved just that. Xavier has been named the 2024 NSW Rugby League 'Young Person of the Year'. What a fantastic achievement. As part of the prestigious accolade, Xavier was asked to present the game ball at the Manly versus Canterbury NRL finals match in August, an experience I'm told, he will never forget. Xavier has shown extraordinary passion, dedication and commitment to the sport since he started playing as a 7-year-old. For the past six years he has been an integral member of the Macquarie Scorpions Junior Rugby League Club and is currently Captain of his under 15s team. More than that, Xavier is a qualified referee, league safe trainer and assistant coach of the Scorpion's under 7s team. He also volunteers his own time to help with game day set up and clean up. Congratulations Xavier on this amazing award, I look forward to seeing you on the field in years to come.

**NOURISHED AUSTRALIA**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Food insecurity and unnecessary hunger is sadly something effecting an increasing number of people throughout Lake Macquarie. While there is no easy solution to this complex problem, I acknowledge the work of Nic Cade and Jeremy Eastham who recently opened the doors to NourishEd Australia in Toronto. NourishEd Australia is a unique charity, created to provide the twin supports of access to nourishment through free and discounted food and educational resources. The charity is in its infancy and currently runs a weekly food pantry, where anyone doing it tough can visit to buy a \$10 food hamper, with a retail value of around \$50, or access free food. But there are big plans for NourishEd Australia, with the team of volunteers working to become a 'Hub of Help' and a one stop shop where people can go to access a range of services, such as educational and budget centred cooking classes, meal services, and providing a safe space for clients to link with social workers, mental health practitioners and police officers. It is an excellent initiative, and I look forward to watching this charity flourish.

**NICHO HYNES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Cronulla Sharks player Nicho Hynes being awarded the 36th Ken Stephen Medal – Man of the Year. The Ken Stephen Medal - Man of the Year recognises the efforts of an NRL player who has not only achieved on the field but committed time off the field to community projects. A player is nominated by their NRL club for going above and beyond in their involvement in charity work, youth development or community support. This year's award recognises Nicho's advocacy (as a Wiradjuri and Darkinjung man) for indigenous programs both within the NRL and across the wider community (including his service on the NRL advisory board for Indigenous issues), his involvement in the development of the NRL's Diversity and Anti-Racism Program 'One Heart', his support for the School to Work program and the 'MegaJaws' program (assisting with clinics for children and adults with disabilities), and his drive that led to the Sharks' Mental Health themed round in collaboration with Gotcha4Life (focusing on mental fitness and raising suicide awareness). Nicho is a very deserving recipient of the Medal.

**CRONULLA POLAR BEARS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate the Cronulla Polar Bears Winter Swimming Club on winning the Australian Winter Swimming Association Men's National title for the second year in a row. The club, a founding member of the Winter Swimming Association, has operated since 1953, and fielded 65 swimmers in a championship of over 800 at the Australian Winter Swimming Championships, held at Orange Aquatic Centre on 15 September. It is the first time since the 1990s that the club have won the National title twice in a row. Of

the six relays, the Polar Bears won 3, including the Men's Open Freestyle, 30 & Over, and 40 & Over divisions. Of the 14 divisions, the Cronulla Polar Bears won 6, with Col Storrie (55 & Over), Adam Murphy (45 & Over), Steve Parkes (35 & Over), Ben Matthews (30 & Over), Dan Davis (25 & Over), and Jim Dickson (Opens) all taking home gold in the 50 metre long course freestyle. It was a stellar effort from all involved, and everyone who competed deserves recognition for their effort.

#### JOHN VEAGE

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate John Veage on his almost 40-year tenure as a photographer at the local newspaper, the St George and Sutherland Shire Leader. John started his time with the Leader in 1985, shooting sport on the weekends. By 1987 he was working in the job full time, and it wasn't long until he was the Chief Photographer for all Fairfax Community Newspapers. John's photos were iconic, showing the community from all angles, ensuring that every aspect of the Shire was photographed and represented in the pages of the Leader. His love for sport shone through, and locals remember his early morning photos of surfers and swimmers, and his late night shots of the Sharks games. Other photographers at the Leader had a running joke that upon turning up to a job, they would be met with the disappointment of those there that John wasn't the one taking the photos. John went above and beyond in his role and reminds us of the importance of local photographers in capturing images of the community. We will all be sad to see him leave the Leader, but I look forward to see what the future holds for him and his camera.

#### SWAP - SHARON HORNE

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in acknowledging Sharon Horne, one of the finalists in the Open Category of the Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize [SWAP] for her artwork, Rainbow Lorikeet. Sharon's remarkable contribution to the competition, which transforms waste into art, has been a powerful reflection of her commitment to sustainability. Her artwork, made from upcycled materials, demonstrates artistic talent and raises awareness about environmental preservation, a key message of the SWAP initiative. Sharon's work has brought great pride to the Ryde community, showcasing how creative reuse can inspire others to rethink their approach to waste. Through her participation in SWAP, she has highlighted the importance of environmental consciousness while contributing to the growing cultural and artistic landscape of Ryde. Sharon's efforts remind us all of the vital role local artists play in fostering both environmental stewardship and community engagement. Her contribution is a shining example of how art can lead to positive change, and I'm sure this Parliament will join me in extending its congratulations.

#### SWAP - MARI OHANES

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in acknowledging Mari Ohanes, a finalist in the Open Category of the Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize [SWAP] for her artwork Honouring Nature's Splendour. Mari's work, created from upcycled waste materials, showcased her artistic talents and delivered a powerful environmental message. Through her innovative use of materials, she has contributed to raising awareness of sustainability and waste reduction in our community. Mari's participation in SWAP reflects her deep connection to the community of Ryde, where she has actively supported initiatives promoting environmental consciousness. Her artwork has inspired many, demonstrating how creative expression can play a pivotal role in addressing critical environmental challenges. By encouraging positive behavioural change through her art, Mari has reinforced the importance of sustainability and contributed to Ryde's ongoing cultural and environmental enrichment. I am sure this Parliament will join me in congratulating Mari Ohanes for her remarkable contribution to the City of Ryde and her well-deserved recognition as a finalist in this significant community event.

#### SWAP - JEROME LAFFORGUE

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I ask the House to join me in recognising Jerome Lafforgue, a finalist in the Open Category of the Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize [SWAP] 2024, for his outstanding artwork titled Artificial Life. Through his innovative use of upcycled waste materials, Jerome demonstrated remarkable artistic talent and contributed to raising awareness about sustainability and environmental responsibility. His work, exhibited at See Street Gallery in Meadowbank, reflected the essence of SWAP's mission –to inspire positive change by transforming waste into meaningful art. Jerome's commitment to sustainability has been an inspiration to many in Ryde, fostering greater community engagement in environmental issues. His artistic contribution has highlighted the importance of rethinking our approach to waste and the possibilities of creative reuse. Jerome Lafforgue's participation in SWAP has further enriched the cultural fabric of Ryde, and his work stands as a testament to the power of art in driving important conversations about sustainability. I commend Jerome for his achievements and thank him for his lasting impact on our community.

**VCA-NSW Fundraising Dinner for 30 April 2024**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—On the 5 April 2024, I had the privilege of attending the fundraising dinner for commemorative events marking the 49th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975, hosted by the Vietnamese Community in Australia – NSW Chapter (VCA-NSW). Each year, members of the Vietnamese community, especially those who fled Vietnam in search of freedom, gather to commemorate this historical event. Commemorative ceremonies are held to pay tribute to those who lost their lives in defence of freedom and democracy, including Australians who served in the Vietnam War. This occasion also serves as a time to remember the families and friends who lost their lives during their perilous sea voyages in search of freedom, to express gratitude to Australia for providing them with a second home, and to celebrate the resilience and contributions of the Vietnamese community to modern multicultural Australia. I commend the VCA-NSW for their dedication in preparing and organising these significant events. I thank VCA-NSW President, Mr Peter Thang Ha and all the Executive members for their kind invitation.

**50TH YEAR AND MORE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I recognise and acknowledge the NSW Vietnamese Elderly Association for organising the Vietnamese Family Day 2024. On this occasion we also recognise and celebrate the 50th and more wedding anniversaries of a number of the members. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr Huu May Le and Mrs Thi Sinh Nguyen, Mr Tan Khanh Doan and Mrs Thi Phuong Ha Ho on their 57th anniversary; Mr Hong Diem Nguyen and Mrs Que Lang Tran on their 56th anniversary; Mr Van Duc Truong and Mrs Ba Truong on their 53rd anniversary; and Mr Quoc Anh Nguyen and Mrs Thi Huong Duong on their 51st anniversary. The first 50 plus years of marriage have truly stood the test of time, as two individuals came together to share responsibilities and build a life as one. This significant period established the foundation upon which everything else was built. The remarkable journey of love, mutual respect, resilience, sacrifice, and countless other virtues demonstrated by our respected seniors serve as a true inspiration to us all. On this special occasion, I wish them all continued happiness, love, health, and fulfilment in the years ahead.

**70TH YEAR AND MORE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)**—I recognise and acknowledge the NSW Vietnamese Elderly Association for organising the Vietnamese Family Day 2024. On this occasion we also recognise and celebrate the 70th and more wedding anniversaries of a number of the members. Seventy-plus years of marriage is an incredible milestone that few couples are fortunate enough to experience. My special congratulations are extended to Mr Van Sang Le and Mrs Thi Thu Hong Nguyen on the extraordinary milestone of their 74th wedding anniversary, and to Mr Bien Nguyen and Mrs Thi Le Ha Nguyen on their remarkable 70th anniversary. These incredible journeys symbolise not only the passage of time but also the eternal values of marriage, family and enduring commitment. The marriage traditions rooted in their Vietnamese heritage, particularly the virtue of sacrificing for children, have been pivotal to their long-lasting marriage. I extend my utmost admiration for their personal achievements, one that serves as an inspiration to us all and will surely be treasured by their next generations. I wish them continued joy, good health, and cherished moments together as they celebrate these remarkable journeys.

**RYAN MCGILLIVRAY**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Ryan McGillivray, Warilla High School teacher, on receiving a Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching at the 2024 Public Education Awards. Ryan won the award as a leader of the Stage 4 Core Academic Program. The goal of the program is to support the high achieving students in the classroom and meeting what they can possibly achieve, but also to establish future career paths and learn future learning goals for the students. This award is a testament to Mr McGillivray's exceptional dedication and impact on his students. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Ryan and wish him all the best in his future teaching endeavours.

**ERRIN MCGHEE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Errin McGhee, Year 12 Oak Flats High School, for successfully auditioning for the Southern Stars – The Arena Spectacular Orchestra. Errin is a talented percussionist, mastering instruments like the Tom, Bass Drum, Glockenspiel, Cowbell, Tambourine, Shaker, and Timpani. Congratulations to Errin for performing in the Southern Stars amazing ensemble while also preparing for her HSC Music performance exam on the drumkit. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Errin and wish her all the best in her future musical endeavours.



**GLENN SOUTHWELL**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to acknowledge the dedication of Glenn Southwell, of Oak Flats, for volunteering to pick up litter when he walks along the foreshore of Lake Illawarra. Glenn, a former teacher, has shown many students the effects of pollution in the lake from fast-food packaging. In August Glenn joined a band of enthusiasts to help restore a section of degraded salt marsh at Karoo Bay, Oak Flats. Twenty-five people mulched and planted salt-tolerant native species along the foreshore. The goal to rejuvenate the ecosystem, improve fishing and grow a sense of community. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Glenn and thank him for the work he is doing for the environment.

