

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 22 October 2024

The Speaker (The Hon. Gregory Michael Piper) took the chair at 15:00.

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Governor

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER: I report receipt of messages regarding the administration of the Government.

Documents

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I announce receipt of the report of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission entitled *Operation Pamir: A report under section 132 of Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016 concerning the arrest, charging and prosecution of a vulnerable person, including issues arising from his detention in custody*, dated October 2024, received 18 October 2024. I order that the report be printed.

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION NSW

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, I announce receipt of the report of the Information and Privacy Commission NSW for the year ended 30 June 2024, received 21 October 2024. I order that the report be printed.

[*Notices of motions given.*]

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge members of the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association who are in the gallery. It is lovely to have them back. We will have to find an office for them in Parliament House soon.

Bills

HEALTH INSURANCE LEVIES AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 15 October 2024.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (15:19): I speak in debate on the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. The Coalition opposes this egregious tax, which will directly impact hardworking families and individuals across New South Wales. This bill is a broken promise by a government that said no new taxes. This bill creates a health tax, imposed by Minns and Mookhey because they cannot manage the budget. When Labor has money problems, it reaches into the public's pockets. That is exactly what it is doing today. Labor's health tax will increase average private health premiums by \$114 a year. That will force approximately 72,000 people in New South Wales out of private health insurance, because in a cost-of-living crisis people cannot cop another bill or tax from this Labor Government.

It is a false economy by Labor because this decision will ultimately end up pushing policyholders back into the public health system, which is already stretched and has the longest queues in the country. In a cost-of-living crisis, families are holding on to their private health insurances by their fingernails. In the first half of 2024, 216,000 Australians downgraded their cover because they are finding it really hard to pay their bills. We know that families value the health of their kids and themselves above everything else. This tax will hurt. We

cannot forget this Government—indeed, all governments—wants us to have private health insurance because it saves the system money. The private health rebate incentivises us—some would say forces us—to take out private health insurance if we want to get some tax back. In that context, this bill does not make sense.

Who takes out private health insurance? It is not a luxury only for the rich; it is something the majority of people value. In New South Wales 65 per cent of people who have private health coverage earn less than \$90,000 a year. Approximately two in five people with private health coverage have an annual taxable income of \$50,000 or less. I want to bust some of Labor's arguments. Treasurer Mookhey pulled out the old, "I am just doing what he did" argument and said he is recycling a tactic used by Mike Baird in 2013. It is desperate to reach back that far for justification and it is actually quite misleading. I will compare the two situations.

Most Australians and people in this city and State are living through the worst cost-of-living crisis that they have experienced in their lifetime. In 2024 it is incredibly out of touch to think that adding \$114 to the average person's premium or \$156 to private health insurance is sensible. The average house price in Sydney has doubled over the past 10 years to more than \$1.6 million for a three-bedroom house. In 2013 the average 30-year mortgage rate was under 4 per cent. Now, it is closer to 7 per cent. In 2013 Mike Baird proposed an increase from \$1.37 to \$2, which was a 45 per cent increase. Labor is proposing to double that and increase the levy to \$3.27. It is not a like-for-like comparison. In 2013 Mike Baird did not proclaim that legislation because he was able to do a deal with the private health insurers.

Labor Government Ministers have proven time and again that they cannot do deals. They could not do one for GST with their Federal colleagues. They could not do one when Albo took away infrastructure funding from this State. There is industrial chaos in this State because they cannot even do deals with their union mates. How can we possibly expect them to do a deal here? Rather than negotiating in good faith, they are taxing the people of New South Wales in a cost-of-living crisis, when people are leaving private health in droves. Currently, Labor's budget has a \$140 million unfunded revenue target. That is why we are seeing this tax. Labor needs to find the money, and it is trying to find it from private health. It is counting on private patients funding more of our public health system. That is the reason for this tax.

The Government needs the money. It also needs people to retain their private health insurance, but it is making it more expensive. That is absurd. On the Government's cost-of-living hub website, which is dedicated to supporting people to manage the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, Labor's advice to people with private health insurance is to review their policies. The Government's website says, "You may be able to get a cheaper policy with another insurer—or choose not to have one if you are experiencing financial hardship". This Government needs people to retain their private health insurance, but it is going to make it harder for them to do that. It is taxing people and then saying, "Oh, if you can't afford it, you should opt out". The Government's messaging on private health insurance is incredibly confusing.

Labor's other flawed argument is that the health insurers should just absorb the cost because they are wealthy enough to do so. The health funds, many of which are not-for-profits, argue that this cost has to be passed on to New South Wales private health insurance premium holders. In fact, they may be compelled to do so by the industry regulator, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority [APRA]. Private Healthcare Australia expects four out of 10 private health insurers will run at a loss under this tax. In the first half of 2024, health fund revenue decreased by \$52 million and 216,000 Australians downgraded their cover. Yes, the health funds rapidly accumulated cash during the COVID period. As a consequence of health facilities closing down, they could not perform operations; however, the insurance companies were still taking in the money. But the sector made an agreement with the Morrison Government to pay back excess profit to members. To date, \$4.5 billion has been returned to members. It is therefore not accurate to count on excess capital accumulated between 2020 and 2024 as profit for the insurers. APRA data shows that in the first half of this year claims expenditure surged by 10 per cent and revenue from premiums dropped by \$52 million.

Where does that leave us? This bill will have significant consequences and inevitably raise premiums for people with private health cover. That will drive people out of private health insurance, which will increase wait times and the burden on the public health system. The bill impacts on not only people with private health cover but also everyone who relies on our health system, which is already overstretched. The Government has not thought this through. It must do independent modelling to show the true impact of this decision before it rushes into a new tax. Government Ministers must return to the negotiating table in good faith, in discussions that are founded by independent data and evaluation. Only then can the people of New South Wales be assured that this is not just a blatant tax grab by a government that has cut the health budget two years running and is looking for solutions for its own budget mismanagement. The Opposition does not support a new health tax on the people of New South Wales.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:27): I make a brief contribution in support of the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. The bill will make amendments to the Health Insurance Levies Act 1982

to enable a base rate to be declared by the regulation. This legislation is essential to establish a new prescribed rate of \$3.27 under the Health Insurance Levies Act 1982, aimed at addressing a significant revenue shortfall caused by certain health insurers underpaying for single-room accommodations in our public hospitals. The bill will empower the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance to increase the levy rate to \$3.27 per week from the current \$1.77 per week if negotiations with the health insurers remain unsuccessful.

Currently, the average cost for accommodating a private patient in a single room is \$1,075 per day, yet insurers are paying only the shared room rate of \$436. That discrepancy leads to an annual loss of \$140 million to our health system. Those funds are desperately needed to ensure quality care for our communities. While 44 of the 53 private health insurers comply with the agreed upon single-room rate, nine insurers, including some of the largest, have not honoured their 2013 commitment, undermining the very foundation of our public health services. These insurers are in breach of an agreement they signed in 2013 to pay the single room rate. The Government has engaged in negotiations for months, yet these insurers have evaded responsibility, draining resources that should be used for patient care.

This bill empowers the Treasurer and Minister for Finance to adjust the levy if negotiations fail, ensuring that the burden does not fall on our hospitals or taxpayers. This loophole is costing the New South Wales health system \$140 million per year. Money that would otherwise be used for patient care and the demands on our health system is instead going directly to the profits of those insurers. The bill introduces this amendment to the health insurance levy to recover an equivalent amount from insurers by the means that are available to New South Wales. In 2019 several health insurers decided separately that they would underpay NSW Health by paying only the shared room rate of \$436—sometimes with a small, arbitrary amount added on top—instead of the rate for the single rooms that their members were given in public hospitals. This amount is nowhere near the gazetted rate they agreed to pay in 2013, which NSW Health and the funds' members rely on.

I acknowledge that this issue has been difficult to address during the past few years. The COVID-19 crisis hit in early 2020, at which time the priority was protecting the health of the people of New South Wales. At that time, NSW Health, our hospitals and staff worked incredibly hard to protect our State. Their incredible job during these difficult times has not gone unrecognised. However, now is the time to make this important change. This situation cannot continue. Over the past year NSW Health has met with health insurers multiple times. Regrettably, those meetings have not led to action. Those health funds have pre-empted the amendments that this bill will make and have launched a public campaign of disinformation. They allege the amendments in this bill that are intended to recover costs will increase costs to the insured.

The bill seeks to recover these underpaid costs from health insurers through the health insurance levy. The shortfall to New South Wales public hospitals would be covered by the costs recovered through the levy. This would ensure that these essential hospital services can be maintained and improved. The Government remains willing to negotiate with insurers. However, the bill provides that the Treasurer has the power to increase the levy if these negotiations are unsuccessful. This bill will not punish policyholders or public hospitals. It stands to recover the funds lost and return to the arrangements agreed upon in 2013, ensuring that health insurers pay their hospital bills in full.

The bill will empower New South Wales public hospitals to continue to provide these extremely important services to our communities. It will ensure that health insurers maintain their contributions to the cost of their private patients treated within public hospitals, which the funds agreed to do back in 2013. We must not allow profit margins to overshadow patient care. The revenue recovered through this levy will enhance our public hospitals and directly support health workers, which are essential investments for our community's wellbeing. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:33): I understand that the purpose of the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024 is to reset the base rate for rooms to provide appropriate funding for New South Wales hospitals. Concerns have been raised with me about the potential impact that such a rate rise would have on health insurance premiums, waitlists and people taking out health insurance coverage. It is my hope that the New South Wales Government will continue its negotiations with private health insurers and not need to enact the regulatory powers this legislation would give it. That said, if the powers contained in this legislation are enacted, it will be important that we monitor the impacts on health coverage, waiting lists and other related matters.

At a later stage I will seek to amend the bill to ensure that there is regular reporting on any impacts should this levy be enacted. Again, I hope that private health insurers and the New South Wales Government are able to reach an arrangement before that occurs. I ask that in his reply the Minister provide a commitment to use the regulation-making powers in this bill to revisit, reduce or reconsider the provisions members are legislating here today if that reporting should indicate there have been adverse impacts on the health system in New South Wales or unintended consequences for the take-up and coverage of private health insurance. As I said, I will seek to

amend the bill at a later stage to provide some increased transparency, which will be an important strengthening of this legislation.

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (15:35): I support the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. In the Bega electorate 21 per cent of patients are admitted to our local hospitals as private patients. They receive excellent care in our public hospital system and want to use their health insurance to support their local hospitals. Even though there are no private hospitals in the Bega electorate, and being in a private health fund does not shorten a person's waiting time for elective surgery, those patients want their doctor of choice and repeatedly state they want to use their health insurance locally so that services can be improved through the funds raised from private health insurers. In rural and regional areas we see the direct benefit of this.

Equally, we recognise when large private health insurers are not doing the right thing locally. These are areas with active hospital auxiliaries, which work hard to provide funding and equipment for their local hospitals. When I worked as a specialist in the Eurobodalla, private patients were not charged more than the rebate provided by their private health fund, as per the agreement between NSW Health and private health insurers. Hospitals in the Bega electorate continue to waive any excess for patients with private health insurance. My message to those private patients was that if they did not use their private health insurance, the only one that would benefit was the private health insurer because then it pays nothing. What these nine health funds are doing is simply not fair. The money that should be paid to New South Wales would fund more staff, more equipment, more upgrades and more procedures in our local hospitals. Therefore, why is the member for Vacluse supporting wealthy private health insurers before our public hospital system?

The Minns Labor Government is taking steps to ensure that the nation's big four insurers pay their bills when they use public hospitals. The cost of caring for a patient in a public hospital is \$1,075 per day. In the last financial year the single room rate was gazetted at \$892. HCF is only paying \$463, which costs the New South Wales Government \$40.5 million per annum. NIB is paying only \$491, which costs New South Wales \$17.6 million per annum. Bupa is paying only \$501, which costs NSW Health \$35.8 million per annum, while Medibank is paying only \$515, which costs NSW Health \$33.4 million per annum. Overall, the refusal of some private insurers to pay the correct rate is estimated to cost the public system close to \$140 million a year. Over the past five years this refusal has cost the Southern NSW Local Health District, including the South East Regional Hospital Bega, Moruya District Hospital and Batemans Bay District Hospital, \$18.9 million. That is money that could be used to expand and improve essential health services in the Bega electorate.

Meanwhile, since health insurance companies stopped paying the correct rates their profits have doubled. In 2022-2023 alone, the industry recorded a \$2.2 billion profit—a rise of 110 per cent from the previous year. At the same time, the proportion of premiums they return to their customers has fallen from 88 per cent in 2019-20 to 82.61 per cent in 2022-23. Forty-four of the 53 private health insurers are either already paying the correct rate or have now agreed to resume paying after discussions with the New South Wales Government. They include Teachers Health, Nurses and Midwives Health and Emergency Services Health. The Government commends those funds that continue to pay the gazetted single room rate and will continue to work with them.

The Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024 allows for the weekly prescribed rate of the health insurance levy to increase from \$1.77 to \$3.27. The purpose is to recover lost revenues for private patients staying in single rooms from private health insurers. Health estimates that the revenue lost from certain health insurers only paying the shared room rate of \$436 or slightly more instead of the current single room rate of \$928 is around \$140 million a year. New South Wales has always charged a single room rate, and the health funds were paying it without question until 2013. In 2013, several funds indicated to New South Wales their intention to cease paying the single room rate. In response, the then Government legislated an increase to the health insurance levy as part of the 2013-14 budget. Subsequently, insurers reversed their position and agreed to continue paying the single room rate. The legislative amendments were not commenced following that agreement. The Leader of the Opposition has the opportunity to support the reintroduction of Mike Baird's legislation that he voted for in 2013.

In 2019, HCF advised—and the majority of all other major health insurers followed—that they would reduce the level of cover for single room accommodation in a public hospital from their insurance policies and thereby reduce the payments they make to New South Wales public hospitals for single room accommodation. At that time, the Government could not respond to that or negotiate due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill replicates the approach taken in 2013 by creating legislative amendments to increase the prescribed rate of the health insurance levy, commencing the amendments only on proclamation and creating a regulation-making power to change the base rate back if insurers agree to pay the single room rate.

The base cost for providing a bed in a New South Wales facility is \$1,075. That excludes the much higher costing ICU beds, neonatal intensive care beds and other intensive unit beds. New South Wales only charges a daily flat rate regardless of the acuity or complexity of the patient, and that is the single gazetted room rate that is already at over a 10 per cent subsidy of the cost. Allocation of single rooms is always based on clinical needs.

NSW Health's preference is for insurers to continue payment of the single room rate. Given the rising costs of health care, including ambulance, NSW Health cannot continue to subsidise or fund the gap between the cost of a single room and the payments received.

Private health insurance membership in New South Wales has increased each year since 2020; 46.2 per cent of New South Wales residents hold private health insurance as at the June 2024 quarter. Private patient usage in New South Wales public hospitals is consistent over the past five years, with an average of 18 per cent of overnight patients electing to use private health insurance. I reiterate that private health insurers have made record profits since 2019. Private health insurers have experienced significant growth in their profits since 2019. According to APRA data, the industry's profits nearly doubled between 2019-20 and 2022-23, with a 185 per cent increase over that period from \$723 million to \$2.1 billion. Of the large for-profit insurers, APRA profitability data indicates that Bupa recorded growth of 136 per cent, nib recorded growth of 116 per cent and Medibank recorded growth of 80 per cent over the same period.

I refer again to the reduced payment in the single room rate by the big insurers. The New South Wales government's single room rate of \$892 in July last year provided a subsidy of around 17 per cent, compared to the average cost of a providing a standard private room in a New South Wales public hospital of \$1,075. The cost of a private room in ICU, neonatal intensive care unit beds and other intensive care unit beds is even higher. The new gazetted single room rate as of 1 July 2024 is \$928, which is still a 14 per cent subsidy for the cost of providing a standard private room. Despite that, nine insurers, including the largest insurers that make up over 70 per cent of the New South Wales market share, are only paying rates that they have set themselves when their members stay in a single room in a public hospital. In 2022-23 Medibank was paying \$515; Bupa, \$501; HCF, \$463; and nib, \$491. As health care costs continue to rise, the Government cannot continue subsidising the gap between the cost of a single room and the payments received from insurers. [*Extension of time*]

The rate of out-of-pocket costs for in-hospital services in public hospitals has been steadily increasing over the years. The proportion of public hospital visits in New South Wales without a gap fee decreased by 1.5 percentage points from 90.6 per cent in the June 2021 quarter to 89.1 per cent in the most recent June 2024 quarter. Between June 2021 and June 2024, the average gap payment in New South Wales increased at 8.5 per cent a year. The average out-of-pocket cost paid per hospital episode for the June 2024 quarter was \$341.77 in New South Wales.

Private health insurers are providing less benefits to their customers relative to premiums. The ratio of total health insurance benefits provided to insurance premium revenue has been decreasing over the years, falling from 0.87 in 2019-20 to 0.82 in 2022-23. In the 2022-23 financial year, benefits provided by insurance funds to policyholders was approximately \$22.4 billion and total revenue earned by funds from insurance premiums was approximately \$27.4 billion, which results in a benefit-to-premium ratio of 0.82 nationally. In the 2019-20 financial year, benefits provided by insurance funds to policyholders was approximately \$21.7 billion and total revenue earned by funds through insurance premiums was approximately \$24.9 billion, which results in a benefit-to-premium ratio of 0.87 nationally.

At the same time, private health insurance average premiums have continued to increase year on year, while the largest insurers have increased premiums above the industry average. Some of the larger insurers have had higher average premium increases. For example, in 2024, nib's average premium increase was 4.1 per cent and Bupa's was 3.6 per cent. Those private health insurers should just do the right thing for their customers and for the people of New South Wales, including those in the Bega electorate. I ask the community: Are they joining the for-profit insurers ripping off the hospitals? Will they join public hospitals in fighting for their share? Are they going to back public hospitals or profiteering private insurers? I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:47): I contribute to debate on the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. We have seen Labor members revert to their most common denominator with this bill, which is if they do not have a solution for something, they tax people. The Opposition believes that governments should keep their election commitments, so the Opposition will be opposing the bill. The bill does one thing and one thing only: it increases the tax on private health insurance policies by a massive 85 per cent. For some background, since 2019 the major private health insurance funds have declined to cover the full gazetted fee for a private patient occupying a single room at a New South Wales public hospital, which is currently \$928. Since then, the Government's so-called efforts to persuade the funds to cover the full fee have so far not succeeded. That brings the tally of successful negotiations of this Government up to zero.

Members should be clear that this bill does nothing to directly address the issue of cover for private patients admitted to a public hospital. The bill seeks to increase the health insurance levy by 85 per cent, from \$1.77 to \$3.27, which equates to roughly \$156 a year for a family membership. I noticed earlier that our comrade from Bega spoke about profits. We know Labor members do not like profits. Rather than fighting the insurance companies directly—maybe they are all hoping to get a board position after politics—what are they doing? They

are coming after the pockets of the 43,012 constituents in the Bega electorate who have private health insurance. They know that the Labor Party is not sticking up for them but is taking money out of their pockets because it has failed to negotiate with the insurance companies.

The health insurance funds are likely to pass on the full cost of the levy increase to their members. Under the risk management rules set by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority for health insurance funds to cover all material risks, any increase in the quantum of coverage for a specific service under a policy needs to be prudentially covered by the fund. The usual way to do that is to increase premiums to reflect the additional cost of services covered. Modelling by the private health insurance funds suggests that about 77,000 members may drop their private health insurance as a direct result of this Labor tax grab. The \$156 extra per year for health insurance out of the pockets of the many families in New South Wales facing financial hardship during a Labor Party-imposed cost-of-living crisis will be enough to tip the decision towards dropping their policy. That is not in anyone's interest, or in the interest of the public health system.

For quite some time State and Federal governments—both Coalition and Labor—have worked on a bipartisan basis to encourage the widespread take-up of private health insurance to help spread the overall cost of the health system. However, the Minns Labor Government is now breaking not only its election promise not to increase taxes but also the longstanding bipartisan Federal-State consensus on encouraging the take-up of private health insurance. If too many people in New South Wales give up their private health insurance policies due to inflation and tax increases, this will add to the waiting lists at public hospitals and increase the costs to the public health system. Before the election, Labor pledged no increased taxes. Given that pledge, the onus is on the Government to find other ways if it chooses to negotiate a new agreement with the funds about coverage for single rooms.

I note the comment from the member for Leppington, who said the health insurance levy is not a tax. There is a whole bunch of thesauruses—or whatever the plural is—at the end of this table. If he looked up "taxes" and "levies" he would find out that they basically mean the same thing. The Government can call it a tax, a levy, a fee or a rate, but at the end of the day the Labor Party has decided to come for constituents' pockets instead of taking on the private health insurers. By the Government's own account, 44 out of 53 private health insurance funds have been covering, or have now agreed to cover, the full gazetted rate for a single room. The bill would impose the same 85 per cent tax increase on those funds, despite these agreements. The Government has no justifiable excuse for its tax increase on the members of those funds.

The Treasurer has attempted to insist that this legislation mirrors the legislation that was passed but never proclaimed in 2013, when Mike Baird was the Treasurer. I note that the proposed increase in that legislation over a decade ago was 45 per cent, whereas the increase under this bill is nearly twice as much, at 85 per cent. The year 2013 was over a decade ago. There are kids who are now entering high school who were born that year. Back then inflation was only 2.5 per cent. Right now in 2024 we are living through one of the worst cost-of-living crises in our lifetime. As members will have noticed during the giving of notices of motions, Labor members are pretty good at copying their homework. I think we heard about six or seven identical notices of motions. I will give credit where credit is due. At least they chose someone smart to copy their homework off. The problem of being in government is that times and circumstances change. Solutions should match the time period, not just what someone smarter did over a decade ago.

The Opposition encourages the Government to continue negotiating on behalf of the 46,525 constituents in the Cessnock electorate, the 43,946 constituents in the Leppington electorate and the 40,456 constituents in the Granville electorate who have private health insurance. I also encourage the Government to negotiate on behalf of the over 41,000 constituents in my electorate of Coffs Harbour who have private health insurance, who are struggling under Labor's failure to do anything to contain this cost-of-living crisis. The Government has failed teachers by increasing their workloads, it has failed the health system by cutting the health budget two years in a row and it has failed families over and over again during this cost-of-living crisis.

We know those opposite are not great negotiators. They failed to negotiate a better GST deal, they failed to negotiate infrastructure with Prime Minister Albanese and they have failed at nearly every single attempt to negotiate a better deal for the taxpayers of New South Wales. I take back what I said earlier about this Labor Government's tally of successful negotiations being zero. It got one up: It managed to negotiate drivers on driverless trains. That is the one thing it actually did manage to negotiate. It is 2024 and there is a cost-of-living crisis. The Government promised no increases in taxes but it broke that promise with the land tax grab, which the Opposition opposed. The bill would further break that promise. The Opposition opposes this new tax grab by a government that has lost control of the budget and whose first instinct is to rifle through the pockets of the constituents of New South Wales because it has failed to manage the budget.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (15:56): I support the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. The essence of the bill is to ensure that private health insurers pay their bills. I listened to the contribution of the

member for Coffs Harbour. I say to him that he is smarter than his speech. It was a lot of drivel; it was just nonsense. I know he is smarter than that. He is a businessperson too, so he understands well about people paying their bills, which is essentially what the bill is about. He tried to make the argument that times change, that it is 11 years on and the solutions should change.

Nothing changes if people do not pay their bills. We on this side need to do something to get them to pay their bills. If they are not paying their bills then we bring an amendment bill to the House. I want to do more for the hardworking NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association members, some of whom are sitting in the public gallery. I want money to come into the system so that can happen. Those opposite talk about successful negotiations, but they brought in a wages cap that meant NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association members were not able to negotiate.

Ms Kellie Sloane: How are your negotiations with them going? Tell the nurses what you're going to offer them.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: I don't need advice, thank you.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): Order! Members on both sides of the House will come to order.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: The purpose of the bill is to recover lost revenue from health insurers which would otherwise be received by NSW Health if all insurers paid the NSW Health single room rate when their members are accommodated in single rooms in a public hospital. The purpose of the Health Insurance Levies Act is for payments of the health insurance levy and for State Ambulance Insurance Plan contributions. The levy is a monthly payment for private patients. Since 2019 some health insurers have gone back on the 2013 agreement, which was agreed by everybody, and have reverted to paying the shared room rate. We are saying to them to cough up now because they should pay what they agreed to pay. Some have, but some of the recalcitrant insurers are the big four.

I heard Ben Fordham on 2GB and read some of the transcript. He talked about people paying their bills. It costs over \$1,000 per night to look after a private patient in a public hospital. The Treasurer said the charge is about \$872, but some of the funds are paying only \$435. That difference is costing taxpayers \$140 million a year. The Treasurer said that taxpayers should not be subsidising the profits of the big four. He went on to explain what former Treasurer Mike Baird did in 2013. I do not see the difference between then and what is happening now. The insurers have opted out of paying and we are just saying, "Cough up."

The proposed reforms will amend the Health Insurance Levies Act. The legislation will set up a new weekly base rate and it will be adjusted accordingly by regulation, which will commence from April 2025. The bill will commence on a date appointed by proclamation, as was the earlier legislation. NSW Health has consulted extensively with the health insurers who are not paying the gazetted single room rates. Four have agreed to pay the right amount. It is not fair to them either if others do not agree to pay. The bill is simply about getting health insurers, particularly the big four, to pay their bills. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:01): I oppose the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. A lot of good Labor members have been conned by the bill, which will increase premiums by \$156 for every person who has private health insurance. In my electorate just under 50,000 people have private health insurance. Those families cannot afford to pay more for insurance during a cost-of-living crisis. I will come back to the reason. I acknowledge there were in the gallery representatives of the Nurses and Midwives' Association.

The change in the bill will cause around 75,000 people to cease paying for private health insurance, which will put more pressure on the public system. I said at the start of my speech that Labor members have been conned. Let me tell members why. Health insurance levies are about a funding fight between the State and the Commonwealth governments. Federal Labor members will be furious that State members have sleepwalked into this debate and will push the cost back onto them. The Federal Liberal Party will be delighted because it will create another funding war between State and Federal governments. We heard the health Minister say in this House that it comes back to the fact that members opposite have not been able to secure the funds that they need from the Federal Government for health care. The funding war is the reason the Government introduced the bill.

The bill will mean that elective surgery waiting lists and other forms of medical assistance will blow out as the system continues to face pressure. The people of this State are facing higher taxes, higher housing prices or indeed higher premiums as a result of the budget. It seems that every time there is a problem with a part of this Government and its functions, it turns to people's pockets at a time when they can least afford it. I am also concerned that the bill appears to have been rushed through the House. There was a lot of time—

Mr Nathan Hagarty: It is the same one from 10 years ago.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection. The member is right. Legislation was introduced by the Baird Government some time ago, but it was never acted upon. At that time there was negotiation between the Government and the insurers to resolve the matter, but this time Labor has just introduced legislation with very little consultation with the sector. I am genuinely concerned for people in my electorate who might have to give up their private health insurance and the impact that will have, particularly on regional hospital systems that are already under pressure. No member in this House wants to see our hospital system fail. All members come here to do the right thing. I genuinely believe that this is not the right way to go about this problem.

Naturally there will be disparate positions between the left and the right on issues. The left will find ways to perhaps look for other cost increases; those on the right will say perhaps that is not the right way to go about it. Genuinely, I do not believe that this is the best solution possible. Sometimes it is not about doing the left thing or the right thing, the Labor thing or the Liberal thing; it is about doing the right thing. I do not agree that the bill is doing the right thing. I am concerned about the pressures it will have on families, particularly in my electorate, who have private health insurance. I am concerned about the impact on hospitals in our regions and the fact that wait times will blow out. I do not agree with the fundamental premise of the bill.

I note that my friend the member for Sydney has proffered some amendments. I simply say to my colleagues on the crossbench that they cannot amend their way out of a bad bill. With all due respect to my friend the Minister for Health, who I have a great deal of respect for, I believe the bill is masking a funding war between his Commonwealth counterparts. He has every right to criticise them. The Minister for Health should be commended for coming to this Chamber and attacking the Federal Government that is not giving New South Wales a better deal. Good on him for standing up for this State and getting stuck into Federal Labor for not giving us our fair share. But I say to my friend the health Minister: The perverse impacts this bill will have on the system is also not the right way to go about it. He should continue to make the strongest case for New South Wales around the Federal health Minister's table, but please do not punish families in my electorate who are struggling with the cost of living, particularly those who are trying to do the right thing by maintaining private health insurance.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (16:06): Sometimes in this place I have to blink and wet my face a little bit and wonder if I am awake, because some of the arguments put forward by Opposition members are baffling, to put it kindly, or diabolically crazy. It is a simple equation. An agreement was made in 2013 that private health insurance companies would pay the single room rate. That was the agreement. It came after former Premier Baird—

Mr Adam Crouch: Treasurer.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Former Treasurer Baird put forward legislation. Then the parties came to the table and reached an agreement. Arbitrarily, some of those health insurers have decided that instead of paying the full room rate of \$1,075—which is subsidised because they pay a bit over \$928—they said, "We do not want to do that anymore so we are going to pay \$436." That is an example. I belong to Teachers Health. My health fund pays the full amount. So what Opposition members are arguing is should we let those five private health insurance companies continue to pay the lower rate and let the majority of the remainder continue to pay the full rate? Why would they do that? The argument from the Opposition is that this Government is threatening to create a levy to recover the full amount of a hospital bed so that our health system has more money to deliver better services—and I do not think anyone in the community would not argue for that—

Mr Michael Kemp: What about patients?

Mr DAVID HARRIS: What I am saying is I pay private health insurance now and my fund pays the full amount. Members opposite are saying other people pay their private health insurance but their fund only pays half the amount. Where is the fairness in that? Is that what members opposite are really arguing? Are they arguing that the big not-for-profits should undercut the system, take money away from the New South Wales health system while other funds that are not-for-profit pay the full amount? Is that what they are seriously arguing for today?

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order—

Mr DAVID HARRIS: It is nonsensical.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The Minister will resume his seat. I will hear the point of order.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: The Minister said that he was not paying attention earlier and he had to splash water on his face. That is not what anyone on this side of the Chamber said. He should read the speech in *Hansard*.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): There is no point of order.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: They are a glass-jaw mob on that side of the House. As soon as we start to take their argument apart, they stand up and say, "Arrgh!" The member for Coffs Harbour made the statement that anyone who has private health insurance will automatically have to pay more. If the other funds come to the table, there is no need for the levy. The Government can negotiate with private health insurers, do the deal and then make sure that the system is fair. If insurers do not do that, then they should have to pay. Those funds should be paid. Insurers are making a profit out of the New South Wales health system by undercutting what was agreed to. I do not know how members opposite can stand in the Chamber and argue in any way, shape or form that this is a new tax and there is fairness in the system when the biggest profit makers are refusing to pay the New South Wales health system.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): Opposition members will come to order.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: That is the nonsensical argument that they are trying to put forward. They have created a bit of a fantasy about new taxes and all that sort of stuff, but health insurers should pay their fair share. Profitable, and sometimes multinational, health funds are taking money out of the system and saying that that is okay. We are trying to bring more nurses into the system, provide safer staffing levels and increase wages for health staff across the board and members opposite are saying, "No, the priority should be these big companies that are not paying their fair share", and that is reasonable. That is their argument. They need to listen to themselves. When I discussed this with members of private health funds, they immediately said, "Oh, I thought my fund paid the full rate." Their expectation is: if that is the rate, health funds are paying it. Some funds cannot arbitrarily decide, "It's costing us a bit too much so we will just cut it in half. We are not going to pay that any more", while other funds continue to pay the full rate. I fully support the legislation. It is about making sure that the health system receives the money to run the system from those organisations, which are made up of members who think that are paying full freight.

Mr Michael Kemp: They'll pass it on.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Members argue that insurers will pass it on. Shame on them. They are collecting the money. They are making the profit in some cases. They are ripping money out of our system. I will never stand in this place and argue that we should rip money out of the public health system to prop up private companies.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:12): I support the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. The bill is very important for my constituents on the Central Coast and for the people of New South Wales. It will provide for a new prescribed rate under the Health Insurance Levies Act 1982 that is used to calculate the monthly levy payable under the Act. That would allow the health insurance levy to be increased to \$3.27, unless a lower rate is declared by regulation. The purpose of that is to make private health insurers pay their bills, to recover lost revenue and, fundamentally, to require private health insurers to pay what was agreed. An agreement was reached in 2013—10 years ago. Private health insurers agreed to pay the gazetted single room rate when a private patient is treated in a public hospital. The single room rate costs the public system \$1,075 a day. The gazetted rate currently is only \$928. It does not represent the full cost recovery, but that is the agreement. It is a flat rate.

The public system does not charge private health insurers more when their patients are in intensive care or in beds that provide more complicated and more costly care. A flat rate is payable. Forty-four of the 53 private health insurers that operate in this State pay the correct amount. That is the fundamental inequity at the heart of this legislation, as well as getting paid what was agreed. It will make health insurance fairer for people across the State. Nine health insurers have decided that they are not going to abide by the agreement made 10 years ago. They say that they would prefer to pay a lower rate. By and large, those private health insurers are the larger and for-profit private health insurers. The discrepancy between the agreed amount and the amount they are actually paying the public system now is quite large. HCF pays \$463 instead of \$928 and Medibank pays \$515.

There is a significant cost to the State system from this failure by private health insurers to pay what was agreed to. According to the health department, that cost is estimated to be \$140 million a year. Over the past five years the Central Coast has lost \$32.8 million because private health insurers are not paying when their members are treated in Central Coast hospitals. Some \$6 million a year is forgone. That \$6 million could be invested into our hospitals and meet the fair wage demands from public sector essential workers. The failure of private health insurers to pay the agreed amount is undermining the public health system in the State. The bill is a part of this Government's determination to rebuild and strengthen public health and invest in the essential services that the people of New South Wales voted for at the last election. They voted for it, they demand it and they deserve it.

I note that members opposite oppose the bill. I look forward to them explaining that decision to their communities when they leave this place. I look forward to the member for Terrigal explaining to people on the Central Coast why it is fair that some private health insurers do not pay what was agreed to, which has left our

local Central Coast public hospitals in a deficit. That \$6 million could be used on the Central Coast to provide better public health for our community. This is a good bill and it should be supported by the House. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:16): I contribute to debate on the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. Earlier today I grabbed the Legislative Assembly Chamber copy of the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*. I quickly flipped to page 617, where I saw the word "levy". For members in the Chamber, I clarify that a levy is the collecting of contribution and tax et cetera and appropriation by the State of a fixed or proportion of all or some of the wealth in the country et cetera. It is pretty clear, according to the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that a levy is a tax. If any member is unsure, they should grab a copy of the Legislative Assembly's dictionary and go to that page and make themselves au fait with the meaning of the word "levy".

Government members cannot spin their way out of the fact that they have broken another promise to the people of New South Wales. This is a health tax—a levy is a tax and a tax is a tax. It is pretty rich to listen to contributions of members from the Central Coast. They are the same people who lied about free parking at Gosford hospital prior to the election—twice—and then reaffirmed that lie and said they were going to provide free parking and match the former Government's position of free parking for staff, patients and families of patients. They agreed to match that. And then, lo and behold, straight after the last State election, the Minister for the Central Coast reneged on that promise. Broken promises have already come out of this Government. The shadow health Minister and I have spoken many times about that lovely little broken promise and how it is affecting thousands of people using the public health system at Gosford hospital.

Members opposite cannot come into the Chamber and try to play the victim card and say, "We are the only defenders of public health", because they screwed over thousands of people on the Central Coast when they lied to them about free parking at Gosford hospital. They are starting from a low base. Labor is imposing a health tax because of its budget mismanagement. This Government has blundered from one awkward moment to the next when it comes to budget management. It is painful to watch. I note the contribution of the member for Kiama who said that it is everybody else's fault. That is fine. The health Minister blames all the health woes on the Federal Government because Federal Labor is not listening to him. What does it say about the Labor Government that its Federal colleagues in Canberra will not talk to, help or support its Ministers when it comes to the New South Wales health system? It speaks volumes for the fact that nobody is listening.

I note the comments about former Treasurer Baird and the threat of that legislation. But he sat down and negotiated, as all good leaders do, and the negotiated outcome helped provide support to the public health system. I note the contribution from the member for Coffs Harbour. This Government has talked about negotiations and failed on every account, and here is yet another example. The question should be asked of the Treasurer and the health Minister: How many times have they met with the private health providers and discussed the issue of short payment on beds? I suspect that the answer is zero, although I am happy to be corrected, and I encourage the health Minister and the Treasurer to sit down with those organisations.

It is a bit like the Queensland Labor Government not paying its bill for COVID accommodation, which the people of New South Wales picked up the tab for. I remember the now Premier of Queensland, Steven Miles, or whatever his name is this week, shredding a bill of over \$130 million, literally with glee, and saying, "Not our problem—it's the people of New South Wales", and I'm not paying it". It is a good example of the contempt that the Labor Party in Queensland holds for the people of New South Wales. Hopefully, come Saturday, there will be a good outcome and that guy will be bumped to the other side of the room where he belongs. By the way, send him the bill again and send in the Sheriff's Office to say, "Where's our \$130 million?" I suspect that that will go a long way towards paying a few bills. He thought it was a great joke holding the people of New South Wales in such contempt.

We have to understand that the costs will be passed on. I note the anger and frustration of the Minister for the Central Coast. However, under the risk management rules set out by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority [APRA] relating to health insurance funds, they have to pass on those costs. It is not a matter of saying that it is the wrong thing to do and they are gouging; they do not have a choice. If we pass the bill, they will have to pass the costs on. That was outlined by the shadow Minister for Health.

It has been interesting to hear the talking points from Government members. We have been in government. There are ministerial and department talking points, but Government members sometimes need to look a bit behind them and realise what the net impact of a decision like that would be on the thousands of people who it will negatively impact, as opposed to doing the right thing, which is sitting down to negotiate. A conga line of trade unionists go in and out of this building every sitting week to negotiate with the Government. Yet the Government could not find the time to sit down with large insurance companies, some of which are not-for-profits. Which one was the member for Vaucluse mentioning earlier?

Ms Kellie Sloane: HCF.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Has the Minister or the Treasurer sat down and had open negotiations with HCF?

Dr Marjorie O'Neill: Yes, he has.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: He obviously has not done a good job of it, because he is failing, by the sound of it. The reality is that the Government has not done well in its negotiations with the conga line of trade unionists trying to negotiate in this place, because all we hear in their weekly protests on Macquarie Street is unrest and unhappiness. Let us look at some interesting facts. The proposed levy—or tax—increase by the Minns Government would raise private health insurance by \$78 for a single membership or \$156 for a family membership. Those costs will be passed on. That equates to a premium increase of just over 4 per cent for people living in New South Wales. That decision will probably drive more than 70,000 people out of private health cover. If members think for one second that the public health system can survive without the support of the private health system, they are fooling themselves. It is a bit like talking about the education system and saying, "Let's get rid of private schools. We'll put them all into public schools." Members opposite are living in nirvana.

Mr Ryan Park: Why don't you like private schools?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): Order! Government members will come to order.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I note the Minister's ridiculous interjection. The Minister will be the one who drives 70,000 people out of private health cover.

Mr Ryan Park: Why do you always hate private schools?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I actually went to one. This decision will drive more than 70,000 people in New South Wales out of private health cover. Let us put that into perspective. The Central Coast has four electorates. Currently, 54,000 people in the electorate of Terrigal are making sacrifices and spending extra money that they can barely afford under the cost-of-living crisis—which the Government has not helped with—to have private health cover. In my electorate of Terrigal, almost 20,000 people are using hospital admissions funded under private health insurance. In The Entrance, 44,676 people are making the sacrifice of paying for private health cover, and 15,000 hospital admissions have been funded by private health cover.

In the electorate of Gosford, 43,774 people are making the sacrifice of having private health cover to take the pressure off the public system. I have been to the Gosford Hospital plenty of times, as the Minister would know, for more reasons than I would like. My wife made the choice to go through as a private patient because we had made the sacrifice of having private health cover, and we ticked that box. It is up to private health insurers to make the right decisions, and it is up to the Minister and the Treasurer to sit down with them and negotiate to make sure that they are paying their fair share.