**CODY BURCHER**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate rising motorsport talent Cody Burcher on taking out the Repco Super3 series, which is run in conjunction with Australia's major motorsport platform, the Supercars. Racing in the second-last round of the Super3 series was held at the iconic Mount Panorama track this month, with 21-year-old Cody winning both races in his MW Motorsport Nissan Altima, giving him eight wins for the series and an unassailable lead with a round to spare. I have watched Cody's driving career develop since he cut his teeth in karts around the Orange and NSW karting tracks, advancing to racing sedans in the Toyota 86 series in recent years where he finished third. Super3 and Super2 series drivers, are recognised as the next generation of Supercar drivers, making this series win a significant milestone for Cody. I look forward to him one day securing a driving position in Australia's highest level of touring car racing, the Supercars, arguably the toughest touring car series in the world. His Super3 victory this month is another step towards fulfilling that potential and I congratulate him on reaching this amazing milestone.

**EUGOWRA FLOOD RECOVERY COMMITTEE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Eugowra Flood Recovery Committee, on being named the recipient of the Central West Volunteer Team of the Year, part of the NSW Volunteer awards for 2024. A small group of seven people, this committee did an enormous job for its community after the devastation of the 2022 floods, which almost wiped Eugowra off the map. The Flood Recovery Committee helped guide Eugowra's recovery, working with Cabonne Council, the NSW Reconstruction Authority and other services to deliver support to the often-traumatised residents of the small township. Almost immediately after what has been described as an 'inland tsunami' surged through Eugowra, the committee members started working towards connecting those who lost everything with those that could help. Committee members Sean Haynes, Liz Mitchell, Kim Storey, Dave Herbert, Janet Moxey, Ash Wright and Tim Wright continue to work hard for their fellow Eugowra residents who still battle the flood's after-effects. I congratulate the committee on this accolade and thank them for their continued commitment to Eugowra.

**JAZMIN PIETRZAK**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to commend Molong's Jazmin Pietrzak on the wonderful example she is setting for the young people in her community through her work with St John Ambulance NSW. Jazmin is a volunteer Cadet Leader and first aid instructor with St John Molong Division, where she gives her time providing first aid, emergency care and training to young cadets. She also helps to plan and manage the Western Region Youth camps, where the next generation of local St John volunteers receive training and support. This dedication to protecting her community recently earned Jazmin the Central West Young Volunteer Award, handed out by the Centre for Volunteering, an organisation which promotes and supports volunteering across our state. The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are held each year to recognise and thank the millions of volunteers striving each day to build stronger, more diverse communities across the state. Jasmin's contribution is particularly important considering the struggle organisations face into recruiting people to volunteer, especially younger generations. St John is a wonderful organisation, with its existence enabling other events to go ahead. I thank Jasmin her for her selfless contribution to her community.

**TRADIE TO THE RESCUE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—We have all heard of the saying "Not all heroes wear capes" and "Pop" has definitely proved this saying to be correct. On a typical Thursday in Bellinger Keys near Urunga, a baby plover found itself in a perilous situation, having fallen down a drain and lost from its mother—there seemed to be no hope of survival. Thankfully, the community of Bellinger Keys rallied together to rescue the little bird. The star of the show was a local legend, known by the number plate "POP." In a moment of true bravery, he barely hesitated, plunging headfirst into the drain with a kid's net in hand to rescue the stranded plover. With determination and care, he managed to scoop the tiny bird out, reuniting it with its mother. As the baby plover scampered back to its mother, a wave of relief washed over everyone present. The warmth of that reunion

illustrates that heroism often comes in ordinary forms—people stepping up to help without seeking recognition. This tradie's willingness to get involved shows that anyone can be a hero in their own way.

### **TOGETHER FOR A LIFETIME**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—A love story, you only see on television. John and Fay Bowell shared a beautiful connection that spanned 75 years, including 71 cherished years of marriage. They found their forever home in Kempsey in 1958, where their lives intertwined deeply within community. A Life Member of Macleay Netball and Kempsey Amateur Swimming Club, Fay played a pivotal role in starting Saturday morning netball for the kids of Kempsey and, instilled confidence in the countless children she taught to swim. Fay's warm smile and boundless energy were evident in everything she did. John, equally devoted, immersed himself in community life through sports and local government, earning the Order of Australia Medal [OAM] for his service. Together, they were a formidable team, sharing laughter, challenges, and a commitment to each other and their beloved Kempsey. When John passed away on May 24, 2024, Fay's heart was forever changed. Just four months later, she followed him on September 18, with her passing attributed to a 'broken heart.' Their love story is true inspiration for all who believe in the power of enduring love. May their spirits forever dance together.

### **71KM WALK OF STRENGTH AND HOPE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Embarking on a remarkable 71km journey from Harrington to Port Macquarie, Wauchope's local Alison Penfold, raised awareness and much needed funds for pancreatic cancer research. Each step of her walk was part of PanKind's Remember September campaign to honour and remember the 71 Australians who lose their life each week from pancreatic cancer. For Alison, this cause is deeply personal. Having lost her mother to pancreatic cancer in 2013, this walk was not just a charitable endeavour but a heartfelt tribute. With each kilometre, Alison carried the memory of her mother, walking with determination to make a difference for other families affected by this devastating disease. Driven by the hope of helping other families facing the same struggles, Alison's unwavering determination allowed her to raise an impressive \$3,874 for PanKind. These funds will contribute to crucial research aimed at improving treatments and outcomes for those battling this aggressive disease. Alison's walk was not just about raising funds but also about raising hope for more effective treatment. Her strength, determination, and compassion are truly commendable.

### **HEATHER KERR – COROWA**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Heather Kerr from Corowa, who was nominated for the 2024 NSW/ACT Community Achievement Awards. This recognition highlights Heather's extraordinary contributions to her community, through her dedicated work and leadership with the Oakland's branch of the Country Women's Association [CWA]. Heather has been an advocate for community development, organising numerous Debutante Balls, fundraising dinners and events that significantly benefit local initiatives. Her leadership and commitment have not only strengthened the CWA, but also garnered state-level acknowledgement for the Oakland branch's impactful contributions. This includes the group being awarded the Local Shire Council Community Event of the Year three times since 2016. As the CWA celebrates its 75th Anniversary in NSW, Heather's ongoing efforts have created positive changes within the community. Thankyou Heather, for your ongoing support and positive spirit that continues to inspire those around you, and for your invaluable service to our community.

### **WALBUNDRIE SHOW 7 OCTOBER**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to thank the organisers of this year's 111TH Walbundrie Show, for their dedication and preserving this cherished agricultural and community event. A special shout-out to Show Society Secretary Sandra Webb and the many volunteers whose hard work makes this much-loved event on the country show calendar, that attracts visitors from as Sydney, Melbourne and beyond, a remarkable success. This year's show also featured many exciting events, such as sports shearing, local farming competitions, and engaging father-son challenges. The main arena buzzed with horse events, other popular activities included the dog and poultry shows, and the children's farm nursery. The Pavilion showcased an impressive collection of cakes, flowers, and crafts. And I must make special mention of the creative contributions of the community's talented school children, along with the stunning decorated plywood chickens crafted by the Howlong's Men Shed. It's moments like these that strengthen our country bonds, creating lasting memories and showcasing the heart of our community through the joys of agricultural tradition.

### **HOWLONG COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate the Howlong Community Emergency Response Team for being named the finalist in the 2024 Premier's Awards in the Excellence in Service Delivery Category. This recognition highlights the team's commitment and invaluable service to our community. Established in partnership with NSW Ambulance by the Howlong Community Progress Association Inc, this

dedicated unit of trained volunteers provides crucial initial care before paramedics arrive from Corowa and Albury. Since its inception in 2023, the team has reported to an impressive 95 Triple Zero (000) calls, demonstrating their readiness and capability in emergency situations. Best wishes to the Howlong Community Emergency Response Team as you await the announcement of the Premier's Awards winner on November 18, 2024. Thank you for your outstanding service and dedication to our community.

#### **BREAST FRIENDS - GREAT LAKES BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—October is Breast Cancer awareness month, and I would like to recognise the important work of Breast Friends, the Great Lakes Breast Cancer Support Group. Since 2007, this group has provided a safe space for women facing breast cancer to share their experiences and support one another. Their meetings, held on the first Wednesday of each month at Tuncurry Beach Bowling Club, welcome members at all stages of their cancer journey, from newly diagnosed to long-term survivors. The group's sewing bees produce cushions and drainage bags for women undergoing surgery at local hospitals, offering practical support. With guest speakers and discussions on physical and mental wellbeing, Breast Friends helps its members move forward while building connections in the Forster-Tuncurry area. I thank Breast Friends for their ongoing work in supporting women during their cancer journey.

#### **OLD BAR PHARMACY**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge Old Bar Pharmacy for embracing new technology to improve their service to our community. Led by proprietor Akash Mehta, the pharmacy has invested in a robotic system to streamline their operations. The robot handles medication storage and retrieval, scanning barcodes, storing items securely, and delivering them when requested by the pharmacist. Even with this automation, the pharmacist still checks all prescriptions before providing them to patients. This system allows staff to spend more time with customers, enhancing the level of service. I commend the Old Bar Pharmacy for its commitment to innovation and improving customer care.

#### **ORBIT MARKETING**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to recognise Simon and Jo Gould from Orbit Marketing for their hard work and involvement in the Pink Up Forster Tuncurry Launch Party, which raised \$3,620 for the McGrath Foundation's breast care nurses. Orbit Marketing were the drivers behind the launch party at Wharf St., with the help of Jessica Gray, Kath Harris, Jeanene Duncan & El Rattray. This event brought our community together to support the Pink Up Your Town movement for a night of fabulous food, pink cocktails, dancing & raffles. With special guest Tracy Bevan, Director on the McGrath Foundation Board - this event really showed the importance of this cause and the strength of those facing breast cancer. Thank you, Orbit Marketing, for your contribution to this important cause and for promoting Pink Up Forster Tuncurry all month long.

#### **INAUGURAL LISMORE CYCLING FESTIVAL A SUCCESS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Congratulations to Lismore City Council and the Byron Bay Cycle Club for successfully staging Lismore's inaugural two-day Cycling Festival on October 5-6. The Lismore Cycling Festival was hosted at Lismore's Regional Sports Precinct with races, participation rides and two 'come and try' sessions for children and adults keen to take up the sport. Saturday's events included those sessions – Cyclocross and a special junior's Crit-Cross -- followed by criterium racing on a closed street circuit around the Oakes Oval complex. There were vendors offering coffee and food, making it a family-friendly day out. Sunday featured Fondo events, which are for participation and are not about racing, with three distances for each ability including the Gran (110 kilometres), Medio (70 kilometres) and Piccolo (28 kilometres). As well as showing off our scenic countryside in Lismore and surrounding valleys, the event aimed to provide an experience that shows cycling is for everyone, especially for short distances. The festival also aimed to give back by raising money for a donation to the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service in Lismore. With many local businesses providing sponsorship and support, the Lismore Cycling Festival can only grow in stature in future years.

#### **MESSAGE TO KYOGLE HIGH SCHOOL'S YEAR 12 STUDENTS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to share the motivational message I have sent to Year 12 Kyogle High students: Congratulations on completing your 13 years of school education, that's a significant milestone. I'm sure you have heard plenty of advice and wise words about how to face your Higher School Certificate exams. You have done the hard work, so however you prepare remember to take care of yourself. And after the exams, and graduation, your next adventure begins. Whether you go on to further study, or start a new job, whether you stay in Kyogle or move to another place, or even another country, all sorts of opportunities will open up to you. I encourage you to make the most of them all. And whatever you do from here on, you do it with the grounding of your years at Kyogle High School. You have had the advantage of growing up in a tight knit community, with its rich arts culture, sporting teams, a focus on social justice and a beautiful natural environment.

What a great start for heading out into the world! My best wishes go to all HSC candidates from Northern Rivers schools.

#### **WATLING & BATES DUO RECORDS SECOND ALBUM**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Congratulations to my Unumgar friends Dr Kym Watling and Geoffrey Bates, who as Watling & Bates have recorded their second album, *Dark Middle Period*, through much adversity. The Indy Northern Rivers Editor Susanna Freymark recently published a poignant story on Geoff's diagnosis a year ago of plasma cell leukemia. Through rounds of chemotherapy, blood treatments and doctor visits, the couple said it was difficult to work on their original music. With characteristic humour, Kym told Susanna that they were determined not to release any songs posthumously. "Yeah, nothing gives you focus like a terminal illness," Geoff chuckled. The writing and recording process allowed the duo to focus on something other than treating Geoff's illness. As Susanna put it: Creativity is a life force and for Watling & Bates the release of this second album is just that – it represents life, music and the future. When interviewed, Geoff was doing well; two stem cell transplants have achieved a partial remission, which is great news. *Dark Middle Period* was written and produced by Geoff and Kym, engineered and mixed by Scott French of Lovestreet Studios, and mastered by Paul Blakey of 12th & Vine Post.

#### **PROBUS CLUB OF SHORTLAND INC.**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Originating in the UK in the 1960s, Probus Clubs involve connecting socially in retirement – for fun, fellowship and friendship. Today, there are men's, ladies' and combined clubs in 23 countries worldwide, knowing that socially engaged people have much better mental and physical health outcomes. The Probus Club of Shortland was founded 15 November 1984 at Steelworks Golf Club. Now their home for monthly meetings is Hunter Wetlands in Shortland, where they have been for four years, and where they hope to remain for years to come. Members make new friends, listen to interesting guest speakers, learn new skills, and explore new interests and hobbies which have included wine tasting, resuscitation classes, BBQ nights, Tai Chi classes, cruises, movie and lunch days. There are currently 49 members with 19 men and 30 women, the average age around 80 years, and 11 couples among the members from diverse backgrounds such as truck and bus drivers, electricians, clerks, nurses, ex-service and shop managers, and they often connect with other Probus Clubs for activities and trips. My congratulations and thanks for sustaining this vibrant and important group.

#### **SUE PROSSER**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Sue Prosser is Hospitality Manager for Soul Hub, which gets no government funding, supporting homeless people in Newcastle. For a week in May 2024, Sue and her son Luke slept in their cars to experience sleeping rough. It is the 5th year she has done this to raise awareness in the lead-up to the annual fundraiser Sleepout for Soul event, held on Friday May 17, which hosted 500 sleepers. Sue and Luke hoped to raise \$20,000 of the overall target of \$200,000. In a pilot program, which operated at full capacity a few nights each week from April to June, vulnerable women and children were offered a car park to sleep in overnight, as frontline services are forced to find innovative ways to provide respite from domestic violence and homelessness. They were provided with food and drink, showers, toilets, kitchen facilities and access to television. Soul Hub, with 265 volunteers, relies on the generosity of locals and Sleepout for Soul. Finding ways to help, Ms Prosser speaks with members of the homeless community, listening and learning about their struggles. Thankyou, Sue, for your dedication and selfless contributions.

#### **SANCTUARY MEDICAL PRACTICE FLETCHER**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On 6 August at Fletcher Community Centre, Sanctuary Medical Practice marked its 12th anniversary with a themed celebration - 'Commitment to Health in Community and Raising Future Generations of Primary Health Care Workers'. Practice Owner/Manager Deb Walter is proud of their person-centred approach to healthcare, qualified GPs with extensive experience, GP Registrars, Nursing, Psychology and Social Worker, all supported by a caring admin team. The vision of the practice is driven through the clinical leadership of Dr Graham Walter, a GP of 20 years in this area. The celebration reflected on their achievements in health education, having trained 11 GP Registrars, around 95 medical students, 3 Medical Practice Assistants by the University of New England Partnerships [UNEP], through a scholarship from Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network [HNECCPN]. The practice also begins the education of Practice Nurses, with the first New Grad Nurse starting in 2025, mentored by Nurse Jo. Everyone is committed to local people and the education of community-focused future generations of healthcare workers. Congratulations and thankyou Sanctuary Medical Practice for continuing to work hard to meet our community's healthcare needs.

#### **GIPPS ST RECREATION PRECINCT**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—This month I had the pleasure of speaking at the opening of the Gipps

St Recreation Precinct, a significant development for our community that has been over twenty years in the making. It is the first of its kind in the Penrith area and is sure to be enjoyed by families from across Western Sydney. The Gipps St Recreation Precinct is poised to become a vibrant hub for sporting and recreation, offering facilities for football, cricket, skating, waterplay, barbecues and more. This precinct will provide much needed outdoors spaces for residents and is sure to become a landmark destination. As a parent, I understand firsthand how vital these facilities are for fostering community connections and providing a safe, engaging space for families. I commend Penrith City Council who have tirelessly advocated for this initiative and their dedication to ensuring that the precinct could be realised for our local community.

#### **KU-RING-GAI MALE CHOIR AND AUSTRALIAN WELSH MALE CHOIR**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—In September 2024, I attended a performance of the Ku-ring-gai Male Choir and the Australian Welsh Male Choir at the Hornsby RSL. The Ku-ring-gai Male Choir is one of the longest-running choirs in Australia, established in 1946 by servicemen returning from WWII. They perform often at local retirement villages, to the great joy and entertainment of the residents. Australian Welsh Male Choir is Melbourne based and were on an Australia wide tour. The wonderful voices of Anita Kyle and Lucinda Beck added to the afternoon's enjoyment. In attendance was the Ku-ring-gai Male Choir Patron, the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, together with my fellow and Ku-ring-gai Male Choir Friend, the Honourable Paul Fletcher MP. I recognise Ku-ring-gai Male Choir Secretary Dr Ken Wade, together with conductor Dr Paul Whiting OAM and conductor and Musical Director Tom Buchanan OAM, and the choristers who performed under their batons with such skill and enthusiasm. I look forward to attending many performances by the Ku-ring-gai Male Choir in coming years. They help bring our community together.

#### **2CR CHINESE RADIO - 30TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On 26 September 2024, I attended the 2CR Chinese Radio 30th Anniversary celebrations in Eight Restaurant in Haymarket. I was joined by the Premier and Leader of the Opposition. Beginning as a Chinese community radio station on 26 September 1994, 2CR is Australia's first 24/7 Chinese radio station. Its Sydney broadcasts were soon followed by Melbourne and Brisbane. Currently, 2CR has over 280,000 listeners and followers, as they broadcast in various languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese and English. Their programs include news and current affairs, community dynamics, real estate, medicine, economics and finance, gourmet cooking, gardening, religion, children's programs and many more programs. I recognise Managing Director of 2CR, Esmond Cho. Thank you for your work. The Australian Chinese community is a vibrant community in the Davidson electorate, and I am proud to represent them in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **BALGOWLAH ROTARY CLUB AWARDS NIGHT 2024**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the Balgowlah Rotary Club who are hosting their annual Awards Night on the 15th October at Wakehurst Golf Club. Each year, the Rotary Club of Balgowlah recognises various organisations and members from the Manly area for the fantastic contributions they make in our local community, and in the vocations they work in. The Awards Night is always a wonderful event, and a fantastic opportunity to showcase the extraordinary youth, business and community spirit and talent we have here in Manly. The term 'community service' and the Rotary Club of Balgowlah are in many ways synonymous, and I recognise the Club for its unwavering commitment and support of community organisations in the Manly Electorate. I wish to extend my congratulations to all the recipients of the 2024 Awards Night.

#### **VIPERS RUN CLUB - MOVE FOR 60 - FUNDRAISING EFFORTS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Overcoming mental health struggles can be extremely difficult, as much of this difficulty can be owed to the stigma surrounding mental health, and the lack of awareness and conversations taking place. Hence, the overall objective of World Mental Health Day on October 10th is to mobilise efforts to raise awareness and bridge this gap between stigma and understanding. This World Mental Health Day, an inspiring local run club in the Manly Electorate of which I am a proud member, Vipers RC, took this objective to heart in hosting their annual 'Move for 60' challenge. The 'Move for 60' event saw Vipers RC members run a continuous 60 hour relay at Queenscliff Surf Club for the 60 men who lose their lives to suicide every 60 minutes in Australia. All proceeds from the event went to Lifeline to ensure their crisis support lines remain operational for those who need them most. I am delighted to inform the House that this year's 'Move for 60' was a resounding success. I congratulate Vipers RC and all involved for tackling this crisis head on to raise funds and awareness that I am confident will save lives.

#### **LEGACY WEEK 2024 THANK YOU MORNING TEA**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—Mr Speaker, on October 9, Legacy Northern Beaches District hosted a 'thank you' morning tea for all those involved in this year's annual Legacy Badge Week. Legacy was founded in

1926 to 'keep the promise' to care for our veterans' families. I wish to extend a huge congratulations to Legacy Northern Beaches District who this year raised more than \$40,000 during the annual Legacy Badge Week. I also wish to thank all who partook in this year's fundraising efforts, and I especially wish to acknowledge Heather Milnes and Barry Nolan from Legacy Northern Beaches for all they do in our local community, and for hosting such a wonderful morning tea. I was extremely humbled and grateful to be in attendance and to be given the opportunity to say a few words of acknowledgement on this important organisation. Well done to Heather, Barry and all who volunteered their time for this significant and worthy cause.

#### **CONGRATULATIONS SUZANNE – SUE - TALBERT**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to congratulate Suzanne 'Sue' Talbert of The Hills RFS who was earlier this year awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal as part of the Kings King's Birthday honours. Sue began her journey as a firefighter in the Kenthurst Brigade in 1979 and continues to this day. From the very start, Sue demonstrated a passion for service and an unwavering commitment. She later became a dual member with The Hills District Communication Brigade, where she served as a Deputy Captain from 2008 to 2024. Sue's outstanding dedication extends beyond firefighting. In 1994, she was a founding member of the RFS Critical Incident Support Services [CISS] team. The CISS provides crucial emotional support to fellow volunteers and staff across the state. Sue works unconventional hours, traveling throughout NSW often onto firegrounds to prioritise the wellbeing of the RFS family. Over the last 30 years as a member of CISS, Sue has arguably made her greatest impact on the RFS by supporting and protecting its members. I commend Sue for the long-standing service to the residents of Kinghurst and the surrounding Hills Shire.

#### **TRACEE KELLAND, PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARD**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to congratulate Tracee Kelland on receiving a Pride of Workmanship Award from the Rotary Club of Kenthurst. The Club held its Annual Awards night on 30 September 2024. Susan was nominated by Dipali Suradkar. The award was given in recognition and gratitude for an incredible 27 years of dedication and service at Commonwealth Bank. Tracee's commitment to ensuring that every customer feels valued and supported when they walk into the branch is truly commendable. The care and attention which Tracee has displayed over the last 27 years to meet the needs of the community have made a lasting impression on co-workers and more generally the community. The citation stated, "Thank you for your unwavering service and the positivity you bring to the workplace. Your hard work does not go unnoticed, and we are truly fortunate to have you". It is an absolute pleasure to be able to congratulate and recognise Tracee on receipt of the Pride of Workmanship Award.

#### **CONGRATULATIONS GLENRAC**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Glen Innes Natural Resources Advisory Committee [GLENRAC] on receiving the Outstanding Community Group Award, at the Business NSW New England North West Business Awards held at Gunnedah recently. The group was recognised for improving the community's wellbeing and their efforts towards building sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and community capacity building. I congratulate all involved with GLENRAC winning this award and for GLENRAC celebrating their 35-year milestone. GLENRAC is a not-for-profit community driven organisation, with their strategic direction and strong connection to their community provided by a volunteer committee of management and staff, including CEO Kylie Falconer, aided by Christine Davis, Karen Bavea, Eliza James and Karena Sokolan. I congratulate the current committee behind the team: Chair Julie Firth, Vice Chair Selena McMullen, Treasurer Sam Baker and Secretary Suzi Meyer. I commend GLENRAC on supporting the collaborations between landholders, government agencies, community groups and service providers, as well as for addressing environmental, economic and social challenges, strengthening social bonds and empowering the community to achieve longevity of change to improve community wellbeing. Thank you for the invaluable contribution to Australian Agriculture.