The fourth electorate on the Central Coast is Wyong, where 34,548 people currently pay for private health cover. They have had around 10½ thousand hospital admissions. No-one believes that a fair share should not be paid, but it is up to the Minister, the Treasurer and the Government to sit down and negotiate with health providers to make sure that they are paying their fair share and that those costs are not passed on to the consumer—because they will be. Under APRA's guidelines, health providers have no choice but to pass them on.

I note the member for Gosford has come into the Chamber. I note that 43,774 people in her electorate will now be forced to pay more for their health cover, just as 50-something thousand people will pay more in my electorate. Many of them are literally struggling to do that, and now the Government will tax them. The costs will be passed on to every single one of those 34,000 people who have private health cover, and the member will have to wear that burden. It will push people out of being able to afford private health cover.

Ms Liesl Tesch: That is just health fund scare tactics. If health funds were ethical—

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The member for Gosford will have her chance to defend this bad bill. It will push people out of private health cover, who will then have to rely completely on the public system. It will put more pressure on the public system, because the people who are making those sacrifices— [*Extension of time*]

We need to be clear that the net effect is that those thousands of people on the Central Coast will have to make a decision, because APRA has given those companies no alternative but to pass the costs on to the mums and dads on the Central Coast. They are literally holding on by their fingernails at the moment because of the cost-of-living crisis, and the bill will make it worse. That was outlined by the shadow Minister in her contribution to the second reading debate. Those people are not rich; they do not earn massive incomes. In fact, looking at the people on the Central Coast, the median household income in The Entrance is just under \$80,000 a year, the median income in Terrigal is just under \$96,000 a year, the median income in Gosford is just over \$75,000 a year

and the median income in Wyong is \$76,000 a year. But people are doing the right thing by paying for private health cover.

If companies are not doing the right thing, it is beholden on the Government to sit down with them and negotiate an outcome, rather than applying a tax that will be passed on to every single one of those people on the Central Coast. The member for Gosford will have to wear it when they start ringing her office and saying, "Thank you very much. I've now had to forgo my private health cover because I can't afford it anymore." It has been outlined that the increases are significant. We are talking \$156 per year for a family and \$78 for a single person. Those people have made a willing choice to help support the health system by having private health cover. It is not a luxury, but it is a choice and a sacrifice that they have decided to make.

I grew up in a working-class family. My mum is a teacher; my dad was a book binder. They made sacrifices to make sure we had private health cover. We went without a lot of things because of that, and I then carried on that same tradition by having private health cover because it is the right thing to do. If people can afford to take the pressure off the public system any way we can, they do. We have all made the decision to make that sacrifice. We should not pass this bill, which will enforce unnecessary, painful cost increases on families across the Central Coast. They do not have a choice. It will be coming whether they like it or not. Those are the unintended consequences of not sitting down and negotiating. No-one denies that the health system is struggling. Only a few weeks ago the Minister stood in this Chamber and criticised the Federal Government for its inability to come to the table to negotiate with him.

Mr Ryan Park: Now you're talking.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Yes, that is exactly the problem. The Minister needs to sit down with those companies and do the same thing. Hopefully, they might listen to him more than his Federal colleagues.

Mr Ryan Park: Why didn't you do it for 12 years, dopey?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I ask that the Minister withdraw his comment. It was unparliamentary and inappropriate.

Mr Ryan Park: If anyone takes any offence to anything, I completely withdraw it. I would like to do that as a catch-all.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: That is the contempt the Minister holds this place in, which is very sad because he has been given a high office and he demeans it by slagging people off. I really thought he was better than that. It is unfortunate that his way of dealing with the issue is to slag people off and make personal comments rather than debate a bad bill, which he knows this is. He has been caught out. The fact is the Federal Government is treating all of those opposite with contempt. This bill is a cash grab because the Feds are not listening to them. Now the Minister is trying to find other ways to redeem the situation. Rather than sitting down and negotiating with those companies in good faith, he has taken the lazy route and tried to drop some legislation, the unintended consequence of which is that the people of New South Wales, including more than 100,000 people on the Central Coast, will face increases on their health premiums.

I implore the Minister to think about what he is doing because this is a bad bill. He and I used to joke in this Chamber about hospital passes and football passes. Unfortunately, he has been given one in this situation because, as I said, the unintended consequence of the bill is hundreds of thousands of people paying more. We are now looking down the barrel of 70,000 people across New South Wales having to stop having private health cover. The unintended consequence of that is it will put even more pressure on the already stretched public system.

Ms Anna Watson: So you think the Government should prop up the private health sector?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: The member for Shellharbour has her chance to have her say and defend this bad bill. Good luck to her. The reality is that every one of those people will receive a bill with an increase because of the Government. Those opposite can explain it to all of them when they come knocking on their doors because they will be. I do not support this bad bill.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (16:31): I speak in debate on the wonderful Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. I am in shock at the utter cynicism of those opposite. The member for Terrigal came into the Chamber with his dictionary. I have a dictionary too. I refer to page 1,055 of the third edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary*:

hypocrisy ... the act of pretending to have a character or beliefs ... that one does not possess

Members opposite are hypocrites. They fail to have a position on a whole host of things: housing—

Ms Anna Watson: Transport and education.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: —transport and education. They do not have a position on anything. I bet I know when they came to a position on this bill. It was two days ago when an article in *The Australian* said that Federal electorates are at risk because of it. They are only opposing it because of cynical, short-term politics. That is the only thing that motivates them. The other thing that probably motivates them is sticking up for big businesses. The member for Terrigal rattled off various statistics about Central Coast electorates and how all these people are going to come knocking on doors and asking what is going on. The only thing motivating those opposite is hypocrisy, cynicism and short-term politics.

There was an accusation about not meeting with private health insurers. I can confirm that the Minister and his office have met with them at least 20 times. That is a big number. I know members opposite do not deal with big numbers but 20 is a big number. They spoke about the previous bill and the need to sit down and negotiate. We have negotiated. All that former Premier Baird did was put a bit of pressure on the insurers and kick the can down the road—much like those opposite have kicked a \$188 billion debt down the road to this Government. The statistics show that there has been a 110 per cent increase in profits for private health insurers over the past few years. That is \$1.3 billion in super profits over that time. All that has gone to executive bonuses. They have gone up significantly—somewhere around the vicinity of a million dollars in the past few years. Those opposite are backing that in, which is disgraceful.

In my neck of the woods, the South Western Sydney Local Health District has been under significant pressure, especially during the 12 years of the previous Government. An upper House inquiry a few years ago showed that there were horrendous outcomes for people in my area. The level of profits that those companies have earned in the past five years since they stopped paying their bills is \$60 million. All that serves to do is short-change the people in my electorate even more. I cannot believe that those opposite would try to stick up for those companies, those huge multinational corporations. Bupa earned \$25 billion in revenue in 2021. That is who they have gone in to bat for. They have forgotten about the people of New South Wales. They have abrogated their responsibility to look after the health and welfare of the people of New South Wales. Once again, they have backed in big businesses like Bupa.

The majority of the insurers—whether they be the Teachers Health fund, the Nurses and Midwives Health fund or the Emergency Services Health fund—are paying their fair share. They are paying their bills and doing the heavy lifting. But a handful of them are not. It is quite clear that no level of negotiation will work because those negotiations have been had at least 20 times now. They were had 10 years ago. The companies said, "All right, we'll play along for a little while. Then, when they're not looking again, we'll go back to the old way of doing things." They have done that. The only way to stop that happening is to enshrine it in law. That is why I support the bill. Those opposite stand condemned and I am very disappointed.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (16:36): The Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024 is very disappointing to say the least, but it is proof positive to the people of New South Wales that the Minns Labor Government has absolutely no idea about managing its budget. It has absolutely no idea about good and sound financial management. The member for Gosford, if she was in control of finances, would be much more adept at it than her friend in the upper House Mr Mookhey, I am sure, because she would understand that many people in her electorate and across New South Wales depend on good-quality health insurance. As we have heard in the press for the past week since the health Minister announced his new tax on the health insurance industry, the first thing that health insurance companies do whenever there is an increase to their costs is increase premiums to ensure their stability and financial management. They will have no other choice.

Who will pick up the pieces for that? It will be every person with health insurance across New South Wales. They will incur hundreds of dollars more in health insurance costs every year. What will they do? They will react because we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, which the Minns Labor Government unfortunately fails to concede. People are doing it very tough and, when people are doing it tough, they will avoid costs to their disposable income. We will witness an enormous drift of people out of private health insurance back into the public system because of the increases to health premiums, which the health insurers will have no other choice but to pass on to the premium holders, the people of New South Wales.

Of course, that will have a flow-on effect on our public hospitals, which are already in crisis. Anybody who has visited a public hospital over the past six months will have witnessed the many hundreds of people sitting in hallways and waiting rooms, which are packed to the rafters, waiting to receive health care. An enormous number of people were sick over winter for whatever reason, whether it was the flow-on effects of COVID, normal flu or day-to-day injuries. I put on record that Blacktown Hospital is a state-of-the-art facility. One will find none better anywhere in the world, thanks to a great \$700 million investment by the former Liberal-Nationals Government. Thank goodness for that.

As I have mentioned many times, I well remember a previous member for Blacktown, Paul Gibson, berating his own Labor Government, week after week, for its failure to invest in Blacktown Hospital. At that point

in time, when Mr Gibson quite correctly raised those issues, the hospital was like something out of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. I mean no reflection on the people who worked there but on the deplorable state of that asset. The hospital should never have had patients in it; it needed upgrading. The former member for Blacktown used to raise that issue every week. When the Coalition came to government in 2011, it made a \$700 million investment in Blacktown Hospital to build that state-of-the-art facility.

I am very proud to say that there is also a mental health facility on the same grounds as the hospital. I do not know how far away it is from opening, but it comes thanks to other significant funding from the former Liberal-Nationals Government, which invested very heavily in health facilities. It is one thing to have the health facilities, but if we do not have the capacity to stabilise the balance between those people with private health insurance and those who cannot afford it and must access public hospitals, then we are going to have a crisis. That is exactly what the Minns Labor Government is doing by imposing this new tax on health insurance providers.

Government members will talk about the big, glamorous businesses that are reaping the rewards. I heard a member say that the Liberal Party is here to support Bupa. Of course we support Bupa. We support HCF and any other health insurance provider, because they are keeping people healthy and out of the public system, which helps to strike that balance. We are seeing an enormous influx of people into the public health system at the moment—I do not have to tell members that, including the health Minister, who is in the Chamber. He knows because he hears each and every day how packed those hospitals are. Of course, the nurses are still trying to get their pay increases, which they were promised but have not got—although they have struck some sort of sweetheart deal and are getting very close to a wage rise.

One of the greatest impacts on the New South Wales budget has been the Government's continued wage increases for public servants—especially on behalf of its union buddies. That is what has broken the budget. Now, in order to claw that money back, the Government has gone for the health insurance providers by imposing this enormous tax. That is proof positive that the Minns Labor Government has no idea how to manage an economy, as we have seen time and time again. One wonders why houses are not being built. It is because the Minns Labor Government has increased taxes on new homes and apartments. We are seeing that failure now. This tax, which will be imposed on health insurance providers, will force masses of people back into the public health system, putting further pressure on our public hospitals. That is an absolute disgrace and a travesty. The Government must pull its head in, reassess this legislation and not impose a tax on health insurance providers.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:43): I contribute to debate on the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024, which is about the financial ethics of the big health insurers that are not paying their bills. The Central Coast Local Health District has been robbed of about \$30 million because health funds have not paid their bills since 2019. That is not fair on our health district. Imagine what our health district could do, the number of nurses it could employ and the services it could expand if we had \$30 million more from health insurers paying the debts that are due. I speak only about the big five insurers. It is a tragedy that this has happened. I am glad that Treasurer Daniel Mookhey and the Minister for Health have taken action to try to right this wrong, because it is not fair on our New South Wales health system.

The member for Terrigal and member for Kellyville are confused about what the bill is about. This is definitely not a tax on health funds. The bill makes health funds pay what they are charged by the New South Wales Government when their patients stay in public hospital beds. Treating private patients in public hospitals is what we do, and an arrangement has been in place for decades. It costs \$1,007 per night to look after privately insured patients in our public hospitals. But since 2019 a succession of private health funds have refused to pay the private bed rate in our public hospitals. That has cost the New South Wales Government \$490 million. That money could be invested in our public hospitals. The Government will enforce the bed rate from January 2025. This is not a tax; this bill enforces the rate for private patients who stay in public hospitals.

The Treasurer and the Minister for Health have met with those five private health providers 20 times to try to resolve the issue but, sadly, the providers have not acted in good faith. That is why we have had to introduce this bill to Parliament. Some 53 private health funds use our hospitals, and 44 of them do the right thing. Here in the New South Wales Parliament I thank all the health funds that do the right thing. I thank the nurses' and teachers' health funds, Emergency Services Health and all the other funds that do the right thing. Sadly, the big five firms do not do the right thing. Returns to the people have gone from 88¢ to 82¢, whilst profits have grown considerably. The bill is about the State's ability to recover money from those organisations.

Members opposite have said that health insurance premiums will go up, and health funds have threatened to increase their fees. But they have not been paying their bills since 2017. In 2014 Labor backed Mike Baird to prevent that from happening. But in 2019 the big five stopped paying their bills so we need to do something to make them pay—that is the reality. When those funds stopped paying their bills, sadly, they did not reduce their members' premiums. The bill is about the ethics of those big organisations and ensuring they pay their bills when

they are due. I call on those organisations to do so. Sadly, the Government must introduce legislation to the Parliament to make that happen. I thank the Minister for Health and the Treasurer for the work they have done to ensure we get our fair share. I am sure that, as ever, the Gosford health district would like that extra \$30 million to spend in the future.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:47): I was not going to contribute to debate on the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024, but I heard so much dribble from members opposite that I am compelled to do so.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order: The member for Blacktown has used unparliamentary language.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): The member for Blacktown will resume his seat when another member takes a point of order. He will also think carefully about his language.

Mr STEPHEN BALI: There was more dribbling from those opposite than from Messi during a football match. I will not restate the arguments made by the Government or rehash those made by Opposition members. But I point out a fact that the Opposition did not cover, which is that 44 of 53 funds—and the health Minister can correct me on this—have agreed to this measure. That leaves nine of the larger funds that have not. Many members have talked about HCF and the massive cost increases that will be imposed if the Government enforces the payment of \$892 per night, per public hospital room.

So I just looked up on the list of those health funds to see how much the increase would be. I do not want to advertise particular health funds but HCF's hospital cover right now is \$463. If you want silver-plus hospital cover for a single, you pay \$40.10 per week. Health Partners has signed up to the \$892. Applying the Opposition's logic, this would cause massive rate increases. I do not know what those opposite came up with. We are comparing like for like, silver-plus cover for both of them. I googled it on a comparison of health funds: HCF costs \$40.10 per week and Health Partners costs \$40.49 per week. The cost to the consumer will be 39¢, and HCF is making a profit of \$171.4 million a year versus Health Partners with \$29.8 million.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Why does the Government not negotiate with them directly?

Mr STEPHEN BALI: Health Partners has negotiated and delivered. The other side have their EarPods in and are not listening to anything. They are going "la, la, la". Maybe they need to go to an audiologist and start listening.

Mr Michael Kemp: Is that what the member did in school?

Mr STEPHEN BALI: That is what I used to do, and I got in trouble and sent to the back of the room.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Opposition members and the member for Blacktown will not incite each other.

Mr STEPHEN BALI: That is the clear difference. HCF's silver membership costs \$40.10 a week and it pays the Government only \$463 for the bed space. Health Partners pays \$892, and its premium for the average person who signs up to the same program, Silver Plus, is \$40.49—a 39¢ difference. The Opposition wants to back in HCF and all the large providers making hundreds of millions of dollars. The small health funds that are supporting members and still making \$29 million a year, which is pretty good money, are doing it at \$40.49.

Those opposite have absolutely no idea. They are just coming here to put out their political philosophy of supporting big business to drive down costs. They want to socialise costs and privatise profits. That is all they are interested in. They want to privatise the profits of the large health funds but screw over the small health funds. "Who cares about them?", asks the Opposition. We on our side do. We can demonstrate the 39¢ difference. The big health fund, which generates over \$170 million in profit, pays only \$463. Every other, smaller health fund that is nimble and there for the members is paying \$892, and it is almost the same price—a 39¢ difference in health funds. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame, stop running after large businesses and help the small providers who are delivering for their members.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (16:52): In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Mount Druitt, The Entrance, Bega, Lismore, Leppington, Wyong, Sydney, Kiama, Vaucluse, Coffs Harbour, Terrigal, Gosford, Leppington and Blacktown for their contributions to debate on the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024. I have been in this place for a little while, 13 years, as a member. I have been here as a public servant and as a staffer. Never before have I seen something so absolutely stupid as Opposition members coming in here and saying, "You know what we'll do today? I know exactly what we'll do today. We'll rip money out of our hospitals and give it back to those hardworking, struggling people facing enormous pressures, those private health insurers."

When I think of struggling, I immediately think of private health insurers. That is what I immediately go to. I understand that struggle is not always visible, depending on what seat you are in. It may not always be visible. But I am sure it is in Blacktown, Leppington and Vacluse. When I see people struggling, I go out on Macquarie Street and say to people, "Do you think the following groups are struggling?" And they say one thing: "private health insurers".

Let us go through what those opposite are arguing. It costs a little bit over \$1,000 to operate a hospital bed, the whole box and dice, in New South Wales. It has been fairly consistent for a long time. With Minister Hazzard it would have been the same. That is a fact. We then have asked and offered a 17 per cent subsidy, which would bring that down to \$892. That is what we are asking. We are discounting off what it costs. The taxpayer said, "We are generous. We will drop that down 17 per cent to \$892." Those are two important numbers.

That lot over there have walked down here today with the shadow Minister for Health, a rookie, who is new on the block. Let's think about how stupid this is. Someone has said, "Go and say this. Go and stand up for"—wait for it—"private health insurers." I see people marching in the street, and I know that my comrade the member for Vacluse likes a union rally. Soon they will be marching out there to defend private health insurers because they are absolutely struggling at the moment. Those CEOs cannot put food on the table and do not know where their next pay cheque is coming from. Those opposite will say, "We want a placard. Run onto Macquarie Street. Block the streets. What do we want? A fair go for private health insurers. That's what we want."

With the 17 per cent subsidy, the vast majority of the good private health insurers that all of us rely on, that the Labor Government supports and that successive governments, State and Federal, have supported, have chosen to do the right thing. But a small number is not happy with the 17 per cent discount. They say, "No, no, no. What we want is a 56 per cent discount, and we want that rate from \$1,075." It costs \$1,075, and \$892 is what we are asking. That is a 17 per cent subsidy. A small number is saying, "That is not enough from taxpayers. We want mums and dads in each member's electorate to subsidise us to the tune of 56 per cent."

I have seen and heard. I have been in opposition. I know how loose it can get. I know well how hard it is. No-one knows opposition better than I do, and I will not be relearning it. I cannot tell how on earth, at a time when everyone, including those on both sides of this House, understands the pressures on our hospitals, someone would come here and think, "You know what I'll do today? I'll stand up in the oldest Parliament and demand that my local health district reduce its income by \$30 million, and I'll give that back to private health insurers' profits." I cannot believe that. I have seen a lot of crazy things, but this is right up there.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): It being 5.00 p.m., 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

ROYAL VISIT

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:00): I move:

That this House welcomes His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla to New South Wales.

Last Friday the Government was delighted to welcome His Majesty King Charles III to Sydney for his first visit to Australia as sovereign, alongside Her Majesty Queen Camilla. The wonderful Sydney Opera House shells were lit up in celebration to welcome the royals to our beautiful harbour city. On Sunday the Parliament of New South Wales welcomed the King to celebrate the bicentenary of the Legislative Council, which first met in August 1924. The King's gift, an hourglass that he described as a speech timer, reminds us that we must use our time in this Parliament wisely, so I will endeavour to keep this speech within the limits of this House's hourglass equivalent, which is the electronic clock on the wall.

While the weather last weekend was not fantastic by our standards, Sydney has put on some wonderful weather today. The amazing harbour is sparkling under blue skies for this afternoon's visit. I am hopeful that it stays like this for the remainder of the royal visit. Australia has shaped the King's life and world view more than that of any other monarch. The King has now visited Australia 17 times, including 15 official visits as the Prince of Wales. The King's love of Australia started in the 1960s, when he was an exchange student at Geelong Grammar School's Timbertop Campus in the Victorian Alps. From Bondi to Siding Springs, Parkes to Maitland, Holbrook to the Riverina, the King has met with and been impressed by New South Wales citizens.

In 2013 the King set up the Prince's Trust Australia, now the King's Trust, to help young people, support veterans and promote sustainable design. The trust is just one of the magnificent contributions the King has made to the people of Australia. The King's commitment to sustainability and ecology is to be commended. It provides a welcome focus for his leadership as nations around the world race to decarbonise their economies and address climate change. Royal visits are a unique opportunity to showcase the people and places that make our State such

a great place to live and to visit. Our State's many attractions have been highlighted to the world during this visit. Importantly, the visit has allowed us to host the most Aussie event of all, the barbeque. Earlier today, the Government hosted Their Majesties at a community barbeque in Parramatta Park on Dharug country. From the "democracy sausage" to a barbeque fit for a king, this State can do it all. The event showcased our State's rich culinary and cultural diversity.

Their Majesties met with the great community leaders and organisations that make this region such a fantastic place to live, work and do business. Among those who met with the King today was Inspector Amy Scott, who showed incredible bravery during the tragic events at Bondi Westfield earlier this year. Amy's brave actions that day undoubtedly saved many innocent lives. I thank her for her service. Parramatta has played a critical role in our nation's development of agriculture. It was, therefore, fitting that our State's primary producers were invited to showcase some of their world-beating produce. The King also met Australian of the Year Award recipients Professor Georgina Long, AO, and Professor Richard Scolyer, AO, to learn about their groundbreaking melanoma research.

One of the drawbacks of the sunny weather in Australia is the damage that the Aussie sun can do to those of us with skin more suitable to the King's homeland. It is therefore wonderful to have such research being undertaken by these amazing Australians. Together, Georgina and Richard have developed a series of world-first treatments based on melanoma breakthroughs. Their important research embodies our State's history of innovation and resilience. Richard met the King as a medical pioneer and fellow cancer patient, having been diagnosed with brain cancer last year. We wish Richard the best and hope for his recovery. During the visit, the King also toured the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern and the Homes NSW Cowper Street project, a shining example of sustainable housing.

Queen Camilla met with some of the dedicated team from OzHarvest, before meeting authors and children at Green Square Library. This afternoon Their Majesties will conclude their visit, meeting with the public on the Sydney Opera House forecourt. The King and Queen's visit to our State puts them in good company, as 330,000 Brits visited New South Wales in the year to the end of June. More than a third of the Australian population trace their ancestry back to the United Kingdom and more than a million British-born people call Australia home. The longstanding friendship between Australia and the United Kingdom is underpinned by our shared heritage, common values, strategic interests, and substantial trade and investment activities. Indeed, the United Kingdom is one of New South Wales' most valuable trading partners. In 2023 the United Kingdom was Australia's second largest source of foreign investment and fourth largest services export market.

The New South Wales Government is always looking at new opportunities to deepen our special relationship, including through trade, tourism and education. Once again, we welcome His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla to New South Wales. We hope they have a very enjoyable time visiting New South Wales.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:06): Firstly, I acknowledge my parliamentary colleague the member for Shellharbour, who is an avid monarchist. I thank her for bringing this public interest debate motion to Australia's oldest Parliament. On behalf of the Opposition, I welcome His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla. Their visit to New South Wales has been an unrivalled success. There has been an outpouring of appreciation and love for the monarchy in Australia and New South Wales during the King and Queen's visit. We must remember that the King is currently undergoing treatment for cancer. It is a big trip across the world, especially while undergoing treatment. It goes to show the King's passion and love for this country that he has undertaken this trip while undergoing that treatment. The people of Australia appreciate the incredible contribution that His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen have made during their visit to Australia and Sydney this year.

As outlined by the member for Shellharbour, the King is no stranger to this country. His first visit dates back to 1966, when he was an exchange student at Geelong Grammar School at Timbertop. The King made many visits as the Prince of Wales, acting as the Queen's representative in Australia, which is arguably the best example of a constitutional monarchy working well. In 1967 he made his first official visit, when he represented the late Queen Elizabeth II at the memorial service for the great Prime Minister Harold Holt. In 1970 he visited Cottesloe Beach in Western Australia. Of course, we all remember the iconic photograph of the young lady in a bikini bounding out of the waves to embrace the Prince of Wales. That image was broadcast all over the world. It is a very famous and iconic photo. It was 1970. I had not been born at that point. It goes to show the love this country has for the monarchy and our history and background.

The member for Shellharbour and I have had the privilege of travelling to Westminster to see how our parliamentary system has evolved from 1,000 years of political history in the United Kingdom. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that we have taken the best parts from that system and transplanted them in New South Wales. In 1974 the Prince of Wales returned for the official opening of the Anglo-Australian Telescope. Then in

1977 he was in Australia as part of the silver jubilee for the Queen's reign. In 1978 he attended the funeral of the late former Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies. In 1979 he had a one-day stay at a Western Australian sheep station, which I am sure he found very enlightening.

In 1981 he visited Canberra, and then in 1983 he toured with the late Princess Diana and the newly born Prince William. There was a massive outpouring of affection for the next generation of constitutional monarchy here in Australia. In 1985 he visited Victoria for the State's 150th anniversary. In 1988 he visited with Queen Elizabeth II as part of the bicentenary celebrations. During a speech here in Sydney in 1994 we saw the infamous "fake" assassination attempt occur. In 2005 he made a special visit to Sydney's Breakfast Point and the Rose Group development as patron of the International Network for Traditional Building Architecture and Urbanism, which is obviously very close to His Majesty's heart. In 2012 he returned with the then Duchess of Cornwall to mark the Queen's diamond jubilee. In 2015 the Prince and Duchess visited Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney, Albany and Perth, before returning in 2018 to open the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

King Charles III and Queen Camilla have made multiple visits to this country. On Sunday morning it was wonderful to again see the outpouring of affection for His Majesty before he made his visit to Parliament House. As a monarchist who comes into this Chamber every morning, it was a pleasure to meet and welcome His Majesty on Sunday. All members who attended were very impressed by the speech he gave acknowledging the 200th anniversary of the Legislative Council. He also presented a lovely hourglass to the Council, which will hopefully keep its members' speeches shorter. This debate is all about our appreciation of the monarchy. God save the King.

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:11): I support the good member for Shellharbour and her public interest debate motion about the royal visit. Whether a monarchist or republican, it is respectful to acknowledge the position and the person. His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla arrived here last Friday to the sight of the Sydney Opera House lit up in celebration to welcome them to our beautiful harbour city. Their Majesties' visit puts them in good company. Some 330,000 Brits visited New South Wales in the year ending in June. More than one-third of the Australian population traces its ancestry back to the United Kingdom. Over a million British-born people call Australia home, including my mother-in-law. Our countries have a shared heritage, common values, people-to-people links, strategic interests, and substantial trade and investment activities. The UK is one of the State's most valuable trading partners. In 2023 it was Australia's second largest source of foreign investment and fourth largest services export market.

Of course the King is no stranger to Australia, having now visited 17 times, 15 of those on official visits as the Prince of Wales. In the early 1960s the King was an exchange student at Geelong Grammar's Timbertop campus in the Victorian Alps, which he claims was the best part of his education. In 2013 he set up the Prince's Trust Australia—now the King's Trust Australia—to help young people, support veterans and promote sustainable design. It is here that I acknowledge the King's commitment to sustainability and ecology. That work provides a welcome focus to his leadership. As nations from around the world race to decarbonise their economies and address climate change, His Majesty has the power and position to influence.

Today we hosted Their Majesties at a community barbecue at Parramatta Park, on Dharug country. Parramatta has played a significant role in our nation's development of agriculture. Among those in attendance was Inspector Amy Scott, who showed incredible bravery during the tragic events at Westfield Bondi Junction earlier this year. It is important to acknowledge Amy's actions that day, which undoubtedly saved many innocent lives. Their Majesties met with great community leaders and organisations, and we showcased the State's rich culinary and cultural diversity that make this region such a dynamic place to live.

The King met Australian of the Year award recipients Professor Georgina Long, AO, and Professor Richard Scolyer, AO, to learn about their groundbreaking melanoma research. Richard was diagnosed with incurable grade 4 brain cancer last year. Together with Georgina, he developed a series of world-first treatments based on melanoma breakthroughs. He met the King as a fellow cancer patient but also as a medical pioneer who embodied our State's history of innovation and resilience. We continue to wish him well and hope for his recovery. The King also stopped by the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern, where he was welcomed to Gadigal land, greeted by traditional dancers and had a private meeting with key Indigenous Elders. Queen Camilla met with some of the dedicated team from OzHarvest, before meeting authors and children at Green Square Library. Our people really are our greatest asset in New South Wales.

This afternoon Their Majesties conclude their visit, meeting with the public at the Sydney Opera House forecourt. Just down the road from this Parliament thousands of excited royal fans are eager for a chance to see King Charles and Queen Camilla. We wish His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen the very best on their visit, and safe travels. For the good of citizens of both our nations, we are always looking at new opportunities

to deepen this relationship, from trade to tourism and education opportunities. We look forward to the connection between New South Wales and Britain deepening during His Majesty's reign.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (17:16): I support the motion of the member for Shellharbour welcoming His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla to New South Wales. This visit signifies more than just a royal tour. It represents the continued connection and relationship between His Majesty and the people of New South Wales and Australia. It also serves as an opportunity to reflect on our shared history, our evolving national identity and the importance of the constitutional monarchy in making Australia the place it is today. His Majesty has always had a strong connection to New South Wales, following in the footsteps of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. My community in the St George region was fortunate enough to have been visited Her Late Majesty on multiple occasions. In 1954, only one year after her coronation, she attended my community and even toured through St George Hospital at the time. This was followed by a visit by Her Late Majesty in 1970 to celebrate the bicentenary of Captain Cook's landing in Australia.

I had the privilege of meeting the King during his visit to the New South Wales Parliament on Sunday. As he was leaving, I personally extended an invitation back to the St George area for a barbecue on his next tour to Australia. A barbecue in one of our beautiful local parks is not only a celebration of our way of life but a reflection of the community spirit that thrives in St George. The St George area is home to many wonderful cultural groups that contribute to the unique and inclusive character of our local community. Our strong multicultural heritage is a source of great pride for the region, which I know is something our community would look forward to highlighting for His Majesty in the future. This spirit of inclusiveness and diversity is at the heart of what makes New South Wales such a special place.

Noting His Majesty's longstanding advocacy for environmental preservation and green spaces, I also mentioned to him the many wonderful parks and open spaces in my electorate such as Oatley Park, Gannons Park and, of course, Carss Park. Oatley Park is rich in history and still exists today due to the fierce advocacy of local community groups and individuals, which mirrors His Majesty's passion for preserving such spaces. This invitation was not simply a formality but a heartfelt gesture of community pride, showcasing the very best of what it means to be an Australian.

I also mentioned that I would in fact drive him around on his next visit, and we both laughed. The St George region would truly be honoured to showcase our local community's beautiful parks and open spaces and, if time permits, even facilitate a visit and walk through St George Hospital to see firsthand the first-class health care, the wonderful medical staff and the upgrades that are being delivered, just like Her Majesty did before him. A barbecue in one of our beautiful local parks would be not only a celebration of our way of life but a reflection of the community spirit that thrives in the St George area. On this tour, however, the King was fortunate enough to visit Parramatta today for a community barbecue. Parramatta and Western Sydney are also fantastic locations to showcase our rich multicultural society to Their Majesties.

As we welcome Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla, their tour is a reminder to recognise the success of Australia—from our rich multicultural society to our health facilities, arts, culture and sports. It also reminds us that, even as we evolve as a society, some traditions, such as the connection to the Crown, continue to adapt and remain relevant to the values we hold dear. In fact, my son James and his fellow students from Mortdale Public School were in Parliament House in Canberra yesterday, and my son, along with his class, made the news as His Majesty visited. I again extend my warmest welcome to His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla and recognise the opportunity that their visit has provided to showcase the values that make New South Wales and Australia such an extraordinary place to live.

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (17:21): I thank the member for Shellharbour for bringing the motion to the House. I know that all members were extremely keen to contribute to the debate, so it is an honour to be one of the lucky few to do so. Last Friday, New South Wales had the distinct honour of welcoming His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen to Sydney for His Majesty's first visit to Australia as sovereign. The iconic Sydney Opera House shells were beautifully illuminated in celebration, lighting up our harbour city in a grand gesture of welcome. It was a momentous occasion for all of us. The visit, however, is far more than a ceremonial occasion. Australia has shaped the King's life in ways that are truly unique.

In the early 1960s His Majesty spent time as a young exchange student at the Geelong Grammar Timbertop campus in the Victorian alps. Since then, as the member for Shellharbour stated, the King has returned to Australia 17 times, with 15 of those visits made as the Prince of Wales. His Majesty has seen much of New South Wales over the years. I remember well His Majesty's visit to Wollongong in the 1980s. Since then, His Majesty has crossed the vast landscape of our nation, connecting with Australians from all walks of life. The King's connection to Australia is evident in the establishment of the Prince's Trust Australia, now named the King's Trust, which was formed in 2013. Through the initiative, His Majesty has made lasting contributions by helping young people, supporting veterans and promoting sustainable design. His Majesty's leadership in sustainability and ecology

showed foresight, and his dedication continues to provide a welcome focus as the world collectively tackles the challenges of climate change.

Earlier today, Their Majesties were welcomed to Parramatta Park on Dharug country for a community barbecue, a true Aussie tradition that allowed our State to showcase not only our world-class food but also our rich cultural diversity. Their Majesties had the opportunity to meet community leaders and organisations that make Parramatta such a vibrant place to live. Parramatta has also played a crucial role in our State's agricultural history, so it was fitting that today some of our State's primary producers showcased their world-beating produce. That included Nowra beef farmer John Bennett, who said that escorting King Charles around the State's top agricultural stallholders today was an occasion he will never forget. The event was a testament to the quality and innovation of our regional farmers and producers.

His Majesty also met with Australian of the Year recipients Professor Georgina Long, AO, and Professor Richard Scolyer, AO. Their groundbreaking melanoma research is leading the world, and Richard's own diagnosis last year has only underscored his resilience and dedication. My dear friend Michelle Miran from the South Coast is currently receiving treatment under the guidance of Professor Long and her amazing team, and it is wonderful that the King was able to meet both Professor Long and Professor Scolyer. Professor Scolyer's meeting with the King was not just a moment of shared experience for them as fellow cancer patients but a reflection of our State's capacity for innovation and compassion.

His Majesty and Her Majesty's visit is another reminder of the deep enduring relationship between the United Kingdom and New South Wales. Over 330,000 Brits visited New South Wales last year, and more than a third of Australians trace their ancestry back to the United Kingdom. With over a million British-born people now calling Australia home, our bond is as strong as ever. That relationship extends far beyond shared heritage; it is built on common values, strategic interests, and robust trade and investment links. In 2023 the United Kingdom was Australia's second largest source of foreign investment and fourth largest services export market. Our partnership is vital, and we continue to explore new opportunities for growth in trade, tourism and education. As the King and Queen conclude their visit, we wish them all the best. Their time in our State has deepened the bonds between New South Wales and the United Kingdom. We look forward to continuing that special relationship under His Majesty's reign, a relationship that benefits our citizens, enriches our cultures and strengthens our shared future.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (17:25): I contribute to the public interest debate and thank the member for Shellharbour for bringing the motion. This royal visit is significant for several reasons. First and foremost, it marks the first global tour by the new sovereign. This is King Charles's first visit to Australia since his accession to the throne in September 2022. The King's Trust Australia is a national charity that supports disadvantaged young people and military veterans as well as champions sustainable communities. His Majesty King Charles III is the founder of the King's Trust Australia. The King's Trust Australia has established a new charity, the King's Foundation Australia, dedicated to protecting, conserving and regenerating Australia's built heritage; delivering education and training programs for young people; promoting sustainable urbanism; and delivering related built projects.

The King's Trust Australia has done significant work to date under the name of the Prince's Trust, including creating dedicated places to provide young people, communities and veterans with the opportunity to develop new skills and succeed in life and providing social housing in Glebe in conjunction with the New South Wales Government. Today His Majesty unveiled plans for a new charity called the King's Foundation Australia at a special reception at Admiralty House in Sydney. I was privileged to attend and meet His Majesty. The charity's first project will be as the custodian of the Hillview Estate in Sutton Forest within my electorate, working to restore the historic property and its surrounding land. The State Heritage listed former summer residence of the Governor of New South Wales will serve as the permanent base of the King's Foundation Australia and be developed as a landmark cultural hub.

Inspiration has been taken from the regeneration of Dumfries House, an eighteenth-century mansion in Scotland, which now acts as the King's Foundation headquarters after it was saved for the nation in 2007 by a consortium led by Charles as the Prince of Wales. The King set up his original foundation, previously called the Prince's Foundation, to train the next generation of skilled craftspeople in heritage techniques essential to many traditional industries, including in building, carpentry, fashion and textiles. Practical education and training programs in traditional and heritage craft will also be developed at Hillview.

Kristina Murrin, the Australian-born chief executive of the King's Foundation, said the new foundation was a sign of Charles's affection for Australia. Ms Murrin said that establishing a permanent presence for the King's Foundation in Australia is testament to His Majesty's affection for Australia and commitment to extending the reach of the work on sustainable communities undertaken by the King's Foundation elsewhere in the world. Dumfries House has been transformative for the local community and has pioneered nature-based learning for

young people and adults alike and placed traditional skills at the heart of practical education courses across the estate. It is an exciting prospect to have the opportunity to apply to Hillview Estate what was learnt when Dumfries House was saved for the British nation. The foundation said the charity has signed a long-term lease and the Hillview property remains in the ownership of the New South Wales Government.

The 1870s-built residence on the old Illawarra Highway at Sutton Forest was previously known as Prospect. It is referred to as the most exclusive highland estate and was a vice-regal summer retreat for 16 consecutive New South Wales Governors between 1882 and 1957, offering them a place to escape the Sydney summer. The New South Wales Government's heritage register listed the house, which had 38 habitable rooms, including 27 bedrooms, and its 60-hectare estate as of exceptional significance to the people of New South Wales as the former country home of the Governor of New South Wales for 75 years. The parallels to Dumfries House are similar. I am very much looking forward to working with the new King's Foundation Australia in returning Hillview to its former glory for the benefit of the people of New South Wales.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:30): By leave: It gives me great pleasure to support this motion, which welcomes His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla to New South Wales. It is great that the sovereign is here when we are celebrating the bicentenary of the commencement of self-government in New South Wales, which took place next to this Chamber in the Wentworth Room in 1824. It an appropriate and important coincidence that the visit is occurring at the same time. I also note that for many people in my community and in this State, the sovereign represents the intrusion of the British Empire and a negative experience for the Indigenous people of this land.

I did not receive an invite to meet the King. I did not seek one. I am happy to tell the House that. I met the Prince in 1989 when I was a young subaltern in the Royal New South Wales Regiment. I was given the opportunity to go to the United Kingdom to celebrate the 300-year tercentenary of the Royal Welsh regiment, of which the then Prince of Wales was honorary colonel. At the end of the celebrations, a bunch of soldiers from the Royal Welsh regiment were lined up and given the opportunity to meet the Prince, their honorary colonel. I decided to stand at the end of the line. Again, I was not invited, but to the good credit of the regiment and the Prince, my intrusion was accepted in good faith and in good humour. I will remember that moment fondly.

It is appropriate to note as a member of the Labor Party that the sovereign's representative in this country has dismissed two Labor leaders in this country's short history: Jack Lang in 1932 and more recently Gough Whitlam on 11 November 1975. Those events weigh heavily on members on this side of the House. I have no hesitation in saying that those in my party view that intrusion by the sovereign into our parliamentary democracy as unwelcome and inappropriate.