#### **RECOGNITION OF DR ROD MARTIN**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Dr Rod Martin of Armidale for his accomplished career in Medicine - being a Rural Generalist, with credentials in Anaesthetics, Obstetrics, Emergency Medicine and General Practice. I congratulate Rod on his significant contribution and service to his patients, medical students and to his community. Rod is an esteemed Doctor, Lecturer, Examiner and business owner, founding Observa Care with his wife Deborah. Adding to his repertoire, Rod has served on Council, as the NSW representative of Council for nearly 10 years and served on numerous boards, sharing his expertise and supporting the health sector. I commend Rod for an impressive career and for his enduring and selfless commitment to improve the health outcomes and the lives of others into the community.

### **RUBY DROGEMULLER**

**Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Moree local Ruby Drogemuller, for her selection in the Australia's 15-strong team to compete at the 2024 World Aquatics Junior Diving Championships in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The championships will include 250 of the world's most talented junior divers between the ages of 14-18 years, from over 40 nations. I congratulate Ruby on this impressive accolade and for her excellence in preparation in the leadup to the selection. Ruby was chosen based on her prior performance at the Australian Junior Elite Nationals in Brisbane, where she won silver in the Girls Junior A Platform. Four other members from the NSW Institute of Sport Squad Scholarship Athletic Squad were selected to represent Australia at the championships. I commend Ruby on her commitment to the sport of diving, for the hard work put into training and for taking opportunities to do her best. Special thanks to those who have supported Ruby, including her coach and especially her family members for enabling Ruby's exciting journey. We wish Ruby all the best at the World Championships in November – the Northern Tablelands Electorate is right behind you.

### **NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Every year, the 29th September is National Police Remembrance Day, a day to remember and honour our fallen officers whose lives were tragically cut short while performing their duties as a Police Officer. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I take this opportunity to thank all officers for selflessly putting their lives on the line and dedicating themselves to keeping our communities safe. I also pay tribute to their loved ones. Our community is better off for their service and I wish all serving officers the very best for their safety.

### **OOSHMAN ST CLAIR**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I congratulate the owners and team at Ooshman St Clair on the recent opening of their store, located at the St Clair Shopping Centre. Ooshman offers delicious Lebanese bakehouse food and I know that locals and visitors alike were thrilled to learn of the opening of the St Clair store. I look forward to trying out one of their delicious meals. Franchisees are the backbone of our community and their hard work and many attributes are of great benefit to our economy and local area. I commend the owners and team at Ooshman St Clair and I wish them success.

### **SMALL BUSINESS MONTH**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—October is Small Business Month and I take this opportunity to recognise and celebrate the vital role that small businesses play in my electorate of Badgerys Creek and across NSW. There are over 850,000 small businesses in NSW and they are the backbone of our economy, employing nearly two million people and contributing significantly to our growth and prosperity. Small businesses are the heart of our communities, providing employment, services and fostering a unique local character. I recently visited Fruit World Penrith Florist at Nepean Village and I thank them for their excellent customer service and wonderful floral arrangements that we all may enjoy.

### **DINO ZAPPACOSTA - GRIFFITH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise Dino Zappacosta who served and contributed to local Government over a 38-year career. Dino has been a teacher, a winemaker and a business owner. Dino was elected to Council in 1987, prompted to run by the beginning of exciting developments in Griffith, including the theatre, new swimming pool and roundabouts. He has always been passionate about fostering the city's growth and understood the patience and dedication required to see that happen. He was elected mayor in 2006 and 2008, and further was deputy mayor for 15 years. Dino was part of the Build More Dams committee lobbying to build more dams during the millennium drought. Dino with his family have celebrated over 40 years of ownership of the iconic Hanwood Village Store with a strong following of loyal customers and always helping with a worthy cause. Dino is to be congratulated on his enormous commitment to the community and his tireless work as a councillor over the years.

### **LANCE PARKER – GRIFFITH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise the late Lance Parker who was born in Hillston in 1927 and contributed many years to education, farming, and the community. After qualifying as a teacher, he spent his early career in outback New South Wales, at one teacher schools. Securing a property manager position in 1961 prompted a career change to agriculture. During that time he developed a keen interest in fish farming, breeding golden and silver perch. He purchased the property "Cascade" at Wallanthery on the Lachlan River, which was the first warm water fish hatchery in Australia and continued his work with fresh water fish. During this time Lance wrote and published 4 books of stories and bush poetry, reflecting local

Riverina history. He served as a member of the Probus Club, and was an active member of U3A for fifteen years. Lance's long service to education, agriculture and the arts sector is to be remembered and commended.

#### NICOLE GIBSON

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... October is Mental Health Awareness Month, and I would like to recognise local mental health advocate, Nicole Gibson. For the past four years, Nicole has committed to putting "one foot forward" for the Black Dog Institute, whilst bravely sharing her story to encourage people struggling with their mental health to seek help. Nicole sadly lost her brother to the black dog in November 2012. Since 2019, her husband has faced his own mental health struggles, but with the right support, they have been able to help him through it. As Nicole pounds the pavement raising funds for the Black Dog Institute each year in October, she spreads a very important message. Help is available, people are not alone, and there is no shame in asking for support. Sharing your story of loved ones lost can be difficult, and I commend Nicole for her commitment and dedication to being a mental health advocate, fundraising and creating awareness of support services available. Thank you for all you are doing Nicole, keep up the great work!

#### MERINDA ROLL

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to congratulate Merinda Roll from the Dubbo Demons AFL Club who has recently been awarded Life Membership to the Club. As the President of the Junior club for many seasons, Merinda endeavours to create the best opportunities possible for young players. She collaborates closely with key stakeholders including the local Council, Central West AFL, and Seniors AFL to bring these opportunities to life. A driving force within the club, she has been instrumental in modernising clubrooms, installing an electronic scoreboard at South Dubbo Oval and getting dedicated girls changerooms. Merinda is passionate about providing junior players from the west with representative opportunities, ensuring that they are nominated for the GWS Academy, as well as Raz and Rep teams. Not just a passionate club member off the field, Merinda is equally dedicated on it! She laces up her boots to train with the seniors' women's team and participates in the annual Masters game. Thank you, Merinda, for your unwavering dedication and commitment to AFL and for tirelessly working to enhance opportunities for people to enjoy the sport.

#### ANDY PEARSON

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Andrew Pearson from the Dubbo Demons AFL Club who has recently been awarded Life Membership to the club. Andy began his journey with the Demons as a junior player. He currently serves as the Captain of the Tier 2 men's team and is always dependable, stepping up to play for the Tier 1 men's team whenever needed. He is one of the first faces you'll see at the Oval on a Saturday, always there early to help set up the ground for game day. Once the games have concluded, you'll find him continuing the support for the club by fundraising and selling raffle tickets at the Tavern. Andy dedicates his entire weekend to the Demons and AFL. On Sunday's, you'll find him back at the South Dubbo Oval, supporting his children and the junior players as they take the field. The 2024 season marked a special milestone for Andy as he celebrated his 100th senior game. This significant achievement was made even more memorable by the fact that he played alongside his teammate Jacob Pearce, with whom he shared his junior playing days. Congratulations Andy, you are a true club stalwart!

#### WORLD SAND GREENS BINALONG

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise the inaugural Men's World Sand Greens Championships held at the Binalong Golf Club in September. The Binalong Golf Club was founded in 1857, originally nine-holes, now boasting eighteen holes, par seventy-two course. The World Sand Greens tournament was a first for Australia requiring golfers to adjust their game to play on sand greens. The tournament set Binalong on the world stage, seeing a myriad of individuals come together to prepare and execute a range of tasks to not only showcase the magnificent course, the distinct style of golf and oversight the success of the overall tournament. I congratulate the following individuals who took a lead role; Michael Brayshaw - Club President, Madaline Brayshaw - Club Secretary, Will Grogan - Vice President, Pat Dwyer - Club Captain, Duncan Burleigh - Golf Secretary, Denis Williams - Head Groundsman, Chris Glover- Greenskeeper, Mitch Grange, George Elliot, Libby Elliot, Peter Muscat, Caroline Muscat, John Lee and Christopher Glover received life memberships. I acknowledge that there were many others involved in making this a terrific and awe-inspiring event and thank and congratulate everyone involved.

#### ZANTIS JEWELLERS GOULBURN

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Zantis Jewellers Goulburn. Peter Zantis have been working in the family-owned jewellery store in Goulburn for the past fifty years. Peter is a watchmaker, jeweller, and gemologist. Peter's father was a watchmaker and founded the business in 1947. On completion of high school in 1976, Peter commenced his watchmaking apprenticeship alongside a jeweller's apprenticeship,



whilst working at the shop. Belinda started working in the shop on Saturday mornings in 2001 going onto work fulltime at the shop in 2006. Peter and Belinda acquired the business in 2009. Moving from the original shop after twenty years into the Argyle Mall seeing increased clientele due to the location, deciding then to go back to the original shop in Auburn Street, combining the workshop and shop making one shop focussing on exhibiting and selling exclusive jewellery. Zan tis Jewellery has a proud longevity, seeing many other conglomerate companies come and go. The undeniable skill, talent and true commitment to quality jewellery and customer service has not been surpassed. I congratulate Peter and Belinda and wish them well in their retirement.

#### **ANNALIESE CASTON**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise to recognise Annaliese Caston. Annaliese is an active and engaged volunteer in the Murrumbateman community and has been for decades. Her contributions to the community have been multi-faceted encompassing environmental, economic, and social levels within the community. Annaliese can regularly be found attending to the Murrumbateman Village Box Gum Grassy Woodland, undertaking weed control, species mapping and the identification of rare species. As a member of the executive of the Murrumbateman Community Association [MCA], she serves as the primary liaison between MCA, Yass Valley Council and community groups seeking improvement and maintenance activities at the Murrumbateman Recreation Grounds. Annaliese's compassion is well-recognised within the community, quick to help those who maybe experiencing hardship conducting such activities as cooking a meal, driving vulnerable members of the community to medical appointments. I take this opportunity to recognise and thank Annaliese for her selfless commitment to the community within Murrumbateman and the many roles which she undertakes and the many successes that have been achieved.

#### **JUST CUTS GRAFTON SHOPPINGWORLD**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Wes and Laura from Just Cuts Grafton who have been recognised as one of the top four Just Cuts franchise owners globally. What an outstanding achievement. At the recent Just Cuts Annual Gala Awards held in Fiji the team were recognised for their overall performance including financial, brand advocacy, contributions to the community and providing exceptional service to their clients. Being noted in the top four is certainly an honour and acknowledges the hard work, dedication and effort put into their business each and every day. What a fantastic result and something to be very proud of indeed, keep up the great work Wes and Laura, congratulations.

#### **TAHLIA O'HARA**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to recognise the remarkable achievements of Tahlia O'Hara, a proud Gumbaynggirr woman from South Grafton. Tahlia is well known throughout the Clarence Valley for her community spirit, passion, and dedication to helping others, and now she is being recognised on a much larger scale. Currently in her third year of studying a Bachelor of Pharmacy at Griffith University, Tahlia was recently selected as the face of the University's Open Day. Her nomination by the Gumurrii Foundation is a testament to her outstanding academic achievements and commitment to Indigenous health. Tahlia's dedication to improving health outcomes for her community is inspiring. She is planning to return to the Clarence Valley after completing her degree, where she hopes to further her studies in medicine and work in the local health sector. Her goal is to gain as many qualifications as possible and bring her knowledge and experience back to support rural and regional healthcare, particularly for Indigenous communities. Tahlia's commitment to education and her community exemplifies her leadership and vision for a healthier, more inclusive future for all. Congratulations, Tahlia!

#### **MILLIE REID-GALLAGHER**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—My congratulations go to Millie Reid-Gallagher from Clarence Valley Anglican School who recently auditioned for the Gondwana National Choir. Millie, who is in year 8, was accepted and will now perform at the Sydney Opera House at their Christmas Concert "Voices of Angels" in December. The Gondwana National Choir's aim is to reflect Australia through song. The Choir, which is over 30 years old, is highly acclaimed and world-renowned. I believe the audition process is quite demanding and, as such, an acceptance into the Choir is a great accomplishment. This will be Millie's third year performing in the National Choir, what a fantastic achievement. Well done Millie and enjoy this very special experience.

#### **RUBY LAFFERTY ON THE VOICE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to congratulate Mosman local Ruby Lafferty on making it onto this season of The Voice Australia. At just 18, Ruby's talent is undeniable. Two judges turned their chair for Ruby in the blind auditions: Kate Miller-Hiedke and Adam Lambert, with Adam using his block to ensure Ruby joined his team. Ruby recently graduated from Mosman High School and has told Mosman Living that her high school experience helped foster her love of music and confidence in her extraordinary singing ability.

Those in my local community know that Mosman High has always prided itself on its achievements in artistic expression particularly in music, drama and art. Throughout high school, Ruby was involved in various music programs, choirs and concerts. Ruby is now studying a Bachelor of Arts in Media Communications and Performing Arts & Entertainment Industries, when she's not busy being a national superstar of course. I want to warmly congratulate Ruby on her incredible achievement. Unfortunately, Ruby has not made it through to the finals, but I hear she has been working on some original music, which I can't wait to hear. Congratulations Ruby.

#### **MOSMAN BOWLING CLUB AGM**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to congratulate Jenny Hole on a successful three years as President of the Mosman Bowling Club. Jenny will stay on the Board and continue helping out at the Club as Past President for another 12 months. Over the years, Mosman Bowling Club has become a vibrant and integral part of the Mosman community thanks to a string of successful and engaged Presidents and Board members. I thank Jenny for all she has done for the club these past three years and wish her all the best in her future endeavours. I welcome newly-elected President Julie Hayden, who has been a member at the club for 28 years. Julie is now the longest playing female member of the Club, and I have every faith the Club will continue to thrive and grow under her leadership. I acknowledge Caroline Duhigg and Stephen Lewis, who stepped down from the Board at the AGM, and I welcome new Board Members Jill Kehoe and Peter Garland. Congratulations Mosman Bowling Club on another successful year.

#### **ILLUMINATE OCTOBER: COMMEMORATING 7 OCTOBER 2023**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On 6 October 2024, I attended Illuminate October – Sydney's sunset candle lighting ceremony. We gathered to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the lives lost and those taken captive on 7 October 2023. We gathered to remember over 1,200 innocent Israelis that died – the largest loss of Jewish life on any single day since the Holocaust. We gathered in hope that the hostages will be sent free – free from fear and isolation, having been held in captivity. I recognise constituent, Melissa McCurdie, who shared her moving story. She was due to visit Be'eri in Israel last October to visit family members. Three were brutally murdered and others taken hostage. This is heartbreaking. I recognise Michal Ohana, who shared her story of survival. She was shot at Nova festival. She demonstrates so much bravery. Michal lit the commemoration candle that shone brightly over Sydney Harbour. I recognise the Israeli Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Amir Maimon; the President of the Zionist Federation of Australia, Jeremy Leibler; and the President of the Jewish Board of Deputies, David Ossip. Thank you for helping bring our community together to reflect and never forget. We must hold onto hope.

#### **HUNTER SURF LIFESAVING**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Our surf lifesavers are already making waves as this year's patrol season kicks off! The annual Raising of the Flags Ceremony at Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club was met with enthusiasm from the many volunteers eager to begin their vital work. Of the 13 surf lifesaving clubs in the Hunter, six are based right here in the stunning Newcastle Electorate, and their contributions are nothing short of essential. Whether they're performing rescues, educating beachgoers, or providing a reassuring presence on the sand, these dedicated volunteers work tirelessly to ensure our safety throughout the scorching summer months. This year, the Hunter Branch was deservedly named Surf Lifesaving Branch of the Year and welcomed 800 new members. As patrols officially commence, it's a reminder that we all have a role to play; swim between the flags, know how to spot rips, and understand your limits in the water. A sincere thank you to all our volunteers—your dedication makes our beaches safer for everyone.

#### **BHARAT NALLURI**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to Bharat Nalluri, who was recently named best director for the Netflix show *Boy Swallows Universe* at the Asian Academy Creative Awards. Based on the best-selling novel by Australian author Trent Dalton, *Boy Swallows Universe* is an Australian coming-of-age filmed in Brisbane. The series was released on Netflix in January of this year and has received critical acclaim, including being nominated for a BAFTA and Emmy earlier this year. I recently had the pleasure of meeting Bharat at his Australian Citizenship ceremony. Bharat became a Novocastrian shortly before COVID and fell in love with our beautiful city. As such, Bharat is advocating for more film productions to take up residence in Newcastle and the Hunter, which will provide many exciting opportunities for the region. This is an amazing achievement, and Newcastle looks forward to your next production. Hopefully we will see you call "action" on a production in Newcastle in the future!

#### **HUNTER SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the Year

12 graduation ceremony at Hunter Sports High School, where we celebrated the outstanding achievements of the graduating class of 2024. This remarkable group of 97 graduates has shown incredible dedication and perseverance, demonstrating the school's commitment to providing personalized pathways that support each student in reaching their goals. Of the graduates, 57 pursued a traditional HSC pathway, with 43 on an ATAR track. Impressively, 41 students have already received early offers to university, showcasing their hard work and determination. Additionally, four big-picture graduates gained non-HSC entry into university, while eight secured apprenticeships and three completed traineeships. Athletes also shone brightly, with 24 students representing New South Wales in various sports throughout the year, and five selected to represent Australia, along with one student chosen to represent Samoa. I wish all HSC students the best of luck as they prepare to sit for their exams. Congratulations to this extraordinary cohort for their achievements; your future is bright!

### **HUNTER VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I am very pleased to recognise Jill Stuart of Kahibah, who was recently awarded not only the Hunter Senior Volunteer of the Year but also the Hunter Volunteer of the Year Award. This is a very significant and much deserved recognition for Jill who has been a passionate advocate for and made a truly extraordinary contribution to the Cerebral Palsy Alliance for 60 years. The Stuart Centre in Croudace Bay, named after Jill for her advocacy and fundraising efforts, is now the Cerebral Palsy Alliance's longest running therapy centre. For over four decades, this Centre has made the world of difference for people in the Hunter region with cerebral palsy and their families. Jill's unwavering dedication has had a lasting impact on countless lives, and these awards highlight the incredible importance of volunteers in our communities. Jill's work is a testament to the difference one person can make. So, Jill, on behalf of the people of Charlestown, I thank you for your tireless work and advocacy over many decades for this cause. Our community is a better place because of generous and caring people such as yourself.

### **BUTCHER BOYS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I would like to recognise the Central Newcastle Butcher Boys who tackled the rugby league competition with determination and tenacity this year. For the first time in 61 years the Butcher Boys made it to the grand final, fighting hard all season. After an intense and nail biting preliminary final victory against The Entrance, the Butcher Boys broke their premiership drought. Though the team narrowly missed out on the top spot against the Maitland Pumpkin Pickers, this achievement is a huge win for the club. While the result wasn't what they dreamed of, the community couldn't be prouder. They may not have taken home the trophy this year, but they've certainly kicked plenty of goals for the club and our community. We're all behind them as they charge forward into next season!

### **MIGRANT INFORMATION DAY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend at the Annual Migrant Information Day, to recognise the challenges and celebrate the contributions of our migrant community. The Migrant Information Day was hosted by the St George Multicultural Network to provide vital resources for new migrants and refugees. It consisted of various stalls for housing, health, employment, education, support and government services. As the Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, I am always looking for ways to recognise and celebrate the countless ways migrants contribute to our society, and this event plays such a crucial part in helping new arrivals settle into our vibrant and diverse community. I believe that the celebration of diversity in our state is what makes us strong, and through events like this, we work together towards the ultimate goal of promoting harmony in our community. Thank you to the St George Multicultural Network for hosting the event and for their service to our community. I would also like to acknowledge and thank all stallholders and attendees who made this event such a great success, and I look forward to continuing the celebration of this great initiative for many years to come.

### **TANIMA BANERJEE**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, it always brings me great pleasure to share the work and achievements of locals like Tanima Banerjee, who was recently awarded the 2024 Southern Sydney Volunteer of the Year Award. Tanima is a Penshurst local and has an esteemed background in scientific research. She uses her talents towards generously volunteering for the Association for Asia-Pacific Countries, where she applies her skills in innovative ways to benefit the community. This award recognises the hard work of individuals who donate their time and talents tirelessly to support their communities. Having been instrumental in promoting health and well-being by offering educational support, organising music fitness classes, providing language assistance, and fundraising for cancer research, Tanima is indeed a worthy recipient. I would like to congratulate Tanima on

her award and thank her and all the other volunteers for the work that they do for the community. Without them and the generous contribution of their time and effort, our local communities would not be the same.

#### **DR YIN-LAN SOON**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Dr Yin-Lan Soon, a valuable member of my local community. Dr Soon was recently named winner of the 2024 Rotary Inspirational Women's Award in the healthcare worker category. Dr Soon's contribution to the community over the years has been very inspirational. She is a forensic psychiatrist and senior lecturer, who was described as someone who serves the often-neglected incarcerated population and forensic mental health system in NSW. With extensive qualifications in medicine, psychiatry and law, Dr Soon provides psychiatric care to individuals with challenging mental health conditions across the custodial system. Her leadership in this field of work has fostered a greater understanding for the importance of mental health in our community. I am always pleased to share the inspiring work that is done by those in our community, and Dr Soon's tireless commitment to improving rehabilitation and health outcomes is just outstanding. Dr Soon's dedication and generosity is outstanding. I would like to congratulate her on this well-deserved award and thank her for her remarkable service to the community.

#### **WILKINS PUBLIC SCHOOL FAIR DAY**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Along with many locals my family and I had great fun at the recent Wilkins Fair Day on 8 September. Fair Day is a huge event on the local calendar, with over 5,000 people visiting the school on the day for rides, games, and food with students providing performances all day. This year's event raised over \$40,000 which will go towards two important projects: upgrading and extending the current play equipment areas and providing stimulating nature-based equipment which will give children the opportunity to explore, play and relax in a calm outdoor space. Throughout the day, nobody went hungry with handmade delights from the canteen, and the ever-popular lemonade stand. The cake stall was loaded with fresh goodies and the classic BBQ was run by an army of dedicated parent volunteers. Congratulations to Wilkins P&C President, Kimberley Ashton and Katrina Byrne and Gianna Spencer the key organisers of the event. I'd also like to make a special call out to the P&C Vice President, MC and stage manager for the day Lucy Suze who kept things running smoothly. Thanks and congratulations to all involved in delivering such an amazing day for our local community!

#### **SUMMER HILL LAKERS NETBALL CLUB**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Congratulations to Summer Hill Lakers Netball Club for an outstanding season competing in the Inner West Netball Association competition. Lakers is one of the smaller clubs to compete but this year they have achieved some amazing results. From only 17 teams and about 200 players, 10 Lakers teams made it through to the finals, with 6 of those going all the way to Grand Finals! On Grand Final day an amazing 5 out of 6 teams became Premiers; Senior A3, Under 14/3s, Under 13/4s, Under 12/3s and Under 10/2s, with the Cadet 4s coming in runners up. A special call out to Liz Leonard the well-known super coach of the Lakers and all the many players, volunteers, coaches, umpires and supporters who make this great little club an important part of our Inner West community. Their success was recognised by the Inner West Association as the club took out the Magpie Trophy for Overall Best Club. Congratulations Summer Hill Lakers on such an amazing season 2024!