I give a shout-out to Professor Jenny Hocking for the work she has done over many years, which is documented in the book *The Palace Letters: The Queen, the Governor-general, and the Plot to Dismiss Gough Whitlam*. She showed that the Queen, Prince Charles and Martin Charteris, who was the Queen's private secretary, were all aware by September 1975 that John Kerr, the Governor-General—the Queen's representative in this country—was considering dismissing the Government and knew of his failure to warn Whitlam of that possibility. Given the fondness I know the King holds for Australia through his dealings with the people of this country, this visit provides an opportunity for the sovereign to make very clear that it would be inappropriate in the future for the sovereign's representative in this country to ever again use what are called the reserve powers to dismiss a democratically elected government in this State. On that note, I again welcome the King and Queen to our country. I support the motion.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (17:34): By leave: It gives me great pleasure to support the motion moved for this public interest debate to honour the tour of our King, Charles III, and his gracious consort, Queen Camilla, in Australia. I feel a personal connection, as I remember fondly, on the occasion of their last tour of Australia, that my wife and I were present with other dignitaries to welcome them on their arrival.

Mr Ron Hoenig: God save the King!

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: God save the King! Alicia had our son Tom, who was just six days old, in her arms. He was not exactly the normal participant in an official line-up on the tarmac, but the royal couple were their usual understanding selves. It is a memory I shall never forget. Alicia and I had the honour to meet His Majesty again this past Sunday in this building, when the King presented the Legislative Council with a gift to signify its bicentenary. It is amazing that His Majesty, as Prince of Wales, was present when Parliament celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Legislative Council and that he is once more here as King to help Parliament celebrate the bicentenary of the other place. It is certainly safe to say that he was the only person in the building who had been an important part of official celebrations then, and he was once again an important part of our Parliament's milestones.

The King is literally a living, organic link to Parliament's history, and that of our nation's. As someone who respects the historical institution and unitary value of family, I believe this organic link is one of the many strengths of the system of constitutional monarchy. This is a link of family, not just the personages of the royal family but of the shared institution of the Crown that binds us to New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom, amongst others. We are nations that all enjoy the rule of law and order and the strength of democratic institutions, and are amongst the most diverse yet stable societies on our planet. At the governmental centre of those nations stands the Crown, which is served by the royal family, who in turn serve its people. This is a timeless balance of tradition and stability with freedom and progress.

The dignity of the office of sovereign, of someone who is above politics but immured in duty, is not lost on Australians. We have seen, with that familial identity I spoke of before, the goodwill and respect shown by nearly all during this tour. Political figures on such tours mostly come together to show their statesmanship and the level of national dignity that exists above politics. During the royal tour of the late Queen Elizabeth II back in 2000—when I worked for the Hon. John Howard, no less—the media picked up on this phenomenon. If my memory serves me, writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, journalist and strident republican Mark Day, far from wanting the monarchy gone, lamented that there were not more royal tours, as the sovereign had a calming and powerful effect upon Australian political life. Would that office have that effect if we had some dreary bureaucrat in the role or a Labor or Liberal president? I doubt it, as I think many also do.

It behoves the House to remember that those who fought and won the referendum in 1999 were a mixture of monarchists and constitutionalists, the latter being those who simply thought the Constitution works well and should not be altered due to political or ideological whim. We know, due to recent example, that this is a view that many Australians still strongly support. Yesterday His Majesty spoke of his sadness—and, undoubtedly, the Queen's also—about such a short visit to Australia. I echo that sentiment, as it would have been lovely if people and communities beyond Sydney and Canberra could, if only for a short time, have had some rest from politics and their cares and a helpful reminder that in these difficult times, at home and abroad, there are international institutions that serve them so well. At Their Majesties' coronation, the King declared, paraphrasing from Matthew 20:28, "I come not to be served, but to serve." I hope that, as the tour concludes, many of my fellow Australians will see how lucky we are to have such servants as the King and the Queen. God save the King!

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:38): In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Terrigal, Heathcote, Oatley, South Coast, Goulburn, The Entrance and Lane Cove. Whilst I may be a staunch republican, on behalf of the New South Wales Government I know I speak for every member of this place and of the other place when I wish His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen the very best on their visit. We look forward to the relationship between New South Wales and the United Kingdom deepening during his reign, for the good of all citizens of Australia and the United Kingdom.

The contribution from the member for Heathcote was one of respect for the position of the King, regardless of his views on the long-running debate about whether Australia should be a republic. The member discussed our shared heritage and the values that are important to us all. I am sure that those values will continue regardless of where and how this debate ends. The member for Oatley is a known monarchist. He has deep connections to the monarchy, to the King and to the Queen. He discussed his time at St George Hospital, where he first met the King and more recently on Sunday. The member for Oatley also discussed the strong multicultural history and the King's commitment to climate change, which we all share.

The member for South Coast was a little concerned about all the MPs who were really keen to speak today. I am sure that her concerns have been alleviated now. She spoke strongly about the ceremonial role of the King and discussed his time at Geelong Grammar School. She also talked about the King's love of Wollongong in the 1980s when the Prince of Wales came to Wollongong, which I had not known about. I learnt something from the member for South Coast and I thank her for her contribution. I thank the member for Goulburn for her contribution. I echo the concerns of the member for The Entrance. Never again can we have any Prime Minister sacked by the inappropriate use of the reserve power. What happened to Jack Lang and Gough Whitlam must never happen again.

The member for Terrigal has left the Chamber. I am not too sure why. I appreciate that he is a staunch monarchist. That is his view. He has a strong appreciation of the King's charity work and his commitment to climate change. The member spoke about thousands of years of history. I especially respect and hold close to my heart our own style of government. The member for Terrigal is back in the Chamber now. We never want to see the system of government changed in this country from the Westminster system. That is something that I am sure we agree on, looking at what is happening in America and other places right now. The style of government that we inherited from the United Kingdom is one we should keep.

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

Motion agreed to.*Bills***HEALTH INSURANCE LEVIES AMENDMENT BILL 2024****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (17:42): One of the things that was interesting during this debate on the Health Insurance Levies Amendment Bill 2024 was the comments of the Opposition members. I need to explain this clearly so that members can understand. It probably requires them to have a year 3 or year 4 level of mathematics. I reckon most members in the Chamber will be all right. Crouchy will be right. The case has been made that the bill alone will increase premiums. I would ask whether those opposite agree with that comment, but I will not because they have said it in the Chamber. They have said that this piece of legislation will increase premiums. The small problem with that theory—small in nature but significant in terms of a debating point—is that the full rate has not been paid for about five years.

I happened to look at my own premium the other day. It is weird, because if, after we pass this bill, the premium will increase—and I am trying to be clear as possible—then if we did not do this and they were not paying the full rate, the premium should decrease. I am making a decreasing gesture so that members can understand it. If we pass the bill, members opposite say premiums will increase. The problem is, the health insurers have not been paying the amount but premiums have not decreased.

Ms Kellie Sloane: Have you heard of the cost-of-living crisis? Have you heard of health inflation under your Government?—back to economics school.

Mr RYAN PARK: Yes, 100 per cent that all applies. Therefore, if healthcare inflation is the reason premiums are up, this is not it. The bill is not the reason.

Ms Kellie Sloane: It is not adding up, Ryan.

Mr RYAN PARK: It is not adding up! Here we go. I will make it as simple as I can. Members opposite are saying that if we pass the bill, premiums will go up. The health insurers have not paid the amount for five years; premiums have not fallen. The member's response is that is due to healthcare inflation. That is fine. Assuming her argument is correct and healthcare inflation is the reason that premiums have gone up, therefore if we pass the bill, there will be no difference because it will be healthcare inflation that continues to take it up. I do not know how to describe that argument because I do not have a dictionary in front of me. I should have looked up the word "stupidity".

We on this side of the House will make sure that the local health districts of the member for Gosford and the member for Terrigal get to keep about \$30 million. I know the member for Terrigal does not need it. That is fine. I am very generous. I will do it. I will also make sure that the Sydney Local Health District will keep an extra \$12 million. I will make sure that south-west Sydney—the place that we are all fond of—keeps \$12.5 million. I will make sure that in my own backyard—I had better declare a conflict of interest; I declare a conflict of interest every 25 minutes in this place—the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District will receive about \$30 million. This change will not increase premiums unless the private health insurers do one simple thing and say, "We will have to increase premiums, but we are going to have to pay back a bit of money to members that we have not paid back in the past five years when we were not paying."

Ms Kellie Sloane: They paid back \$4.5 billion, Ryan. Study up, buddy.

Mr RYAN PARK: No, they did not pay back; they gave members benefits. We have a weird understanding. When people pay every month, they receive a certain level of benefits. That is base level. I hope every member in the Chamber understands that. Unless they are going to say to the people of New South Wales, their customers, "We got caught. In the past five years, our premiums have gone up and we have not been paying this money, therefore, we owe you money", then the theory does not work. If it is health inflation, then the bill will not make a difference. Opposition members were screaming that health inflation caused the increase in costs. But half an hour ago they were saying the bill was going to do it.

Mr Adam Crouch: It will.

Mr RYAN PARK: If it does, then they have to pay back money to members, because for the past five years premiums have been going up and they have not paid the full cost. But it is okay. We have a direct mail ready to go; it is not a problem. Do not get me wrong. What I also love is when those opposite come to this

Chamber—I checked *Hansard*; it is hilarious—and I hear them say words that sound familiar. I have an annoying habit of reading every piece of correspondence. I thought that something they said sounded very familiar, almost paragraph by paragraph. Crazy, I went back to my office, rummaged through and found it. There it was, directly from the health insurers, word for word. "You have X number of people in your electorate. This will cost X dollars. And by the way, we will write to every one"—okay, that is fine.

In addition to that, the bill will end up recouping about \$140 million a year in funds for New South Wales hospitals. That is the equivalent of just under 1,000 senior nurses. I noticed that the nurses recently visited Parliament House. We are in the middle of discussions with them about their wages. That is fine. I will be informing them that if we lose an extra \$140 million, that is \$140 million we cannot use. That money will not be theirs to use; it will be gone. I thank members who have contributed to debate on the bill. I acknowledge the member for Sydney has foreshadowed that he will move an amendment. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House. This important bill brings fairness back to the health system.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Alex Greenwich.

Consideration in Detail

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): By leave: I will propose the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:51): I move my amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-209E:

No. 1 **Reporting on levy**

Page 3, Schedule 1[4], proposed Part 8. Insert after line 33—

10 Review of levy in NSW Health Annual Report

- (1) The annual reporting information for the Ministry of Health must include the following information about the impacts of the levy—
 - (a) the change in the number of people in New South Wales with hospital cover through private health insurance,
 - (b) the change in waiting lists and waiting times for elective surgery,
 - (c) other relevant information on the impact of the levy on the health care system.
- (2) The information must also be published on the NSW Health website.
- (3) This clause does not apply until the commencement of the *Health Insurance Levies Amendment Act 2024*, Schedule 1.

As foreshadowed in the second reading debate, the amendment provides an important oversight mechanism should the Government proceed with the regulatory power to instigate the levy. As I have said, I hope that Treasury, NSW Health and the private health insurance industry are able to come to an agreement before the Government needs to put in place this levy. There are obviously good people in Treasury and NSW Health and across the private health insurance industry who are interested in the best interests of patients and of the healthcare system. I understand why the Government is proceeding to give them this regulatory power in order to ensure that there is appropriate funding for hospitals in New South Wales.

The amendment provides important oversight to ensure that there is annual reporting on any adverse impacts of the levy, should it be instigated, and that those impacts are reported regularly. I ask the Minister in reply to confirm that, should the levy be put in place and should the report indicate some unintended consequences, the Government will look to revisit the issue and address those items. The amendment seeks to highlight any change in the number of people in New South Wales with hospital cover through private health insurance, any changes in waiting lists and waiting times, and any other relevant information about the levy and its impact on the healthcare system. It is my hope that, should the Government introduce the levy, there will be no adverse impacts. But if there are, it is important they are captured and that the Government acts to address them. I commend the amendment to the House.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vacluse) (17:53): I appreciate the attempt by the member for Sydney to find some transparency in the bill. I note that independent data and analysis has not been available. The amendment, at the very least, does no harm, but I do not expect it will do much good either. This will be, in effect, a report card after the event—after a bad bill has passed and after a tax has been imposed on the people of New South Wales—and it will be too late. It also relies on the goodwill of the Government, if there are unintended consequences, to change legislation that has already been proclaimed. Never get between a Treasurer and a tax,

I say. The people of New South Wales should not expect that, despite this oversight, anything will change once this bad bill has passed. I also note that some of the information required for the report card is already publicly available. Bureau of Health Information data is released quarterly that gives waitlists and elective surgery times. The amendment will achieve nothing, but it does no harm. The Opposition will not oppose it.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (17:55): I acknowledge the amendment moved by the member for Sydney and the shadow Minister's comments. The amendment will ensure that our public hospitals continue to deliver world-class health services. The New South Wales Government's efforts to ensure that private insurers pay their fair share will mean that our public hospitals get the funding they deserve. I will make sure that is the case. Transparency is important, as outlined by the member for Sydney. We need to monitor the impacts. Like any sensible government in any country—and certainly in this country, I hope—we will monitor any impacts and make sure that, importantly, we share any impacts and act accordingly, as should every responsible government that is charged with delivering legislation for the benefit of the citizens it represents. Accordingly, the Government will support the amendment to report on this data.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:56): I thank the health Minister and the shadow health Minister for their support of the amendment. I make the point that this information is not currently available because the levy is not yet in place. The reporting will look specifically at the impact of the levy, and that is an important call to action should there be any adverse impact as a result of it. As I said, I hope there are none. I also hope that NSW Health and the private health insurance industry are able to reach an agreement before the regulatory power is required. I commend the amendment to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): The question is that amendment No. 1 of the member for Sydney on sheet c2024-209E be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): 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 RYAN PARK: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

The House divided.

Ayes50
Noes31
Majority.....19

AYES

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

Finn, J
Greenwich, A
Hagarty, N (teller)
Hannan, J
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Hoening, R
Holland, M
Kaliyanda, C
Kamper, S
Kirby, W
Leong, J
Li, J
McDermott, H
McKeown, K
Mehan, D

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

NOES

Clancy, J	Kemp, M	Sloane, K
Cooke, S	Lane, J	Speakman, M
Coure, M	Layzell, D	Taylor, M
Cross, M	Moylan, B	Thompson, T
Crouch, A (teller)	Petinos, E	Toole, P
Davies, T	Preston, R	Tuckerman, W
Di Pasqua, S	Regan, M	Ward, G
Griffin, J	Roberts, A	Williams, L
Henskens, A	Saunders, D	Williams, R
Hodges, M	Singh, G	Williamson, R (teller)
James, T		

PAIRS

Minns, C	Provest, G
Washington, K	Wilson, F
Whan, S	Ayyad, T

Motion agreed to.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 15 October 2024.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (18:05): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. The Opposition will not move any amendments to the bill in this Chamber, as many of the bill's provisions are common ground. The Opposition will address its amendments in the other place. At the same time, it is conscious that the reforms have taken a long time to come—indeed, far too long under Labor—and the bill fails to fundamentally address the biggest issue by far in the rental market in New South Wales, which is the shortage of housing supply.

Over Labor's more than a year in power, rents in Greater Sydney have increased by more than 13 per cent. The proportion of rental housing accessible to a median income earner in New South Wales has dropped from 35 per cent in 2022-23 to 28 per cent in 2023-24. In stark contrast, the Liberal-Nationals Government achieved a record high of 48 per cent in 2021. New South Wales renters have been let down by a government that has delayed delivering the bulk of its rental reform commitments until now. While the bill introduces several provisions designed to offer clarity and protection to tenants, it does nothing to address the most significant issue facing the rental market today: supply. The bill does nothing to alleviate the pressures caused by supply constraints. The one million renting households in New South Wales deserve better from the Minns Labor Government.

This Parliament has heard that there are around 30,000 no-grounds evictions each year. Overall, most evictions—about 60 per cent—are made with grounds. Property owners do not evict a tenant for no reason. Indeed, it costs them to be without a tenant, and it costs them financially to evict a tenant. In reality, only about 3 per cent of the market, per year, is affected by no-grounds evictions. Yet the bill introduces a significant shift in tenancy laws by proposing to abolish no-grounds evictions for both fixed-term and periodic leases. Under the bill, property owners would now be required to provide a prescribed reason for terminating a tenancy. The prescribed grounds include a breach of the tenancy agreement; sale of the premises; significant renovation, repairs or demolition; the tenant is no longer eligible, such as in affordable housing schemes, student accommodation or key worker accommodation; the premises will no longer be used as rented residential premises; the property owner or their family will reside at the premises; and the premises is tied to employment and the employment has been terminated.

While the changes provide tenants with greater security, they introduce new complexities for property investors who rely on flexibility to manage their assets. Limiting property owners' ability to terminate tenancies could disincentivise investment in the rental market, particularly when we desperately need more housing stock. We have seen those issues arise in other jurisdictions where similar policies have been introduced, including in other States of Australia and also across the ditch in New Zealand. Without a careful balance, we risk worsening the rental crisis rather than alleviating it.

For those reasons and more, we will move to amend the bill in the upper House to uphold what is a fixed-term tenancy to reflect certainty of contract and to recognise property rights. A fixed-term tenancy is a contract agreed between two parties entering into it eyes wide open with clarity and certainty. They have agreed on terms, including a time frame, and a legislated, prescribed reason should not be a strict legal obligation to end such a mutually binding contract. The Opposition will say more in the other place on the issue. The bill introduces limitations on rent increases, mandating that rent can only be increased once every 12 months for both fixed-term and periodic leases. While that provides predictability for tenants, it does not solve the core issue of affordability. Rent prices are rising because demand outstrips supply and, unless the Government makes a concerted effort to increase housing stock, rents will continue to climb. In that sense, the bill offers a temporary fix to a long-term problem that can only be solved by addressing supply shortages.

The bill also includes provisions on pet ownership, allowing tenants to request permission to keep pets, with property owners required to respond within 21 days. While allowing pets can no doubt improve tenants' quality of life, we must ensure that the new rules do not place an undue burden on property owners. Property maintenance and suitability for pet ownership are concerns, especially where strata by-laws or other regulations may apply. Overall though, to be fair, the feedback from stakeholders is that a reasonable balance has been found in relation to pets in rentals. I recognise that. It has to be pointed out that it has taken a long time. This issue was the subject of deep, wide and successful consultation over two years ago when we were in government. It was only because we lost government that we could not act upon the need for reform. I also recognise and thank the RSPCA for its inputs on the provisions.

Another aspect of the bill is the provision to enable a rental bond rollover scheme, which seeks to ease the financial strain on tenants moving from one property to another. While the Opposition supports the initiative in principle and indeed took it to the last election, we remain cautious about the practical implementation of such a scheme and want to carefully consider the detail of that long-promised reform. It is taking too long. The bill also introduces reforms aimed at reducing financial burdens on tenants. Those are broadly supported. It mandates that tenants must have access to at least one fee-free method of paying rent, such as through bank transfer or Centrepay, ensuring that tenants are not penalised with additional costs just for making basic rent payments. An additional reform prohibits landlords and agents from charging tenants for background checks during the application process. It eliminates unnecessary financial hurdles for prospective renters and promotes a more equitable system where tenants are not burdened with extra fees. Together, those measures offer practical solutions to ease financial pressures on tenants and improve the overall fairness of the rental market.

We have consulted widely with stakeholders across the rental and housing sectors in relation to the bill, including with the Tenants' Union and many other tenants groups, the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales, the Property Council, the Student Accommodation Council, the Property Investors Council of Australia, the Property Owners Association of NSW and the Property Investment Professionals of Australia. I have also been engaged with many more stakeholders, particularly on the tenants side of the market, through two select committees of the Legislative Assembly in the past year. I thank all stakeholders who have been engaged in the process. Some stakeholders have raised particular concerns. The Student Accommodation Council, for instance, highlighted challenges faced in fixed-term leases, especially given their alignment with academic schedules. They are seeking a carve-out that recognises the unique nature of purpose-built student accommodation. That is, in our view, a sensible proposition because purpose-built student accommodation is different in many ways. It serves a big strategic sector for Australia and is worthy of a targeted legislative approach.

As we consider the scope of the bill, I reiterate that housing supply is the key driver of the rental crisis. The Opposition remains committed to tackling the issue with a focus on supply-side reforms. We had outlined several initiatives aimed at addressing rental pressures in the lead-up to the last election, including moving to a reasonable grounds model for evictions during periodic leases, extending notice periods for the end of fixed-term leases, and introducing a new optional standard lease agreement for three- and five-year terms to promote longer term leasing and relationships—something that, importantly, should be explored and incentivised in policy terms. We also put forward a rental bond rollover scheme, as well as strengthening privacy protections around tenants' information.

Additionally, we had acted to prohibit solicited rent bidding, implemented the First Home Buyer Choice initiative and committed to further planning reforms to increase housing supply. Had those measures been fully implemented and maintained, they would have delivered real change to the housing and rental market. And, unlike those opposite, we would not have needed nearly two years to act. Our policies—particularly, for instance, the longer term lease models, which we see used well and widely in Europe—would have benefited both property owners and tenants. Yet the Minns Labor Government has missed that particular opportunity.

Lastly, it is concerning that the Minns Labor Government has failed to stand up in any way, shape or form to the Albanese Government to address immigration and associated inflationary pressures affecting New South

Wales. As the Premier himself has stated, 37 per cent of the 500,000 migrants coming into Australia settle in New South Wales—obviously over a certain time frame—adding further strain to an already struggling housing market. It is a net population growth of more than 15,000 people per month. Despite that increase in population, the number of rental properties available in New South Wales is already declining. Data from the New South Wales Rental Bond Board shows that, as at 28 February this year, there were 969,441 rental bonds held. That had decreased to 968,274 by 31 August 2024.

That highlights a worrying trend: an increasing population alongside a decreasing number of available rental properties, placing further pressure on an already tight housing market. That is why getting the balance of reforms right is so important in this delicate market. I thank the Minister and his team for their efforts in crafting the bill and engaging with me and my team. We appreciate it. I again thank all stakeholders engaged in the bill, including every one of those I mentioned earlier and have engaged with over the past 18 months or so. I also acknowledge former Minister Victor Dominello, who did much in this space, together with then Premier Dominic Perrottet, who worked hard to improve the rental market and, in many instances, laid the groundwork for the reforms before us today. I once again foreshadow that the Coalition will have more to say and do on the bill in the Legislative Council. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (18:17): I speak in debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I commend Minister Chanthivong for introducing it in its current form. It is a great piece of legislation that will have a large effect on the people of Newcastle. In my electorate, nearly four out of every 10 people rent: 39.8 per cent of my constituents are renters. Statewide the average is just below one in three at 36.2 per cent. Most days I hear concerns from constituents about the difficulties of finding a private tenancy in the Hunter. Just last week Newcastle welcomed the NSW Rental Commissioner, Trina Jones, to talk with Hunter renters and to listen to their experiences and concerns. The forum had a huge turnout, highlighting that residential tenancy issues continue to remain a large concern among my constituents.

The forum was run in conjunction with the Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, which has also been a strong advocate for the changes contained in the bill. It has provided much-needed legal advice and support to Novocastrians over the past decade, including providing free telephone advice, information, advocacy and, where appropriate, representation in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal for people renting privately through a landlord or real estate agent. The Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service has always been steadfast in challenging current tenancy legislation, including eradicating no-grounds evictions and supporting the introduction of legislation to make it easier to keep pets in rental homes and to make renting more fair, simple and affordable.

I acknowledge CEO Nicole Grgas and the great team at the Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service for the incredible work they do in the sector. Nicole is a tireless advocate who has been pushing hard for these reforms for many years. It gives me great pleasure to speak in favour of the bill on behalf of my constituents. As I have said before, just under one-third of the population of New South Wales rents. Renting is becoming more common. It is also a longer term option for the people of this State. But the rental market is the toughest that renters have seen for decades. Demand for housing has far exceeded supply. The vacancy rate across New South Wales is approximately 1.5 per cent, which is much lower than the 3 per cent vacancy rate that is considered healthy and balanced.

Renters also have to deal with some of the highest rental prices we have seen to date, amid other cost-of-living pressures. The New South Wales Government wants to make renters' lives easier by delivering a modern and balanced rental system. The bill is the next step in fulfilling the New South Wales Government's election commitment to make renting in New South Wales fairer by ending no-grounds evictions and making it easier for renters to keep pets. The bill makes many other changes, including limiting how often rent can be increased, banning renters from being asked to pay for background checks, and ensuring renters have a free and convenient way to pay their rent.

The changes in the bill were informed by the Government's 2023 "improving rental laws" consultation, which received a whopping 16,000 survey responses and 400 submissions from renters, landlords and industry bodies. Ending no-grounds evictions is the foundational reform in the bill. It lays the groundwork for a fair and balanced rental market. Currently, landlords can end a lease without reason—commonly known as a no-grounds eviction—which leaves renters facing sudden and sometimes frequent moves, and makes it difficult to forge strong links to a community. Without stability and security, it is hard for renters to make a house feel like a home. Renters may be hesitant to assert their rights or raise concerns with their landlord in fear that requesting a repair or addressing a safety issue could result in an eviction.

Overall, the current protections for renters in the Act do not operate effectively. Around 60 per cent of leases in New South Wales are fixed term, while around 40 per cent are periodic. The bill significantly improves the lives of many renters in New South Wales by ending no-grounds evictions for both fixed-term and periodic

leases. It also establishes a specific list of new grounds for ending a tenancy in addition to the current grounds, which include breach of agreement and actual sale of property. The new termination grounds are fair and reasonable. They respect a landlord's rights in relation to their property, while also acknowledging that the property is a renter's home. Some grounds have specific requirements to prevent unnecessary terminations. For example, if a landlord cites renovation or repair as a ground to terminate, that work must be scheduled to start within two months of the termination. That will help to ensure leases are not terminated for renovations that are a long way off.

Other supporting measures that guard against the misuse of those termination provisions include re-letting exclusion periods, evidence requirements, offence provisions and new notice periods. Ending no-grounds evictions and introducing supporting measures will give renters more certainty so they can raise issues without fear of eviction, while also acknowledging a landlord's need to adapt to changing personal and financial circumstances. One concern that I frequently hear from renters about no-grounds evictions relates to pets. Last week I received an email from a constituent who works in the animal rescue and shelter sector. He said that his shelter has become increasingly bombarded with pets primarily because people in Newcastle cannot find rental properties that allow pets. Allowing people to have pets in rentals will have a huge impact on many Novocastrians who are struggling to find a rental for themselves and their beloved pets.

Pets bring many benefits. They can help renters turn their rental property into a home. The Government made an election commitment to make it easier for renters to keep pets in rental homes. Currently, landlords in New South Wales can refuse permission for any pet in a rental property without reason or justification, unless the pet is an assistance animal. Under the proposed changes, renters must still seek their landlord's consent to keep a pet, but landlords can only refuse that request on specific grounds. The bill will introduce a straightforward application process for renters. A renter must seek a landlord's consent to keep a pet, and a landlord is required to respond within 21 days to either grant consent with or without conditions, or to refuse consent on one or more of the prescribed grounds for refusal.

Both the renter's request and the landlord's response must be provided through a prescribed form, which will make the process simpler for both parties and prevent unnecessary information from being shared. The bill provides a list of reasons for a landlord refusing a renter's request. The bill allows the landlord to consent to a renter keeping a pet, subject to reasonable conditions. A renter may appeal a landlord's refusal or conditions if they believe the reason is invalid or the conditions are unreasonable. The bill broadens the current protection against rent increases more than once in a 12-month period to all types of leases, including fixed-term leases of less than two years, and when there is a change in the lease type. Currently, rent increases can be made more than once in 12 months on fixed-term leases of less than two years.

The bill ensures that renters can pay their rent conveniently and without additional cost. It requires landlords to offer renters the choice of using the electronic bank transfer and Centrepay to pay their rent, and enables the payment method chosen by the renter. The penalty for breach of the requirement to offer a free payment method will be increased. The bill prohibits the charging of fees or passing on of costs incurred by the landlord or agent to the renter. Landlords are not prevented from accepting other forms of payment as long as the renter and landlord both agree for rent to be paid that way. The bill clarifies that renters cannot be asked to pay for background checks, which is a very important clarification.

The bill appoints the NSW Rental Commissioner as a permanent member of the Rental Bond Board. That appointment aligns with the commissioner's role of advising the Government on rental issues and working with both government and community to protect renters and rebalance the rental market. In conclusion, the bill delivers on the New South Wales Government's key election commitments and introduces other changes to make renting in New South Wales fairer. It puts an end to no-grounds evictions, makes it easier for renters to keep pets, and introduces measures to make renting more simple, affordable and secure. The reforms in the bill are sensible and balanced. They will improve the lives of renters across New South Wales and provide clarity and certainty for landlords as well. Overall, the reforms will enable renters to create more stable homes, which will, in turn, strengthen our wonderful communities.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua): Before I call the member for Sydney, I welcome to the Parliament Sammy Coure, son of the member for Oatley.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (18:27): I also welcome Sammy to the Parliament, which is making renting fairer for when he grows up—that's exciting! The Sydney electorate has the highest proportion of renters in this State, and my constituents strongly welcome the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. Safe, secure and affordable housing is a fundamental human right and crucial to ensuring that people can engage in education, employment, relationships and community life. With more people renting and fewer of them able to afford the asking prices in an increasingly competitive private rental market, large numbers of people across the State are ending up in housing stress, unable to afford the basics, let alone a home, and under the constant threat of

homelessness. I continue to hear from many constituents about massive rent rises that have made small, modest homes unaffordable for median-income earners.

The enormous social housing waiting list means that social housing cannot provide the safety net we need. Thousands of people are already living in unsafe conditions, whether they are couch surfing, sleeping in cars or overcrowded properties, or living on the street. Too much focus in the policy response to the housing affordability crisis has been on housing supply. Certainly, low supply contributes to rising prices, but building new homes will take time and relief is needed now. There are also many factors outside government control that make relying solely on increases in private supply risky. They include labour and product shortages, developer profits favouring land banking, the staged release of housing supply and the prioritisation of luxury developments.

What governments can do now is make renting fairer and more secure. I strongly welcome the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024, which will remove the option for no-grounds evictions and make it harder for landlords to refuse companion animals. No-grounds evictions give landlords a reliable free pass to punish tenants who pursue their rights. Landlords can impose excessive rent increases or refuse to do basic repairs and maintenance and then evict any tenant who complains, under the guise of "no reason". No-grounds evictions provide a loophole for landlords who do not want to exercise their obligations and responsibilities. There is always a reason for evicting a tenant, and the bill provides a comprehensive list of lawful reasons, including that a close family member intends to live in the property, that renovations or repairs are required, and any other reason prescribed by regulation.

Because the inner city is close to jobs, services and entertainment, my constituents pay among the highest rents in the country, many for small homes, including studio and one-bedroom apartments with no balconies, no private laundry facilities and no lift access. When they receive rent increases, in excess of \$200 per week in many cases, they are often too afraid to challenge or make a counteroffer because of fear of eviction. Many live in substandard homes because they are scared to ask for basic maintenance. I share tenants' advocates' concern that potential loopholes remain in the legislation.

For example, landlords could pretend to offer a property for sale or pretend to undertake renovations, evict tenants under those grounds, and wait out the exclusion period before re-letting a property for a higher price. We need to monitor the situation closely. I will move an amendment at a later stage to provide for data collection on all evictions and the reasons provided. I understand that The Greens will move an amendment, which I will support, to create a statutory review to assess whether, under these new provisions, landlords have only valid reasons to end residential tenancies and to have a wider look at the Act.

The bill also aims to make it easier for renters to have companion animals by prescribing the grounds for a landlord to lawfully refuse an animal. Companion animals pose no more risk to property than humans do. Damage and disturbance can happen with or without animals. It all comes down to whether a tenant is responsible. I live in a rental property. For 12 years my companion animal, Max, lived with my husband and me, until he recently passed away. I was grateful that the property owners allowed us to have Max for that entire time. He was a beautiful rescued whippet fox terrier, who will always be in our hearts.

I welcome the bill's aims and recognition of the importance of animals. However, I am not convinced that the changes are enough to ensure renters can keep companion animals. The default position is not that tenants can keep companion animals, and the onus will be on tenants to challenge landlords' refusals through the tribunal. Tenants will be waiting for hearings when they need to know whether they can move into properties. Women escaping domestic violence with companion animals will be less secure in making applications. This could force tenants to abandon beloved animals when they move into new homes. Companion animals, such as my dog, Max, provide love and companionship, especially to people who live alone, and have physical and mental health benefits that contribute to significant budget savings for the Government. Our laws should support people who want to have companion animals.

I think that the provisions around pets in rental properties will need to be reviewed by the Government down the track. I worked closely with the former Government on provisions to allow companion animals in strata buildings. It is not an easy thing to do. I acknowledge that the Government is working hard to achieve it in this bill. I am just concerned that the provisions in the bill may set up an adversarial arrangement. However, I ask that the Minister in reply commit to, when we look at the reform of the application process, looking at what avenues can be made through the application process to make sure that that is a process friendly to companion animals.

Notwithstanding that, I strongly welcome the bill and look forward to a better deal for renters. Further reform is needed to make renting fairer. Rental laws currently prohibit unreasonable rent rises, but we have seen huge rental increases that in no way could be considered reasonable become common across the State. The law needs to provide greater clarity around what can and cannot be considered reasonable. The Australian Capital Territory has linked reasonable rent increases to the consumer price index, with any increase above this requiring

the approval of its tribunal. Importantly, we need to increase the supply of affordable housing. We need to build 5,000 new social housing homes a year for the next 10 years just to house everyone on the waiting list. We need to set targets for affordable housing, with stronger targets for government redevelopment projects. We need to establish definitions for "affordable housing", including essential worker housing, and set funded pathways to build what is needed.

We need the Government to respond to the review of the Boarding Houses Act, which the former Government failed to do. That failure and the failure to provide protections for residents of boarding houses has resulted in the residents of the boarding house in Selwyn Street, Paddington being delivered with eviction notices. The men, in their sixties and seventies, have lived for decades in that boarding house and, because there are not the protections for residents of boarding houses that there are in other areas of the Residential Tenancies Act and because there are not the planning controls to protect boarding houses from redevelopment, may very well face eviction sooner rather than later. I have been working with the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, who visited the residents of the Selwyn Street boarding house last week with me, to further advocate in this regard.

It is important when we talk about rental reform and housing affordability reform that we do not forget the important role that boarding houses play in that mix and that we have protections for boarding house tenants. We need to be realistic. The rental market in New South Wales is currently a landlord's market. The bill provides us with an opportunity to help restore balance and fairness. I thank the Minister, his staff and the crossbench for their constructive work on the reforms. I acknowledge the work of the Minister and the long-term advocacy of the member for Newtown and my crossbench colleagues in this regard. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:37): I speak in support of this pivotal piece of legislation that addresses the pressing need of renters across our State, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. The bill marks a significant step forward in reforming our rental market and balancing the rights and responsibilities of renters and landlords, while fostering a fair and equitable housing environment for all. I want to respond to the member for Willoughby's comments regarding the time taken to get here and why this bill does not address supply issues. The Minister for Housing, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading have been working and leading a lot of work on supply issues. The former Government over 12 years flogged off so much Crown land and so many public assets that could have been used for housing, and failed to use it for housing.

Even in my electorate, we had a real drama because we had social housing properties going into such disrepair that they had to be condemned. I remember getting a call at seven o'clock on a Saturday night from someone in a government-owned house whose roof was collapsing because they had had termites. When I went to see them, they could not get through to any providers to help them to get emergency accommodation. This 60-year-old woman and her mother, in her eighties, were told that they may have to wait three weeks, as the black storm clouds over their house started to descend and the roof was collapsing because of the termite damage that had been there for some time.

Of course I did not care it was Saturday night at seven o'clock. I went out there. We got onto the office of the former Minister, Pru Goward, who had put renters out to community housing so the Government did not have to deal directly with these problems and could put everything at arm's length. We had those people in a hotel that night and we had the SES tarping the roof. But the story does not end there. Did the former Government come in with funds to get the house fixed? No. It left the house in disrepair. When the Government finally let the tenants in to get their goods and belongings, the house had been damaged by vandals because it had been unliveable for some time and the former Government did not do the work to fix it. For anyone on the Opposition side of the House, excluding the member for Newtown, to dare lecture this Government on housing supply, they would have to have so much front, it is disgusting.

Mr Tim James: Look at the numbers. Look at the data.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I am looking at the lived experience in my community. I gave the member for Willoughby the opportunity to speak without interruption, so he should hush for a little while. The house of another woman in my electorate was also being eaten by termites. The former Government, as her landlord, told her it was her problem, which it clearly is not. It is disgusting. With her three daughters in a three-bedroom house she was faced with the possibility of not having anywhere to live. When we finally got Housing NSW to inspect the house, the floor was about to collapse under the bathroom.

They had already seen the termite evidence in the kitchen. The woman could not use her stove. She had metres of electrical cords so she could plug into a power point in order to cook food for the children. It was disgraceful. Eventually I got the predecessors of Homes NSW to visit and I received a very good lecture that I have taken very much to heart. The sentiment of the lecture was that—under the former Government—people

who live in public housing should not expect to have a palace and should be grateful for whatever the then Government might deign to let them live in, whatever hovel or slum, in whatever state of disrepair. It showed an absolutely disgraceful lack of disrespect.

We took Housing NSW to look at one of the homes that was "eminently suitable", according to Housing NSW. I needed a bucket to pick up their jaw as it dropped as they went into the house of a woman who told us about her experience with domestic violence and how a mark on a wall was where she had been bashed. She was too scared to tell Housing NSW, because she would have been evicted. The domestic violence went on and on in the house over 20 years. They then said to her, "What do you do?" I could see in their face that their expectation was that she would say, "I don't have a job. I've got no income." She proudly told them that she was the assistant manager of a local fast food franchise—one of the working poor who, under the former Government, did not get a fair go. The attitude of the former Government was disgusting and totally out of touch with the lived experience of people in this State, particularly in regional areas like my electorate where it failed to invest in public housing.

I note that, after a lot of advocacy, some investments were made, but it should not be necessary to go to a local member to get basic human rights to live in a house that is not falling down. It was absolutely disgraceful. This bill does not seek to look after infrastructure or supply of housing, as the member for Willoughby said, but will implement vital reforms to enhance protections for renters, such as termination of no-grounds evictions, making it easier for renters to keep pets, limiting the frequency of rent increases, banning the practice of charging tenants for background checks, and ensuring that methods of paying rent are accessible and cost-free, among other reforms. These changes represent a commitment to the values of fairness, security, and dignity for all members of our community, specifically for those who rent. The Government knows that some people will say the bill does not go far enough, and I understand that. But we are in a housing crisis and we must ensure mechanisms are in place so we do not lose landlords out of the market.

We have reached an important point where we are doing better to support renters. This bill goes a long way toward that. One of the most significant reforms is the elimination of no-grounds eviction for both fixed and periodic leases. Under the new legislation, landlords must provide a valid reason for terminating a tenancy, and so they should. It cannot be that tenants are evicted after years of renting. Again I speak to situations in my electorate. One day I phoned the local real estate agent because someone came to my electorate office and said, "Jenny, I have tried 120 properties to get somewhere to rent and I can't do it." I spoke to a wonderful real estate agent, Alexandra Haggarty, who does a lot of work in this space. I asked, "Is this real? Is there a black mark against this person's name that they have gone to 120 properties to get a house, and they can't get it?" She said, "No, that's true, Jenny. That is where our market is." That is because we did not have any investment by members opposite in public housing and we do not have enough other stock.

What has happened to these people is they may have been living in a house for five or 10 years and they have been great tenants, and they get evicted because their landlord can see that they can put the price up, or a property agent tells the landlord they should do that. Then they say, "If they won't pay it, go and get someone else who will." There are people in my community who are paying so much money in rent, and they cannot afford it. That leads to horrific circumstances such as people living in caravans outside their children's houses because they cannot find somewhere affordable to live, and being always at risk.

We know that there are people in our communities who are only one bad circumstance away from losing their housing. In the current rental market, if someone in the family has a very serious illness, even a terminal illness, the rest of the family is potentially left homeless because they have had to leave work and have lost their income. That is not a good place to be. Across society, all of us are at risk of that in the current housing environment, with tenants at the whim of landlords who are not doing the right thing. I do not want to say any more about the bill. I know there are many members who want to join in the debate, and I do not want to ask for an extension of time. I just want to say thank you to the Minister and to the Minns Labor Government for introducing the bill. I also thank all those who support it. Let us not have any more rubbish about things that did not happen for the last 12 years and people talking about timing.