#### **TAMIL SOCIETY OF GRADUATE TAMILS**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Sunday 29th September, I was delighted to address students, parents, volunteers and organisers from the Tamil Society of Graduate Tamils, for the annual Tamil Competition awards ceremony at James Ruse Agricultural High School, Carlingford. Tamil Australians are a dynamic part of our Prospect Electorate and Western Sydney community. With an estimated 150,000 Tamil speakers across Australia, our local suburb of Toongabbie is the beating heart of Tamil community life, across cultural organisations, religious institutions and centres of learning. Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, the annual Tamil Competition by TSoGT brings together around 3,000 children from across Australia and New Zealand to participate in a unique event that promotes Tamil language and culture while celebrating our multicultural community and developing essential interpersonal skills. This year, I was honoured to address hundreds of gathered attendees and present students with awards celebrating academic excellence in Tamil language, as well as an appreciation for their vibrant cultural inheritance. My congratulations go out to Dr Pon Ketheswaran, President and all our dedicated students, educators and volunteers at the Tamil Society of Graduate Tamils on a wonderful celebration of Tamil language and culture in our Western Sydney community.

#### **ROCKY MASCARENHAS - TOONGABBIE FC**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Thursday 3rd October, the Granville and Districts Soccer Football Association awarded local club Toongabbie FC and their Secretary, Rocky Mascarenhas with awards at

their annual Presentation Gala Dinner at Renaissance Westella, Lidcombe. Established in 1900, GDSFA is one of the oldest Football Associations in the world. Toongabbie and Districts Junior Soccer Club was established in 1953 and is one of the most historic football clubs in our local Prospect Electorate. Today, the Club features 35 teams and close to 500 players who call Girraween Park their footballing home. At this year's GDSFA Presentation Gala Dinner, Toongabbie FC won the Fair Play Award, for the least number of Yellow and Red Cards in competition throughout the season. Toongabbie FC Secretary and Life Member, Rocky Mascarenhas won the Club Person of the Year award, a wonderful acknowledgement of his many years of service, both to the sport and to our local Prospect Electorate community. As GDSFA Patron, I would like to personally congratulate Rocky and everyone at Toongabbie FC on both awards, which are a testament to the positive ethos, welcoming environment and community spirit of this vibrant football club and its fantastic volunteers.

### **GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH - OFFICIAL DINNER**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Tuesday 8th October, I was delighted to attend the Official Dinner welcoming His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Australia at the International Convention Centre, Sydney. Our Greek-Australian community is woven into the fabric of modern Australia, with Greek migration to Australia throughout the last two centuries making a profound impact on our multicultural society. Today, over 424,000 Australians identify with Greek ancestry, and Sydney is of the largest centres of the global Greek diaspora. I'm proud to represent Greek-Australians throughout our local Prospect Electorate and across Western Sydney. Established in 1924, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia celebrates its centenary this year with religious and cultural events, elevated by the first official visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch to Australia in 28 years. The Official Dinner was attended by over 1,300 guests, religious and community leaders, including Parliamentary colleagues Sophie Cotsis MP and Courtney Houssos MLC, as well as the Parish Committee from nearby St Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Church Parish Community, Blacktown. My warmest congratulations go out to His All-Holiness, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios and all our Greek-Australians on a wonderful event, with best wishes for the centenary of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

### **CANAPES IN THE CANOLA**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Locals came together amidst the stunning canola fields to celebrate the community and its rural foundations thanks to St Annes Catholic College, who recently hosted a charity event, 'Canapes in the Canola.' The stunning backdrop, a sight to behold, was made possible thanks to the generosity of Jason and Stacey Coleman of Sebastopol. They graciously opened up their golden fields of canola, allowing for this inaugural event to be enjoyed by all. Their kindness is a true reflection of the community's spirit. The charity event, a testament to the community's generosity, raised a significant \$10,000. This substantial amount will make a tangible difference in the lives of our local youth, supporting both St Anne's Catholic College and the Temora District Education Fund. Guests savoured the flavours of local produce, expertly prepared by chef Michele Seymour, while they reflected on the value and beauty of rural NSW living. The event allowed guests to be treated to performances from local musicians, Lauren Wilesmith and Tom Henderson, adding a touch of local talent to the event. I would like to congratulate all involved in bringing such a vibrant, and unique fundraising event together.

### **WEETHALLE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I was delighted to join the celebrations with the local community of Weethalle, attended by thousands of spectators, to mark the very special milestone of one hundred years since this small town was established. Weethalle is a small farming town on the Mid Western Highway, 60 kilometres west of West Wyalong, a community that prides itself on its silo art painted by Heesco in 2017. The weather was stunning, allowing the crowds to enjoy the exhibits around the grounds of Weethalle Showground. The day was a whirlwind of excitement, with a diverse range of activities to enjoy. From camel rides to the Scottish marching band, and Clydesdale hayrides, there was something for everyone, ensuring that no one was left out. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Weethalle community for their enthusiastic participation in this event and for their active participation and support. It's your support and involvement that made this centenary celebration a truly memorable one. I would also like to congratulate the Weethalle Centenary Committee on their hard work in creating an event that will reflect on our rich history and celebrate Weethalle's growth and future.

### **COOTAMUNDRA'S EMILY WALSH WINS EMMY**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Emily Walsh received an Emmy for Outstanding or Fantasy/SciFi Makeup (Non-Prosthetic) for her work on the television series Shogun, filmed in 2021. Her award was specifically for "The Abyss of Life", episode eight in the Shogun series. A movie fanatic from an early age saw Emily as an aspiring actress when she was involved with the Cootamundra Amateur Dramatic Arts Society and, this was also where her interest in makeup was nurtured as she would assist with make-up applications for stage shows the group put on. Determination and never missing an opportunity to learn new skills is how Emily

described her drive to achieve. She started her formal training at TAFE NSW in 2007 whilst she was still at high school and completed a hair, beauty and make-up course. Emily described the movie industry as hard, with long hours. In the beginning she would work for free or low wages just to get her name out there. There is also so much job satisfaction and camaraderie with colleagues and it is extremely rewarding when an award like an Emmy happens.

#### **CREATING LINKS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER NATALEE O'BRIEN**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I am proud to recognise Natalee O'Brien on her appointment as the new CEO of Creating Links. Natalee's vision and commitment to community service have always shone through in her work. With over 20 years of leadership experience in senior roles within the Salvation Army, Natalee brings a wealth of knowledge, passion, and a proven track record in driving impactful community services. With a proven track record of fostering collaboration and driving impactful initiatives, Natalee brings a wealth of experience and fresh ideas to the role. Her passion for empowering individuals and supporting diverse communities aligns perfectly with Creating Links' mission, ensuring that our services will continue to thrive under her guidance. Natalee's extensive experience spans multiple sectors, including youth and family services, homelessness support, and community engagement, making her a natural fit for the values and mission of Creating Links. She is deeply committed to strengthening and expanding our programs that support the diverse communities we serve. Her vision includes building stronger collaborations with government and non-government stakeholders, ensuring that our services continue to evolve to meet the growing needs of the community. Once again congratulations, Natalee!

#### **EAST BANKSTOWN FOOTBALL CLUB ANNUAL BDAFA DINNER**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Congratulations to Chris Millar and Pia Livas from East Bankstown Football Club in my electorate of Bankstown on receiving the East Bankstown Volunteer of the Year Award and the Umbro All Age Ladies Division 1 Golden Boot. A family friendly Club established in 1944; East Bankstown Football Club is the oldest Club in the Bankstown District. Chris, President of East Bankstown Football Club, is known as a silent achiever who works tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that East Bankstown Football Club is a well-oiled machine achieving goals on and outside of the field. As President he has mentored many young people in the organisation and selflessly guided them throughout their football career. Pia's dedication, commitment, and passion, that she consistently brings to the field shows young women across our community that you can be successful in sports. One day I hope to see Pia continue to reach her goals and I wish her all the best in her football career. On behalf of our community, I extend my sincerest thanks to Chris and Pia for their work. These awards add to the legacy of sporting achievements in our community.

#### **CHIROKINETIX SPORTS MEDICINE - LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Congratulations to Chirokinetix Sports Medicine Clinic on winning the 2024 Local Business Award for Outstanding Health Improvement Services. This well-deserved recognition represents the continued dedication, expertise and exceptional service Chirokinetix Sports offers to our community. Chirokinetix Sports works to empower the individuals in our community by providing tailored treatment plans that focus on injury prevention, recovery, and overall well-being. Their holistic approach to sports medicine not only addresses immediate concerns but also promotes long-term health benefits, making a significant impact in improving the lives of those who need it most. The clinic's commitment to patient care through innovative therapeutic techniques and technologies, ensures that patients receive the most effective care possible; working to achieve fitness goals and giving patients the confidence to return to their daily routines stronger than ever. Chirokinetix Sports continues to raise the bar for excellence in health improvement in community. This award is a testament to their unwavering commitment to delivering top-tier care. I congratulate Chirokinetix on this achievement and thank them for the invaluable contribution they make to improving health and wellbeing. It is a privilege to have this service available in our community!

#### **KIAMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges that the makeup of the next Kiama Municipal Council has been confirmed following the recent local government elections. I wish to congratulate all returning and newly elected Councillors including: Matt Brown (returning), Mike Cains (new), Imogen Draisma (returning), Stuart Larkins (returning), Melinda Lawton (new), Melissa Matters (new), Cameron McDonald (new), Yasmin Tatrai (new), Erica Warren (new). I would also like to acknowledge the senior Kiama Municipal Council staff headed up by the Executive Leadership Team including the CEO Jane Stroud and

Chief Operating Officer Joe Gaudiosi. I also acknowledge and thank the outgoing Director of Infrastructure & Liveability Michael Malone for his efforts and I welcome the new interim Acting Director Seren McKenzie.

#### **SHELLHARBOUR CITY COUNCIL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges that the makeup of the new Shellharbour City Council is now confirmed following the recent local government elections held on Saturday 14th September 2024. I would like to acknowledge the returning and newly elected Councillors including: Mayor Chris Homer (returning and re-elected as Mayor), Kellie Marsh (returning), Mitch Ellis (new), Moira Hamilton (returning), John Davey (new), Lou Stefanovski (new), Craig Ridding (new), Rob Petreski (returning), Kane Murphy (new). I also acknowledge Shellharbour City Council's Chief Executive Officer Mr Mike Archer who continues to display leadership in ensuring that Shellharbour City Council lives within its means, continues to reduce Council's annual deficit from \$11.3 million to \$3.8 million in 2024-25 and delivers services to Shellharbour residents based on its core values – Collaboration, Accountability, Integrity, Respect and Sustainability.

#### **SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges that the makeup of the next Shoalhaven City Council has been declared following the local government elections which were held on Saturday 14th September 2024. I wish to congratulate all the newly elected and returning Councillors including: Mayor Patricia White (returning), Jemma Tribe (returning), Bob Proudfoot (returning), Luciano Casmiri (new), Peter Wilkins (new), Jason Cox (new), Selena Clancy (new), Matthew Norris (returning), Ben Krikstolaitis (new), Gillian Boyd (returning), Mitch Pakes (returning), Karlee Dunn (new), Natalee Johnston (new). I would also like to acknowledge the new Mayor of Shoalhaven Patricia White and I look forward to working with her and all new and returning Councillors on improving services in the Shoalhaven and ensuring Council gets back to basics and delivers the services our community deserves.

#### **VALE MOSIGNOR VINCENT REDDEN**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to acknowledge the passing of a beloved member of our community, Monsignor Vincent Redden, who served faithfully as parish priest of St Mark's Catholic Parish, Drummoyne, for over 18 years. Mons Redden was ordained in July 1961 and served across Sydney throughout his 52 years of service as a priest. He was appointed Vicar of Clergy to the Archbishop of Sydney, a role he held for 12 years, before being appointed Chairman of the Sydney Archdiocese Catholic Schools Board. Mons Redden served as a chaplain in the Army Reserve for over 25 years and went on to become a key organiser of many of our local ANZAC Day ceremonies. For nearly two decades, Mons Redden shared his wisdom, compassion and love with us through his inspiring faith, service and dedication to the community. On behalf of our community, I extend my sincerest condolences to Mons Vince Redden's family, loved ones, friends and former parishioners. Vale Monsignor Vincent Redden.

#### **CEC BARLOW AWARD WINNERS**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today, I would like to congratulate two local winners of the Football Canterbury Volunteer Recognition Awards, Georgina Yfantis and Manning Charles. The Canterbury & District Soccer Football Association's Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner, the "Cec Barlow Awards", is named after Mr Cecil Barlow. Cec, a WW1 veteran, was President of the CDSFA for 31 consecutive seasons spanning the period 1933 and concluding at the end of the 1963 season. Winner for the Balmain District Football Club, Georgina Yfantis, was recognised for her outstanding contribution over many years as a volunteer, including being Age Coordinator for three different age groups in 2024. Winner for the Leichhardt Saints Football Club, Manning Charles, was recognised for his efforts as a member of the club committee, most recently as Junior Vice-President, and his work as their long-standing Equipment Officer. The tireless efforts of volunteers are what makes community sport thrive and gives so many the opportunity to play the sports they love. Dedicated volunteers like you make our community stronger. Congratulations Georgina and Manning, for your commendable efforts enriching our community through football.

#### **NATIONAL FAMILY BUSINESS DAY**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Small family-owned businesses are the lifeblood of our community and I was proud to recognise them on National Family Business Day on 19 September. An initiative of the Family Business Association, National Family Business Day celebrates the vital role family-owned businesses play in our economy and communities. They are an essential pillar of the Australian economy, making up 70% of all businesses nationally, employing almost 50% of the workforce, and generating an estimated \$4.3 trillion in wealth. Family businesses drive innovation, create jobs and foster a sense of community. Behind every family business is a story of hard work, passion, and dedication, passed down through generations. My own community of

Willoughby boasts a plethora of these businesses, and it is always a pleasure for me to meet and greet the hardworking men and women who run these enterprises. I am very grateful for the support that local chambers of commerce in Willoughby give to the small, family-run businesses of our community.

#### **ST PHILIP NERI CATHOLIC CHURCH MINISTRY EXPO**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On 22 September, I was honoured to be a guest at St Philip Neri Catholic Church in Northbridge for their Ministry Expo and Family Mass. The church takes its name from St Philip Neri, a sixteenth-century Italian Saint who dedicated his life to pastoral care and charitable work in the service of others. Inspired by his example, St Philip Neri's parish staged this expo to encourage more individuals to share their unique gifts and talents in service to the community. The expo was a wonderful event, featuring food, beverages, and live music, creating a wonderful atmosphere of fellowship and community spirit. The Family Mass was also a special occasion with the pupils and families of St Philip Neri School partaking in the service. St Philip Neri is a thriving parish with 120 children participating in its 2024 Sacramental Program for Confirmation. I thank Father Jose Philip and his fellow priests for their kind invitation and for making me feel so welcome at their parish.

#### **WORLD PHARMACIST DAY 2024**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The local pharmacy is an essential community service, and I was proud to recognise these health care providers on 25 September 2024. An initiative of the International Pharmaceutical Federation, World Pharmacist Day recognises the crucial role that pharmacists play in building healthier communities in NSW and around the world. Pharmacists are integral to our health-care systems, often being the first point of contact for health advice and primary health care, as well as addressing the health needs of our communities. With nearly 37,000 pharmacists across 6,000 community pharmacies in Australia, they're always there to support the community – whether it's after hours or on weekends. Pharmacists are truly one of the most trusted and accessible healthcare professionals. In my community of Willoughby, I'm always pleased to engage with our dedicated local pharmacists and their hardworking staff. I thank them all for the tremendous work they do to keep our community healthy.

#### **FOOTBALL TRUST**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations to the Wagga and District Football Trust which has kicked a terrific goal for sport, and for the rights of women on the world stage. The Trust recently hosted a visit to Wagga Wagga by the Melbourne Victory Afghan Women's Team – an amazing celebration of the world game, culture and international unity. Remarkably, it was the first time the team have ever visited a regional Australian centre and they were delighted by their experiences in Wagga and the warm welcome they received. Exiled by the Taliban, the women have endured unimaginable hardship, and many remain isolated from their families, but they have been embraced by Australians and have become powerful ambassadors for sport and justice. Their visit included a civic reception and friendly matches against local players, with a training session attracting dozens of people hailing from countries around the world. Through this visit, the Trust fulfilled its mission to promote football in general and women's sport in particular. It is a great credit to the Trust and I thank the members – Chris Blake, Peter Adams, Bill van Wel, Donna O'Grady and Steve Jacques - for delivering this triumph of sport, culture and community to Wagga Wagga.

#### **DOWNSIDE UP FOR CELEBRATION**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Last weekend, I was privileged to join a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the RFS brigade at Downside, one of the service's oldest brigades and an ornament to its community. During the celebration, medals and clasps were presented to volunteers who have given decades of service. Remarkably, two of those volunteers have served almost as long as the brigade itself. Maxwell Chamberlain and Jim Dennis, who were presented with clasps for 60 years' service-plus, have been part of the brigade for more than 61 and 63 years respectively. What a remarkable contribution and wonderful testament to the community spirit of Downside! Also receiving long service clasps or medals were Benjamin Beck, Gregory Charleson, Bruce Harper, Michael Graham, David Meiklejohn, David Thomson, Gerrard Gaskin, Paul Gaynor, John Rapley and Bruce Rapley, for 20 years or more. And recognised for ten years or more were Steven Watt, Stuart Meiklejohn, Robert Hawkins, Joshua Kingham, Andrew Price, Roslyn Prangnell and Simon Cole. Regardless of length of service, all have shown courage and dedication, and are worthy recipients of their awards. Thank you to all these volunteers for doing so much to serve and protect the community of Downside.

#### **AUNTY LOUISE**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—The memory of a beloved First Nations educator lives on, thanks to a collaboration between Wagga City Council, the Aboriginal community, and the Ashmont Public School community. The school's former Aboriginal Education Officer, Aunty Louise Niki, passed away in 2019 but her



legacy continues, and in recognition of her dedication, a large mural of her has been created as part of an artwork, Stories of Yindyamarra, on the clubroom wall at Jack Misson Oval. Aunty Louise served at Ashmont PS for more than 20 years, leaving many fond memories of her dedication to culture and the students and staff. She was so beloved that she was chosen to be honoured in the mural. Artists Amanda Newman and Natalie L Simmons worked with staff, students and Elder Aunty Gail Manderson to create the piece. It features Aunty Louise watching over the school against a backdrop of the emu constellation, symbolising the guidance of past Elders. Congratulations to the artists, Assistant Principal Susan Brasier, Aboriginal Education Officers, Danielle Grey and Peter Little, the students, and Council's Cultural Officer, Lauren Reynolds. And a special thank you to Ashmont's Aboriginal community and Aunty Louise's family, for helping to create this remarkable tribute.

#### **MAITLAND PICKERS DOUBLE WIN**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the Maitland Pickers Rugby League Club on their minor and major premierships success in 2024. The Pickers women's team will go down in history as the inaugural winners of the Tooheys Newcastle Rugby League Women's Premiership, downing Lakes United 16-10. The team were also minor premiers. The men's team made history, claiming their third consecutive Denton Engineering Cup with a 24-4 victory over the Central Newcastle Butcher Boys. The side became just the seventh team to secure a hat-trick of titles in the competition's 115 years. The Pickers men also won reserve grade, congratulations! Matthew Soper-Lawler and Brooke Carter both named Player's Player of the Year, in recognition of their on-field performances, at the recent Newcastle Rugby League Awards. Matthew Soper-Lawler and Sam Anderson were named in the Team of the Year, Russell Grigg won Women's Coach of the Year, James Bradley won Try of the Year and the Pickers Club also were named Club Champions. Congratulations to the Pickers on an outstanding year in 2024.

#### **VALE CHARLES CLEM JONES, RAAF**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Vale Charles "Clem" Jones, of Rutherford. Clem held the honour of being the oldest surviving World War II Spitfire pilot in Australia. In 2021 not only did the RAAF turn 100, but the RAAF itself did also. For the occasion Clem was presented with the Centenarian Veteran Certificate of Recognition. Clem sadly passed away, at the age of 103, on September 11 this year. Clem enlisted in the RAAF in January 1942 and was a warrant officer with 1435 Squadron and 185 Fighter Squadron. He had known he wanted to be a pilot since he was 12-years-old and that dream became reality when he became a Spitfire pilot. He served through the Suez Canal, Egypt, Malta, Italy and up to the Austrian border during his time with the RAAF. As a Spitfire pilot he fought enemy fighter aircraft as part of invasions or supported bombing raids into Germany and across Europe. His passing was honoured by a flypast by the PC-21 at his funeral on September 24. Clem is survived by his wife, Freda, who turns 100 in November and his son, Christopher. His dedicated service to his country will never be forgotten.

#### **NSW RFS LOWER HUNTER AWARD WINNERS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I would like to recognise the long volunteer service of members of the Rural Fire Service Thornton Brigade. The Lower Hunter RFS Award ceremonies have recognised: Captain Katherine Smart - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Deputy Captain Joshua Harris - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Henry Coppins - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Rebecca Riley - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Deputy Captain Corey Rumbel - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Deputy Captain Ross Wheatley - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Anthony Sadler - 10 Years Long Service Medal Plus First Clasp for Additional 10 Years Service, Haylee Lawrence - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Gary Nicholson - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Martin Whelan - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Matt Skinner - 10 Years Long Service Medal, Bradley Fairclough - 10 Years Long Service Medal. Our community is very fortunate to have such dedicated members in our local brigade. Congratulations also to former Thornton Brigade member, now Maitland Vale/ Luskintyre Brigade member Josh Kostyk - 10 Years Long Service Medal Well done and thank you for your service.

#### **SYDNEY ROYAL DISTILLED SPIRITS AND FINE FOOD SHOW - ILLAWARRA WINNERS**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)**—I am proud to inform the house of the outstanding accomplishments of two of our local Illawarra businesses. Recently, Bellambi's Wolf and Woman Distillery and Fairy Meadow's Zweefers Cakes took out multiple gold medal prizes at the Sydney Royal Distilled Spirits Show and the Sydney Royal Fine Food Show. To have been recognised at this top level is a true testament to their vision, passion and hard work that is put into running and maintaining a successful business, along with creating great quality products for everyone to enjoy. The Illawarra is filled with many amazing local and family businesses that continue to provide the highest quality products to our community every day. I would like to pass on my congratulations to the owners, staff, family and friends of both Wolf and Woman Distillery and Zweefers Cakes and commend them for their

remarkable efforts in this historic win. Both businesses should be incredibly proud to be recognised among their peers as the best of the best, coming away with a total of 12 medals, including 5 gold, the Illawarra could not be prouder to call these two businesses ours.

#### **CITY OF CANADA BAY COUNCILLORS**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to congratulate local councillors who were recently sworn in to the City of Canada Bay Council on Tuesday 8 October 2024. This is the first time in the history of the Council that a popularly elected Liberal Mayor and four Liberal councillors have been elected. This is a testament to the trust and confidence our community has placed in their vision and policies for the Council. At an important time for our community, these Councillors have a responsibility to serve our local constituents with diligence and compassion. I would like to congratulate Mayor Michael Megna and Councillors Anthony Bazouni, Hugo Robinson, Sylvia Lee Alafaci, and Mastourah Meouss. It is a privilege to represent your community at the most grassroots level of local decision making, and I wish them all the very best. I extend my congratulations to all candidates who put their hand up to run at the September council elections and would like to particularly recognise and thank Christopher Burt and Samantha Andreacchio Merline. Thank you for your tireless efforts across the campaign. Congratulations to all the elected councillors, I look forward to working collaboratively with you in this term of council.