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (18:47): I am proud to support the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. This is a really good day for renters around New South Wales, in particular for the 6,032 renters who call the Davidson electorate home. They make up 19.7 per cent of local residents. Although the percentage of renters in the Davidson electorate is not one of the highest in New South Wales, that is a substantial number of people. I know someone who is watching Parliament right now is my wife, Gess. It is great to have an audience. Hi, Gess.

Ms Jenny Leong: I will say hello to Leo from the Tenants' Union, too.

Mr MATT CROSS: Yes, and hello to Leo, too. We are two of the people who are renters in the Davidson electorate. My wife and I are renters in Lindfield. This bill means quite a lot to the people in the Davidson electorate, including Gess and me. Leadership is about solving problems. I believe this bill is doing exactly that. For anyone who is familiar with the work of adaptive leadership led by Professor Ron Heifetz at the Kennedy school, he talks about adaptive leadership and technical leadership. I will speak first about what this bill means in relation to adaptive leadership. The bill brings into focus the importance of respect. People who rent should be respected. There have been times—including those in the stories of members who preceded me in the debate—when there has been a complete lack of respect. My liberalism is very much that I believe in the freedom of the individual and I believe in the best in people. I believe that people are well intentioned. Sadly, renters who are extremely well intentioned now get, and have in the past received, some very negative experiences, which is a shame.

Speaking of my liberalism, when I was elected to this place I spoke about Sir Robert Gordon Menzies' "forgotten people". The forgotten people were people, like my family, who were not wealthy but not poor. They were middle class, the silent Australians. In thinking about the world we live in, I remarked that I believed renters were the new forgotten people. Menzies clearly spoke about the importance of the forgotten people but also the importance of the home and home ownership, particularly "homes material, homes human, and homes spiritual". It is very much part of the Liberal Party's values and DNA to support both home ownership and people who are renters. Certainly my vision, as a member of Parliament, is to make sure that we increase home ownership because it is so important to the fabric of today's society.

However, many people are renters either by choice or because of challenges. My wife and I are renters by choice but for many people who rent it is a challenge. We need to help them to have a strong foundation in the home to bring out the best in them. The great thing about the bill is that it accepts the role of technology in 2024, which I think is something we all endorse. Speaking further about the importance of the home, I will talk about the importance of the family. People think families are made up of humans only but they are also made up of pets. The member for Sydney previously mentioned the importance of pets and how they are a part of his family. Pets are such an important part of the fabric of the home, and I am glad the bill accepts that and brings us into 2024.

Turning to the technical aspects of the bill, the main reform that will certainly be welcomed by renters is the eviction provisions. A landlord can only evict a renter for a valid reason. Sadly, in the past people were not given good or valid reasons, so this is a very welcome part of the bill. Secondly, penalties will apply to landlords or their agents who serve unfair or incorrect termination notices. I am all for making sure that people are held accountable. In fact, it was a Liberal government under Sir Robert Askin in the 1960s and 1970s that brought in consumer protections for the first time in New South Wales. So, again, liberal values protect people. Thirdly, renters can move out early after receiving a termination notice under certain conditions, including commonsense things such as renovations and property sales. But it is important there is a valid reason and this bill makes that clear.

The fourth reform is pet-friendly rental laws so that renters can seek permission to keep a pet and, if a landlord refuses, it must be for a valid reason. I think that is something we all welcome. The fifth reform is in relation to rental payments. Every two weeks I have to pay my rent—Gessika certainly reminds me to make sure I do so. It is a welcome reform that rents can be increased only once every 12 months because renters need certainty, and the bill offers that. The worst-case scenario is continued interest rate rises but they should not be passed on to the renter every time; rents should be fixed, so having just one increase in a 12-month period is welcome. The next reform is that renters will have a free and easy way to pay rent. Again, that is common sense. The final important reform is that renters cannot be charged for background checks when applying for a rental property, which is certainly welcome. The other important technology reform is rental bond rollovers. It is amazing that it has taken so long for us to get to this point, but the change is certainly welcome.

I thank a few people because in politics I do not think we thank people enough. Sometimes we concentrate too much on the negative and not enough on the positive. I mentioned previously my disappointment about how long the bill has taken to arrive—18 months—but it is finally here and I thank the Government for bringing it to the House, particularly the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. I thank the shadow Minister, the member for Willoughby. I hear he spent much time working through the bill with stakeholders. As previously mentioned, I thank Leo Patterson Ross for his work on the bill. I have met with Leo and I will continue to talk to him about these important issues. It is great that we are coming together as a Parliament to solve these issues. Leadership is about solving problems, and today is a day that the Parliament can be proud of.

Finally, I often speak to student groups, as many members do. Students of all ages ask about the work we do and some students question whether you can have an impact by becoming a politician or working in the public service. In the first speech I gave to this House I spoke about renters. I hoped that my speech would start a conversation. Many members in this place, including the member for Newtown, have been talking about this issue

for a long time. It is all about starting a conversation. In my speech I quoted the iconic Darryl Kerrigan, who said, "It's not a house; it's a home." I also spoke about Menzies' forgotten people address in which he talked about "homes material, homes human, and homes spiritual", and I end this speech with another quote from Sir Robert Gordon Menzies. He said:

The home is the foundation of sanity and sobriety ... its health determines the health of society as a whole.

I believe this bill will strengthen society and strengthen individuals. The most important thing about this bill is it ensures that individuals can reach their full potential. I am very proud to support the bill.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:56): I am pleased to contribute to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I thank the member for Davidson for making some important and sensible comments and not bringing political views into the debate. I thank him for simply acknowledging those who have contributed to the bill and those who will benefit from it. The bill will introduce the most significant changes to rental laws in over a decade. It demonstrates the Minns Labor Government's commitment to making 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 that renters have a free and convenient way to pay their rent. As we all know, around one-third of the New South Wales population are renters and renting is becoming a longer term option, or a necessity, for more people of all ages and in all life circumstances.

For many years renters have lacked the stability and the security they have craved to enable them to make a rental property a home. For many years I was a renter and endured considerable difficulties as a sole parent with two small children on a casual teacher's wage. I was often treated unfairly; in fact, I felt that I was often treated as a second-class citizen. I have a number of horror stories but I will not share them today. I acknowledge the member for Maitland, who outlined some of the homes she has seen and some of the terror and distress that renters often experience when their rental properties cannot be a home. I have lived experience of being a housing commission tenant. I was born into it and lived there as a child and later as an adult when my life was turned upside down. Those experiences have driven my work and my advocacy in this place. Today is an important day for us all to speak to our convictions and to our compassion, and to acknowledge the fairer and safer lives that we want tenants to have.

Stable and affordable housing is an absolute necessity. People cannot lead happy and fulfilling lives if they do not know where they are going to be living from one day to the next. That certainly echoes many of the stories that constituents of mine have told me. I am sure that is the case for many members of this place. In New South Wales more people are renting than ever before, as has been mentioned many times. Around one-third of the population lives in rentals. The current rental market in New South Wales is the toughest that renters have seen for decades, with historically low vacancy rates and median rent prices for houses increasing by nearly 10 per cent over the past 12 months. Many people, especially young people, are unable to get their foot on the housing ladder and believe that they never will. If they do not have the option to own their own home, they ought to have access to stable rental accommodation, which the bill tries to address.

The existing power imbalance between renters and landlords leaves many tenants feeling powerless and vulnerable. As I have said, I have lived experience of that, challenging real estate agents who are judgemental and challenging landowners who believe in different classes of citizens. Tenants are often forced to accept unreasonable terms because they lack housing options. If a renter has directly experienced no-grounds evictions or if they live under the constant threat of sudden and unexpected eviction, that has a profound impact on their mental health. That absolutely forms many of the stories that my constituents have come to me with. It is not just about having a roof over your head; there are often multiple and complex layers of other issues that come with the lack of secure housing.

At present, many renters are afraid to raise issues with their landlords out of fear that they will be evicted. Consequently, rental properties are allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, as many members have spoken about, and the tenant is forced to live in squalid conditions. There are too many of those people, but I acknowledge that. The bill takes a step towards addressing those issues. In the current housing crisis, a sudden and unexpected eviction leaves many people, including families and young children, homeless or at risk of homelessness. The housing and homelessness services in my electorate tell me that they are struggling to keep pace with demand and are distressed by it.

Renters who are forced to move regularly cannot forge strong links to their community and often need to move away from schools, family and friends. I recall being told about an abandoned car in a car park near a railway station in the Blue Mountains. I left a note on the windscreen offering to help whoever owned the car because apparently someone was coming back each week. They had run out of money for registration and could not keep up their rental payments. One of the parents was sick, so they had taken the whole family "on a holiday"

into the national park and were living under the shelter near a cave. They thought that their life had fallen apart. I hate to think what their next thoughts were, but they believed that they would be moved away from the community that they loved and the area that offered them security, care, friends and their school.

It is fantastic that the bill appoints the Rental Commissioner as a permanent member of the Rental Bond Board. That aligns with the commissioner's role in advising government on rental issues and working to protect renters and rebalance the rental market. The bill creates a modern, fairer, safer 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. It appointed the State's first Rental Commissioner, Ms Trina Jones, who is a tireless advocate for renters. The Government has passed all sorts of legislation around rent bidding and the Portable Rental Bonds Scheme. That has been a game changer for renters, who will be able to save thousands of dollars. The Government has invested \$8.4 million in a 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.

The Government has also launched the new, free Rent Check website to make it easier for renters to check whether the rent they are being asked to pay is fair. The reforms in the bill are critical to begin improving the lives of the more than two million people across the State who rent. They provide clarity and certainty for everyone, particularly renters who want to create stable homes. I look forward to seeing further Government bills introduced to the Parliament to implement the remainder of its commitments and continue the important work on the rental market.

I acknowledge the work of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services, its staff and all of the members, that undertook important work in the inquiry into no-grounds evictions. I recognise and thank Leo Patterson Ross, the Tenants' Union of NSW and the Blue Mountains Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, particularly Ben Connor and the team, for their extraordinary work. I thank the many tenants who have shared their stories with me. They have played a helpful and significant part in delivering the reform package in the bill. I express gratitude for the important work undertaken by many in this place and beyond, including the Minister for Housing, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Minister for Building and their teams. I thank the member for Newtown for her tireless advocacy on the issue. I am proud to be in the Chamber with her tonight. The Government is modernising the rental system for the people of New South Wales. I am proud to be a member of this Government. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (19:06): It is my absolute pleasure to speak on behalf of The Greens in debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I say at the outset that The Greens enthusiastically support the comprehensive end to no-grounds evictions in New South Wales contained in the bill. The bill seeks to outlaw unfair no-grounds evictions in New South Wales and require all residential landlords to provide a reason, supported with evidence, when evicting someone. The pathway to delivering on the reform started over a decade ago and was built by tenants' advocates, housing experts, grassroots groups, activists, legal centres, unions, renters and, indeed, The Greens. More than 28,000 renters in New South Wales are booted from their homes each year without a reason. For many renters, fear of a no-grounds eviction is enough to prevent them from requesting basic maintenance or repairs, forcing them to live in mould-ridden homes or in properties that fail to meet their accessibility requirements.

The bill is a chance to take a massive step toward ensuring that renters in New South Wales have not only the security and stability but also the dignity and safety that they deserve. In addition to ending no-grounds evictions, the bill requires landlords to offer tenants a free and convenient way to pay rent; limits the frequency of rent increases for all lease types to no more than one every 12 months; appoints the NSW Rental Commissioner to the Rental Bond Board; and clarifies that limits apply to the amounts a prospective tenant can be required to pay before a residential tenancy agreement begins. The Greens wholly support those changes. The bill also establishes an application process for renters who wish to keep a pet, which I will address in greater detail shortly.

Before I turn to the detail of the bill, I foreshadow that The Greens will move a number of amendments to close potential loopholes pertaining to specific grounds for eviction; mitigate against the loss of rental homes to the short-term rental market; strengthen provisions around pets to ensure that tenants do not bear the administrative burden; and require data collection and a statutory review of the Act in five years. I will speak to the amendments during the consideration in detail stage.

The most significant reform in the bill is the removal of unfair no-grounds eviction provisions and their replacement with specific grounds on which a termination can be issued. The bill removes sections 84 and 85 of the Residential Tenancies Act, which prevent renters in New South Wales from exercising their rights under the Act. Those provisions stop renters from fighting rent increases, compel them to pay for maintenance when it should be the landlords who cough up and prevent them from requesting critical repairs, all out of fear that they will be kicked out. As Dr Chris Martin from the City Futures Research Centre told the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2024:

No-grounds reform is the single most important tenancy law reform that the NSW Parliament could make today. It goes to the single most unsatisfactory aspect of the current experience of renting: its insecurity. It is also the reform on which other improvements in the renting experience depend.

New subdivision 1 of the bill sets out an exhaustive list of reasons—in addition to non-payment of rent, serious damage by the tenant or other occupant, or use of the rental premises for illegal purposes, which are already in the Act—that a landlord may evict a tenant. They are a breach of a tenancy agreement; the actual or proposed sale of the premises; the demolition of or significant renovations or repairs to the premises; a tenant no longer being eligible for a specific housing scheme, such as affordable housing; and the landlord or their family residing in the premises. We are particularly pleased that new section 84 makes it clear that specific grounds are needed to terminate both fixed-term and periodic tenancies.

Following the review of the Act and legislative changes in 2017, both the Liberals under Victor Dominello and Matt Kean and Labor under Luke Foley—if members remember him—signalled that they were considering ending no-grounds evictions. Since then, there has been much back and forth about the necessary extent of this reform. The Greens and, to its credit, Labor—in a private member's bill introduced by the then shadow Minister, the member for Granville, and an announcement made in the lead-up to the March 2023 election—have always maintained that the practice must be banned for both fixed-term and periodic tenancies. Meanwhile, the Coalition has argued that landlords should be able to evict people without a reason at the end of a fixed-term agreement. In Victoria, reforms allowing no-grounds evictions at the end of the first fixed-term agreement have only incentivised increased rental churn, with landlords moving tenants onto shorter fixed-term agreements to preserve their right to arbitrary evictions.

The inquiry into the private member's bill to comprehensively end no-grounds evictions that I had the privilege of chairing earlier this year heard overwhelming evidence that reforms must apply to both fixed and periodic tenancies. Shelter NSW highlighted that more than 70 per cent of no-grounds evictions in New South Wales are issued at the end of a fixed-term lease and warned that both the Queensland and Victorian models "leave renters open to bad-faith evictions". It is wonderful that a comprehensive ban is reflected in this bill. I acknowledge both Minister Chanthivong and his team and the Premier and his team for their willingness to listen to the experts, advocates and millions of renters in this State about the need for this comprehensive reform.

The Greens are concerned with two specific grounds on which termination notices can be issued in subdivision 1 of the bill. As foreshadowed, The Greens will move amendments to address those concerns. First, we do not believe the proposed sale of a premise should be included in the list of specific grounds. I will speak in more detail during the consideration in detail stage about the concerns housing experts and advocates have raised with that provision. We are also concerned that new section 87F, which relates to renovations or repairs, leaves the door open for discretion in determining what repairs are considered significant enough for a landlord to use this ground for eviction. We understand that this detail will be provided in the regulations, but we are seeking clarity from the Minister about the kinds of parameters that may be used to determine whether something is "significant". We have reservations about passing this legislation without knowing the details.

Similarly, The Greens seek an assurance from the Minister in his speech in reply that new section 87F will provide that tenants who have requested significant repairs, for example for the replacement of a mouldy roof, cannot be evicted on this ground if a rectification order is not already in effect. It is essential also that the New South Wales Labor Government provides an assurance that any tenant who would be evicted under the proposed new sections pertaining to eligibility for transitional housing, affordable housing or student housing cannot be evicted into homelessness. Clause 9 of the bill pertains to pets. The Greens believe when it comes to pets, renters should have the same rights as their landlords—if a landlord who moves into their investment property is able to have a pet, a renter in the same property should also be able to.

Our rental system should be animal inclusive by default, not least because we know this is an area of policy that significantly overlaps with efforts to eliminate domestic and family violence risks. As the Minister said in his second reading speech, "pets form part of the modern family". According to Domestic Violence NSW, 93 per cent of domestic and family violence workers said that the lack of animal-inclusive rental housing is a barrier to support for people with animals who are experiencing violence. While proposed division 8 creates a process for people who are already in a rental property to request landlord permission to keep a pet, it does nothing for people who already have a pet who are seeking to move into a new rental property. New sections 73D, 73E and 73F require a landlord to provide a written response to an application by a tenant to have a pet within 21 days of receipt, prescribe the only grounds on which a landlord can refuse to give consent, and outline conditions that a landlord may be able to impose on consent for a tenant to keep a pet.

Let me be clear: Unlike the no-grounds evictions reforms in this bill, the pet provision is far from the game changer required for lives to be saved and pets to be included as part of renters' families. New section 41 closes a loophole that allows rent to be increased more than once in a 12-month period for fixed-term leases that are shorter

than two years. The Greens welcome this light form of rent control and encourage Labor to keep heading in that direction. We recognise that unlimited rent increases are a sad and unjust reality. The reform does not go far enough. This provision protects tenants who are already in a property from unlimited rent increases, but it does not prevent rents for a single property going up multiple times in a 12-month period if, for example, multiple tenants occupy the same property in successive three or six-month leases. [*Extension of time*]

While The Greens do not intend to move amendments to the bill regarding rent freezes and rent caps, I put on the record that the only thing stopping unlimited rent increases being imposed on the two million renters in New South Wales is the Labor Government. I give my commitment that once these reforms are passed, The Greens will look at ways to ensure that no-one is forced to live in housing stress by paying more than 30 per cent of their income on rent, and that no-one is evicted into homelessness. Ending no-grounds evictions took us a decade, but maybe we can get rent controls in place in half that time. I acknowledge the tireless efforts and truly visionary policy work of the many people who have been part of delivering this reform. I remember sitting in a Newtown campaign meeting in 2014 as the newly preselected candidate for Newtown discussing the possibility of taking up the fight for renters' rights directly to the greedy real estate agents, dodgy landlords and big property investors.

Around that table a decade ago, shaping the initiative that would be a priority for me and the Newtown electorate office for an entire decade, sat some very wise heads, friends and political allies, including then Marrickville councillor and now City of Sydney Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore, Emma Bacon, Maïy Azize, Ben Spies-Butcher, Mark Riboldi, Rafi Alam, Rob Shield and newly elected Newcastle Councillor Joel Pringle. There were hundreds of other key people involved in that first Newtown Greens campaign and I express gratitude to them all. I thank also the many past and present renters who have been a part of the decade-long campaign in the Newtown electorate office. I thank Dan, Cathy, Lydia, Mithra, Kaitlyn, Asha, Chandi and Anna and our current team of Luc, Dani, Donny, Eleanor and Patricia, who I believe is still ticking over amendments in her head as she sits at the back of the Chamber.

This policy priority did not emerge in a vacuum or as a result of what happened in Newtown and to The Greens; it is connected to the very real struggles faced by communities grappling with the sell-off of public housing, the insecurity of the private rental market and the failure of successive governments to address the housing crisis. Those issues added to the growing movement for change and brought together communities, organisations and activist circles we were all part of under the collective Make Renting Fair campaign. I make special mention of those at the Tenants' Union of NSW with whom we have worked over the years: former Tenants' Union policy adviser Ned, who is now a valued part of the Balmain Greens team, and the current team of Leo, Jemima and Zuzia. I give a special shout-out and thanks to the teams at the NSW Council of Social Service, Everybody's Home and the community legal centres across the State, particularly the tenants advice and advocacy officers on the front line of supporting our community members when they face the reality of the eviction crisis.

If we succeed in ending unfair no-grounds evictions with the passage of this bill, it will be a testament to the power of effective, collective community campaigning as well as the willingness of some tenacious members of The Greens to not stop talking about no-grounds evictions. "One foot in Parliament and 1,000 feet on the streets" is how we have seen this change delivered. We must acknowledge that it is a New South Wales Labor government that has committed to working with this Parliament to bring about this reform. I am sorry to say that we could have got it done all those years ago if members of the Liberal Party, in their discussions, had listened to the Ministers who were responsible at that time.

So often it is said that The Greens push too hard and expect too much, and that we are a protest party—as if that were an insult. The Greens are a party that puts things on the agenda before they are acceptable or popular, before they are safe to support and the majority is on board. That is our role in progressive social change, a role I am honoured to continue to play both in this place and outside it. The no-grounds evictions ban in this bill will make a massive material difference to the lives of over two million renters in New South Wales and the many, many millions of renters to come. The Greens are so pleased that we are finally debating this critical reform in this Chamber. I absolutely commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:21): I am pleased to make a short contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Newtown to the debate. How ecstatic she must be to finally see a Labor government supporting The Greens in getting this reform through Parliament! All members know that rental reform is an important issue that affects over two million people in New South Wales. More people than ever before are renting in our State. In fact, one-third of our population relies on a rental property to call home, and renting is becoming a more common and longer term option for the people of New South Wales. It was heartening to hear the member for Davidson's contribution to this debate about the importance of these reforms to renters such as him and his wife.

The New South Wales rental market, which consists of over one million properties, is the largest in Australia. With such a vast rental market, it is essential that we strike a fair balance between the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords. Sadly, that balance has been missing, and renters in New South Wales now face challenges like never before. Vacancy rates across New South Wales are approximately 1½ per cent, which is much lower than the 3 per cent vacancy rate that is considered to provide a healthy and balanced rental market. Renters are also having to deal with some of the highest rental prices we have seen to date, amidst other cost-of-living pressures.

The New South Wales Government wants to make renters' lives easier by delivering a modern and balanced rental system. This bill is the next step in fulfilling the New South Wales Government's election commitment to make renting in New South Wales fairer, by ending no-grounds evictions, and make it easier for renters to keep pets. The bill also makes other changes, such as limiting how often rent can be increased, banning renters from being asked to pay for background checks and ensuring renters have a free and convenient way to pay their rent. The bill also broadens the current protection against rent increases more than once in a 12-month period to all types of leases, including fixed-term leases of less than two years and subsequent leases of a different type. Currently, leases of less than two years duration can have their rent increased more than once in 12 months.

The bill also ensures renters can pay their rent conveniently and without additional cost. It requires landlords to offer renters the choice of using electronic bank transfer and Centrepay to pay their rent, and to enable payment by the method chosen by the renter. The bill will also increase the penalty for a breach of the requirement to offer a fee-free payment method. The bill prohibits a landlord or agent charging fees or passing on to the renter costs incurred. Landlords are not prevented from accepting other forms of payment so long as the renter and landlord both agree for rent to be paid that way. The bill appoints the NSW Rental Commissioner as a permanent member of the Rental Bond Board. That aligns with the commissioner's role of advising the Government on rental issues and working with both the Government and community to protect renters and rebalance the rental market.

In conclusion, the bill delivers the New South Wales Government's key election commitments and makes other changes to make renting in New South Wales fairer. The bill puts an end to no-grounds evictions, makes it easier for renters to keep pets and introduces measures to make renting more simple, affordable and secure. The reforms in the bill are sensible and balanced. They will improve the lives of renters across New South Wales and provide clarity and certainty for landlords too. The bill is a clear demonstration of the Minns Government's commitment to supporting the people of New South Wales. Overall, the reforms will enable renters to create stable homes and, in turn, strengthen our communities. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:25): The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 has been a long time coming, and I am glad that today members finally debate reforms that will help renters across New South Wales. The reality of renting in New South Wales is challenging. In this State, and across Australia, we are facing a rental crisis. Many individuals and families find themselves in precarious living situations, facing constant worry about rent increases, evictions and substandard housing conditions. The ongoing pressures of the housing market have left many tenants feeling vulnerable and powerless.

In recent years we have seen alarming trends. Rising rents have outpaced wages. The number of households experiencing housing stress has increased, and a growing number of renters feel they have no choice but to accept unfavourable terms. We have a housing crisis in New South Wales. In fact, housing is the single largest cost-of-living issue facing the people of our State. More people are renting than ever before, around 33 per cent of the State's population, which is an increase of 17.6 per cent since 2016. In my North Shore electorate more than 46 per cent of voters are renters. I am a renter myself and know firsthand the challenges that many face. The issue is regularly raised with me by members of my community, so I have sought to ensure that in this place I speak on their behalf.

The bill will introduce reforms that will end no-grounds evictions to give renters and owners more clarity by introducing reasonable, sensible reasons to end a fixed-term or periodic lease. It will make it easier to keep pets in rental properties, ensure that renters have a free way to pay their rent and protect renters from having to pay for background checks when they apply for a property. Many of those are commonsense reforms that will ease the burden on renters and ensure a fairer and simpler rental system in New South Wales, bringing us into line with other States and jurisdictions across Australia. Members of this House know that no-grounds evictions disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, such as low-income renters, seniors and people with disabilities, who may already be facing barriers to accessing affordable housing. The reforms in the bill will provide renters with stability while ensuring that landlords who need to regain possession of their property are able to do so.

The bill aims to ensure that landlords may only evict tenants on the following specified grounds: a breach of a tenancy agreement; actual or proposed sale of the premises; significant renovation or repairs; demolition of the premises; the premises are part of an affordable housing scheme, transitional housing program or a scheme for students and the tenant is no longer eligible; the premises are required for key worker accommodation; the

premises will no longer be used as a rented residential premises; the landlord or landlord's family is moving in to reside at the premises; or the premises are related to employment and the employment is terminated. The bill also sets out the notice to be provided for each ground.

For most new grounds, the following notice periods are provided. For those on fixed-term agreements of six months or less, the termination notice period to tenants will be increased from 30 days to 60 days. For fixed-term agreements of more than six months, the termination period will increase from 60 days to 90 days. For renters with periodic notice agreements, the notice period will be 90 days. The issue of no-grounds evictions has been significant in my community and is raised with my office regularly. Both major parties took the issue to the last election. I recognise that the Liberal team supports the legislation, I recognise the Labor Party in putting up the bill and I recognise The Greens who have been championing and putting forward their own legislation over a number of years to see this outcome. It is good that we finally have a united House to introduce reasonable grounds for evictions in New South Wales.

I turn now to pets in rentals. We know that at the moment many renters find it difficult to find properties in which they are allowed to bring their pets along. Organisations such as Animal Welfare League NSW outline that pet ownership improves emotional wellbeing, with the bond between owners and their pets being powerful. The correlation between pets and mental health is undeniable. According to the RSPCA, almost one in five animals that are surrendered in New South Wales have been surrendered due to concerns about rental applications, which is devastating. Domestic violence organisations have reported that a major barrier for victim-survivors getting out of dangerous homes is their concern about securing housing for them and their pet.

In my community in the Mosman local government area, which is one of the smaller local government areas but a very large suburb, there were 11,120 microchipped companion animals registered in 2023, which was a 23 per cent increase since 2019. In North Sydney, there were 17,026 microchipped animals registered in 2023, which was an increase of 11 per cent since 2019. It is safe to say from the data from the Office of Local Government that families in my community love their pets. That is a significant number of households with pets. The challenges people experience when trying to relocate, especially in a community like mine where half the electorate turns over in population every five years and is quite a transient community of people, mean we need to ensure there are homes for people and their loved family pets.

Currently, renters can only keep a pet if the landlord agrees, and landlords can refuse a renter's requests to get a pet during a tenancy without providing a reason. We can read into what happened during COVID, when it became incredibly important for people to have connection and companionship. If that cannot be done in the home that a person lives in, are they going to move out and find somewhere new or risk the home they live in by breaching their tenancy agreement and getting a pet? The proposed reforms will still require a renter to apply to have a pet in their home, but the changes will aim to make it easier and bring New South Wales into line with most other States where similar reforms have been undertaken.

While owners will no longer be able to refuse pets without any reason, they will be able to decline in certain specific situations. Those reasons are that 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 may 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.

Tenants will be able to make an application to apply to keep a pet on the premises and landlords will be obliged to respond to an application within 21 days. 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 in order to prevent renters from waiting unnecessarily for a response. The changes will ensure that renters and families will be able to keep their furry friends as part of their families.

The bill also introduces a cap on rent increases. Current protections against multiple rent hikes do not apply to fixed-term leases of less than two years or when there is a change in the type of lease, such as from periodic to fixed term. 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. Reforms in the bill will also ensure that tenants can no longer be asked to pay for background checks. Renting and moving are already a significant financial burden, and background checks put additional costs on renters without adding an additional benefit to them. The bill clarifies 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.

The changes put forward by the Government have taken a long time to get to. We have spoken a lot about the time it has taken the Government to introduce them. I recognise a balance has to be made between the demands of renters and landlords and the challenges of the housing market across the State. While I believe we should have reached this point sooner, I welcome the legislation before the House today. It is disappointing that in the period since the election, rents have increased by 11 per cent across the State. The bill introduces reforms on issues faced by renters across our communities. Vacancy rates across the State are incredibly low; in my community it is about 1 per cent.

There is also more to do. We need to look at longer-term leases. A person has to have long-term security and stability in their home. We need to look at the way in which people can maybe make reasonable, renter-friendly modifications to their home to ensure that it can be a long-term home for them, their families, their friends or the people they call that place home with. I do not want this to be the end of the reforms for renters. I want renters to now know that they have a voice, have support across the Parliament and can come to us with the issues that they want addressed. I welcome the Government's legislation today. I welcome them looking to do more. The reforms will make it fairer and easier for renters in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:35): I contribute to the debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024, and I enthusiastically support the amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act in the bill. The amendments will end no-grounds terminations for fixed and periodic leases, make it easier for renters to keep pets and limit the frequency of rent increases to once in a 12-month period. They will ban tenants from being asked to pay for background checks and ensure free and accessible ways to pay rent. The bill has been a long time coming, and I commend Minister Chanthivong for bringing it forward. Last year, stakeholder consultation led by his department received over 16,000 survey responses and over 400 written submissions from a whole range of stakeholders, including renters, landlords, real estate agents and all sorts of people, such as the animal welfare sector, about the reforms that are needed to the Residential Tenancies Act.

In banning no-grounds evictions, the bill sets a really important and balanced approach that requires a landlord to give a reason when evicting a tenant. We need to have that balanced approach because in New South Wales three-quarters of landlords own only one property. We are not often talking about large institutional investors. We are talking about people who often have all their eggs in one basket. We need to have a balanced system, but one that is also fair to people who are renting and who live with the constant stress of a possible eviction. A few months ago, the Tenants' Union conducted a survey and found that over 90 per cent of renters said the possibility of being forced to move without being given a reason was a source of anxiety for them and that over 80 per cent identified it as a serious source of anxiety. That is anxiety about the roof over their head, a basic human need. This is incredibly important legislation for both landlords and tenants.

The bill will end no-grounds evictions by requiring landlords to have a valid reason. The new valid reasons will include that the property is being sold or offered for sale with vacant possession, the property's usage will change, the landlord or a family member will move in, the property is to undergo significant renovation or repair, the property will be demolished, the tenancy is part of an employee or caretaker arrangement that has ended, the property is student accommodation and the renter is no longer a student, the renter is no longer eligible for a subsidised affordable accommodation program or transitional housing and the property is part of a New South Wales government key worker housing program and is needed to house a key worker.

The legislation will also include a ban on re-letting a property within a certain period after termination for each ground to deter misuse of the termination grounds. Of course, the landlord can apply to the secretary for an exemption from the re-letting ban if their circumstances have changed, but only if their circumstances have changed. This is incredibly important. We all know people who have been forced to move when they have been evicted without being given any reason. I remember having a discussion with a constituent who had made some complaints about maintenance, which the landlord refused to address. They took the matter to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, but in the meantime they were served with an eviction notice and forced to leave their home and find somewhere else to live, which ended up costing them a lot more money.

Around 30,000 people are evicted without grounds each year in New South Wales, which causes a huge amount of stress. We are not talking about a small number of people. While the bill is incredibly welcome, for 12 years the previous Government resisted ending no-grounds evictions, except during COVID. Going back through all my previous speaking notes about banning no-grounds evictions, I made the point when I introduced a private member's bill in 2021 that the previous Government introduced a temporary six-month tenancy moratorium through the COVID-19 Recovery Act 2021 that restricted landlords from evicting tenants due to rental arrears or any other type of no-grounds eviction. It began on 27 March 2021 and lasted until 26 September 2021. When I introduced my private member's bill the previous Government refused to extend the moratorium or consider going further, despite the changes having been introduced in other jurisdictions.

While COVID was an incredibly challenging time and a lot of people lost work and struggled to pay their rent, we have been in a cost-of-living crisis for a number of years—pretty much since the end of COVID—and still the previous Government did not make these important changes. I am glad the Opposition supports the bill, even though it does not support a ban on evictions without giving a reason at the end of a periodic lease. This is a really important reform, whether they be periodic or fixed-term leases, because in other jurisdictions there has been a perverse incentive for shorter leases and evictions at the end of periodic leases to turn a property over and put rents up.

One other important measure in the bill is to make it easier for people to keep pets in rental properties. The bill requires a landlord to have grounds on which they can refuse to allow a tenant to keep a pet and limits them to those grounds, including when keeping an animal at a property would result in an unreasonable number of animals being there or when a property is unsuitable for keeping the animal and the animal would be likely to cause damage that would cost more to reasonably repair than the rental, as well as a number of other restrictions. I am concerned that the 21-day time frame for an application is unreasonably long. I ask that this be monitored over the next few years ahead of the review. A landlord could turn this around in the same time it takes to turn around a normal rental application.

I want to talk a little bit about a dog I know called Malu, who is the best friend of my dog. Malu is an American staffy who lives in a rental property and whose owners recently moved from a unit to a house to give him more space. The previous landlord approved a photo of him as a little puppy but his owners did not tell their new landlords that he was now fully grown and had outgrown the unit. They had to apply to many properties before they could find one that would approve a dog. Giving landlords the leeway to take up to 21 days to come up with a reason to knock someone back is over the top. I do not think anyone would apply to keep a Clydesdale in a studio apartment. We are talking about responsible adults applying to keep their beloved pets in their rental property. Our pounds are full of animals who have been dumped by their families because they could not find a rental property that would allow them. Placing the onus on tenants to challenge a refusal will extend the process even longer and, in some ways, make it more stressful, even though it places the onus on landlords to at least consider a request in good faith and only knock it back on reasonable grounds.

In wrapping up, I thank the Tenants' Union and the Western Sydney Tenants' Service for their incredible advocacy for reforms to residential tenancies over the past decade. I also acknowledge the advocacy of a number of members of this place, including the member for Newtown from The Greens. This is a really important reform. The Government is striking an important balance between tenants and landlords that will make it easier for people to regard the house they lease as their home and not just an asset. I am glad the Opposition supports the bill, but to suggest that it does not address housing supply is ridiculous. The bill is about the Residential Tenancies Act. If Opposition members want to support increasing housing supply, they should get on board and support the Government's Transport Oriented Development Program and apologise for selling off 3,000 units of public housing when they were in government. Labor wants unfair evictions to end, and I am very pleased that this Government will deliver on that.

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (19:45): I support the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I note that my colleague The Greens NSW spokesperson for housing and renters' rights, the member for Newtown, has already spoken on the bill. I acknowledge the considerable and commendable work she has done to bring the issues addressed in the bill to prominence in this place. When the member for Newtown was elected in 2015, it was pretty much unheard of for a member of the New South Wales Parliament to be championing renters' rights. Almost 10 long years later and here we are, in no small part because of the dedication and commitment to this cause by The Greens NSW, driven in this place by the member for Newtown. Of course, she has received considerable support from my other colleague the member for Ballina and from my predecessor as the member for Balmain, Jamie Parker.

I support the bill, and I urge all members in this place to do the same. It is long overdue. It is disappointing that during its 12 years in government the Opposition did not see fit to introduce these reforms. Indeed, it had the chance when it reviewed the Residential Tenancies Act and brought amending legislation to Parliament in 2018, but it failed to do so. That was despite the strong calls from renters at the time. Tenants' advocates and groups such as the Tenants' Union of NSW had been calling for such reforms for several decades before then—that is right, decades. The bill addresses an issue that is well and truly past due. The bill has a long history. There were calls to bring in just cause evictions when the first renting laws in New South Wales were introduced by Labor in the 1980s, putting an end to some grossly unfair practices that were all too easy for landlords to get away with under common law leases.

There were further calls to reform evictions without grounds when the current legislation was being drafted in 2010—again, under a Labor government. That is why it was so good to see NSW Labor finally come to terms with this issue in 2017, when its then leader announced that it had changed its position and called for an end to

unfair evictions. In media reports from the time, Luke Foley, who was then the member for Auburn and Leader of the New South Wales Labor Party, said:

This is a matter of basic fairness. I can't tolerate a situation where there are 750,000 kids in rental properties in NSW and some of them are being forced to move four, five, six or seven times and they never get a reason for it.

That was almost seven years and four NSW Labor leaders ago. Since then, to its credit, the Labor Party has held its nerve, maintaining its position to end unfair evictions and taking this policy to two State elections, including the election it won in 2023 that enabled it to form a minority government, with support from The Greens and Independents on the crossbench. It is a shame that, after squandering several opportunities to deliver this reform while in government, the Coalition waited for an election it would lose before staking its claim on this issue. But it was genuinely exciting to see the Liberal Party offer its support for ending unfair no-grounds evictions in the lead-up to the 2023 State election, making it an issue that now enjoys broad support across the Parliament. Cross-party support has been consolidated thanks to the private member's bill introduced by the member for Newtown to prohibit no-grounds evictions, which was referred to a parliamentary committee to help determine the best path forward for this reform.

I am so pleased that after many years of advocacy, we are now debating Government legislation to make those much-needed changes to the law. The changes proposed today will have a significant impact on the lives of so many people in our community who are struggling to find and keep a secure and affordable place to call home. Right now in New South Wales, tenants can be unfairly evicted, receiving just 30 or 90 days notice—depending on whether they are on a fixed-term or continuing agreement—without any reason. As we heard in the Chamber today, that practice has led to nearly 30,000 households being evicted without a reason each year, creating a climate of instability and fear. Tenants know that if they complain about a rent increase or ask for repairs to be carried out, they might receive an eviction notice instead. They know that despite the promise in the legislation that so-called "retaliatory evictions" are not allowed, those rules are easy for landlords to get around and the practice is widespread.

No-grounds evictions are especially unjust because tenants have no opportunity to challenge them or even address the underlying reason. Once a landlord decides to use a no-grounds eviction, the tenant is left powerless, facing the loss of their home without recourse. That is what makes no-grounds evictions so unfair. In my own electorate of Balmain, where 41.5 per cent of the community rents, that issue really hits home. Every day I speak to renters in my community, and many of them have shared with me their stories of unfair treatment and no-grounds evictions. Almost everyone I speak to has had a rent increase that far exceeds inflation, with hikes of 25 per cent, 30 per cent and sometimes as high as 45 per cent hitting especially hard. That is a shocking statistic that I find hard to comprehend. Some have had to move out of their communities because they could no longer meet the expense, while others have tried to negotiate.

Negotiating with a landlord under our current renting laws does not always end well for tenants. Many people I speak to have experienced a no-grounds eviction in response to attempts to negotiate. The ever-looming threat of no-grounds evictions creates a significant power imbalance. It results in renters tolerating poor housing standards—we see that across the State—and skyrocketing rent increases, which have jumped significantly over the past few years. They fear that if they speak up, they could end up homeless instead. A large number of homeless people live out of their cars and in all sorts of appalling situations because they struggle to find a place to call home. Of course I speak to landlords too, and I thank the landlords in my electorate who have gone the extra mile to assist tenants by keeping their rents down. That puts downward pressure on the market, so it is not just renters in their own investment properties who stand to benefit. But, sadly for renters across New South Wales, such landlords are not the norm.

Turning now to the substance of the bill, it will amend the Residential Tenancies Act so tenants in New South Wales cannot be evicted without reason or grounds. It will replace provisions that currently enable no-grounds evictions with a new subdivision requiring one of the following specific grounds for termination notices: a breach of tenancy agreement; actual or proposed sale of premises; demolition of, or significant renovations or repairs to, premises; tenant no longer being eligible for an affordable housing scheme, transitional housing program, student accommodation or employee and caretaker residential tenancy agreement; premises being required for key worker accommodation; premises no longer being used as rented residential premises; or landlord or family residing at the premises.

Evidence requirements to substantiate the above grounds will be set out in regulation, and landlords or their agents who serve fraudulent or incorrect termination notices will be subject to penalties of up to 650 penalty units. The bill will also require landlords to respond within 21 days to all requests from tenants to keep a pet and to provide a valid reason if consent is refused. Landlords will also have the ability to provide conditional consent for a pet. Additionally, the bill limits rent increases to once every 12 months for all lease types—it is breathtaking that provision does not currently exist. It prohibits paid background checks at the rental application stage and

requires renters to have a free and easy way to pay rent. The bill also makes the NSW Rental Commissioner a member of the Rental Bond Board.

Those amendments are long overdue and will have a meaningful impact on the lives of renters across the State. During a housing crisis, we must do all that we can to ensure that renters have a safe, stable and affordable place to call home. While the bill is incredibly welcome, we know that there is so much more work to be done. We must continue to push for further protections, including caps on rent increases to help combat the rising cost of living for the one in three people who rent their home in New South Wales. Skyrocketing rents are pricing many key workers out of homes. Anglicare recently released a study that showed that 99.1 per cent of rentals were unaffordable for early childhood educators, 97.8 per cent are unaffordable for ambulance workers and 96.3 per cent are unaffordable for schoolteachers. Those figures are deeply concerning and are a sign that we need to do far more to address the issue of unaffordable rents.

We also need to work to ensure better protections for renters with pets. The current change will not offer much additional protection for renters, and it will mean that renters with pets may still struggle to find a home. That is particularly concerning for renters, including women who may already be in a precarious and dangerous situation when fleeing from domestic or family violence. I look forward to seeing the Labor Government work with the crossbench to deliver more meaningful reform in that space. I will continue working with my Greens colleagues, the crossbench, community members and renters' rights advocates to call for better protections for renters. In the meantime, I acknowledge the significance of the reforms currently on the table and the huge real-world impacts that the changes will have on renters in the State.

I again thank rental advocates, including Ned in my team, who has worked on the issue forever—since long before he worked in the Balmain electorate office. I thank Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore and the Newtown team, in particular Patricia, who has worked her backside off for a very long time. I thank my Greens colleagues for their work on that critical issue and my crossbench colleagues who support the bill. I thank the Government for its comprehensive reform and for working in good faith with The Greens to see it through, and I thank those members of the Opposition who have spoken up to advocate for change. As the member for Newtown said, The Greens—and the member for Newtown in particular—have worked with the community and advocates to get the issue on the radar for so very long. I am thrilled to be here today to see it being legislated. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (19:55): I am delighted and very proud to be part of a Labor government introducing some of the most wideranging improvements to renters' rights that any of us in this House have seen in our lifetimes. The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 will amend the Residential Tenancies Act to do several things:

- (a) to ensure residential tenants are offered a convenient and free way to pay rent,
- (b) to ensure prospective tenants cannot be charged for background checks,
- (c) to enable residential tenants to obtain consent to keep animals and to set out the grounds for a landlord to refuse consent,
- (d) to require a landlord to have a valid reason to end a residential tenancy,
- (e) to specify the grounds on which a landlord may terminate a residential tenancy by termination notice,
- (f) to limit rent increases to once every 12 months for all leases,
- (g) to create offences including an offence for a landlord wrongly giving a termination notice,
- (h) to specify when a tenant may vacate premises after a termination notice is given and before the termination date,
- (i) to make the NSW Rental Commissioner a member of the Rental Bond Board.

There is a whole bunch of stuff in the bill, and the Minister and my colleagues have spoken in detail on those things. That is also why I say that these are the most wideranging changes and improvements to the way renters deal with the people who own the properties they live in, their landlords. Fundamental to the bill is ending no-grounds evictions. Currently, landlords can end a lease without giving a reason. That is known as no-grounds eviction and leaves renters facing sudden and frequent moves. It causes tremendous unfairness and disruption in their lives. Without the stability and protection that the bill will provide, tenants cannot make a rental premises feel like a home. Fundamentally, ending no-grounds evictions is the most important part of the bill.

I thank the hundreds of people across the State who made submissions to the review that the Government used to inform its work on the bill. I particularly acknowledge the many community activists who have advocated over many years for improvements in renters' rights. It is fair to acknowledge that The Greens have been very vocal in that regard. I also acknowledge all the members in Young Labor and in the Labor Party rank and file who have time and again said that we need to do more to improve renters' rights. In this State and in this nation, only the Labor Party is both willing and able to deliver these sorts of laws to make our society a better and fairer place

for everyone. That is why I am proud to be here today and proud to be a member of that party. We have a lot more to do to make our housing system better and fairer. We have yet to achieve a situation where we have sufficient, safe and affordable housing in this State. The bill is an important step along the journey to making our State a fairer place for all of its citizens. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (19:59): The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 is cause for great celebration. The progressive side of politics has been pushing for the end to no-grounds evictions for a decade, at least. The reforms go some way towards redressing the power imbalance between tenants and landlords, and tenants and the profit-driven property market. The Greens have been advocating for these reforms for over a decade. I acknowledge the incredible hard work of our housing spokesperson, the member for Newtown, and her office and successive staff that have worked with her and our party room, as well as the work of our Greens members and communities for their advocacy and voice on this issue. I congratulate the Minister and the Premier on making good on these reforms that Labor committed to in the 2023 election.

In the Ballina electorate, I particularly recognise the work and advocacy of the Northern Rivers Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service, the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre and House You for their work standing up for renters' rights. Make no mistake, renters across New South Wales have been doing it tough for at least 10 years. Constant rent increases, evictions for trivial reasons and an inability to feel safe and secure even with a lease has been the model of renting in this State for many years. As a lifelong renter before I was elected to Parliament, I can say that in the Ballina electorate the rental crisis has been going on for many decades. Being kicked out of a home because it is festival season or because the landlord can make more money on the short-term holiday market has become the norm in my area, not the exception. The long-term impact of the prevalence of short-term holiday letting and the subsequent shortage of available rental properties has directly led to exorbitant rents and people being priced out of the rental market in my region, and then add to that the 2022 floods.

Talk to any renter in the Ballina electorate and they will have a horror story about unfair evictions, price bidding on rents—which, thankfully, is now illegal—the extreme lack of rental availability, 300-plus applications for homes, and rent prices that match the suburbs of Kirribilli and Bondi, without the access to public transport or any of the health, education or social supports available to Sydneysiders. That is why my community is so excited about a 60-day cap on whole homes that can be rented as short-term holiday lets across most of Byron shire. We are already seeing a significant increase in available rental properties, and I believe we will see rent prices come down over time. That is certainly the model for other areas with high tourist visitor economies. This legislation comes at a time when the rental system across the State is at complete crisis point. Had the Coalition Government listened to renters and The Greens and taken action any time in the 12 years it was in government, we would not be in this dire situation. Better late than never, as they say.

This legislation ends no-grounds evictions for fixed-term and periodic leases, and limits how often rent can be increased. It bans renters from being asked to pay for background checks and makes it easier for renters to pay their rent. The status quo is that a landlord can end a periodic or fixed-term lease once that fixed term ends, without giving any reason to the tenant. Now there must be a valid and justifiable reason for ending any lease. It tips the balance of power towards the renter and can provide a sense of security for the tenant if that property continues to be rented out. The bill replaces provisions that currently enable no-grounds evictions with a new subdivision requiring one of the following specific grounds for termination notices: breach of tenancy agreement, actual or proposed sale of premises, demolition of or significant renovations or repairs to premises, tenant no longer eligible for affordable housing scheme, premises required for key worker accommodation, premises no longer to be used as residential premises, or landlord or family residing at the premises.

There is some improvement for pets on paper, but The Greens are seeking greater surety for tenants. The status quo in the bill does not capture the reality of strata, for example, and puts the onus on the tenant to take the matter to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal if they want to make the case that a denial is not a valid reason. We will not hold the bill up, but we would like to see a blanket presumption that any tenant can have pets and that the onus is on the landlord to make the case otherwise. We welcome the fact that, under this law, there can be no more than one rent increase every 12 months for all lease types. The Greens welcome that the bill will appoint the Rental Commissioner as a permanent member of the Rental Bond Board. We will seek to insert a new section requiring the secretary of Fair Trading to collect data on the grounds used to evict tenants. We will seek to require the secretary to publish annual reports containing this information. We will also seek a statutory review of the entire Act as soon as possible after five years from the commencement of the new section. We welcome the reform. I congratulate everyone who has got behind the bill.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (20:05): I make a brief contribution to debate in support of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. The bill will amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. The bill centres around two fundamental principles: fairness for renters and legitimate reasons for landlords to end tenancies. By rebalancing the rental market in New South Wales, we are safeguarding the rights of over 2.2 million

renters while maintaining the integrity of property ownership. The bill aims to abolish no-grounds evictions. Currently, landlords have the power to end a fixed-term or periodic lease without providing any reason, leaving renters in a precarious position. The bill seeks to end that practice, ensuring that landlords have valid reasons for terminating a lease. Whether it's due to selling the property with vacant possession, using it for personal or family use, or planning significant renovations, landlords must justify evictions under specific grounds. That shift will offer greater stability for renters, allowing them to establish roots in their homes without the looming threat of unjustified eviction. At the same time, it still respects the rights of landlords, enabling them to regain possession when necessary.

The bill replaces sections 84 and 85 of the Residential Tenancies Act, outlining new grounds for termination under sections 87E to 87M. Those include circumstances like offering the property for sale with vacant possession, no longer using it for rental purposes, or housing a family member. For example, if a landlord plans to renovate a property, they must prove that the works will commence within two months of the tenant's departure. This ensures that tenants are not unnecessarily evicted for indefinite or far-off renovation plans. Additionally, landlords cannot use this ground to evade their legal responsibility to maintain the property. The inclusion of these provisions ensures that tenants are not subjected to undue hardship.

To maintain fairness, exclusion periods will be introduced, preventing landlords from re-letting a property within a specific time frame following termination. That will dissuade landlords from evicting tenants under false pretences, such as pretending to move in themselves and then promptly re-letting the property. The Government has been clear. These new grounds are reasonable, balanced and designed with both renters and landlords in mind. Most landlords will find these measures sensible, while only a minority of landlords might resist these changes if they do not want to follow best practices. Some may argue that these amendments unfairly burden landlords, preventing them from managing their investments effectively. That is not the case. The bill maintains landlords' rights to evict tenants in cases of rent non-payment, property damage, illegal activities or tenant harassment.

Landlords still have ample control over their properties but must adhere to clearer, fairer guidelines. Severe penalties are being proposed for false eviction, being 100 penalty points, or \$11,000, for an individual, or 650 penalty points, or \$71,500, for businesses. The bill does not stop at providing justifiable grounds for evictions. It also introduces a suite of measures designed to enhance the experience for renters. Notably, new sections allow tenants to give an early exit notice, freeing them from liability to pay double rent during an extended notice period. That alleviates the burden that renters face when trying to balance their finances during a transition between homes.

The bill also introduces changes to the rent increase provisions. Renters in fixed-term leases shorter than two years are now protected from multiple rent hikes within a 12-month period. It creates stability for tenants and aligns New South Wales laws with the National Cabinet's Better Deal for Renters agreement. Critics might suggest that rent control or restrictions on evictions could lead to landlords leaving the rental market, exacerbating the housing crisis. That argument overlooks the long-term benefits of a stable rental market. By providing certainty for tenants, we create an environment where renters are more likely to report property issues, ensuring a higher standard of living. Moreover, when landlords invest in their properties and maintain good relationships with tenants, they can expect a longer term, consistent rental income.

Another major change in the bill relates to allowing pets in rental homes. Currently, renters face significant obstacles to keeping pets, with landlords able to refuse without providing justification. The bill seeks to make it easier for renters to keep pets by requiring landlords to respond to pet requests within 21 days. If the landlord refuses, they must outline the reasons for doing so. This is crucial, as studies show that pet ownership has a profound impact on mental wellbeing, combating loneliness and promoting overall happiness. While recognising the importance of pets for many families, the bill also takes into consideration legitimate concerns that landlords might have, such as potential property damage or the unsuitability of certain types of properties for pets. In cases where a pet is permitted, the landlord can still impose reasonable conditions, such as requiring professional carpet cleaning or fumigation at the end of the tenancy.

In conclusion, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 is a balanced, well thought out reform that addresses the longstanding needs of renters while maintaining the rights of landlords. The changes reflect a modern rental market that emphasises fairness, security and transparency. The bill ends no-grounds evictions, allows renters more control over their housing situation, and makes renting in New South Wales fairer and more predictable. It is not just a legislative step but a humane approach to creating homes, not just houses, for millions of people across the State. I thank the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading for introducing the bill and modernising the rental market in New South Wales. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (20:13): I speak in support of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024, a crucial step towards improving the rental landscape for the people of New South Wales. The bill is especially relevant to my electorate of Ryde, where the proportion of renters is steadily increasing. In an electorate

that has seen significant housing developments in areas like Meadowbank and Macquarie Park, ensuring fair and clear rules for renters is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 by making the following key changes. First, it will ensure that residential tenants are offered a convenient and free way to pay rent. At a recent community barbeque in Marsfield, I was appalled by the number of residents complaining that the only practical way to pay their rent was via an app that charged a processing fee. Those fees add to the overall cost of living and are an example of rent-seeking at its best—excuse the irony.

Second, the bill will ensure that prospective tenants cannot be charged for background checks. There is a cost associated with that process, and while some landlords may desire a background check, the onus should not be on a tenant to pay for the privilege of being considered for a rental property. Those costs are unnecessary and have rightly been abolished. Third, the bill enables residential tenants to obtain consent to keep animals and to set out the grounds for a landlord to refuse that consent. This is crucial. Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world with some of the least pet-friendly laws. I have expressed my concern many times that, as the Government continues to propose high-rise living as a silver bullet for housing affordability, insufficient work has been done to make that style of living realistic and sustainable. It is an important first step to acknowledge that pets are often a crucial part of any family, but more must be done, which I will speak about in more detail.

Fourth, the bill requires a landlord to have a valid reason to end a residential tenancy. This is to abolish the notion of no-grounds eviction and is a necessary reform to inject fairness into a system that has evolved significantly. Many people are now lifelong or long-term renters, and, as property markets continue to rise, it is unconscionable that many people who have made a community their home for years have been unceremoniously evicted without grounds. Unscrupulous landlords do the calculations and realise that more money can be made by finding a brand-new tenant without expectations, rather than negotiating a higher rent with an incumbent tenant. This is welcome reform, especially in my electorate of Ryde.

Fifth, the bill seeks to specify the grounds on which a landlord may terminate a residential tenancy by termination notice. In place of no grounds, the bill sets out prescribed grounds which, on balance, are fair and reasonable. For example, if a tenant breaches their lease agreement, if the property is sold or requires significant renovation, or if the landlord wishes to reside at the premises, a tenant can have their lease terminated. I have long advocated for these changes, and I am pleased to see them introduced. However, I note that schedule 1 [12] references the premises being required for use as key worker accommodation. I would be grateful if the Minister could clarify or provide a real-world example of how this particular ground could be invoked by a landlord. Specifically, under what legislative instrument or regulation could a premises be required for such a use? I expect that this must have arisen in the course of consultation with the stakeholders, and I would find value in the Minister elaborating on how that arose and by which stakeholders.

Sixth, the bill seeks to limit rent increases to once every 12 months. For periodic leases or fixed-term leases of two years or more, this is a useful step for renters. It provides a long line of sight for future increases and a degree of predictability that allows families and individuals to plan and budget. This was raised repeatedly this time last year when I held Ryde's first ever rental forum, and I strongly welcome the change. Other key changes in the bill relate to offences for wrongly giving a termination notice, specifying when tenants can vacate after a termination notice but before termination date, and making the Rental Commissioner a member of the Rental Bond Board. Those are welcome clarifications and initiatives that will help people in my electorate better understand their rights and navigate the rental system.

A key aspect of the bill, which is relevant to my electorate, is the clarification of rules around pet ownership. For too long the question of whether tenants can have pets has been a grey area, leading to disputes between landlords and renters. In Ryde, many families, singles and retirees live in rental properties. The reforms are a welcome step towards bringing clarity and fairness. The reforms clarify that a tenant who has entered into a rental agreement may keep an animal at the premises with the landlord's consent. The law will require the landlord to provide a written response within 21 days either approving or refusing the application. No response within 21 days is to be treated as consent, meaning that the laws will err on the side of the pet owner in the case of an unresponsive landlord.

For those who receive a refusal, there must be reasonable grounds, such as an unreasonable number of animals, unsuitable premises for the welfare of the animal or high risk of property damage. This is in line with other jurisdictions and is a welcome step. However, opportunities appear to remain for strata schemes to impose overly zealous restrictions, which could cause an unknowing tenant to believe that they are not permitted to keep a pet. We must do better as a Parliament, especially for those living in apartments, to clarify the rules. I encourage the Government to be ambitious in its reforms to strata properties and ensure we do not create separate classes of tenants dictated by whether they live in a house or a unit. While the bill introduces critical protections, it does not address one of the root causes of the pressures in the rental market, which is supply. More regulation alone cannot bring down rents, and one solution lies in reducing the number of vacant investment properties.

Those properties are available now. They do not require DAs or a workforce. They are already built and their introduction to the rental market would not upset the sensibilities of local community amenity or create undue pressure on surrounding infrastructure. I have previously called on the Parliament to reduce the attractiveness of retaining vacant properties. Instead of buying and renting homes to locals, some people park their money in properties and wait for the market to rise. In doing so, they remove much-needed rental properties from the market, driving up prices for everybody and undermining public confidence in a planning system that becomes too focused on new development rather than the efficient use of current development. While it would not be a complete fix, it is something and it is fast. It is time we looked at measures to make it more difficult for investors to keep properties vacant, ensuring that housing is used for people, not speculation.

There is still much more work to be done. Rental reform alone will not solve the problems that renters face. We must also look at strata and building reform to ensure that improved rental conditions are not undermined by poor building quality or unscrupulous strata management. In Ryde, where apartment living is becoming the norm, we have heard too many stories of poorly built developments—leaks, structural defects and issues that make life extremely difficult for renters and owners alike. Additionally, strata management issues, including exorbitant fees and mismanagement, place unnecessary burdens on residents. If we want to make renting a more sustainable option, we need to couple tenancy reforms with better oversight of strata managers and stricter building standards. The bill is an important step in the right direction, but it cannot be the last. It is time to build a rental market that offers stability, fairness and opportunity for everyone, whether they rent by choice or by necessity. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Community Recognition Statements

STARS OF SYDNEY SOUTH WEST

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (20:22): On 14 June I had the honour of attending, and serving as one of the judges for, the Stars of Sydney South West, where Sydney's south-west business owners and local celebrities—the "Stars"—light up the dance floor with local dance teachers to raise funds for the Cancer Council. Now an annual spectacular, the event has raised over \$480,000, with this year's event adding an additional \$118,000 to that tally. As one of the judges, I had the privilege of seeing firsthand how incredible the local talent and dedication was in our community. I was joined on the panel by Leppington's Local Woman of the Year, Antoinette Sulfaro; HeyYa TV's Davy Nguyen; and award-winning marriage celebrant, MC, model, TV presenter and actor Glenn Millanta. It was not an easy task selecting the winners, and all the nominees demonstrated their immense talent and passion. The performances reflected the diversity of our area, with many different dance styles and cultures. I congratulate all the performers, dance instructors, sponsors and organisers.

CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:23): I congratulate and welcome the newly elected Central Coast Council mayor, Lawrie McKinna; deputy mayor, Doug Eaton; and the Liberal councillors who have been entrusted with the great privilege of shaping and supporting the Central Coast over the next four years: John McNamara, Jared Wright, Rachel Stanton and Trent McWaide. Their election is a testament to the trust our community has placed in them to represent their voices and make decisions that will shape their future. Last month's election marked the return of local democracy to the Central Coast Council, following a period of administration. I extend my gratitude to the outgoing administrator, Rik Hart, for his stewardship during a time of financial crisis and recovery. His leadership has been invaluable in guiding the council through challenging times. Now, with our newly elected representatives, we can look forward to a future where local decisions are once again in the hands of our community. Being elected to council is a tremendous honour and it comes with enormous responsibility. I am confident that our new councillors will work together cohesively to serve the greater cause of the people of the Central Coast.

SCHOFFIELDS CRUSADERS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (20:24): I take great pleasure in congratulating the Schoffields Crusaders Junior Rugby League Club for another successful season. In only their second year in the competition, the Crusaders junior rugby league teams are proving to be strong competitors, with four teams making the grand finals and all four winning. The club was also awarded Penrith district club of the year. That would not be possible without the incredible support from families and the Schoffields community getting behind those young sportspeople and encouraging them to be their best. I also thank and congratulate the coaching staff and volunteers, who have been instrumental this season. I make special mention of Belinda Mckinlay for being awarded volunteer of the year. Their guidance, passion and countless hours spent training the teams have laid a solid foundation for success. It is heartening to see such enthusiasm and investment in the future of our youth, as those experiences

will not only shape exceptional players but also engage members of our community. I am truly proud to be called a patron of the team and I look forward to barracking for it again next season.

PAM MORAN

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:25): I acknowledge Pam Moran of Grafton, who is celebrating a win in the Women's 80-84 Open at the 2024 Australian Masters Squash Championships. The championships were held in Canberra, where there were close to 400 competitors from across the country. Pam has been playing squash for more than 60 years. In fact, as a much younger whippersnapper, I remember Pam beating me on the court more than once. Pam beat Robyn Bamberry from Queensland 3-0 in the final to claim the title. It is the first time that she has beaten Robyn in her career. I congratulate Pam on an outstanding achievement. But, of course, this is not the first time that she has won the Australian masters. She won that event in 2018 in Tasmania. I congratulate Pam on her most recent victory and her long sporting career.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:26): World Teachers' Day is on 25 October. I encourage people across the Central Coast to celebrate that by thanking all the teachers in their orbit. Teachers are the foundation, the building blocks of a great New South Wales. I am sure every member in this place can immediately think of a teacher who rocked their world. As a former teacher, I know how important our education system is and how much work is done behind the scenes. Teachers are much more than educators; they are friends, role models, event coordinators, listeners, life-changers and support people. They also provide mental health and wellbeing support. I believe in the importance of expressing gratitude towards our teachers as they work hard, day and night, to educate, guide and empower the future minds of our society. I note my appreciation for all the teachers who work so hard to inspire students on their journeys and are always there for them. Teachers play an unparalleled role in our society and deserve more than a day of our recognition and gratitude. I thank teachers for their profound contributions and incredible efforts shaping the lives of young people.

SARAH SWAN

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (20:27): I congratulate Sarah Swan on being elected Mayor of Woollahra at the 2024 local government elections. The appointment is a testament to her dedication and hard work for the people of Woollahra as deputy mayor in the previous council. In her maiden speech, Mayor Swan paid tribute to the strong, dynamic and pioneering women in her family who instilled in her from an early age a strong desire to be involved in public life at a local level. Mayor Swan promised to lead a council in which everyone and their contributions are valued, regardless of personal or political affiliations. She identified four priorities that council must address: ending family violence, reconnecting with younger demographics, preserving the character of our community and supporting local businesses. I look forward to continuing to work closely with Mayor Swan to deliver for our community.

CHRIS DUCZYNSKI

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:28): One of my favourite things about the northern Illawarra is the diverse art community that has been fostered there. A key contributor to the art culture there is Chris Duczynski. Chris's photography has had a huge impact on the art scene for more than four decades. He started work as a photojournalist in the 1980s before moving into the field of cinematography and video, and then embracing digital photography as it replaced film. Chris draws his inspiration from the unique environment of the Illawarra, especially the industrial environment of Port Kembla: the steel stacks, the cargo ships, the port and the way that they interact with the natural landscape. As a surfer, he has always had a strong connection with the ocean and that is reflected in his work. His work has captured the drama and beauty of the Illawarra with expertise and style, and has contributed to key cultural institutions in the area, such as the Scarborough Art Show. I thank Chris for his contributions to art in the Illawarra. I look forward to seeing what he produces next.

NOAH HAZLEWOOD

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (20:29): As we celebrate Small Business Month this October, I recognise Noah Hazlewood, a young and very talented photographer and videographer from Hallidays Point. Noah captures stunning landscapes and seascapes in our electorate, often with his drone. His style offers a unique perspective. He also works on creative projects for weddings, real estate agencies and other local businesses. Noah is a familiar face at local markets, where he often sells his work. He has also held several successful exhibitions, including a month-long showcase at Hallidays Point Library and a recent exhibit at Dundaloo, where he held a meet and greet. Local galleries and businesses support Noah by displaying his work for sale. I proudly have three of Noah's beautiful prints in my office. My favourite is his aerial shot of the Green Cathedral in Tiona. I thank Noah for sharing the beauty of our local area through his lens and for sharing his many talents with our community.

SAPPHIRE COMMUNITY PANTRY

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (20:30): I congratulate the Sapphire Community Pantry on its seventh anniversary. The pantry first opened its doors on 28 September 2017 in a small room beside the Bega Salvos store, but quickly outgrew the space and in 2018 moved to larger premises at 2 Peden Street. The Sapphire Community Pantry store offers low-cost and often no-cost groceries and toiletries from its Bega shopfront. It has since added outreach services and a mobile pantry van to its operation. It has gone from strength to strength. Around 350 to 400 people visit the pantry each week. After seven years in operation, demand is stronger than ever. Manager Mandi Rush said:

We need to keep going strong for our community, and we need our community's support to keep going.

The pantry was founded by Christine Welsh and Peter Buggy. I thank them for their vision and efforts in getting the service up and running to assist the region's most vulnerable.

COUNCILLOR FRANK DE MASI

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (20:31): I congratulate Councillor Frank De Masi on his election as Deputy Mayor of the Hills Shire. Councillor De Masi was first elected as a councillor on 9 September 2017. He was re-elected on 4 December 2021 and, more recently, was re-elected again on 14 September 2024. Councillor De Masi was elected unopposed as deputy mayor at the first council meeting for the current term on 8 October 2024. I served as deputy mayor during the previous term and, as such, I can say that Councillor De Masi is an outstanding councillor, and his endorsement as deputy mayor is very much well deserved. Councillor De Masi is a tireless councillor for our local community, and this was evident at the Hills Shire Council when many members attended to congratulate Councillor De Masi on his election as deputy mayor. I wish Frank De Masi the very best for his new role. I am sure he will do an excellent job assisting the mayor, Dr Michelle Byrne.

RED CROSS UBER CLOTHING DRIVE

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:32): Recently I had the pleasure of attending the Australian Red Cross and Uber Clothing Drive in Greenacre, organised in partnership with TAXIBOX. This fantastic initiative allows people in my electorate and across Sydney to donate clothing to the Australian Red Cross, supporting those in need, especially during this cost-of-living crisis. The event was incredibly well organised, with Uber drivers and donors arriving to drop off their donations. Dedicated volunteers worked tirelessly to collect boxes and bags of clothing, before storing them in TAXIBOX containers. It was heartwarming to see the generosity of our community and the seamless teamwork of the volunteers and organisers. I was deeply inspired by the overwhelming support from our community and felt immense appreciation as I witnessed remarkable collaboration between the organisations. There was a strong sense of unity, generosity and dedication, as everyone came together to work for a worthy cause. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the teams who made this event possible in our community. I look forward to seeing the initiative continue to grow in the coming years.

WALCHA HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands) (20:33): I recognise the achievements of the Walcha Hospital Auxiliary on its 90-year milestone. There are not many auxiliaries in New South Wales that can claim to be 90 years old. I congratulate the members on their tireless efforts to raise funds and on recently presenting \$13,000 worth of vital equipment to our local health service. Special thanks to committee members, including Margaret Cross, Linda Cross, Pam Clare, Vicki McIvor, Sandra Laurie, Marie Spink, Cecilia Brennan, Molly Hunt and our mayor, Eric Noakes. Volunteers are the heart and soul of our regional towns, and I thank all of them for their selfless dedication. I say thank you also to the Walcha Bowling Club for providing the venue for the 90-year celebration, along with the Emporium on Derby and the Paperdolls House of Walcha for providing the fashion for the fashion parade, which was held during the festivities. I commend all those involved and thank them so much for their hard work.

GASOLINE PONY

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (20:34): I acknowledge the fantastic contribution of Fiona Cook to our inner west live music and bar scene through her establishment, Gasoline Pony. Fiona has announced that she is stepping down from running the Gasoline Pony, which she founded with her brother Elmo 11 years ago. The "Gaspo", as it is known, has a loyal following and has become a much-loved local institution. Fiona and Elmo created one of the best bars and live music venues not only in the inner west but in all of Sydney, with visitors coming from across the city to hear great music in the heart of Sydney's inner west. Running a small business requires a lot of personal sacrifice and hard work, and Fiona deserves all our thanks for her many years of commitment, particularly during the COVID years. She has helped to create a stage for

countless emerging and professional musicians. I also welcome Angela, who takes over the running of the Gaspo. I congratulate Fiona and wish Angela good luck.

CHRISTINE AND DAVID DONALD

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:35): I acknowledge Christine and David Donald from Deniliquin. For the past 20 years Christine and her husband, David, have been dedicated foster carers, providing short-term, long-term, respite and emergency care to many children in need. Christine's passion for fostering began in her youth, inspired by her parents, who were also foster carers. Following in their footsteps, she has embraced that path with the same commitment. Supporting children to overcome significant challenges and reach their full potential has been the most rewarding aspect of her role. Christine's goal is to nurture children into happy and contributing members of society. Beyond fostering, Christine and David actively volunteer in their community through the Deniliquin Rescue Squad, VRA Rescue and Deniliquin South Public School. Christine and David are to be commended for their unwavering commitment to providing a safe and caring home for children, no matter the duration of their stay.

BEN HAYWARD

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:36): I acknowledge the achievement of Ben Hayward from Warilla, who recently won the Find and Tell podcast competition. Hosted by journalist and author Jamila Rizvi, Find and Tell was a collaboration between ARN Media's digital networks iHeart and BlakCast. This competition saw hundreds of entries scaled down to a final four, showcasing diverse and compelling storytelling from Australians of various cultural backgrounds. Ben's winning episode focused on the question of whether Aboriginal languages should be taught in Australian schools. He spoke with Wiradjuri man Geoff Anderson of First Languages Australia and Wollongong Elder Uncle Richard Campbell. As the winner of the competition, Ben has the resources to tell more of those stories. He received more than \$10,000 in support, including top-tier podcasting gear from RODE, and short courses and mentoring from the prestigious Australian Film Television and Radio School. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I congratulate Ben on this wonderful achievement and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

CROWS NEST FEST

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (20:37): The annual Crows Nest Fest was a tremendous success on Sunday 20 October, bringing together over 50,000 people to celebrate the vibrant community spirit of Crows Nest. For over three decades, this much-loved free festival has showcased the best of our local area, and this year was no exception. With fantastic exhibitors, local businesses and community partners, the day was filled with delicious food, great entertainment and activities for all ages. Events like this help to foster a sense of connection and pride within our community, while also supporting local businesses and bringing people together. I extend my congratulations and thanks to the Crows Nest Mainstreet leadership and its members, North Sydney Council and all the volunteers and participants who worked tirelessly to make this day a success. Their dedication has once again delivered a wonderful festival that continues to be a fine local tradition. I thank them for their hard work and commitment to making Crows Nest Fest such a special event for our community. Here's to its continued success in the years to come.

PHAP BAO TEMPLE

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (20:38): On 20 September 2024 I had the pleasure of attending a fundraising dinner to support the construction of a Buddhist stupa at the Phap Bao Temple in St Johns Park. A Buddhist stupa is a sacred architectural monument that is used as a place of meditation and worship. The structure of the stupa symbolises the cycle of life and death, the path to enlightenment and the teachings of Buddha. There are various types of stupas, such as the relic stupa, where relics and important objects belonging to Buddha or other religious persons are buried. This stupa will provide the Buddhist community in my electorate with a place to worship their loved one's ashes and ancestors. The event was attended by many guests who recognise the urgent need for a sacred space dedicated to spiritual and cultural practices. I express my gratitude to the President of the Vietnamese-Australian Medical Association, Dr Lieu Vinh Binh, for the initiative and kind invitation.

HINDMARSH PARK

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (20:39): When I make a promise, I always get it done. Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the official opening of the completed upgrades at Hindmarsh Park in Kiama, for which I worked hard to secure grant funding. A special, official opening ceremony took place on Monday 21 October 2024. I acknowledge the newly elected mayor of Kiama, my friend Councillor Cameron McDonald, Kiama Council CEO Jane Stroud and the Kiama Council staff. I acknowledge also the member for Shellharbour, who was in attendance. I acknowledge the project manager, David Wagstaff, and his team from Growth Civil Landscapes. I acknowledge the Kiama Lions Club, who did the barbecue, and volunteers

Ray Redgrave, Mike Podolinsky, Geoff Heinecke, Rosie Singleton, Cheryl Moses, Sue Hudson, Rob McKinnon and Richard Hoskins for their amazing efforts on the day. I thank Auntie Gwenda Jarrett and Christian, who performed the welcome to country and the smoking ceremony. I acknowledge students from Kiama Public School and Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School. It was a terrific ceremony and celebration. The upgrades, particularly the replacement of the old rocket ship with new equipment like the roundabout, completed a much-needed face lift of Hindmarsh Park. The member for Shellharbour and I had a great workout on the day, and we enjoyed every minute of it.

IAIN TURNER

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (20:40): I acknowledge the stellar service of Iain Turner, who after 49 years of service with Fire and Rescue NSW has decided to leave, on his own terms, what he describes as the best job in the world and commence his retirement. Iain's career began in 1975, at the age of 19, training in Sydney, briefly working in Wollongong and then calling the Central Coast home. He has been in the role of station officer at both Kariong and Bateau Bay stations, where he served for, collectively, more than 30 years. Iain has left a lasting impression on his colleagues, having seen and been a part of it all, from house fires to devastating natural disasters and everything in between. I am sure the House joins me in congratulating Iain on his tremendous service to our community, doing what he did best: saving lives. May he enjoy retirement and all the things that come with it.

TOONGABBIE COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (20:41): I acknowledge the Toongabbie branch of the Country Women's Association, which recently celebrated its seventieth anniversary. When the Toongabbie branch was established, in 1954, Toongabbie was recognised as a country town outside Parramatta. Now the branch sits in the middle of the metropolis, but it has not changed in all those years. Members of the Toongabbie branch celebrated this milestone with a fabulous high tea, served on lace tablecloths and with beautiful crockery. The Toongabbie branch has a strong commitment to serving our community. In recent times, it has provided clothing and knitted goods to those affected by natural disasters across New South Wales. In our local community, the branch provides a safe and communal space for women to come together to partake in fantastic initiatives. That is not to mention the terrific Christmas stalls they host across the electorate. I congratulate the Toongabbie branch of the CWA on reaching such a terrific milestone, and I look forward to catching up with them again soon.

WARILLA-BARRACK POINT SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:42): I acknowledge Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club. On Saturday night I had the great pleasure and honour of attending the celebration of its sixty-fifth year in service. It was a fantastic night. There must have been over 100 people there. The club came from humble beginnings. We saw movies and slides, which are unheard of. It was an incredible night. I acknowledge Alan Beveridge, who does a fantastic job of running the club, and his committee, including Laurie Boyle, David Boyle, Corinne Boyle and Georgia Ross, who is a new volunteer, a young woman who has put her hand up to volunteer for the club. There are many other volunteers. We had a discussion about the fact that no lives have ever been lost at the club. They always fill their slots, every summer, and are an absolute credit to our community.

BARRY HOLLMAN

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (20:43): I formally acknowledge Barry Hollman for his commitment to the Bourke community as a councillor for 20 years, eight of them as mayor. Barry led through the devastating drought and the real prospect of Bourke running out of town water. Barry's tenacity and passion were instrumental in obtaining much-needed funds for droughtproofing Bourke, including a new water treatment plant and additional bores and pumps. He used his straight-shooting manner to convince the then Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and the former New South Wales Government to visit Bourke in November 2019 for a community cabinet, via a coach, not chartered flights, to ensure that they witnessed the true impact of drought on all of regional New South Wales, not only Bourke. Barry was a passionate and trusted advocate for the Bourke community in his time on the council and never missed an opportunity to raise the issues and secure any funding he could, especially for the sealing of Wanaaring Road. Barry has been a great asset for Bourke Shire Council and the community, and I have the utmost respect for the time, wisdom and commitment he has given. I thoroughly enjoyed working with Barry. He will be sorely missed. I thank Councillor Barry Hollman.

BILAL EL-HAYEK

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:44): I congratulate Bilal El-Hayek on his re-election as mayor of Canterbury Bankstown. Since being elected to the City of Canterbury Bankstown Council in 2017, Bilal has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to our community, serving not only as councillor, deputy mayor and mayor but also as a passionate advocate for the people of the Bankstown/Darani ward. The personal story of Bilal,

who arrived in Australia as a 12-year-old boy unable to speak English, embodies the resilience and determination that have shaped his leadership. His journey from attending an intensive English school to completing his senior schooling, all while nurturing a passion for community service, is inspiring to many. From his role as a youth coordinator with the Bankstown Police Citizens Youth Club, to working with disadvantaged families through the Bankstown Family Connect program, Bilal's impact on our community has been profound. Bilal's leadership, including his role as a White Ribbon ambassador and his efforts to promote multiculturalism through Harmony Day, will continue to strengthen the bonds of our community. I again congratulate Bilal El-Hayek.

RURAL FIT

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (20:45): I acknowledge Albury's exercise and movement clinic Rural Fit for its initiative supporting individuals with Parkinson's disease. The clinic is currently in its second year of its Movers and Shakers program, which has expanded from one participant to 17 participants. The program focuses on slowing the progression of the movement disorder that impacts the nervous system, through cardiovascular, muscular and cognitive exercises. Research highlights the importance of regular exercise for individuals with Parkinson's, as it can significantly enhance their quality of life. A special mention goes to Josh Jones, the manager and senior exercise scientist at Rural Fit, for the amazing work he does with his patients. Josh was inspired by the diagnosis of his father, Cameron, in 2023 and created a supportive space that not only engages the community but also enhances its wellbeing, especially those who are navigating the challenges of Parkinson's. I thank Josh and the Rural Fit team for their efforts. They are making a difference in our community, providing essential support and effective treatment options to individuals with this condition.

RANIA BURSIC

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:46): Rania Bursic has made an amazing contribution as the community liaison officer at Fairfield West Public School. For the past five years, Rania's unwavering dedication to fostering strong connections between families, students and the school community has been instrumental. Her tireless efforts in supporting parent-teacher communication, assisting with enrolment and transition processes, and organising vital programs such as the breakfast club, the playgroup and English classes have significantly contributed to the wellbeing and success of students and parents. Rania's hands-on involvement in lunchtime programs further demonstrates her commitment to creating an inclusive and nurturing environment. I commend her for the positive impact she continues to make. Fairfield has some of the most disadvantaged families in New South Wales, and Rania has truly made a difference. Rania's dedication and contributions are of note. I thank her so much for the work she does.

ELIZABETH SPANOS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (20:47): On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I congratulate and commend Elizabeth Spanos on being the 2024 Westfield Local Hero for Penrith, in recognition of her service as a dedicated volunteer and committee member of Penrith Community Kitchen. Through the strong dedication of Elizabeth and fellow volunteers, the kitchen provides nutritious meals to 500 people each week and has recently expanded its services to providing pantry food and meals to 12 schools. Westfield has provided the kitchen a community grant of \$20,000 as part of the announcement. The funds will further enable the kitchen to serve our community. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank Elizabeth and her fellow volunteers at Penrith Community Kitchen for welcoming and supporting all people to the kitchen, to ensure they do not go hungry.

HUTMAN FAMILY HALLOWEEN

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:48): Halloween is the most spook-tacular time of year, and Cartwright will be extra-spooky next week, as the Hutman Family Haunt sets up for plenty of scares. For years, the Hutman family has decorated its home in Cartwright for Halloween and Christmas, becoming one of the most recognised homes in the neighbourhood. Inspired by daughter Chelsea, who is 24 and has autism, the Hutmans have sought to bring joy to the community with their locally famous displays. This year the Hutmans decided to open up their home as a haunted house for the community to enjoy. They are opening up a special session for people with disabilities and their caregivers, who are often unable to access such events. This kind of community spirit defines Liverpool and the 2168 postcode community. I recognise the impact of the Hutmans, especially Tanya, who have taken a personal love of all things spooky and turned it into an event that everyone in the community can access. I look forward to sharing in their vibrant, inclusive Halloween celebrations.