#### **COUNCILLOR JULIA PRIESTON**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Cr Julia Prieston upon her election to the office of Deputy Mayor of Hunters Hill yesterday evening. Deputy Mayor Prieston was re-elected to Council at the recent Local Government Elections, in a historic result for the Hunters Hill Liberal team and will serve the community as their Deputy Mayor over the next two years. Once again, congratulations Julia.

#### **BORONIA PARK SPORTS AND COMMUNITY FACILITY**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that on 13th October 2024, the Boronia Park Sports and Community Facility was opened, representing joint funding from the NSW Government, Australian Government, Hunters Hill Council, Hunters Hill Rugby Union Football Club, and Ryde Hunters Hill Cricket Club. This new facility, the largest piece of local infrastructure built in the Hunters Hill Municipality for several decades, was made possible thanks to the tireless advocacy of individuals like Glenn Poynton, Peter McFarlane, Mayor Zac Miles, Bec Ho and many many more, to them, on behalf of our entire community, I say a massive thank you.

#### **ROTARY FAIR**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Lane Cove Rotary on yet another successful annual Rotary Fair, held on 13th October 2024. The Fair is much loved and very popular event which is held across the Lane Cove Plaza, the Canopy and Longueville Road in Lane Cove. The large crowds the event attracts is a mark of the countless hours that Lane Cove Rotary put into the day. Thank you to all those who made it possible.

#### **MARRICKVILLE MUSIC FESTIVAL**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Attendees had a blast at the Marrickville Music Festival last Sunday 13 October! The day was a celebration of Marrickville's colourful, vibrant culture, showcasing a range of the extremely talented musicians that call the Inner West home. The atmosphere on Sunday was electric, with everything from food and fashion stalls to DJs and Disco bands, Marrickville Music festival highlighted all the amazing things our great community has to offer. The program put the diverse range of music in the Inner West in the spotlight, championing the wide variety of musical genres favoured by local artists, with a choice of 7 stages across the festival site. The sight of residents and visitors alike dancing to all the amazing artists was not a rare one on Sunday, and the party didn't stop after dark! With local venues hosting after-parties, attendees kicked-on into the night, continuing their celebration of the best live music the Inner West has to offer. Congratulations to Mayor Darcy Byrne, General Manager Peter Gainsford and the whole Inner West Council team for putting on such a wonderful community event.

#### **ALEKSANDER GILLIAN**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Aleksander Gillian for being awarded the Hunter Academy of Sport Athlete of the Year Award in the category of Swimming. The Hunter Academy of Sport Awards represents a significant occasion in our community, as they bring together outstanding athletes from across 17 diverse sport programs. This annual ceremony not only highlights the exceptional talent within our region but also fosters a

spirit of camaraderie and healthy competition among young athletes. Aleksander is a shining example of dedication and talent within the Hunter Academy of Sport. His commitment to excellence in swimming has been evident throughout the season, as he has consistently demonstrated remarkable skill, resilience and a strong work ethic. In 2023, Aleksander's exceptional performance earned him the Rising Star of the Year Award in swimming, a testament to his hard work, countless hours spend training and his ability to rise to the occasion during competitions. Congratulations Aleksander! Your award is truly well-deserved and I eagerly look forward to witnessing your continued growth in the upcoming season.

#### **JACK SMITH**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Jack Smith for being awarded the Hunter Academy of Sport Athlete of the Year Award in the category of Tennis. The Hunter Academy of Sport Awards represents a significant occasion in our community, as they bring together outstanding athletes from across 17 diverse sport programs. This annual ceremony not only highlights the exceptional talent within our region but also fosters a spirit of camaraderie and healthy competition among young athletes. Jack is a shining example of dedication and talent within the Hunter Academy of Sport. His commitment to excellence in Tennis has been evident throughout the season, as he has consistently demonstrated remarkable skill, resilience, and a strong work ethic. Whether in practice of competition, Jack has shown that he is not only a formidable competitor but also a true sportsman, inspiring his peers and coaches alike with his unwavering dedication. Congratulations Jack! Your award is truly well-deserved, and I eagerly look forward to witnessing your continued growth in the upcoming season.

#### **MENAI HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the incoming student leadership team of Menai High School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I urge them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the new student leadership team for 2025, namely School Captains Natalie Liu and Nathan Benjamin Khuuand and Vice Captains Summer Bates, Georgia Farrell, Donovan Porter and Sam Brugmans. I have every confidence that these dedicated young adults will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Menai High School's motto of 'care and commitment'.

#### **2024 BISHOP OF PARRAMATTA AWARD FOR STUDENT EXCELLENCE**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Congratulations to the recipients of the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta 2024 Bishop of Parramatta Award for Student Excellence. The Office of Vespers, the traditional Evening Prayer was conducted at St Patrick's Cathedral Parramatta followed by a formal award presentation by Bishop Vincent Long Nguyen and Executive Director Jack de Groot. Recipients from schools in the Parramatta Electorate were: Rita Raffoul of Maronite College of the Holy Family, Emily Orszulak of Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta, George Walker of Parramatta Marist High School, Oliver O'Neill of St Patrick's Marist College, Sacha Sayhoun of Catherine McAuley Westmead. These students have shown dedication to their communities and their studies in areas such as academic excellence, sporting achievements, creative and performing arts and social justice. This award is a testament to their teachers, schools and families. I commend every student from across the Parramatta Diocese for their work, and I know that they will succeed in their post-secondary studies/employment in whatever discipline they choose.

#### **ALICE LEUNG**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I rise to congratulate Miss Alice Leung, a dedicated local teacher at Concord High School, who was recently awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools. Alice has been teaching science across Sydney for over 15 years with an emphasis on learning tailored to the individual student's needs. Her work focuses on building student's understanding through engaging content and long-term retrieval practices. I was particularly impressed by Alice's efforts fostering an inclusive environment for women in STEM. Her time at Concord High has seen her encourage the students to become more involved in coding through the establishment of the Minecraft Club for girls. Alice's award is a testament to her passion for science and education, inspired by her own experiences throughout school. We are so fortunate to have such passionate leaders in our community. Congratulations Alice on this remarkable achievement, your dedication to teaching as a vocation is to be commended.

### YP SPACE MID NORTH COAST

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I proudly recognise YP Space Mid North Coast, for their incredible efforts in providing housing support and wraparound services to countless children and young people in our community who are experiencing homelessness. YP Space (YPS) are a critical service, providing a wide range of supports for those in need between the ages of 12 and 25 years. In September 2014, YPS took over the Port Macquarie Youth Refuge, enabling them to expand their Macleay services and assist even more children and young people in need. This exceptional organisation works on the premise that every person's situation is unique. The focus is on providing a personalised, relevant support plan, which aims to equip every individual with the skills and confidence to ultimately transition from instability to independence. Special educational programs have been developed to address everyday, essential skills from renting properties to financial literacy, goal setting, organisational skills and money management aiming to equip every single child in their care with the emotional and practical tools needed to become independent. I commend YP Space for the services and supports they provide to our community. Congratulations!

### KYLL GOODSSELL

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise the true dedication and commitment of Kyll Goodsell, who has been a member of the Lake Innes Fire Brigade for 22 years. Encouraged by his father, who himself was a member of the brigade believing with their home situated in bushland and therefore vulnerable to bushfires that it was a wise decision to learn vital skills and support the surrounding community in this way. Kyll followed his father's example and has continued through his actions his selfless commitment to helping others in times of crisis. Having stood in the front line during the harrowing bushfires of 2019-2020, Kyll knows how crucial it is to be able to count on the support of volunteers in your community and to have a strong brigade beside you. Kyll's unwavering commitment to the Lake Innes Fire Brigade is to be commended and in particular for the critical role he played in the recent and significant upgrade to the station as part of the Federal and NSW Government's rural community resilience program I am extremely thankful to Kyll as he continues to selflessly serve his community in times of need.

### BUXTON RURAL FIRE BRIGADE STATION EXTENSION OPENING

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Buxton Rural Fire Brigade Station extension on Sunday 22nd September 2024. I was joined by RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers, Joe Fenning RFS, and Superintendent Daniel Osborne, District Manager for the NSW RFS Southern Highlands, and volunteers of the Buxton Rural Fire Brigade. Established in 1939, the Buxton Brigade continues to grow stronger each year. Today, the Buxton Brigade boasts 45 dedicated members and plays a crucial role in safeguarding the local community. Their team responds to a wide range of emergencies, including bushfires, grass fires, motor vehicle accidents, search and rescue missions, structural fires, and hazard reduction. They also provide essential support to the NSW SES during flood and storm clean-up operations. The dedication and service of this brigade are truly invaluable to the safety and security of Buxton and surrounding areas. Thank you to the volunteers and staff who keep our towns and villages safe during disasters, bushfires, mishaps and more. Your work doesn't go unnoticed.

### NSW SES SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS CLUSTER PRESENTATION

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—SES held their medal presentation ceremony on September 19, 2024. The event recognised members for their long service and commitment to the community. This year's honorees included volunteers with decades of service, continuing a tradition of celebrating those who have significantly contributed to local emergency efforts. Awards presented included long service awards cumulating over 165 years of service, National Emergency Medals and Commissioners Awards. National Emergency Medal for the 2019-20 Bushfires were presented to Annette Collins and Peter Moore of Wollondilly Unit, Brent Coulthard, Robert Ellis, Angela Hughes, Andrew James and Natasha Smith of the Wingecarribee Unit and Irene Fava from Moss Vale Unit. A National Medal was presented to Natasha Smith and a National Medal Clasp 2 to Peter Moore. NSW SES Commissioner's Certificates of Appreciation were presented to Braydon Squires, William Kennedy and Dylan Whitelaw. Long Service Awards were presented to numerous members, including an impressive 35 Year Long Service Award to Peter Moore, a 20 Year Long Service Medal to Matthew Crick and a 15 Year Long Service Award to Stephen Graham.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL COUNCILLORS

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—Congratulations to the newly elected and re-elected Wollondilly Shire Council Councillors in the 2024 NSW Local Government elections. I wish you the best as you embark on this important journey of service. Thank you for your commitment to serving and enhancing the wellbeing of our community. I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate and work together to ensure that the needs of

Wollondilly are effectively addressed. I'm excited for the road ahead and the positive changes we can bring together. Matt Gould was declared elected as Mayor on 1 October 2024. The Councillors for the East Ward are Matthew Deeth (Deputy Mayor), Suzy Brandstater, Paul Rogers and Benn Banasik. The Councillors for the North Ward are Ally Dench, Hilton Gibbs, Jacqueline Jenson, Trish Hill.

#### **SUSAN GROTH, PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARD**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I wish to congratulate Susan Groth on receiving a Pride of Workmanship Award from the Rotary Club of Kenthurst. The Club held its Annual Awards night on 30 September 2024. Susan was nominated by Karen Shepherd. Susan is the Head Teacher of Science at Galston High School. Her contribution through leadership, unwavering dedication, and profound passion for science and education establishes Susan as a worthy recipient of the award. Susan's visionary leadership has been the driving force behind the remarkable achievements of the Science faculty. She has not only developed a strategic vision that aligns seamlessly with the school's educational goals but has also inspired her team to reach new heights. Her ability to set clear, ambitious objectives and motivate her colleagues has fostered a culture of enthusiasm and excellence, reflected in the heightened engagement and excitement of the students in the subject. Susan has also been pivotal in forging partnerships with universities and extending the school's outreach to local primary schools, introducing younger students to the wonders of STEM. Her efforts in nurturing a love of science across all age groups are truly commendable. Congratulations Susan on receiving the award.

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