ABBOTSLEIGH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (20:49): The Wahroonga electorate has many excellent girls schools, including Abbotsleigh Junior School, which recently celebrated its seventieth birthday. Abbotsleigh has been educating girls since 1885, when Miss Marian Clarke opened the school in a terrace house in North Sydney.

This year, the junior school celebrates 70 years at its current premises in Wahroonga. Miss Marian Clarke was ahead of her time, teaching her students what were seen as more masculine subjects, including geometry and Latin. She encouraged the girls to pursue other subjects as well, including woodwork, gymnastics, music, drama and art. In 1952 the fourth headmistress, Miss Gladys Gordon Everett, selected the site in Wahroonga. In 1954 she opened the purpose-built school. I was happy to attend the anniversary celebrations and it was great to see so many generations of Abbotsleigh girls celebrating 70 years in Wahroonga.

RIVERSTONE RAZORBACKS

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (20:50): I congratulate the Riverstone Razorbacks on another great season of local rugby league. It was incredible to witness the dedication, teamwork and passion that every player brought to the field, especially the under 10s, under 19s and A-grade teams, which made it through to the grand finals. I know every player put in hard work and training, honing their skills and learning the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship. It is not just about winning; it is about the friendships forged and lessons learned along the way. The camaraderie and support amongst the Riverstone Razorbacks teammates are admirable. With their attitude, I am sure they will continue to be an incredible club. I thank and congratulate the dedicated coaching team, in particular Jett Koberler, and all the volunteers. Their guidance, support and commitment to developing our young athletes is invaluable. I thank all the loyal supporters for standing by our teams and fuelling the team spirit the Razorbacks are known for. I hope all players enjoy the off-season, keep fit and are ready to go again next year. Go Razorbacks!

Private Members' Statements

STRAY AND FERAL CATS

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:51): When Jim Davis said that cats rule the world, he identified the crux of an issue many members of my community raise with me. Throughout the eight years I served on Liverpool council and in my time as a State representative, whenever I doorknock, regardless of the suburb, a common complaint is the number of stray and feral cats that wander our suburban streets. What may start as one or two cats calling a street home can quickly multiply into dozens. The problem is further exacerbated by owners who either refuse or do not have the means to desex their companion cats. The cats roam and create litters with stray cats in the neighbourhood.

As a councillor, I raised the feasibility of implementing a trap, neuter and release [TNR] program in response to the wide-reaching impacts of stray and feral cats, from the destruction of native wildlife to the endangerment of domestic cats in the community. The numbers are shocking. Feral cats kill more than 1.5 billion native animals across Australia each year. There are more than 2.8 million feral cats running wild in Australia and the destruction is staggering. In response to the issue, I helped generate Liverpool's first Urban Cat Management Plan in 2021. For those reasons, I have been paying close attention to the Legislative Council committee report into pounds in New South Wales, which was handed down earlier this month.

The report made 24 recommendations. Most relevant to the people I represent was the recommendation to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 to clarify that trap, neuter and release programs are explicitly legal. Under TNR programs, stray or feral cats are trapped, desexed and then released on to the streets. It is a humane way to address the increasing number of street cats and, over time, decrease their number in our suburbs and protect native wildlife, including, most critically, our native bird species. TNR programs have been implemented in several jurisdictions throughout the world but have not been largely implemented in Australia.

The exception is the Australian Capital Territory, where TNR programs are legal. TNR programs were established in the Canberra suburbs of Fyshwick, Hume and Mitchell, and are administered by the volunteer organisation Canberra Street Cat Alliance. However, TNR programs are not without controversy. Critics argue that in the context of Australia, TNR programs are not an urgent-enough solution, given the number of native species threatened due to feral, semi-owned, unowned and poorly contained cats. Research shows that both feral and pet cats are collectively killing billions of animals each year. Many unowned cats are able to be domesticated and rehomed. However, there is simply a lack of capacity for organisations to complete the work. Rescue centres are overrun and often depend on voluntary work and charitable donations. Facilities run by local councils also frequently turn away stray cats.

Recommendation 1 of the committee report stated that the Government should provide grants to councils and rescue and rehoming organisations to carry out large-scale targeted desexing programs. The committee recommended that such programs should be targeted in disadvantaged communities and communities with large populations of homeless cats to improve the take-up of desexing programs. For many in my electorate, TNR programs would allow residents to get their companion animals desexed. Low-cost or free desexing and awareness programs are a key component or pillar of Liverpool council's Urban Cat Management Plan.

In the development of the strategy, I met dedicated volunteers who run TNR programs in their local neighbourhoods because they care about local wildlife, the welfare of cats and building a community that takes interest in and ownership of this issue. Dr Helen Swarbrick and Sue Richardson established the Campus Cat Coalition at the University of New South Wales. They provided valuable input into the Liverpool Urban Cat Management Plan. I look forward to the recommendations of the pounds report being seriously considered. I know my community will be observing with interest, given how often they raise the issue of cat management with me.

PENNANT HILLS TREFOIL GUILD

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (20:56): The Pennant Hills Trefoil Guild has been proudly serving the Wahroonga electorate for almost 30 years. I add some comments to the brief contribution I made last week about the guild. Recently, I had the pleasure of joining the guild to celebrate four outstanding women for their incredible contributions to Girl Guides, the Trefoil Guild and the broader community over many years. We honoured Elaine Bright for 40 years of service. Elaine has been a member of the Waitara district parent group and Hornsby district parent group and is an inaugural member of Pennant Hills Trefoil Guild. As well as being a fantastic and diligent member of the local community, Elaine is a talented quilt maker. She made the Pennant Hills Trefoil Guild banner, which is displayed at State Trefoil Guild events. In 2014 and 2019, Elaine was awarded the Girl Guides Chief Commissioner's Appreciation Certificate. She achieved all of that while working full time as a school administration staff member.

We also celebrated the 35 years of service of Julia Morgan, who began as a member of the West Epping district parent group and a unit helper for the West Epping Girl Guides unit for four years. She was appointed unit leader for 1st West Epping Girl Guides, leading numerous State camping trips. Julia was appointed to the Northern Sydney Region and for the past 11 years she has been a member of the Pennant Hills Trefoil Guild, serving as secretary. She has also been the secretary of the Australian Trefoil Guild. Her commitment has earned her multiple Australia service awards, including the Banksia Award and two Bar to the Banksia awards, all of which were achieved while she was working full time as a legal secretary.

We also celebrated Barbara Fairbairn's outstanding 60 years of service. Starting as lieutenant with the 1st Panania Guide Company in 1960, Barbara later became the acting guide leader of 1st Normanhurst. During this time, Barbara gave birth to four daughters. For 21 years, she was a Girl Guides leader at 1st Normanhurst Girl Guides, where she took many children on camping and canoeing trips. Barbara played a key role at the North West Metropolitan Region campsite and was appointed the Australian contingent leader, leading camps to Canada and England. Barbara has held various leadership roles, including as member of the Girl Guides selection subcommittee and a State Girl Guides adviser. She attended the Australian program and section leaders conference and was the New South Wales contingent leader to Australian patrol leader events.

Barbara has coordinated several New South Wales Brownie and Girl Guides combined camps and BP Emblem Award ceremonies. She was a State Girl Guides camp subcommittee member and sub-camp leader and on the Australian international appointments and awards committee. She has been the Pennant Hills division commissioner and assistant; region leader for the North West Metropolitan Region; Beecroft, Hornsby Heights, Waitara and Cherrybrook district leader; North West Metropolitan Region annual Red Cross appeal coordinator; Northern Sydney Region manager and region resource leader; Pennant Hills Trefoil Guild president; and Australian Trefoil Guild adviser. Barbara has been the chair and deputy chair of the National Scout and Guide Fellowship executive committee. Barbara has been recognised for her service by being awarded the Region Good Service award, the Girl Guides Australia Emu Award, the Centenary Certificate, the Chief Commissioners Certificate and the Grey Kangaroo Award, all achieved while working for Bounty Hospital Services.

We also recognised Heather Baker, who unfortunately could not attend as she was in hospital. Beginning in 1979, Heather has been a unit helper at 2nd North Epping, unit leader at North Epping Guides and Epping division commissioner. Heather took her guides camping on many occasions, including to State and international camps. She was a member of the State guide section subcommittee, where she assisted at the State Guide BP Emblem Award Ceremony. Heather was the New South Wales contingent leader to the Australian Patrol Leaders Event "Jumbunna", held in Queensland. Heather was part of the North Epping Trefoil Guild for nine years until it closed. She then joined the Pennant Hills Trefoil Guild, where she was appointed treasurer.

Heather was appointed treasurer of the NSW Trefoil Guild and the Australian Trefoil Guild. She received a number of important awards, including a Boronia, the Chief Commissioners Certificate and the Bar to the Banksia award for her three-year term as the Australian Trefoil Guild treasurer. She achieved all these things while working full-time at her family business. I congratulate Elaine, Julia, Barbara and Heather for their contribution to Girl Guides, the Trefoil Guild and their community service over many years. It is incredible to think of all the achievements these women have made. Girl Guides gives young women incredible leadership opportunities outside their sporting clubs and school groups. It contributes a great deal to developing the human capital of our community, particularly with regard to young women.

KNIGHT PARK SOCCER FIELDS

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (21:01): Sport is critical in fostering health, fitness and social engagement. The soccer fields at Knight Park in Yennora are used extensively by many across the local community. This great facility provides kids and adults with opportunities to socialise, work collaboratively and experience the joy of the great game. In keeping with that, I have been pleased to work with the New South Wales Labor Government via our Minister for Sport to secure approximately \$350,000 for the Knight Park lighting system upgrade on fields one and two. This vital improvement will enhance the training and playing experience of thousands of children and adults who participate in the sport through the Southern Districts Soccer Football Association.

The association uses Knight Park extensively for training. Each night of the week hundreds of children train on Knight Park's four fields, weather permitting. For a long time the existing lighting was inadequate to have proper night-time training or games due to limited visibility. The association has some 9,500 registered players and 3,000 coaches and managers, as well as another 2,000 committee members and volunteers to help run the sport. The upgraded lighting will change lives—and I mean that. Sport gives us some of our greatest childhood memories. I am so happy and proud to be part of this great grassroots initiative. The lighting will also promote other members of the community attending Knight Park for socialising and general exercise. It is a community asset, and they are welcome there.

I sincerely thank the Southern Districts Soccer Football Association for its tireless efforts to promote active lifestyles in south-western Sydney. I also commend all the amazing coaches, trainers, volunteers and families of player athletes for their support in promoting grassroots sport in Fairfield and across New South Wales.

COWPER TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (21:04): Tonight I reflect on a disaster that happened in my community 35 years ago. In the still morning of 20 October 1989 a bus and semitrailer carrying tinned pineapple juice collided head-on at Cowper. Some 21 people died and 22 others were injured. At the time it was Australia's worst traffic disaster. It occurred at the height of the pilot strike, and buses travelling between Sydney and Brisbane were packed. I recall walking into the lounge room at home as a 15-year-old. Mum and Dad were listening to the local radio station 2GF as it covered the disaster. Local journalist David Bancroft had made his way to the site and broadcaster Paul Covington was on air describing the shocking scene.

Tonight I acknowledge those who lost their lives in that tragedy. They were Angus Bristow, Anita Elloy, Alwyn Fenton, Cecilia Howard, David Hutchins, Willam Liddy, Vicki-Lea McGrath, Leslie Ormesher, Gavin Ormesher, Nadine Ormesher, Martin Ormesher, Jannine Ormesher, Jennifer Smedley, Kelly Watson, Robert Westlake, Winifred Westlake, Norman White, Elizabeth Wisley, Shaun Wisley and Pauline Zammit. Colin and Angela Ormesher were sitting on the opposite side of the bus to their family when the collision occurred. Twelve months after the disaster, Colin lost his life to what was reported at the time as trauma-related injuries.

As the House will understand, Angela lost Gavin and Jannine; Gavin's fiancée, Vicki-Lea McGrath; and Angela's brother-in-law Lesley, his wife, Nadine, and their son Martin. I spoke to Angela Ormesher on a number of occasions before her death in 2016. She had great appreciation for the emergency services and first responders, who she said saved her life that morning. I do not doubt she was right. But there was always a great sorrow in her voice and her heart. I have also spoken to the first responders who still live in my community today. Those doctors, nurses, paramedics and SES volunteers describe a shocking scene. Perhaps it is best to acknowledge their stories of that morning but never repeat them. To this day, when those first responders smell pineapple they get violently ill.

Coroner Kevin Waller blamed not only the truck driver, who had up to 80 times the normal therapeutic dose of prescription drugs in his system, but also the condition of the Pacific Highway. His 22-page coronial report, handed down in February 1990, put squarely at the feet of the Hawke and Greiner governments the great challenge of the immediate duplication of the Pacific Highway. I acknowledge that the member for Lismore is in the Chamber. She will understand the challenges we all accepted in the duplication of the Pacific Highway, and I note that duplication did in fact happen. The report identified other issues that were challenges for consecutive Federal and State governments. It has been 35 years since the disaster. The scars have not healed in my community—and I dare say they never will. But we will always remember the heroes of Cowper and the lives lost there on 20 October 1989. I thank the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I thank the member for Clarence. I was living in Kempsey at the time of the accident and remember it very well.

THE GLEN CENTRE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:09): Tonight I celebrate The Glen, a fantastic life-changing drug rehab facility on the Central Coast which celebrated its thirtieth birthday a couple of weeks ago. It was an absolutely amazing day. I will talk about what The Glen has done for so many people. In the 30 years The Glen has existed, over 4,000 clients have passed through its doors. I know that every single person who has passed through the doors of The Glen has had their life changed by the organisation. I thank everybody involved for the work they do and the wraparound support they provide the clients at The Glen to change lives.

The Glen was founded by Cyril Hennessy in 1994. Carol, who I understand is his sister, is now the chair of the all-Indigenous board. She spoke with great pride about her brother. Cyril had two sons who had problems with addictions. One of those sons died young, and the other son, whose name was Glen, motivated his dad to make a difference. Thirty years ago, a drug rehabilitation facility for Indigenous people was not really a popular facility that people in our community wanted to support. Even today, The Glen for Women had quite a bit of resistance in its development. The Glen was established in 1994 and is based on the profound importance of connecting Aboriginal people, First Nations men and women, to culture and giving them the opportunity to reconnect with their family.

I could see the work that has happened from the people who joined in the celebrations. It was an amazingly beautiful celebration. Aboriginal people of many generations all came together. I could see the joy in the hearts and eyes of the people who were graduates of The Glen. They showed a video of people who had passed through The Glen. Once a Glen boy, always a Glen boy. We saw loads of photos. The Glen reconnects Aboriginal people to culture, and they have a beautiful dance group. The Glen dance group is a really powerful group seen across the community of the Central Coast.

We love seeing The Glen boys dance. We now see The Glen women dance, which is amazing culture to share. It is not necessarily a dance of deep culture, but it is a dance of celebration of the changes. The Glen women danced at the Central Coast mental health art exhibition on the afternoon of the thirtieth birthday. Mental health through art is also a celebration of mental health through dance. The journey those women are on is pretty magical. It was really lovely to see Emma McBride, the Federal Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, and Lawrie McKinna, who gave his first speech as mayor, at the event.

I also highlight my respect and gratitude for Joe Coyte. He has been a significant leader in that space for a long time. He received a Churchill Fellowship to travel the world to further his understanding of drug rehabilitation, stigma and the importance of creating change, and also to talk about what The Glen is doing to create change in human beings. Joe is an amazing man. Joe has knocked on the door of Michael Daley. I know he will be knocking on the doors of more members of Parliament in the lead-up to the Drug Summit. He has been involved in a program that works so well, and so we should listen. I also thank the supporters of The Glen across the Central Coast community, who are now quite far and wide. The rehabilitation facility changes the stigma and changes lives.

Lots of people came on board and supplied rides, drinks and food on the day of the celebration. I had the pleasure of walking beside the Hon. Linda Burney as she visited The Glen for Women. The Glen for Men has been so incredibly successful that we now have a Glen for Women on the Central Coast. It is a 20-bed facility. With Linda Burney and Emma McBride, I had the privilege of sitting around the fire pit listening to the stories of women who now have the opportunity to turn their lives around. Those stories are deep and wide, and the pain and trauma are strong, but it is amazing to see those women stepping into The Glen, stepping through their journey into rehabilitation, and then stepping into our local workforce, getting jobs and reconnecting with their family and their lives. I am really proud to wish The Glen a happy birthday. It is changing lives on the Central Coast and changing the lives of Aboriginal people across Australia.

MOSS VALE PLASTIC RECYCLING PROJECT

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (21:14): Residents of Wingecarribee Shire are furious this week that the Moss Vale plastic recycling plant project, which is in the Goulburn electorate but near the border of my electorate of Wollondilly, progressed to the Independent Planning Commission with a recommendation from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure that the project goes ahead. Those who are not familiar with the project may think, "Well, great! Plastic recycling, isn't that a good thing?" I will add some detail. The project is for an industrial scale, four-hectare, five-storey plastic recycling plant in an area designated for sustainable and innovative industries, including sensitive biotechnology, which will cause air and water pollution and release microplastics in the Sydney drinking water catchment area. The Wingecarribee Shire Council has opposed the recycling plant, and the project has attracted the attention of hundreds of community members who are against it.

Community members are not only disappointed; they are furious that their voices and concerns are being discarded. They have fought the plant for over four years. They are united in their conviction that it is the wrong project for the particular site. It makes no sense that a project of this type would be recommended to go ahead in this location. Studies have shown that anywhere between 6 per cent and 13 per cent of plastic processed at United Kingdom plastic recycling facilities could end up being released as microplastics into the environment. Plasrefine has proposed to recycle up to 120,000 tonnes based on operation hours of 24/7, all year round. There are no guarantees around that sum, which does nothing to address the real issue of plastic usage, consumption and reduction. In the process, the project will create pollution, disregard the community and ignore the will of the local council. The loss of trust in the State Government due to this process will be felt for generations.

But that is not the only example of the State Government trying to dump its dirty infrastructure onto the regions. In Tarago, just over an hour south, a waste incinerator project has been proposed to dispose of Sydney's rubbish. The project has resounding community opposition. Community members are well informed about the environmental risks, and they will not go down without a fight. Those are just two examples of the dumping of dodgy infrastructure on regional areas without giving consideration to the infrastructure that we need or deserve.

The Sydney-centric Government making the decisions cares only about Sydney and sees the regional areas as a blank slate for locating their polluting unpopular projects. Can members imagine a plastic recycling plant in Killara, Kyle Bay or Kingsford dumping microplastics and creating toxic fumes, or a waste incinerator in Epping, Earlwood or Eastern Creek? That is right: They tried to place one in Eastern Creek, and it received the same response from the residents as the projects in Tarago and Moss Vale—a resounding no. Eastern Creek was opposed by the major parties, yet all we get is silence about the regions.

Wollondilly, similarly to neighbouring regional electorates, is being duped when it comes to infrastructure. Like all parts of New South Wales, Wollondilly is expected to deliver its fair share of housing. We are well on track to deliver that housing, but without any of the infrastructure that we need. We do not have the appropriate roads, schools, health facilities and recreation facilities, not to mention the basics of jobs and sewerage. The State Government has promised one job to one house, and yet we are still waiting to see those plans for jobs for locals. Luckily some people are able to work from home, but others travel outside of the electorate to their jobs and to public transport. We do not have very good train services. We are lacking any public system, and services are often late or cancelled. It is almost three hours travel time to get to the city.

For too long the regions have been forgotten when it comes to valuable community-enhancing infrastructure. We will not sit back and let the State Government use our land and pollute our air and water, with no provision for sewerage in new developments or upgraded bus connections or more rail services. We are being dumped with developments that serve the State Government's vision for New South Wales's future, with no regard for the strategic goals of the regions. Regional communities are speaking out and councils are speaking out. It is time for the State Government to listen to the people who reside outside of the Sydney metro area. Last night over 500 people met at Moss Vale Services Club. They were really frustrated. After four years of thinking they had beaten the project, they were given two weeks to respond. That is not good enough.

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (21:19): Waste is often not something we like to talk about. How we manage our household waste, including food scraps, can feel personal, yet how we choose to manage it can have a significant impact on the larger community and on our planet. I know inner westies want to reduce their environmental impact and reduce the environmental harm from single-use plastics and other household waste. I am proud to be a member of a government that is tackling this issue head-on, with its public consultation now open on the NSW Plastics: The Way Forward action plan. Since 2022, in our State we have made really important progress in addressing the plastic pollution crisis, phasing out lightweight plastic bags and single-use plastic cutlery, bowls, plates, stirrers and straws. This has led to a drop of 77 per cent in the number of banned single-use plastics items found in litter.

But more needs to be done. In 2022-23 New South Wales alone generated 891,000 tonnes of plastic waste, with only 14 per cent of this being recycled. About 79 per cent of the litter that washes into our waterways is plastic, polluting our precious rivers such as the Cooks River, which runs through my electorate. We are fortunate that members of local groups like the Cooks River Valley Association and the Mudcrabs work hard to clean up and improve the Cooks River and its surrounds, but we need to take stronger steps to reduce the waste that is going into our waterways in the first place. The Way Forward action plan builds on the success of the *NSW Plastics: Next Steps* paper, which the community provided feedback on earlier this year. Importantly, the plan outlines three key actions: reduce plastic litter, reduce harmful chemicals in plastics and microplastics, and keep pace with plastic action. Simple but important actions include phasing out the use of single-use plastic lollipop sticks and requiring food service venues such as fast-food restaurants and cafes to accept re-usable cups.

Much of the action that is occurring to reduce and eliminate waste is happening at the local level. I congratulate locals in my community and Inner West Council on the success of the Food Organics, Garden Organics initiative, better known as FOGO. Council moved to expand food waste recycling to every home in the inner west, and in its first year of operation alone over 8,000 tonnes of food waste has been diverted from landfill. The amount of food and organic material collected each month is, on average, 17 per cent higher than expected and contamination rates are extremely low. Adopting FOGO has led to significant carbon emission reductions because food scraps are no longer rotting in landfill and emitting harmful methane. Instead, food scraps are being industrially composted for use in the Central West, where they are being used to grow high-quality food and fibres.

The council has also taken delivery of high-quality compost from residents' food waste that has contributed to green spaces across the community, including truckloads of quality compost used to support recent tree planting in the Richard Murden Reserve in Haberfield. Council bin audits suggest that roughly 40 per cent of a standard household bin is made up of food scraps. While many residents now report their bin is lighter, they also note that this space is now being taken up by soft plastics. Since the collapse of REDcycle, residents have not been able to recycle soft plastics. Thankfully, the council plans to address this issue by expanding soft plastics recycling. This is all about creating a truly circular economy for soft plastics that can help drive investment in domestic recycling. Inner West Council is also working to create a new grants scheme for local organisations working in the circular economy, continuing to support local organisations doing this important work.

I particularly acknowledge leading organisations like Reverse Garbage, the Bower, Among the Trees and Dress for Success, among many others. The establishment of the sustainability hub in the old council depot in Summer Hill is also contributing to local efforts. People used to line up at the hub for COVID testing, and now they find world-class organisations helping to eliminate waste, promote local jobs, and teach important sustainability principles to locals young and old. The New South Wales Government understands the importance of improving waste management and promoting sustainability across the State by investing in recycling infrastructure, increasing community education on waste reduction and implementing stricter regulations on single-use plastics. It is committed to building a cleaner, greener New South Wales.

CROWN RESERVES IMPROVEMENT FUND

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:24): I express my deep concern over the continued cuts to the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund, or CRIF. This vital fund has been slashed yet again, from \$14.5 million to \$10 million. This reduction is a serious blow to the volunteers and community groups who work tirelessly to maintain and improve our Crown land across rural and regional New South Wales, including the Cootamundra electorate. Crown land is at the very heart of so many of our small towns and villages. It is where our local sports teams play, where our agricultural shows are held and where our communities gather for important moments. These spaces—our showgrounds, our racecourses, our parks and our much-loved community halls—are not just patches of land.

In fact, many of the cherished halls in my electorate of Cootamundra have been maintained by volunteers for over 100 years, standing as a testament to the dedication and spirit of the people of the seat of small communities. They are essential meeting places, cultural landmarks and economic lifelines. They bring us together as communities and preserve our history while building our future. However, maintaining and improving these spaces is no easy task. It is often left to volunteers and members of sporting groups and local organisations, who already give so much of their time and energy. Labor's decision to once again reduce funding for the CRIF makes it even harder for those community champions to continue their work.

Since this Government took office, the funding has been cut by \$8 million annually. Under the Coalition, \$18 million was allocated for the fund in 2022-23. Now, under Labor, this statewide fund has been reduced to just \$10 million. This is not just a financial cut; it is a serious setback for our towns and villages, many of which rely on this funding to maintain essential infrastructure and create growth opportunities. To give an example from the Cootamundra electorate, in the 2021-22 financial year the Narrandera Race Club secured funding from the CRIF to build an amenities block. This was not just an investment in the race club; it was an investment in the entire local economy, providing jobs for local builders and great facilities for visitors to our beautiful region. This is just one project, but it underscores the importance of this funding. Without it, similar projects may no longer be possible.

With the shrinking pool of funds, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Crown land managers and community groups to compete for the funds they need. Not only has the total funding been reduced, but also this year's eligibility criteria is even more restrictive. A minimum grant amount of \$100,000 has been introduced, and only projects deemed to have a "high-quality impact" are being considered. I ask the question: Who determines what constitutes a high-quality impact and will it reflect the unique needs of our small rural communities? The truth is that our towns and villages may not need millions of dollars. Even a small grant can have a massive impact.

Many local groups have done their research, they have found the best prices and they are shovel ready—they just need the funding. Now they are being asked to fight for a share of a shrinking pool, with criteria seemingly designed to leave them behind.

These funding cuts have left our towns high and dry when they need support the most. We are not talking about luxury projects here; we are talking about basic infrastructure: the community halls, sporting facilities and parks that people in the Cootamundra electorate—and, indeed, across New South Wales—use every single day. These projects are essential to the fabric of our rural and regional communities, and they deserve support. I urge the Minns Labor Government to reverse these cuts and restore the CRIF to the levels our communities need. The volunteers and community groups in my electorate and across rural New South Wales work hard to preserve and improve our Crown land and they should not be left to scrap over what little is left. Let us give our rural and regional communities the investment they deserve so they can continue to thrive.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES SHOALHAVEN ILLAWARRA

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (21:28): I speak about an event that I attended last month: the opening of Jumbulla. The newest and most innovative accommodation for women and children escaping domestic, family and sexual violence in the Illawarra of Supported Accommodation and Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra, also known as SAHSSI. It was a significant milestone not just for SAHSSI but for the entire community. This project represents hope, resilience and the collective effort of so many individuals and organisations that have worked tirelessly to make this a reality.

Funded by the Department of Social Services, Jumbulla consists of eight fully self-contained units, designed with dignity, safety and healing in mind. Each unit offers essential amenities—including kitchens, bathrooms, balconies and car spaces—so that the women and children who find refuge here can regain a sense of normalcy and independence. The communal areas provide a calm space for children and women to socialise if need be. Jumbulla is not just about bricks and mortar. It is also a place of holistic support and offers 24/7 onsite staffing and security, ensuring that residents feel safe and supported around the clock. The dedicated staff are there to provide immediate and tailored case management, designed to address the specific needs of each woman and child who comes through its doors. The property looks like any other new block of units and is also located close to transport hubs, local schools and other services.

It is located in my neighbouring electorate; however, I believe they should be located in every electorate. I will be advocating for one in Shellharbour, and I am already looking for land. For those members who may be unfamiliar with SAHSSI, its mission is to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community—women and children escaping violence, and individuals experiencing homelessness. SAHSSI was born in 2014 from the merger of two women's refuges. However, its origins go back much further than that, with over 30 years of continuous service to women and children in need. Its mission has always been clear: to provide safe, secure and supported accommodation for those facing homelessness or fleeing domestic and family violence.

Its vision also goes way beyond that. It seeks to create pathways to stable, long-term housing and to offer tailored support that allows women and children to not only survive but thrive. That is where Jumbulla comes in. The purpose-built facility is a beacon of hope. It stands as a physical reminder of what we as a community can achieve when we come together with a common purpose to protect, support and empower women and children in their time of need. The impact of Jumbulla goes beyond its walls. Transitional housing like this is vital because it provides a stepping stone between crisis accommodation and permanent, long-term housing. It is a crucial part of the continuum of care, offering women and children the stability they need to heal and rebuild their lives while receiving professional support from the outreach case managers.

SAHSSI is currently responsible for managing 38 transitional properties across the Illawarra, with access to additional properties in the Shoalhaven region. Jumbulla adds to that growing network of support, giving more women and children the opportunity to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Domestic violence, homelessness and systemic inequality remain significant challenges but with projects like this, and the continued support of the community, we can create real, lasting change. I again thank everyone at SAHSSI who has contributed to making Jumbulla a reality. I hope that Jumbulla offers the women and children who will reside there safety, peace and the strength to rebuild.

FOUNDATION FOR A BLOODY GREAT CAUSE

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (21:33): On Friday 18 October I had the privilege of attending the Bloody Great Night Out hosted by the Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause at Doltone House. The night was an overwhelming success, raising over \$220,000 for the haematology clinical research unit at Concord hospital. All funds raised at the Bloody Great Night Out go toward the life-saving work of the clinical research

unit, giving patients with rare and aggressive blood cancers the very best chance of beating this disease. This year the funds will go toward the retention of two specialised cancer nurses that support patients undergoing treatment.

The Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause is a charitable organisation founded in 2009 with one simple vision: "Finding cures. Saving lives." It is a seemingly simple goal, but one that has had a profound impact on the lives of many. To date, the Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause has successfully raised over \$1½ million for research and prevention of myeloma, leukaemia and other blood cancers. The Leukaemia Foundation reports that more than 135,000 people live with blood cancer or a related disorder in Australia, with 16 losing their lives each day. Currently, there is no known way to screen for or prevent blood cancers, and it is for that exact reason that the clinical trials at the Concord haematology research unit are so important in supporting patients and their families to deal with the shock of a diagnosis. A cancer diagnosis rocks the sufferer's entire world and turns their world upside down. Having the certainty of knowing that they as a patient or that their family member or loved one is receiving the very best care and has an even better chance of survival because they are receiving an innovative treatment in a new clinical trial is life changing.

Concord hospital's clinical research unit is one of the largest of its kind in New South Wales and it has helped thousands of patients through its groundbreaking clinical trials. Currently it is hosting over 50 clinical trials to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of a range of blood cancer treatments and preventatives. I acknowledge the work of the following people: Professor Judith Trotman, head of department; Dr Nicole Wong Doo, clinical research unit director; Associate Professor Vivien Chen, head of basic and translational research; Associate Professor Ilona Cunningham, Sydney Local Health District clinical director of cancer and palliative care; haematologists Dr Emma Verner, Dr Robin Gasiorowski, Dr Janlyn Falconer, Dr Ibrahim Tohidi-Esfahani, Dr Marc Ellis and Dr Praveen Gounder; Jennifer Harman, clinical nurse specialist and clinical research unit manager; and Tafline Walker, business operations manager.

There are too many to name, but I acknowledge all of the clinical trials fellows, all of the clinical trial coordinators, the nurses, and the administration and support staff of the unit. On behalf of all patients, I extend my sincerest gratitude to the doctors, nurses, allied health workers and hospital staff who work tirelessly each and every day for their patients and to save lives. Events such as the Bloody Great Night Out are run entirely by volunteers and would not be possible without the dedication, vision and passion of the Bloody Great Committee. I recognise the efforts of the chair, Susan MacGregor, and committee members Nat Bongiorno, Lara Meli, Christian Bracci, Rosanna Campisi, Professor Judith Trotman, Steven Nassibian and Marie Piccin. I thank them for the countless hours of planning and preparation that they have dedicated to the foundation.

The Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause is doing incredible work, but the fight against incurable blood cancers requires support beyond the generosity of individuals. I hope that one day in this State we are able to recognise the immense value of investing in haematological research where advancements lead to groundbreaking treatments and cures. With additional funding, we could accelerate the pace of research, improve patient outcomes, and ultimately save lives. Government funding is essential not just for research but also for ensuring that our hospitals and medical facilities are equipped with the resources they need to provide the highest level of care.

The medical professionals at the haematology clinical research unit are doing extraordinary work, but they need the backing of a system that supports their efforts. Investing in blood cancer research is just that: an investment. It is an investment in the health and wellbeing of the very people we serve in this place. The breakthroughs that come from this research have the potential to benefit not only those currently suffering from blood cancer but also future generations. I sincerely thank everyone involved in the Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause and those who make the Concord haematology research unit the innovative, amazing and wonderful department that it is today. I thank them for their unwavering commitment to finding cures and saving lives. Their work is truly commendable.

BEGA ELECTORATE ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (21:38): On 26 September I spoke on the Bega electorate road infrastructure, and I only got about halfway on the 270 kilometres from Princes Highway from Cockwhy Creek to the Victorian border. So, like Jack Kerouac, I am on the road and, like Willie Nelson, I am on the road again. The road network in the Bega electorate has been significantly impacted by severe flooding, storm damage and natural disasters over the past few years. I can vouch for that need, having driven over 60,000 kilometres and having had five punctured tyres and a cracked windscreen over the past two years.

Thanks to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and the Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund, the Bega electorate has received \$6.7 million that will assist local councils with urgent road repairs and priority corrective maintenance and repair of potholes on their local and regional roads. The fund builds on and includes the \$280 million regional portion of the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program, which was paid to local government in early 2023, and creates a new fund, with an additional \$390 million made available to support

regional New South Wales councils. That funding will assist councils to address priority repairs and to deliver safer journeys for local communities, industry and the people of the State.

I have previously described the Cuttagee Bridge, which is on MR272 or the 44-kilometre Tathra-Bermagui Road. I note that I met the member for Barwon there. He was on his bike on the way through. The Cuttagee Bridge is a 110-metre single-lane wooden bridge that is over 100 years old. The MR272 is our region's version of the Great Ocean Road. The member for Barwon would acknowledge that. It contains five heritage wooden bridges featured in cinema, literature and musical culture. They are one-lane wooden bridges where residents and tourists give way as well as give the bush salute.

Following a Minns Labor Government election commitment of \$15 million, an agreement exists between Transport for NSW and the Bega Valley Shire Council for the delivery of the Cuttagee Bridge project. The previous Government offered funding under the Fixing Country Bridges Program in March 2021, which was then withdrawn in June 2021, leaving Bega Valley Shire Council in no-man's-land. The former Government failed to fix the bridge, despite Bega Valley Shire Council's urgent request for the renewal or replacement of the bridge due to the need for local transport, buses, emergency services and freight. In fact, of the 15,000 kilometres of road able to be reclassified by the former Government, not one kilometre was reclassified in the Bega electorate. We must consider the significant heritage and cultural value of the classic timber bridge and its contribution to local tourism. I ask the House to note that I attended the celebration of the Tathra Wharf restoration. The investment of \$7.1 million for this 1862 marine hardwood structure will ensure that it will last another 100 years. This equally applies to the restoration of the historic Cuttagee Bridge.

I turn to work on Brown Mountain. Nine landslips have occurred on the Snowy Mountains Highway at Brown Mountain caused by natural disaster events in 2022. The next stage of critical repairs will begin on two more landslip sites on Brown Mountain, as progress continues to fix damage from heavy rain events. Extensive repairs have already been carried out at three landslip sites along the Snowy Mountains Highway, with the next two on Brown Mountain set to be finished before the year's end. A contract has been awarded to carry out the work, which will begin at a site located about 2½ kilometres west of the Brown Mountain power station, before moving to the second site about a kilometre further west.

The \$1.9 million program of work has been funded through the Australian and State Government's disaster recovery funding arrangements and will include removing loose soil and rocks, installing more than 3,000 linear metres of seven-metre long steel rods known as soil nails and then adding mesh and sprayed concrete, also known as shotcrete. Those projects take time. Crews are making significant progress to work through each area and restore the road to its pre-disaster condition and open it to its full capacity. It is challenging work requiring large, long-reach excavators and drilling rigs. I acknowledge that Transport for NSW has made significant progress on its natural disaster recovery work, completing repairs on more than half of the 100 landslip sites on several key State roads across the Illawarra and South Coast. The 2024-25 New South Wales budget delivered \$3.3 billion to rebuild road and transport infrastructure damaged during natural disasters.

BROKEN HILL POWER OUTAGE

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (21:43): Last Wednesday night Broken Hill, Menindee, White Cliffs, Tibooburra, Silverton, Sunset Strip, Milparinka, Packsaddle and other places experienced a disaster. Tornado-like winds swept through the south of the Far West and damaged seven towers on a 250-kilometre powerline supplying Broken Hill and surrounding communities, blacking them out for days. The redundancy plan for the area was two large-scale generators to back up more than 10,000 residents and businesses with power, but we only had one and it did not have the capacity to maintain full demand. That lone turbine generator is not in the best of health and experiences multiple stoppages, including all of last night. That stoppage has only been resolved this afternoon.

We have one powerline and one backup generator to supply Broken Hill and many communities in the Far West. If that generator failed, we would be in a world of trouble. How did this happen? There is only one generator because the other is reported to have been out of service since November 2023. From the moment the crisis began, my immediate focus was on quickly bringing power to as many communities as possible. I met with the Premier and the Minister and their staff and departments. Transgrid and Essential Energy have been regularly available with information and, thankfully, we have short-term solutions on the move. Four 1750 kVA generators have been deployed to hook into a substation at Broken Hill and another four are en route, providing a total of 12 to 18 megawatts to stabilise the network. In around 20 days Transgrid can reassess and get the lines back up with temporary towers.

The Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and local pubs and clubs like the White Cliffs Hotel, Wilcannia Golf Club and Michael Boland at the Broken Hill Musicians Club are all banding together, creating community hubs using their own generators for charging people's phones and other electrical equipment and offering freezer space for perishable items. Hospitals are conducting welfare checks and the RFS has two

B-doubles loaded with supplies coming into Menindee and other communities, including diesel, coolrooms, lighting towers and Starlink connections. Some residents experiencing this disaster live over 200 kilometres from town. They are feeling isolated and have no communication. They have months worth of food that will have to be thrown out. That goes for businesses too, like supermarkets. The community has stepped up and created its own solutions while it waits for another short-term solution—the temporary towers that are still three weeks away.

Mining operations had to execute emergency response plans to protect their employees when the power went out. Staff were moved to fresh air bases, but now they are shut down altogether and are looking at investing in expensive generators to get people back to work. Perilya mine has helped manage the load to the local grid to ensure that the rest of the community has power. This incident will cost it millions of dollars. In places like White Cliffs, communications that rely on the electricity network are out. People could dial 000, but the emergency response team could not contact the local commands to dispatch a response.

This is a catastrophe for the well-aged, sick and people on life support. The temperatures soar in those areas. While the east coast enjoys spring weather in Sydney, it hits over 40 degrees regularly in many Far West communities. They need air conditioning. Residents are being told to reduce non-essential usage between 5.30 p.m. and 10.30 p.m. That is important because that is the peak load. That prevents rotating shutdowns of the grid. There are scheduled maintenance plans in place. One was on Sunday night, which was scheduled to go to 5.00 a.m., but the power did not come back on for three more hours in some places. Businesses had rostered staff based on the advice that power would be back on at a specific time, so that cost them some money when it was not. The community should not be relied upon in times like these, which the Minister for Energy described as a "huge event". Compensation should be offered to those business who are losing money and time. At the moment, the community is supporting them.

The regional emergency management committee, which includes the mayor, police and SES, is putting together an impact statement for a national disaster declaration. People need to be compensated for their losses of food and business. We are working with the Premier's office on pathways for that compensation. Hopefully some positive long-term answers are on the horizon with the Hydrostor compressed air facility, but these are all a way off. The scale of the Hydrostor project in Broken Hill is untested anywhere else in the world. Today the Premier agreed that we need an inquiry into how we ended up with only one generator left. The people of Far West New South Wales deserve an answer.

RECONNECTING RIVER COUNTRY PROGRAM

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (21:48): In my last private member's statement, I spoke of the Government's plans to flood homes, farms, roads, schools, sporting grounds and infrastructure as part of its misleadingly named Reconnecting River Country Program. In my view, it is an immoral land grab and it is clear that the New South Wales Government does not want anyone to know what it is up to. Since making my private member's statement last week, I have been asked the same question over and over again by many different people: How does the Government get away with this stuff? People wonder why there is not more of an uproar in rural New South Wales about the Government's mad plans. People ask, "Where are the protests? Why are people not out in the streets?" I can answer that question with one word: submissions.

Submissions are meant to help people communicate with the Government on important issues, but these days submissions are used by the Government to shut people up. Let me explain. Governments have figured out that if they call for enough submissions, community advocates will fall into the trap of studiously writing those submissions. Those community advocates end up being so busy writing those submissions that they do not have time for anything else. The Government would rather have advocates silently typing up submissions than taking to the streets and telling rural families what is really going on. For anyone who thinks I am exaggerating how governments tie up advocates with meaningless submission work, the following is a list of government submissions that just one rural group has been asked to submit in the current three-month period—all to do with water.

Submissions have been called for the Landholder Negotiation Scheme, the floodplain management plan for southern valleys, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority constraints road map, the proposed listing of the Murray River below the Darling junction as a threatened ecological community under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the National Water Agreement's draft 302 principles, the Upper Murrumbidgee improvement strategy, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's water pricing determination, and the New South Wales Government's response on potential connectivity rule changes in the northern basin. Many of the advocacy groups are small. They do not have the resources of the Government, and they often have another job in town or on the farm.

Despite having plenty of resources, the Government will not actually read the vast majority of the submissions anyway. If people read the legislation, they will see the loopholes that allow governments to ignore

those submissions. Under the Act, interested parties are meant to be notified of government changes to water plans. But then clause 36 (3) says if the Government does not actually notify the interested parties, it does not affect the validity of any management plan. In other words, the Government is meant to tell people what it is doing but, if it does not, there will be no consequences. Section 39 pulls the same trick. These loopholes make the submissions worthless. That is why I am advising advocacy groups to step away from their keyboards. Submissions are a trap. They are designed to distract advocates so that we cannot protest properly.

By calling for submissions, even when they are not read, governments can say, "See? We consulted. We listened. Now we can just do whatever we want." I believe community advocates are better off not engaging with submissions or the Government's other consultation processes. I am telling advocates to boycott submissions and consultations until we can be sure that the real message is getting through to the Premier and the Government. If we wanted lip-service, we would go to a beautician. We want to be heard, and we are sick and tired of talking to a government that only pretends to listen. If someone lived in Sydney and the Government was about to flood their backyard and potentially drown their pets or risk their kids' safety, they would not be writing a submission and they would not be attending a government consultation session run by a couple of nice bureaucrats with no power over the issue.

If the Government was going to start flooding backyards in Sydney, people would be marching in the streets, and that is what we will have to do in rural New South Wales. If the Government is hell-bent on attempting to flood our backyard, rural New South Wales will have to fight it tooth and nail. I hope that the Premier and his Government are ready for this fight. It will not be pretty, and the Government will not win this fight. The Premier can be sure of that. In rural New South Wales we usually work hard to get along, but no-one from rural New South Wales can go along with these mad plans. Make no mistake, if the Government tries to flood rural New South Wales, it will be the Government that ends up taking on water. My message to the Premier is simple: Don't do it, for our sake and for the Government's sake.

COFFS HARBOUR SPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (21:53): Sports stars of all ages and abilities on the Coffs Coast deserve every accolade that they earn. They bring pride to our community through their passion, their outstanding achievements, their determination to succeed and their endurance. Most importantly, they give their best and their all, and we thank them for what they accomplish. As the weather warms up, they are coming out to play in growing numbers. One of our local success stories has been the Mid North Coast Disabled Surfers Association. The volunteers, participants and carers are hitting the high waters for another season. The team is all about surfers helping surfers and putting smiles on dials, and they are succeeding with each wave by taking people of all disabilities—and ability—surfing in a fun, friendly, safe and inclusive environment.

The season runs on five Saturdays between 26 October and 1 March at Jetty Beach and Woolgoolga Beach. At the conclusion of each day's surfing, a free barbeque lunch is provided by Coffs Harbour Rotary club at Jetty Beach and Woolgoolga Lions Club at Woolgoolga Beach, and a presentation is made to participating surfers. New participants are always welcome, as are new volunteers, who do not need to be experienced surfers. The Mid North Coast Disabled Surfers Association is led by president Richie Goddard, vice-president Brett Pilon, secretary Michelle Anthony and treasurer Troy Young.

Also making waves are the talented Coffs Harbour Boardriders Club members, who have achieved outstanding results at recent competitions. The club excelled in team events at the Vissla Junior Kirra Teams Challenge and the Saltwater Wine Mid North Coast Board Club Battle. The club's junior boys competed in the Kirra Teams Challenge at Durambah between 20 and 22 September, which is the largest team format event in Australia. The Coffs Harbour Boardriders club team included Will Martin, Creed Smart, Carter Crowley, Benji Lowen, Luca Martin, Hamish Harrigan, Sage Lewis and Jarrah White. The reserve surfers who travelled with the team in case of injury were Tye Morrison, Max Crowley and Jet Dean.

The Coffs Harbour team finished third, bringing home \$2,000 in prize money to invest in the development of the junior team. On 14 and 15 September the club's junior and senior teams were at Port Macquarie for the Saltwater Wine Mid North Coast Board Club Battle. The senior team won its event, while the club's first ever junior tag team were semifinalists. The seniors comprised Creed Smart, George Roberts, Maddison Williams and Benji Lowen, and providing a big boost was Rosie Smart, who was available after competing internationally.

Also in the thick of the action is Coffs Harbour Triathlon Club, which is preparing to host two major events in coming months. On the back of the success of the women's event last year, the club has also scheduled a men's race in the 2024-25 calendar. The Men's "Bring a Mate" Movember Triathlon will be held on Sunday 10 November at the Coffs Harbour Jetty. Meanwhile, the women's club race will be held on Sunday 8 December. All proceeds from the men's triathlon will go to Lifeline North Coast—a deserving beneficiary indeed.

Coffs Harbour Triathlon Club members and their supporters are renowned for cultivating a great environment for those who want to give this growing sport a try, with the social benefits being a particular focus.

The club welcomes athletes of all abilities to compete in the local club races, which are staged each fortnight during the triathlon season. The season runs from October to May, with regular club races held on Sundays at the Jetty. Coffs Harbour Triathlon Club's committee comprises president Chris Hamilton, vice-president Mark Kirstein, secretary Peter Birch, assistant secretary Kathy Robson, race director Adrian Hawke, treasurer Maria Wood, timing officer Kathryn Gibney, volunteer coordinator Dean Caton, sanctioning officer Adam Cox, uniform coordinator Caron Mackie, social coordinators Lindy Gemmell and Sam Birch, web administrator and publicity officer Elize Strydom, gear steward Shaun Bayndrian and historian Mark Griffiths. I congratulate all of our sporting organisations and their volunteers on being the heart and soul of our community.

ACTIVATE AUSTRALIA'S SKILLS CAMPAIGN

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:58): I once again address a pressing issue affecting thousands of highly skilled workers—engineers, healthcare professionals, IT experts, architects and educators—ready to contribute their invaluable knowledge and experience but prevented from doing so by outdated regulations and systemic barriers. The result is a missed opportunity for those skilled workers and Australia's economy, particularly in New South Wales. The Activate Australia's Skills campaign was launched earlier this month by an alliance of more than 50 business groups, unions and community organisations seeking to tackle the issue by improving national skills and qualifications recognition.

Research shows that 44 per cent of skilled migrants are working beneath their skill level, while one-third of all Australian occupations face shortages. Additionally, 90 per cent of business leaders are concerned about the impact of skills shortages on their industries. We are losing an estimated \$70 billion a year in economic activity due to the underutilisation of those workers. A significant barrier those skilled migrants face is the recognition of their overseas qualifications. Many are trained and experienced professionals, but they are forced to undergo a costly, complex and lengthy requalification process, often leaving them in jobs that do not reflect their expertise. That must change.

The Activate Australia's Skills campaign makes several recommendations with the aim of creating a streamlined and simplified national skills recognition system that ensures qualifications are recognised consistently across Australia. It calls for a unified national governance system to oversee the recognition of overseas qualifications. That includes the establishment of an ombudsman with regulatory power to provide independent oversight and transparency, to ensure that the system operates fairly and efficiently. Currently the process is fragmented, with different rules and regulations in each State. The campaign also calls for the establishment of a multilingual online one-stop-shop portal. The portal would further simplify the currently fragmented process and serve as a comprehensive guide for navigating the skills assessment, qualification recognition and occupational licensing processes.

The campaign's proposals would enable skilled migrants to transition smoothly into their qualified professions. It would also prevent unnecessary delays and costs, which will help both migrants and the industries that need their skills. A recent report released by the Federal Joint Standing Committee on Migration entitled *Migration, Pathway to Nation Building* recognises those challenges and makes several recommendations consistent with the Activate Australia's Skills campaign. Recommendation 39 of the joint standing committee suggests that we establish mutual recognition agreements with countries that share similar standards to Australia. By partnering with those countries, we can ensure that skilled migrants from nations with comparable qualifications can transition seamlessly into our workforce and thus eliminate unnecessary requalification requirements.

All of that seems relatively straightforward for those arriving through skilled migration channels. However, we know that migrants with highly sought after skills and qualifications also come to this country via humanitarian programs as refugees. Many refugees arrive here with little more than the clothes on their backs. They are highly traumatised, having fled persecution, war and conflict. The ability to prove their skills and qualifications is often difficult if not impossible. No records exist or, if they do, they sit with governments that may range from uncooperative to outright hostile. Thankfully, we can look to successful international examples. The Joint Standing Committee on Migration report notes that processes in Germany may offer an appropriate model. One of the submissions to the inquiry was made by the Australian Migrant Resource Centre. It noted:

In Germany between 2015 and 2018 around 8,475 Syrian vocational qualifications were recognized, as well as over 1,400 qualifications from Iran and over 800 qualifications from Iraq. The most common are ... in the field of health professions (doctor, nurse, dentist).

Our State, like much of Australia, faces labour shortages in those very sectors. But not only can we fill those critical gaps across health care, construction, education and technology; we can also help thousands of workers move from unemployment and underemployment. The shortages are impacting our ability to provide essential services and complete vital infrastructure projects. We do not need to look overseas for the talent we need. The talent is already here, living in our communities. It is a win-win for both New South Wales and its residents. It is not just an economic issue but also a question of fairness, inclusivity and common sense. Migrants bring with them valuable skills that we desperately need, but we are blocking them from making the contributions they are capable of. It is time to change that. The economic benefits will speak for themselves but, more importantly, we will be recognising the value and dignity of every individual who comes to Australia seeking a better life.

WINSTON HILLS ELECTORATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (22:03): I speak on the outcomes of the recent local government elections across the Winston Hills electorate. The electorate of Winston Hills is unique in having three different local government areas falling within its boundaries. There is Blacktown to the west, the Hills Shire Council to the north and Parramatta to the east. Each of those councils plays a crucial role in shaping our communities and fostering the growth of Western Sydney. They are also instrumental in supporting our State's economy—an influence that will only continue to grow.

The area covered by Blacktown City Council is one of the fastest growing regions in our State, with forecasts predicting that the population of Blacktown will increase by 172,000 persons by 2046. That represents a significant 43 per cent growth. Blacktown council plays an important role in managing the expansion by ensuring that facilities and services meet the needs of its rapidly growing population. Residents of the Winston Hills electorate who live in the Blacktown council area are fortunate to have access to a number of facilities, including the Blacktown Aquatic Centre, which is receiving an \$80 million upgrade thanks to the WestInvest program of the previous Government, and the Blacktown CBD, with its Australian Catholic University campus and the shopping complex.

In the recent local government elections, Liberal candidate Mohit Kumar was elected to represent Ward 2, which encompasses the suburbs of Blacktown, Seven Hills, Lalor Park, Kings Langley and Glenwood within the Winston Hills electorate. Councillor Kumar will be a great asset on council with his experience as a serving police officer and a long-serving community leader in a number of groups around the local area. Councillor Kumar's election will help address the concerns of Lalor Park and Kings Langley residents regarding youth crime, as well as Glenwood's opposition to the Labor Government's high-density development plans.

Councillor Kumar's campaign was well received and supported by members of the Glenwood community, who expressed their concerns with the lack of consultation provided by the New South Wales Labor Government on the Kellyville and Bella Vista transport oriented development proposal. The result in Ward 2 of Blacktown City Council also saw a second Liberal fall within a couple of hundred votes of being elected, which would have been a fantastic feat. Nonetheless, just outside of the Winston Hills electorate, the results in Ward 1 saw two Liberal councillors elected in a landmark result. I congratulate Councillor Jess Diaz and Councillor Allan Green on that terrific result for the Liberal Party further down Windsor Road in the electorate of Riverstone.

Parramatta is quickly becoming a second major city in New South Wales, with significant continued investment and population growth. Parramatta is home to a large CBD with a light rail connecting the city centre to its surrounds. Local to Winston Hills electorate residents is the CommBank Stadium, home to the Parramatta Eels and the Western Sydney Wanderers, as well as the Parramatta Aquatic Centre and the Westmead Health Precinct. The recent City of Parramatta election saw the return of a Liberal lord mayor for the first time since 2021. I congratulate Lord Mayor Martin Zaiter on his fantastic achievement. Lord Mayor Zaiter is a hardworking small business owner who has worked tirelessly as a community leader for many years. It is a truly deserving appointment and I look forward to working with him to deliver better outcomes and services for members of the Winston Hills community.

The Parramatta city elections also saw the election of two Liberal councillors in the North Rocks Ward, which covers the residents of Winston Hills and Northmead. I congratulate Councillor Georgina Valjak on her re-election and Councillor Manning Jeffrey on his election to council. Councillor Valjak has worked tirelessly for the local community in Winston Hills for a number of years in her capacity as a local councillor. She has also worked with my office to deliver several terrific outcomes for local residents. I look forward to working with Councillor Valjak and Councillor Jeffrey over the coming term to ensure that our community is serviced appropriately by the City of Parramatta council.

The Hills Shire Council is home to a large portion of the Metro Northwest, with five stops along its route. In recent times the Hills Shire has expanded greenfield development as well as increased density around Castle Hill station. Major investments have also been made in local infrastructure, including significant upgrades

to Memorial Avenue and Showground Road, as well as the opening of the Waves aquatic centre in Baulkham Hills. I take the opportunity to congratulate the newly elected mayor, Dr Michelle Byrne, on becoming the mayor once again. Mayor Byrne played an important role in securing funding for many of those projects during her previous term as mayor. I also congratulate Councillor Frank De Masi on his election to West Ward and as deputy mayor. Once again, I extend my congratulations to all those councillors on their elections to local government. I look forward to working with them.

MOVEMBER FOUNDATION

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (22:08): I recognise a movement that sweeps our nation and the world every November. What started in 2003 with 30 friends in Melbourne who wanted to raise money for men's health and prostate cancer has grown to have annual significance throughout North America, Europe and Asia. With more than six million participants, it is nothing to bristle at. Some may have noticed it because of the proliferation of crumb catchers, lip foliage, grass grins, caterpillars and the abundance of face furniture. Of course, I am talking about Movember—the one month of the year when Gillette profits plummet because men refuse to pick up a razor. But those moes are not purely for show. Beneath the furry upper lip, Movember seeks to increase awareness and address some of the main issues that affect men worldwide.

That is where it gets serious. On average, men die four years younger than women, their suicide rate is four times higher than women, and more than five men die prematurely every hour from preventable diseases and conditions. However, there is no biological reason that men should die younger than women. The team at Movember argues that it is male behaviours and attitudes that contribute to this problem. The cure is education, awareness and compassion. To honour the Movember mission, I will focus on mental health and suicide prevention, and prostate and testicular cancer. Around 43 per cent of Australian males have experienced a mental health problem at some point in their lifetime.

For males aged between 15 to 44, suicide is the leading cause of death—not congenital conditions, cancer or even cardiovascular disease, but suicide. Men typically downplay symptoms or refuse to talk about them. Equally, they are less likely to seek treatment or support. It is incumbent on all of us to identify the early signs. While depression can affect people in different ways, common symptoms include withdrawing from friends and family, mood swings and even a reliance on stimulants. Winston Churchill famously characterised it as his black dog. At times he was so paralysed by despair that he spent time in bed, had little energy and few interests, lost his appetite and could not concentrate. Depression does not discriminate, and it is important that we identify the signs early.

One in five men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. It is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men in Australia. About 17,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year. However, with early detection, prostate cancer is highly curable. It has been said that more men die with prostate cancer than because of it. With the funds that have been raised, Movember has funded two clinical trials targeting the prostate-specific membrane antigen, a protein that can be found in high levels on prostate cancer cells, which makes it a unique target for new diagnostic tests and treatments. The Movember Foundation also funds programs such as the prostate cancer Movember Global Action Plan, prostate cancer survivorship programs and Movember's awareness and education program.

Testicular cancer is the second most common form of cancer among men aged 18 to 39. It is estimated that 1,026 people will be diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2024. It has an average diagnosis age of 36 years. However, like prostate cancer, the outlook is positive for those diagnosed with the disease. About 95 per cent of men survive testicular cancer. In summary, I congratulate everyone who grows a handlebar, pencil, walrus or well-manicured horseshoe. The money that is raised will go to an incredible cause. Let us make sure that this Movember we follow through with action. To our fathers, husbands, brothers, sons and friends, we love you and we want you to be healthy. Please go and get yourself tested, go and see your GP, and talk about your health.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 22:13
until Wednesday 23 October 2024 at 12:00.**

Written Community Recognition Statements

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

CATE MCQUILLEN

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I am honoured to recognise Cate McQuillen, the visionary leader behind Mememe Productions, who was awarded Outstanding Business Leader (36 years+ with under 20 employees) at the 2024 Northern Rivers Business Awards. Mememe Productions is not just a multimedia

company; it's a creative powerhouse dedicated to producing environmentally focused, values-led content for children and the community. Their beloved productions, including dirtgirlworld and Get Grubby TV, are viewed in 128 countries and resonate deeply with families worldwide. Cate's innovative approach combines fun with education, empowering children to engage with nature and embrace sustainable practices. From the world premiere of dirtgirl's eco-musical at the Sydney Opera House to collaborative efforts with local councils on waste education, Mememe Productions leads the charge in influencing a generation towards eco-consciousness. The company also received highly commended awards in the Excellence in Small Business and Excellence in Sustainability categories, solidifying its commitment to not only entertain but also educate and inspire action. On behalf of our community, I extend my congratulations to Cate and the entire Mememe Productions team. Your passion for the planet and dedication to creating positive change are truly commendable. I look forward to seeing your continued impact on future generations.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE INDY AND SUSANNA FREYMARK

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to congratulate Susanna Freymark on the third anniversary of her digital news site, IndyNR, providing local news delivered directly and instantly to readers. Susanna is the director, founder and editor of the news site. Covering the Richmond Valley and Kyogle areas Susanna is kept very busy reporting on local events, stories, incidents, and emergencies as they happen. Along with the news, including coverage of local council and community news, politics, accidents, crime, education, environment, cattle sales, local events, arts and sport, the website also includes a what's on guide, weekly quizzes, food recipes and humor columns, there is certainly something for everyone. Susanna provided an invaluable and extensive coverage of the flooding that devastated the Northern Rivers regions in New South Wales in 2022 Happy birthday to The IndyNR and keep up the fantastic work Susanna, what a great source of news and information for the community, we thank you!

THANK YOU - LIVABLE VOLUNTEERS

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I am honoured to acknowledge the incredible commitment of Livable's Palliative Care Volunteer Support Service who spend many hours offering invaluable assistance to community members, families, and carers in the Clarence Valley, who are living with a life-limiting illness. The service began in June 2004 and is powered by dedicated volunteers trained in Palliative Care support, providing much-needed compassion and care to patients and their families in the comfort of their homes. The support offered can include respite for carers or family members, companionship, social support, and assistance with transport to medical appointments. The Palliative Care team currently consists of seven local volunteers who generously dedicate their time and skills to support individuals and their loved ones throughout various stages of their illness. Relying solely on community donations and grants to continue this vital service, providing compassionate care and support to those in need. Notching up an incredible 18 years of service are Shirley Burke, Christine Fuller and Stephanye Holden. Colin Clark, Kerry Hughes and Kathryn Lentfer, 8 years and Neroli Noonan, 3 years. Such incredible dedication to Palliative Care in our region and I thank each of you for your tireless efforts.

CRONULLA HIGH SCHOOL 2025 STUDENT LEADERS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate Cronulla High School's incoming 2025 student leadership team on their appointment. Ella Hewitt and Mason Boudville were elected as school captains, to serve alongside vice-captains Nadia Yassine and Duke Garnsey. Zara Bennett, Natasha Humphreys, Killarney Inglis-Jones, Holly Jeffree, Kane Pearse, Sasha Phipps, Bodhi Reid, William Scott, Alexander Skapetis, and Kendi Tshaka were all elected as school prefects. Sienna Mackenzie and Lulu Oaten are the new performing arts captains, with Sari McKee and Madison Pintley the new sports captains. Being elected to student leadership is a fantastic opportunity for those fortunate enough to be given the chance. Being a student leader can ingrain listening and communication skills, teamwork, and the value of leadership. These skills are vital not just in a school environment, but also in the workplace and in life generally. I wish the new leadership team the best of luck in their new leadership roles, as well as in their Year 12 studies next year.

66TH YEAR AND MORE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—I recognise and acknowledge the NSW Vietnamese Elderly Friendship Association [VEFA] for organising the Vietnamese Family Day. I also acknowledge the celebration of the 66th year and more wedding anniversaries of a number of members. My heartfelt congratulations are extended to Mr an Mieng Nguyen and Mrs Thi Luong Tran on their 68th anniversary, Mr Van Quy Tran and Mrs Thi Thoa Tran; Mr Van Lam Pham and Mrs Kim Anh Nguyen on their 67th anniversaries, Mr Manh Dong Vo and Mrs Thi Tong Vo; Mr Quang Lam Vo and Mrs Thi Minh Quat Nguyen on their 66th anniversaries. 66-plus years of marriage is an extraordinary journey that exemplifies the value of not only enduring love, but also commitment, mutual respect, compromise, and resilience. The endurance required to maintain a long-lasting marriage is additionally rooted in their Vietnamese marriage traditions and beliefs, which prioritize family and the well-being of children.

I commend the couples for their incredible achievements. The invaluable lessons cultivated throughout their journeys are truly worthy of celebration and cherished by younger generations. I wish them good health, continued happiness, and joy together as they celebrate these remarkable milestones.

CHINESE ASSOCIATION MOON FESTIVAL 2024

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—On 29 September 2024, I was truly honoured to receive the invitation to the traditional Moon Festival organized by the Chinese Associations in Western Sydney. This event also celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China. The event was a memorable celebration of both history and culture within our vibrant community. This celebration was well organised at the Golden Palace Seafood Restaurant Cabramatta. I deeply appreciate the warm welcome I received as a distinguished guest, and I thoroughly enjoyed joining fellow community members in this joyous celebration. There were many representatives of Chinese Australian organisations in Western Sydney and especially in my Cabramatta Electorate. This event beautifully reflects the rich traditions and shared heritage of our communities. It was a wonderful opportunity to come together, appreciate the cuisines and cultural performances that showcased the beauty of our diversity. Connecting with others who share a passion for preserving and promoting our cultural identities was truly enriching. Thank you for the invitation and I eagerly look forward to next year's enchanting evening filled with joy and celebration.

69TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—I recognise and acknowledge the NSW Vietnamese Elderly Friendship Association [VEFA] for organising the Vietnamese Family Day. I would also like to acknowledge the celebration of the 69th wedding anniversaries of a number of members on this special occasion. My heartfelt congratulations are extended to Mr Jack Ly and Mrs Wendy Trieu Ly, Mr Dinh Khoa Nguyen and Mrs Thi Thuoc Nguyen, Mr Nguone Thach and Mrs Thi Hen Chau. 69 years of marriage is an extraordinary journey that exemplifies the value of not only enduring love, but also commitment, mutual respect, compromise, and resilience. The endurance required to maintain a long-lasting marriage is additionally rooted in their Vietnamese marriage traditions and beliefs, which prioritize family and the well-being of children. I commend the couples for their incredible achievements. The invaluable lessons cultivated throughout their journeys are truly worthy of celebration and cherished by younger generations. I wish them good health, continued happiness, and joy together as they celebrate these remarkable milestones.

JENNIFER WORLDON

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Ms Jennifer Worldon of Ed U Play Illawarra and Communities for Children, for her nomination of the NSW Volunteer of the Year Award. This nomination is a testament to Jennifer's dedication and selflessness through her involvement with Ed U Play Illawarra and Communities for Children. Ed U Play Illawarra provide vital experiences and support to child and young people to grow and build their skills. Teaming up with Barnardos Australia for the Communities for Children program, Jennifer's involvement stretches across a wide range of programs that support and improve the lives of kids who need assistance. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Jennifer for her tireless work, giving back to the community. I wish her all the best for her future endeavours.

ZE CLANCY

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Ze Clancy, from Warilla High School, for being a finalist in this year's Young Eyes Festival. This event was a chance for high school students from the Illawarra to pitch their business ideas to a diverse panel of experts and get constructive feedback. The Young Eyes Festival of Innovation originated as an initiative of Zig Zag Hub, a coworking conglomerate dedicated to meeting the needs of start-ups. The Young Eyes Festival of Innovation emerged to fill such void, through entrepreneurial education in schools. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Ze on this achievement and wish her well in her future endeavours.

SAMUEL GARBUTT

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to acknowledge the achievement of Samuel Garbutt, from Warilla High School, for receiving a nomination for his work to be included in this year's HSC Showcase for his Industrial Technology major work. SHAPE presents a selection of outstanding major projects by HSC Design and Technology, Industrial Technology and Textiles and Design students in NSW. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Samuel on this wonderful achievement and wish him well in his future endeavours.

DR JAMES HARRIS

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of Dr James Harris on his 30 years of service to the University of New England Council. Dr Harris served as Chancellor at the university, whilst being actively involved in many committees to support the university and the wider community. I congratulate Dr Harris on this wonderful achievement and for his valuable contribution to the University of New England [UNE]. Dr Harris has been the Chancellor since 2014, joining UNE Council in 1994, before serving as Deputy Chancellor between 2001-2007. Additionally, Dr Harris has served on numerous UNE Council committees including: Chair of Building and Grounds; Member and Chair of Audit and Compliance; Member of Finance; and Member for the Standing Committee(s). Dr Harris has also served as: President of the Bundarra Jockey Club; Chair of the Wool Expo; Chair of Fundraising Committee of NERAM; Trustee of NERAM; and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW. I commend Dr Harris on his hard work and commitment to students, the university and to the education sector. The Northern Tablelands Electorate thanks you for leaving a lasting legacy to our community.

MACINTYRE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT BELLA GRIFFIN

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of Bella Griffin from Macintyre High School, for her success in the sport of Cross Country Running. Bella was selected to attend the NSW Cross Country Championships, before being further chosen for the National Cross Country Championships recently. I congratulate Bella on her selection and impressive success at these events, coming away from the NSW Championships winning a bronze medal for all schools and combined high schools 15 -16 girls multiclass, in the 3000 metres. This secured Bella a position in the NSW state team for a second year in a row, winning a gold last year in the 13-14 year division and this year, winning two silver team medals for her division. I commend Bella on her hard work and commitment to the sport of Cross Country Running. I commend all involved in enabling Bella to attend the competitions, with special thanks to Macintyre High School Principal Sally Chapple, Trainer and Sports Co-ordinator Lisa Watson, as well as to Bella's family, for giving her encouragement, opportunities and support, to compete in her chosen sport at an elite level.

URALLA WOMEN CREATING CONNECTIONS

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the initiatives of Tara Toomey, Emma Pattison and Jay Goodwin of Uralla, who as part of Rural Women's Day this year, came together to organise a sip eat and greet, as a way of getting to know women in their community better and to extend a welcome to those new to town. I congratulate the trio for this initiative and for staging this event, with the only goal being to catch up, get to know one another and to hear about the things women are doing in the Uralla community, with the aim of giving each other support. I commend all three ladies for creating and staging this initiative. The venue and nibbles were provided by Emma and Murray Pattinson, at the Bush Ranger Hotel. Jay Goodwin styled the event and Tara Toomey from Seasons of New England donated beautiful goodie bags for those attending. Thank you for bringing the women of Uralla together!

COLIN MUTTON

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Congratulations to Colin Mutton from The Lagoon Rural Fire Service for chalking up 61 years service to the organisation and receiving his 60 year Long Service Medal. Since joining his local Brigade way back in 1963, Colin has been the regular driver for local callouts, bringing invaluable local knowledge of the Lagoon district to the role. As well as attending local emergencies, Colin has also helped neighbouring district strike teams and attended the Billywillinga and Rockley Mount fires. Colin clearly has a strong sense of community spirit and commitment to the NSW RFS and has been a mentor to the younger generation of the Brigade with a strong focus on bringing a sense of camaraderie to the local members. It is the selfless nature that Colin brings to the role in the RFS that makes him such a deserving recipient of this recognition of long service to the organisation and when the time does come for him to hand over the mantle The Lagoon Brigade will have a huge void to fill. Well done Colin Mutton, your dedication to the RFS has not gone unnoticed.

JEFF MCSPEDDEN

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—The contribution to The Lagoon Brigade of the NSW Rural Fire Service of long serving volunteer Jeff McSpedden certainly deserves recognition. Jeff is a more than worthy recipient of the Rural Fire Service 50 year Long Service Medal, having chalked up 54 years of unwavering service to the organisation. He officially joined the NSW RFS in 1970, however he was attending fires with his father and uncle as a young child. As the Brigade's equipment officer since 2004, Jeff also maintains the local station and has attended many incidents over the years both locally and out of the area. Jeff has served as a Group Officer covering the Perthville, Georges Plains and The Lagoon Brigades from 1970-2000 and is always generous with his time

being more than happy to help mentor young members of the Brigade while being an active member. Congratulations Jeff, your dedication to the NSW RFS is very much appreciated.

TERRY DOLBEL

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Receiving two Rural Fire Service Long Service awards is a wonderful achievement for anyone, but for Terry Dolbel from the Rockley Brigade it's testimony to his dedication and commitment to the local community. Terry has been honoured with the presentation of both 50 and 60 year Long Service Medals for 61 years service to the organisation, having been Captain for many years of the Triangle Flat Brigade before it merged with the Rockley Brigade. Since joining the NSW RFS in 1963 Terry has answered the call to local incidents, spending days and nights on the fire grounds which is a real indication of his selflessness and unwavering support for landowners and the community. Terry has been available to help with a number of Brigade activities over his many years of service, and his dedication to assisting landowners and responding to emergencies has likely saved lives and protected property. Congratulations and thank you Terry for a job well done.

RUGBY LEAGUE STAR

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Fast like lightning and overflowing with talent, Shane Davis-Caldwell has made a remarkable mark on the rugby field this season. His extraordinary achievements not only propelled the Macleay Valley Mustangs to the grand final but have also earned him prestigious titles that reflect his dedication and skill. Shane's stellar performance included scoring an impressive 120 points, with 10 tries and 40 goals. These statistics speak volumes about his ability to shine under pressure and deliver when it counts most. His efforts proved in a breathtaking try during the semi-final, scored in extra time, which secured their place in the grand final—a moment that will be etched in the memories of fans and teammates alike. Recognised as the Highest Point Scorer, Half Back of the Year, and Group 3 Player of the Year, Shane's accomplishments highlight not only his individual talent but also his commitment to the game and his team. These accolades are a testament to his hard work and perseverance, making him a true star in our community. I celebrate the remarkable talent of this young star and can't wait to see what he accomplishes in the future.

THE CHAMPION TRIO

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—As dust hung in the air, James Gaddes, Jade Lamb, and Blake Thurgood demonstrated their unwavering dedication and skill in the thrilling team penning competition at the Youth State Title in Moonbi, hosted by Tamworth Penning. The atmosphere was electric, filled with anticipation, as these young riders controlled their horses with remarkable agility and poise, each movement showcasing their bond with the animal. With incredible precision and a keen strategic sense, the team executed their movements flawlessly, navigating the cattle with confidence and finesse. Their impressive coordination reflected not just raw talent, but also a deep understanding of both their horses and the behaviour of the cattle. Every turn, every push, and every pause were executed with purpose, earning them the admiration of the crowd and their judges. When the dust finally settled, James, Jade, and Blake proudly accepted their titles as champions of the youth division. This dynamic trio has reached great heights, and their hard work had truly paid off. As they celebrate their success, their journey, proves that with dedication, resilience, and a love for what they do, they can gallop their way to greatness!

THE MAD C'S AGAINST MND

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—A hop, skip, and a jump away was far from the description of the "MAD C's Against MND" mission for Motor Neurone Disease [MND]. This remarkable group of friends set out on an incredible challenge, grossly underprepared yet filled with determination to ride 120 kilometres, walk 50 kilometres, and paddle 15 kilometre. Their journey from Yarrowitch to South West Rocks was not just a test of endurance but a heartfelt mission to raise funds and awareness for a family devastated by MND. Over the course of their challenging days, they encountered exhaustion, and numerous unexpected hurdles. However, despite the tough conditions, the MAD C's forged ahead with unwavering determination. Their spirit shone brightly as they crossed the finish line at Matty's Flat in South West Rocks, not only completing their gruelling journey but also uniting their community in support of a noble cause. The dedication and camaraderie displayed by the MAD C's is commendable. It is truly amazing what can be achieved when a community comes together for a common goal. Their mission has left a lasting impact, inspiring others to contribute to the fight against MND.

WELLNESS WALK 2024

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, I recognise One Door Mental Health who last Sunday hosted their Wellness Walk and festival at Government House. One Door Mental Health is a leading mental health provider specialising in severe and persistent mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychosis and schizoaffective disorder, borderline personality

disorder. As part of Mental Health Month this October, One Door Mental Health organised its annual Wellness Walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge to promote mental health awareness. Participants were then treated with a festival at Government House which entailed a number of engaging activities. Over the decade that this event has been running, One Door has raised over half-a-million dollars for essential mental health services. The symbolism of crossing the Sydney Harbour Bridge represents One Door's goal of bridging the gap between stigma and understanding. I acknowledge One Door and the valuable contribution they have made over the last thirty-five years in this important and at times underrepresented space. Finally, I congratulate this year's Wellness Walk participants and thank all of those involved who have made it their mission to ensure that people living with mental health challenges are treated equally.

RED CROSS, MANLY

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, I would like to recognise the amazing work of the Australian Red Cross Shop in Manly. The Manly store, with 27 volunteers aged 16 to 78 years, is one of over 160 Red Cross Shops around the country which last financial year helped raise more than \$9 million for our Emergency Services, migration support and community programs. The shops help connect our local communities and provide opportunities for a retail team of nearly 3,200 volunteers. In 2023, Red Cross Shops sold around 6.8 million donated items, raising funds for the various Red Cross programs and diverting 2,750 tonnes of clothing from landfill. In my capacity as the Member for Manly, and as one who is passionate about the environment, I congratulate the Australian Red Cross on its recycling initiatives and harnessing those initiatives to raise funds in support of those most vulnerable in our communities across Australia and further afield. To the Australian Red Cross Shop, Manly, and the Australian Red Cross more broadly, I congratulate you.

SADAT WELFARE INVITATION FOR COMMUNITY EVENT

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I was delighted to attend the Sadat Welfare Interfaith community event on Friday 2nd August 2024 in Granville. The event beautifully highlighted the profound philosophy behind Imam Hussain's revolution, emphasizing his teachings, legacy, and his commitment to restoring Islamic principles. The event also aimed to unite esteemed religious scholars and community leaders from various sects and religions to promote unity, harmony, and peace among people of all backgrounds, inspired by the universal values of Imam Hussain's legacy. The Sadat Welfare Society is a non-profit Afghan sports association that provides community support. They promote multiculturalism through sports and other welfare activities like the Ramadan Nights Multi-Sport Event and Multicultural Cricket Cup. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to bring people together and for your commitment to promoting the values of peace, justice, and unity. Especially in consideration to recent events locally and overseas, it is more important than ever that we continue to reiterate this message and maintain social cohesion in our beautiful multicultural Australia.

WENTWORTHVILLE TAMIL STUDENT CENTRE – KALAI VIZHA 2024

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I was honoured to attend the Kalai Vizha 2024, Annual Cultural Concert hosted by the Wentworthville Tamil Study Centre on 21 September 2024. This vibrant event, held at Bowman Hall in Blacktown, showcased the rich cultural heritage and artistic talent of the Tamil community, from the youngest students to those preparing for their final HSC exams. The Wentworthville Tamil Student Centre, which has been in operation since 1988, continues to play a pivotal role in preserving and promoting Tamil language and culture within Western Sydney. With over 700 students attending, the Kalai Vizha is more than a cultural celebration – it is a platform that brings together the community, fostering unity and promoting diversity. Through captivating performances of traditional music, dance, and art, the event highlighted the deep roots and contributions of Tamil culture within our multicultural society. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the organizer, volunteers, and participants for making this event a resounding success. Their efforts not only inspire the community but also contribute to the spirit of inclusivity that makes our region so special.

CHAEWON LEE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I congratulate and commend Glenmore Park local Chaewon Lee for winning the Women's Division of the 2024 NextGEN Amateur Tour, a prestigious golfing tournament which was held in Castle Hill during 14th to 15th October 2024. Chaewon shot rounds of 76/76/74 to finish at +4 (226), an incredible 10 shots clear of second place. Having taken an early lead in the first round, she continued on to a commanding victory. I thank Chaewon for making our community so proud with her victory and I wish her continued success in her golfing endeavours.

SNAP FITNESS GLENMORE PARK

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank and commend the wonderful team at Snap Fitness Glenmore Park for raising funds this month for Headspace, in honour of Mental Health Month. Headspace, a not-for-profit organisation, provides free information, support and

services to young people and their families and friends. They assist with mental health, general health, alcohol and other drug services, as well as work support. They also offer an Early Psychosis program. I was pleased to learn about Snap Fitness Glenmore Park raising funds for such an important cause and I thank all in my community who have contributed to this fundraising effort as well as those who have supported Mental Health Month in other ways. I thank the team at Snap Fitness Glenmore Park and I wish them the very best as they continue this important fundraising effort.

SUSAN BOR

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I congratulate and commend local Glenmore Park woman Susan Bor for being announced as a finalist in the 2024 Westfield Local Hero for Penrith program, in recognition of her service as a dedicated advocate for children in crisis and volunteer with Kassie's Cases. The Kassie's Cases initiative provides comfort, dignity and hope to children in crisis, either through entering the foster system or from escaping domestic violence, by providing them suitcases filled with essential items and comforting toys. Westfield has provided the Kassie's Cases organisation a community grant of \$5,000 as part of their announcement of Susan as a finalist. The funds will assist Kassie's Cases in their support of children. On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I thank Susan and her fellow volunteers at Kassie's Cases for supporting, comforting and empowering children in these difficult circumstances.

LISMORE TO HOST 2025 NSW RURAL WOMEN'S GATHERING

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I'm very pleased that Lismore was named host of the 2025 NSW Rural Women's Gathering at a candle lighting ceremony as part of the 2024 event in Harden Murrumburrah. Lismore City Council representatives Tina Irish and Karen Hurst joined my colleague, Minister for Women Jodie Harrison, and the Harden Murrumburrah 2024 organising committee, accepting carriage of next year's event. The Gathering is an annual event held in a different location each year and after 31 years, it continues to be a key event on the NSW Rural Women's Network calendar. The NSW Government provides \$30,000 to the Gathering to empower women and girls across regional, rural and remote New South Wales. I'm excited to have the Rural Women's Gathering here. I think it's fantastic because we have some great women right across our community. This is recognition that there's a whole lot of women's leadership here, particularly our rural women. They're in everything, from the CWA, to the SES, to the RFS, to Zonta, we've got the lot. The Rural Women's Gathering is a great opportunity to network and having it in Lismore means it's easier for local women to take part.

CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL ELECTED FOR 2024-2028 TERM

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Congratulations to Clarence Valley Mayor Cr Ray Smith PSM who was elected at the council's first meeting of this new four-year term. Cr Smith, who is a former general manager of the old Grafton City Council and a highly experienced general manager, will lead CVC for the next two years. I also congratulate Cr Greg Clancy on being elected Deputy Mayor, a position he has previously held. I congratulate all nine councillors on their election – Cr Christie Yager, Cr Peter Johnstone, Cr Greg Clancy, Cr Ray Smith, Cr Allison Whaites, Cr Shane Causley, Cr Lynne Cairns, Cr Debrah Novak and Cr Karen Toms. I have always enjoyed a good working relationship with Clarence Valley Council's elected body and senior staff, dating back to when I was the Federal Member for Page. I see this continuing, particularly in my role as NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to retiring councillors Ian Tiley, Jeff Smith and Bill Day, and outgoing councillor Steve Pickering, for their community service. Like Cr Ray Smith, Dr Tiley has had a distinguished career in local government as a general manager, mayor and administrator.

SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY RECOGNISES BLACKMORE FAMILY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—In a landmark day for Southern Cross University, Vice-Chancellor Tyrone Carlin officially named the Marcus and Caroline Blackmore National Medicinal Plant Garden before a special tree planting ceremony at its Lismore Campus last Wednesday. Parliamentary duties prevented me from attending this celebration of the Blackmore Family Foundation's \$10-million donation to SCU's National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine, led by Foundation Director, Professor of Public Health Jon Wardle. I did relay the following message: I wish to thank Marcus Blackmore AM, his wife Caroline and daughter Imogen, Director of the Blackmore Family Foundation, for their generosity, but more than that, their deep engagement with the NCNM team, which has been wonderful. The foundation's support of the centre's work in advancing education, research and advocacy in naturopathic medicine aligns perfectly with SCU's commitment to excellence, sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation. As an Adjunct Professor to SCU's Faculty of Business, Law and the Arts, I wish everyone success for today's naming ceremony and tree planting, and for many fruitful years ahead. SCU Grounds Supervisor Simon Evans helped Marcus and Caroline Blackmore plant a frangipani tree taken from the site of the late Maurice Blackmore's first naturopathic clinic in Rockhampton.

NEW MEMBER FOR EPPING MONICA TUDEHOPE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the new Member for Epping Monica Tudehope, for her success in the Epping byelection. Her tremendous efforts in getting community support and recognition have paid off. I know she will represent the residents of Epping very well moving forward. God Bless.

CARLA KASSAB

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to Carla Kassab on her election to Hunters Hill Council. I look forward to working alongside her to keep the Hunters Hill Local Government area vibrant and beautiful. I know with Carla there Hunters Hill is in amazing hands.

DR PAUL HINE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr. Speaker, as we enter this final term of the school year, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Dr Paul Hine for his commitment and dedication as Head Master of St Ignatius College Riverview. May his future endeavours continue to be that of service and compassion. God Bless.

THE COFFEE AND SERENDIPITEA EXHIBITION

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—The Bankstown Arts Centre has hosted a truly unique and immersive, multisensory exhibition that invites visitors to explore the world of chance encounters with tea and coffee in a hybrid coffee shop and teahouse setting. The "Coffee and SerendipiTea" exhibition features Yumi Umiumare's pop-up tearoom, where visitors become part of the artwork through a virtual space. Inspired by the Japanese tea ceremony, this immersive experience allows people to find creativity, peace, and connection through the simple ritual of tea. Another featured artist, Pamela Leung, has contributed works that explore the concept of identity, using the coffee shop as a microcosm for society. It's inspiring to see how everyday items like tea and coffee are elevated in an artistic context, bringing people together in both real life and through creative expression. Exhibitions like this one offer our community a chance to experience different cultures and familiar items through art, in a deeply immersive and unique way. They serve to strengthen the social fabric of our society, fostering harmony and appreciation for the diversity of our shared experiences. I congratulate everyone involved in bringing this remarkable exhibition to life and achieving a successful outcome.

STORY TO SCREEN COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS AT BANKSTOWN ARTS CENTRE

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—Bankstown Arts Centre has recently hosted a series of free community workshops focused on filmmaking and scriptwriting, empowering aspiring filmmakers to bring their ideas to the big screen. Led by award-winning creative artists, filmmakers, screenwriters, and directors, these workshops are both informative and interactive. They are designed to inspire our community members to explore their talents in filmmaking and the arts. Organised by Phoenix Eye Film, Art, Life—a Western Sydney-based collective that supports young people entering the industry—these sessions have been a tremendous resource for our local creatives. The workshops covered essential skills, including a screenwriting session that teaches participants how to craft compelling stories for the screen, and a no-budget filmmaking camera workshop, which provided techniques for capturing film in engaging and effective ways. Offering these unique and practical workshops for free gave aspiring filmmakers and artists in our community the chance to channel their talent and pursue their dreams in the film industry. I extend my congratulations to Bankstown Arts Centre for being a central hub of creativity, hosting such inspiring and immersive workshops that bring our community together through art and film.

DEBBIE DOOLAN, PUNCHBOWL PUBLIC SCHOOL, 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—I am honoured to recognise Debbie Doolan for her remarkable 20 years of dedicated service at Punchbowl Public School. Throughout her teaching career, Debbie has made an extraordinary impact on the lives of countless students, helping to shape their futures with her passion for education and commitment to excellence. Debbie has gone above and beyond in her role, creating a nurturing and inspiring learning environment where every student feels valued and supported. Her innovative teaching methods and ability to connect with students have fostered a love of learning that resonates far beyond the classroom. She has consistently encouraged her students to reach their full potential, instilling in them the confidence to pursue their dreams. Beyond teaching, Debbie has been an integral part of the school community,

actively participating in events and initiatives that strengthen the bond between the school and families. Her mentorship of new teachers and collaboration with colleagues has helped cultivate a positive and enriching atmosphere for everyone. As we celebrate this significant milestone, I extend our gratitude to Debbie for her dedication, passion, and the profound impact she has made on Punchbowl Public School.

NEDD BROCKMANN

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Mr Speaker, Nedd Brockmann has achieved another feat of amazing endurance – again for the benefit of others. Less than two years after running 4000km from Perth to Sydney to raise almost \$2m for homeless people, Nedd has covered another 1600km, this time at the Sydney Olympic Park, with 12-and-a-half days of running. In other words, Nedd ran more than two marathons a day around the 400m athletics track, smashing out the final 158km in a gruelling 26 hours. Apart from the physical aspect, the mental endurance of covering the same blue surface hours on end is awe-inspiring – even for a man who has a life mantra of 'get comfortable being uncomfortable'. Along the way, Nedd again brought attention to Australia's homelessness and raised more than \$2.5 million for the charity We Are Mobilise. Incredible. Mr Speaker, Nedd, a former sparkie from Forbes, has the ultimate goal of raising \$10m for charity and with the amazing strength, mental and physical, he has displayed I am confident he will fulfill that goal. Nedd, I take my hat off to you. While others talk about our state's homelessness, you are doing something about it. Thank you.

KIRSTY EVANS

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Mr Speaker, I rise today to commend solicitor Kirsty Evans, a Molong resident who has shown wonderful selflessness in helping her community recover from the 2022 flood event. While the floods which hit the central west in November that year caused enormous trauma for affected businesses and residents, the following months, and then years, of wrestling with combative insurance companies were equally, if not more, harrowing. Mrs Evans immediately recognised Molong's recovery hinged largely on its business community's recovery and with the backing of her firm Cheney Suthers, where she is a director, she became a champion in a fight against tardy and sometimes deceptive insurers. Working pro-bono, Mrs Evans battled for 23 months, doing hundreds of hours of work, to get more than \$1 million returned to Molong. In a nutshell, every claim initially denied was overturned. With a front-row seat to how some insurance firms have made their clients' disaster recovery tougher than it should have been, Mrs Evans is now advocating for industry change. Like the community she has represented, I am enormously grateful for the work Mrs Evans and her colleagues at Cheney Suthers have done. Thank you and congratulations on an amazing effort.

PHILIPPA MITCHELL

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Mr Speaker, this October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I would like to give a shout out to Philippa Mitchell, a woman who is providing a vital service to breast cancer survivors in Orange and further afield. A bra fitter by profession, Philippa has extended her skills to helping countless breast cancer survivors feel good again in their own skin after they have undergone a mastectomy. According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation 58 people are diagnosed with breast cancer nationally every day, making it the most common cancer Australian woman confront. Yet many women, particularly those in rural Australia, are often overwhelmed by the treatment process and unaware of the prosthetics and accompanying rebates available to them after life-impacting breast removal surgery. Based in Orange, Philippa is available to host clinics for communities in outlying centres, along with virtual appointments, where women can be fitted for a mastectomy bra. She is also an advocate for woman taking control of their own breast care, working with McGrath Foundation nurses to encourage women to 'know their breasts' so if there is change, they can act immediately. I thank Philippa for her important work in this field and wish her well.

ERNA LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATION EVENING - ANNABEL DALEY

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in recognising the achievements of Annabel Daley, who was recently awarded the Metro League Teams Presentation Player's Player Award at the ERNA League Representative Presentation Evening. Annabel Daley's recognition as Player's Player is a testament to her commitment, skill, and sportsmanship on the court. Beyond her athletic prowess, Annabel has demonstrated leadership and community spirit, which reflects the values of the Ryde electorate. Her contribution extends beyond her team; she represents the positive impact that local sports people have in fostering community cohesion and promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. It was evident to all those in attendance that ERNA is going from strength to strength, making Annabel's success all the more significant. The community of Ryde is fortunate to have individuals like Annabel, who excel in their sport and contribute to our area's well-being and connectedness. Her achievements inspire both young and old to engage with local sports and community initiatives. Congratulations, Annabel, on this well-deserved honour.

ERNA LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATION EVENING - KAREN HESTER

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Karen Hester on her outstanding achievements at the recent ERNA League Representative Presentation Evening! Karen's dedication to her team and community was evident as she was honoured with the Metro League Teams Presentation Player's Player Award and the Coaches Player Award. These accolades reflect her exceptional skill, sportsmanship, and leadership on and off the court. Karen's contributions extend beyond her achievements in the game. She is a valued member of our Ryde community, inspiring many with her commitment, resilience, and passion for netball. Her recognition at this event also underscores the strength of Ryde's sporting spirit and community involvement. It was evident to all those in attendance that ERNA is going from strength to strength, making Karen's success all the more significant. Once again, congratulations to Karen Hester on this well-deserved recognition, and thank you for your incredible contribution to both the ERNA League and the broader Ryde community.

**NSW POLICE FORCE NORTH WEST METROPOLITAN COMMAND AWARDS CEREMONY -
MRS ANNE SCHOFIELD**

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating the NSW Police Force North West Metropolitan Command, Parramatta Police Area Command, and Ryde Police Area Command for their outstanding awards ceremony! It was a privilege to attend and witness the acknowledgment of exemplary service, particularly the recognition of Mrs Anne Schofield, who was awarded the Ryde Police Area Command Volunteer in Policing Certificate of Appreciation. Mrs Schofield's contribution to the Ryde community through her voluntary service has made a significant difference. Her dedication to supporting the work of our local police has strengthened the safety and well-being of residents. Volunteers like Mrs Schofield, who selflessly give their time and energy, ensure that our community thrives through collaboration, care, and commitment to the public good. The entire ceremony highlighted the ongoing partnership between the police and the community. It was a fitting tribute to those who, through their service, continue to make Ryde a safer place for all. Congratulations once again to Mrs Schofield and all the deserving award recipients

JEAN SMITH'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)—I would like to congratulate and extend my best wishes to Mrs Jean Smith who celebrates her 100th birthday on the 29th of October 2024. Jean Emma Smith was born Jean Emma Ready and enjoyed her childhood with her extended family of many cousins in Belmore. In 1947, Jean married the love of her life, Russell Smith and together they built their home in Sans Souci, which back then I believe was a relative wilderness. Together they raised three children and later moved to Ramsgate. Jean was happily married for 58 years and is a grandmother of 5, and a great grandmother of seven and counting. Jean has a huge social circle of friends and enjoys playing tennis, which she pursued till she was well into her eighties. Jean's family credits her longevity to her strong personal relationships and a healthy and fit lifestyle, despite having a sweet tooth I am told. Jean still lives in her own home and to date, goes out to lunches at the Club with family and friends. I wish Jean the happiest of days on this momentous milestone and may she be blessed with more good health and happiness.

150 YEARS OF BARMEDMAN

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—The long weekend provided several opportunities for people to get out and about and experience many events. One such event I was delighted to attend, was the Back to Barmedman celebrations. It was a heartwarming sight to see the current and former Barmedman community come together, reinforcing the strong bond that has been built over the past 150 years of Barmedman. The Barmedman mineral pool played host to the commemorations where the day event also included a beard competition, including the longest, shortest, most colourful, most untidy, best beard and Mustache, best goatee, greyest beard, and oldest participant competition, which was last held in the town in 1974. One of the most poignant moments of the day was the unearthing of a time capsule, buried since 1974. The memories and stories it held brought a wave of nostalgia, connecting us to our past in a profound way. It was a deeply emotional time for many, a moment that will be remembered for years to come. It was a joyous occasion to see generations of families gathered, opening memorabilia, reading letters, reminiscing over photos, and sharing stories of days gone by.

TEMORA RIBBON RUN

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—The Temora Ribbon Run Motorcycle Ride is an exhilarating event that blends the thrill of the open road with a commitment to community support and charitable causes. Each year, riders from across the region gather in Temora to participate in this journey, each rider with one common goal, to raise money for a very worthwhile charity. This year organisers nominated Can Assist who provide cancer assistance for country NSW, through financial assistance, practical support and raising awareness. This year's run

saw more than two hundred bikers, gather in Temora before setting off to Illabo, then to Junee, Aria Park for lunch before finishing a wonderful day back in Temora. Local business from over the district supported the day with donations of money and prizes. Not to mention the dedicated committee who put in hundreds of hours organising and arranging all the organisation and planning required in making such a day possible. What makes this event unique is its inclusive spirit, welcoming riders of all experience levels and motorcycle types. From seasoned bikers to newcomers, everyone joins in the camaraderie, united by a shared passion for riding and giving back to the community.

COOTAMUNDRA BUSINESS AWARDS NIGHT SUCCESS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Congratulations to our Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council who hosted the Cootamundra Business Awards recently. The night was an outstanding success and I wish to recognise the winners from over 115 nominations received. They are: Category Winner Excellence in Innovation The Olde General Store, The Outstanding Tradie Award South West Slopes Carpet Cleaning, Outstanding Community Organisation Highly Commended: Country Education Fund, Winner: Riding For Disabled Cootamundra, Outstanding Employee Kellie Close – The Bush Chemist Cootamundra, Outstanding New Business Black Cat Patisserie and Chocolate, Outstanding Young Business Leader Highly Commended – Jason Bates, Winner - Tegan Wineman, Outstanding Business Leader Keryn Bell – Director Cootamundra Preschool, Excellence in Business Country Med Group, Super Star in Customer Service The Bush Chemist Cootamundra, Individual Dedication to Customer Service Ryan Radnedge – Manhood's IGA Cootamundra. Having been a small business owner myself, I know Cootamundra's businesses take great pride in giving 100% every day to provide fast and friendly service to every customer who calls. We're so fortunate to have so many small businesses right across the "seat of small communities" keeping our local economy thriving. The awards bring us all together to celebrate and acknowledge achievements within our business community."

REECE HIGNELL

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to Mayfield's resident celebrity Reece Hignell for his return to Master Chef Desert Masters second season. First appearing on the show in 2018, Reece returned in 2020 where he finished in fifth place. This time Reece is returning to Master Chef determined to show that his deserts rival the best. Following his 2020 appearance, Reece opened his Hamilton bakery, CakeBoi, where he gained acclaim for his delicious and beautifully decorated cakes. Furthermore, Reece released his first cookbook in 2022 before opening a restaurant last year. With achievements still mounting, Reece will also release his highly anticipated new cookbook next month. Congratulations for your hard work and achievements Reece. I trust you will make Newcastle proud with your incredible desserts this season!

MARK HUGHES FOUNDATION

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—I would like to recognise the efforts of the 25 trekkers who undertook the 2024 Men's Vietnam to Cambodia endurance challenge to help the Mark Hughes Foundation in the fight against brain cancer. Founder Mark Hughes and his diverse team flew to Southeast Asia on October 8th to participate in the 10-day 500-kilometre hike and bike ride. The Challenge began in Saigon and required the participants to travel through Phnom Penh before crossing the finish line in the Siam Reap province of Cambodia. Throughout this challenge the team faced thunderstorms and the immense tropical heat. Despite these setbacks, the team was able to grit their teeth and push through to raise awareness and funds to fight brain cancer. Congratulations to Mark and the rest of the team on this incredible achievement, you have made Newcastle proud.

NEWCASTLE AND DISTRICT SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Newcastle & District Softball Association [NDSA] for their efforts to raise money for Nova for Women and Children, the local domestic violence refuge. On the 12th of October the NDSA organised a gala day in Mayfield's Stevenson Park. The gala day saw Newcastle softball teams come together to fundraise and raise awareness for domestic violence and to commemorate the life of Stacy Klimovitch. Stacy is remembered as a dedicated member of her family and a respected swim teacher. Stacy's family has been involved in the NDSA for several years, with several relatives playing in the local league and lending their aid to arrange this moving charity event. I would like to thank and acknowledge everyone involved in the planning and running of this beautiful commemoration.

MANLY BUSINESS CHAMBER 2024-25 LEADERSHIP TEAM

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, I wish to recognise the Manly Business Chamber's 2024-25 leadership team. I am delighted to inform the House that following this month's Executive Meeting, Steve Carrodus has been elected President of the Chamber, Kyla Kelleher has been appointed Vice President and Cameron Stewart has been named as Treasurer. As General Manager of the Quarantine Station in Manly, Steve brings a wealth of experience to the role, drawing on over 15 years of senior management positions in the Hotel

General Management industry. Kyla is a Director of Pine Property and has a proven track record in what she does with over 20 years of experience in marketing, communications, and event management. Cameron, in his role as Vice President of Operations at the International College of Management Sydney, has extensive experience in managing small and large businesses including hotels, student living, real estate & management rights, and commercial & residential leasing. I congratulate Steve, Kyla, and Cameron on their new appointments, and I look forward to working collaboratively with them to deliver positive outcomes for our local economy. I wish them all the best for the coming year.

JACARANDA ESTATE

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—October is Small Business Month and I would like to acknowledge Jacaranda Estate Vineyard and Cellar Door, in Wingham on the banks of Cedar Party Creek. Recently re-opened by Peter and Judy Fowler, this boutique vineyard offers a beautiful spot for locals and visitors to enjoy a peaceful afternoon with fine wine. The property, named for the jacaranda trees at its entrance, has been transformed since Peter and Judy took ownership five years ago. Their efforts to restore the vineyard and gardens, despite challenges like the 2021 floods, have made Jacaranda Estate a special destination. Peter and Judy, have juggled their full-time jobs while bringing the estate back to life. They grow Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes, which are turned into a variety of wines. I congratulate Jacaranda Estate on their re-opening, and I encourage those passing through the area to visit and experience it for themselves.

MAGGIE STEELE - FUR BABIES BOUTIQUE

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—October is Small Business Month and I would like to acknowledge Maggie Steele and her business, Fur Babies Boutique in Tuncurry. Fur Babies is a one-stop shop for our furry friends, offering a wide range of products, from hygiene essentials to dog toys and accessories. Maggie's studies in animal care, allows her to provide valuable advice to pet owners. Her love for animals started with her own dog, Teddy, and has grown into a business that serves both pets and their owners. In addition to running a doggy daycare and offering quality pet products, Maggie has wonderful plans, including a café, splash park, and grooming services. She also gives back to the community by hosting charity events, such as Christmas photo sessions with pets. I thank Maggie for supporting the health and happiness of the beloved companions in our electorate.

NORTH COAST PADDLERS

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to acknowledge the North Coast paddlers, who competed at the Region V Dragon Boat Regatta in Penrith, where they finished second. The team included members from clubs stretching from Ballina to Forster. Representing Great Lakes Forster were Michelle Richardson, Wendy Burdekin, Marika Koroi, Perry James, and Cathy Leslie. Manning River Taree contributed Campbell Jones, Lisa Moore, Annie Manticas, and Meaghan O'Riley. Months of preparation, including intense training in Wauchope, paid off as they competed in 500m, 200m, and 1km races, placing in nearly every event. Their efforts secured an overall second-place finish, which was very well deserved. These paddlers will now compete in the Pan Pacific Masters in Queensland and the Forster regatta in November, with many aiming for selection in the NSW State teams later this year. We are proud to have such committed athletes representing our region.

TRANS-TASMAN CUP

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—Charlestown hosted an international sporting event on the weekend, when the Newcastle Northstars Ice Hockey Club hosted the Australian and New Zealand women's ice hockey teams for the inaugural Trans-Tasman Cup. I warmly congratulate Australia's Flyers who defeated New Zealand's Ice Fernz in both matches with an impressive five-nil win on Saturday and a closer three-two victory in the second game. As Minister for Women, it's pleasing to see the Australian Ice Hockey federation using the Trans-Tasman Cup as a way of promoting and growing female participation in the sport, and it is very pleasing to see that the league is expanding to six teams next year, with Australia working towards our women's team making the Winter Olympics in 2030. I again congratulate the Flyers on their victory and also recognise the Northstars for hosting this international event at their home base.

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—This Friday night I will be joining survivors of abuse, safety advocates and supporters in marching to Reclaim the Night along the Warners Bay Foreshore. Reclaim the Night is a powerful demonstration by communities all across Australia that all of us have a right to feel safe, no matter where we are and who we are with. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all those who work

in this area and make such a difference in the lives of others, organisations like Nova for Women and Children, Survivor's R Us, Staying Home Leaving Violence and Community Activities Lake Macquarie, all who will be at Warners Bay on Friday. I'm proud to serve as the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Minns Government, but the very fact that there is a need for such a portfolio shows with devastating clarity that we as a society have so much further to go in addressing this evil, and events such as Reclaim the Night are fundamentally important in progressing change.

PROFESSOR MATT DUN

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—My constituent, Professor Matt Dun is a hero. This word can sometimes be used loosely but Matt truly encapsulates someone who is courageous and has nobility of character. Matt and his wife Phoebe suffered the cruellest of agonies when their daughter Josephine passed away aged four. Josephine was diagnosed with Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma [DIPG], and she leaves a profound legacy because Matt has dedicated his professional life to finding a cure for DIPG and improve the survival for children and today his work will be recognised when he receives the Australian Society for Medical Research Medal at the National Press Club. Matt leads a team of twenty researchers at the Hunter Medical Research Institute who are analysing DIPG tumours to pinpoint disease subtypes and further refine treatments, and I recognise all who are involved in and supporting Matt in this groundbreaking medical work. The Medal from the Australian Society for Medical Research is a prestigious recognition of Matt by his peers, and on behalf of the people of Charlestown I warmly congratulate him and wish him continued success in his work.

ZAHRINA ROBERTSON STUDIO LAUNCH AND ETHEREAL ART EXHIBITION

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—Celebrating some of the outstanding artistic talent in my community, it was my honour to attend the Zahrina Robertson Studio Launch and Ethereal Art Exhibition in Northbridge. Zahrina Robertson is a multi-award winning photographer, videographer, author, speaker and artist. Her clients have included the likes of Richard Branson, George Clooney, Dannii Minogue, Ita Buttrose and Carla Zampatti. Zahrina has also served as an event photographer for Emirates, Tourism Australia and Business Chicks. In addition to her photography and filming brilliance, Zahrina also has a keen environmental conscience and is a champion for protecting our oceans and waterways from pollution. This cause is evident in her Ethereal Art Exhibition, inspired by her own deep connection to the ocean and tranquil horizons. Ethereal was a magnificent art exhibition, beautifully capturing Zahrina's love of the ocean and land both. I was honoured to make some remarks at the exhibition to commend Zahrina for her brilliant artistry and great contribution to Australian art, photography and marketing.

LOCAL YEAR 12 SCHOOL LEAVERS

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—In my community of Willoughby and across NSW, our Year 12 students just finished their final term of schooling. To mark this milestone, I was proud to present hand-signed certificates of achievement to our local school leavers in recognition of their completion of thirteen years of schooling. I would like to acknowledge all the secondary schools in my community including Chatswood High School, Mercy Catholic College Chatswood, St Pius X College Chatswood, Willoughby Girls High School, Cammeraygal High School, Redland School and Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School for educating our school leavers. I pay tribute to their respective principals and teaching staff for all they have contributed to the learning, growth and personal development of our students. I warmly congratulate our Class of 2024 and wish them the best of success with their HSC exams and beyond. I know that the excellent education they received from each of our local schools will prepare them well for their future endeavours.

ACKNOWLEDGING ALVIN LIN'S INTERNSHIP

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—I am pleased to acknowledge Alvin Lin, a Year 10 student from Sydney Grammar, who recently completed an internship in my electorate office during the first week of the school holidays. Alvin demonstrated a strong interest in government and community service, actively participating in various tasks, from research to assisting with community outreach. Throughout the week, Alvin approached every task with enthusiasm, diligence and a keen desire to learn. He asked insightful questions and engaged with the issues affecting our community. Alvin's positive attitude and work ethic made him a valuable part of our team during his time with us. It was a pleasure having Alvin in the office and I'm confident that he has a bright future ahead of him. Thank you Alvin for your contributions and commitment during your internship!

DUBBO CROQUET

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Dubbo Croquet Club on their 103rd birthday! Croquet is a game played on a lawn, where wooden balls are driven through a series of square topped hoops using a mallet. Played in about twenty-six countries worldwide, croquet was played in Dubbo

for the first time in 1921. One hundred and three years later, the club is still going strong, with an active membership of sixty playing members. In the lead up to their birthday, Club Captain, Ben Vang, made a promise to introduce members to "Aussie Croquet" at the celebrations, a variation of the rules played at the club for more than a century. After initial instruction from the captain, the players quickly caught on, and soon three courts were filled with eager participants! In addition to taking on the challenge of Aussie Croquet, club members also enjoyed a birthday cake and luncheon. I take this opportunity to wish the Club a Happy Birthday and congratulate the Executive and their members on their dedication to keeping the sport of croquet strong in Dubbo!

SPENCER CRAFT

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Year 8 Narromine High School student and extremely talented guitarist, Spencer Craft, on his selection in the Pulse Alive 2025 Showband! Pulse Alive is a large-scale event, providing opportunities for performing arts students and teachers from NSW public schools in Greater Sydney and beyond. To be selected in the program, Spencer had to participate in a rigorous selection process including being confident with his instrument, an indicative minimum standard of AMEB Grade 5, and be able to read music notation. He also had to apply via video audition and have the endorsement of his school principal to participate. This massive showcase of talent, including the showband, dance, choir, and drama, will take place at Ken Rosewall Arena, Sydney Olympic Park in March 2025. Congratulations on your selection Spencer, this is a massive achievement, and I am positive you will do yourself, family, and Narromine High School proud! I look forward to seeing you rocking the stage with your band mates!

SHOALHAVEN LADIES PROBUS CLUB

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to recognise two remarkable members of the Shoalhaven Ladies Probus Club, Marie Whelan and Norma Reid, who have been active since the club's inception over 40 years ago. When the club was established on June 2, 1987, Marie and Norma were among the first 19 members, and their commitment and dedication have played a vital role in shaping the club's success. Marie has served in various capacities over the years, including as the club's bulletin and publicity officer, contributing to the club's growth and visibility. Norma, having served twice as president, has also been a key leader, helping to steer the club through many successful years. Their dedication to the club has been a source of inspiration for all members, new and old alike. As the Shoalhaven Ladies Probus Club continues to thrive, thanks to members like Marie and Norma, we celebrate their long-standing commitment to friendship, fellowship, and fun, which are the hallmarks of Probus. Congratulations and thank you for your incredible service over the past four decades!

LESLEY SADDINGTON

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Milton resident Lesley Saddington for her incredible achievement in writing the biography of her late son, Tony Carden. Titled 'I Don't Want to Talk About It', the book is a Biography of AIDS Warrior Tony Carden. This deeply personal and powerful book sheds light on Tony's life, his activism, and his struggles. Tony Carden was an inspiring figure who, despite the trauma he endured as a child, became a bold activist in the fight for the rights of others during the AIDS epidemic. Lesley's book honors his legacy, highlighting his courage and the significant impact he made within Sydney's LGBTQI community. Lesley's journey to complete this book was long and emotionally challenging, as she navigated her grief and dedicated years to researching and telling Tony's story, however Lesley's dedication to sharing Tony's story not only honors her son's memory but also provides important insight into the lasting effects of childhood abuse. Congratulations Lesley for your remarkable strength and commitment to sharing Tony's legacy with the world.

PINK UP YOUR TOWN

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the Milton 'Pink Up Your Town' committee for their incredible efforts in raising awareness and funds for the McGrath Foundation. This inspiring initiative has created a wave of hope, care, and compassion throughout our local community. This dedicated committee has rallied strong support from local businesses and residents, all eager to contribute to the cause of breast cancer awareness and support. What began as a goal to raise \$5,000 has far surpassed expectations, reaching \$15,000 thanks to the generosity of the local community. The powerful pink displays around Milton are a visual reminder of the collective solidarity and commitment to supporting those affected by breast cancer, showing those impacted that they are not alone in their journey. The work of the Pink Up Your Town committee also helps raise awareness of breast cancer and prompts women to have regular breast screenings as the risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer over a women's lifetime is one in seven, and it is estimated that breast cancer will account for 28 per cent of all cancers in Australian women. If you haven't already, then make that appointment today!

KAMBAN KAZHAGAM – TAMIL LITERARY FESTIVAL

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Sunday 20th October, I was delighted to join students, teachers, parents and officials at the 18th Anniversary Kamban Tamil Literary Festival, at the Redgum Function Centre, Wentworthville. Tamil Australians are a dynamic part of our Prospect Electorate community. Founded in 2006, Kamban Kazhagam Australia is a vibrant community organisation with the noble mission of preserving Tamil language and culture, passing on one of the world's oldest languages to a new generation of Tamil Australians who call Western Sydney home. The Kamban Literary Festival is Kamban Kazhagam Australia's major annual event that recognises and celebrates Prose and Verse as one of the three vital tenets of Tamil language, alongside Music and Theatricals. At the event, I had the pleasure of awarding a number of students for their achievements in Tamil Prose and Verse, each individually recognised for their Tamil language speeches and debates, delivered after many weeks and months of dedicated classroom preparation. I extend my warm congratulations to Jeiram Jagathesan, Founder & Chairman, Shanjievun Gunaratnam, President, and all Committee, teachers and volunteers at Kamban Kazhagam Australia for organising a fantastic event, and for your amazing community service in the heart of our Prospect Electorate.

HINDU COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA – DEEPAVALI

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Sunday 20th October, I was delighted to join our wonderful Western Sydney community at the annual Deepavali Festival at Blacktown Showgrounds. Diwali, the Festival of Light, is celebrated widely by people of Hindu, Jain and Sikh faiths across the world to celebrate the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Hosted by the Hindu Council of Australia, this year's HCA Deepavali celebrations were held at Blacktown Showgrounds for the first time, with a dazzling blend of colours and cultural performances all on show. This year, I had the pleasure of meeting festival attendees, devotees, officials and volunteers ahead of the main events. I was honoured to witness a number of rituals, and to pray for peace and good fortune. My special thanks go out to Nitin Jayraman, Secretary, HCA for the personal festival tour, meeting some amazing stall operators, performance and dance groups, including Shivagarjana Sydney and the Nilkanth Pipe Band. I extend my warm congratulations to Suresh Vashist, President, Arjun Mehta, Vice-President, and all Committee, teachers and volunteers at the Hindu Council of Australia for organising a fantastic event, and for kicking off this year's Deepavali celebrations. Happy Diwali!

TOONGABBIE LEGAL CENTRE – ANNUAL DINNER

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to the Toongabbie Legal Centre [TLC] for hosting a fantastic Annual Dinner on 19th October 2024, in Blacktown. Established in 2007, TLC has helped our community access vital legal advice for over 17 years. The Centre offers critical support, pro bono services and community advocacy to members of our community facing financial hardship. Brick by brick, TLC are breaking down barriers to justice, by granting timely, affordable and fair access to legal support. TLC's diverse team of volunteers, legal practitioners, migration agents, social workers, finance, IT and education specialists and law students, go above and beyond to meet our community where they are. They aim to empower our community, to better understand their rights and options, whilst navigating complex and often overwhelming legal challenges. Joined by Her Excellency, the Hon. Margaret Beazley Governor of NSW, Local Court of NSW Deputy Chief Magistrate Theo Tsavdaridis, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam MLC and Dr Andrew Charlton MP, we gathered to celebrate the pivotal role TLC plays in Western Sydney. Thank you to Principal Solicitor Susai Benjamin OAM, President Richard Battley, Community Advocacy Coordinator Stephen Hodgson and the committed volunteers at TLC for your ongoing community advocacy.

CRONULLA BOWLS CLUB 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate the Cronulla Bowls Club on reaching the historic milestone of its hundredth birthday. The first such club in the Sutherland Shire did not have an easy start. Local resident Fred Baker tried to start a club after World War 1, however he was unable to due to the lack of a suitable water supply. By the end of 1924 however, a water supply capable of supplying a bowling club was found, and the club was established. The next green was opened in 1937, with the Women's bowling club opening a year later. Another green was opened in 1957. The current site of the club was bought in 1951, and in 1957 the Cronulla Bowls club became the first in the Shire to obtain a liquor licence. In 2023, the Men's club was combined with the Women's club to form what is now known as the Cronulla Bowls Club. These days, the club does more than bowls, with fantastic club facilities, including a wonderful restaurant, catering for the more than 200 members that still call the club home. I once again congratulate the club for reaching this historic milestone.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PETER HAERTSCH AM

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I acknowledge the contributions of Associate Professor Peter Haertsch AM following his retirement from Concord Repatriation General Hospital earlier this year.

A/Professor Haertsch served locally at Concord Hospital for over 50 years as a plastic and reconstructive surgeon with his primary work focusing on burns rehabilitation. His work included volunteer surgery throughout Asia, providing support to children with congenital deformity. In 2003, A/Professor Haertsch was appointed to the Order of Australia for his work to support victims of the Bali bombing and in 2018, he was appointed a Member in the General Division for his significant service to medical education and reconstructive surgery. In his time at Concord Hospital, A/Professor Haertsch also served as the President of the Concordians Association, working to preserve the history of Concord Hospital and foster a culture of support between medical staff. I congratulate and thank Peter for his many years of service to our community at Concord Hospital, and to his vocation. I am sure that his patients and their families will always remember the care they received, and his professional colleagues will remember his service, dedication and guidance. I wish him all the best in his retirement.

PROBUS CLUB OF BREAKFAST POINT

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I recently had the privilege of hosting the Probus Club of Breakfast Point during their visit to the NSW Parliament on Wednesday 16 October 2024. The Probus Club of Breakfast Point is a local organisation for retired and semi-retired residents offering the opportunity to meet new people and engage with the community. Since its inception in 2011, the club has quickly grown to support over 200 members. During their visit, it was great to meet members of the club, share the history of the oldest Parliament in Australia and discuss the matters important to them. I would like to thank Kerryanne Knox and all members of the Probus Club of Breakfast Point committee for organising this visit. Your dedication to serving your community through Probus is truly commendable. I thank and acknowledge all members of the Probus Club of Breakfast Point. It is through the spirit of friendship, that a wonderful community spirit has been created at Breakfast Point. I sincerely wish all members the very best and I look forward to engaging with the Probus Club more in the future.

PAUL MUMFORD

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I rise to congratulate Paul Mumford of Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club for his recent success at the Football Canterbury Presentation. Paul was awarded the 2024 Cec Barlow Award for his dedication to the club in his capacity as a volunteer. Paul has dedicated over a decade to the Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club, serving as a manager, coach, and registrar throughout the years. It is wonderful to hear of local members of the community actively engaging with our clubs and working to grow women's sports locally. This award is a testament to Paul's dedication to developing women's soccer in our local community and passion for the sport. Thank you, Paul, for your tireless efforts both on and off the field. Your commitment to growing women's sport in our community is truly commendable and I thank you for your continued service to Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club.

GERRINGONG MEN'S SHED

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Gerringong Men's Shed. I congratulate Gerringong Men's Shed for releasing a new cookbook with 50 recipes designed to help men gain skills in the kitchen. I acknowledge Mr Mike Walker. The book became the brainchild of Mr Mike Walker and Mr Graham Hanna, who illustrated the book, after noticing a number of members had begun neglecting their own nutrition after losing a wife or partner or becoming a carer for a partner. Most of the recipes in the cookbook can be made within 20 to 60 minutes, and were developed to be simple to follow. Each recipe has a utensil list and hints to suggested products found on supermarket shelves to assist in the preparation of each meal. Three sponsors helped bring the project to life, the Gerringong Bowling Club, Robson Building and Gerringong Rotary Club Sunrise. Copies of the cookbook are available to purchase now, a book retailing for \$25 each. You can place an order for the cookbook by emailing gerringong.mens.shed@gmail.com and proceeds go to finance Men's Shed projects. Congratulations and well done to Gerringong Men's Shed.

JAMBEROO CAR SHOW

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of NSW recognises the annual Jamberoo Car Show. The show is set to take place on 27th October 2024, featuring a BBQ, a petting zoo, live music, a sculptor, flight simulators, trucks, stationary engines, a tea room—and most importantly, lots and lots of cars. My thanks to David Wiggins, one of the event's founders and a member of the Jamberoo Valley Classic Vehicles Club. Last year, there were over 580 cars on display. This year, the Australian Motorlife Museum will bring 20 vintage cars dating back to the 1920s, alongside modified cars and hot rods. Wiggins's passion for cars was ignited by his father, and he treasures the stories and memories tied to old vehicles. The Youth Hall Committee will be setting up a tearoom for people that want a break from the sun and other activities. There are also plenty of fun activities for kids as well. The Jamberoo Car Show promises to be terrific – classic cars and nostalgic memories – all while supporting a great cause. I take this opportunity to thank all the sponsors including Boral Australia for their contribution to this event which was secured through discussions with the company.

DEMENTIA INCLUSIVE KIAMA

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Dementia Inclusive Kiama initiative. Celebrating their 10th anniversary this year, Dementia Inclusive Kiama have identified barriers and strengths for people living with dementia within Kiama LGA and then strategies to address them. On Thursday 7th November 2024, between 2pm and 4pm, a special community celebration is being held at the Kiama Anglican Church Hall and I acknowledge the enormous contribution of Mr Graham Fairbairn on this project. The focus is on supporting people with dementia to live a high quality of life with meaning, purpose and value. They acknowledge, by making Kiama a dementia-inclusive community, they are often also addressing the needs of many others in the region, including older people and those living with a disability. The range of dementia-friendly activities taking place in Kiama has varied from physical audits and mapping of dementia-friendly places and spaces, through to businesses becoming dementia-friendly. Activities include: Monthly social gatherings and picnics. Dementia inclusive dancing program. Alchemy Chorus (Dementia-friendly choir). The annual Bondi2Berry bike ride. Dementia education sessions. Kiama Men's Shed and Gerringong Men's Shed. New monthly dementia café at Barroul House, Kiama.

HAVANA COOK - GRIFFITH

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise Havana Cook who is one of Griffith's next generation of touch football superstars. Havana was one of four students from Griffith, to play for the open girls Riverina Reps team at the NSWCHS Football finals in Taren Point. She was part of the NSW Combined High School side which came home with gold from National Youth Championship for touch football. The team played against some of the strongest sports high schools in the State putting in an outstanding performance. Havana's exceptional performance resulted in her selection in the NSW State Touch team in Queensland where she finished the competition scoring eight tries. Not only that but was selected for the NSW Combined High Schools Under 15 team. Havana is to be congratulated for her outstanding efforts in representing her region in sport.

LIONS CLUB OF LEETON PROGRAM

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I recognise The Lions Club of Leeton as they recently celebrated 10 years of operation for their literacy program. Recognising the importance of books and reading, the club developed a program which allows each child living in Leeton shire to receive an age appropriate book on their first and every subsequent birthday until they turn four. The program is run in conjunction with the Leeton library, A child is presented with a voucher from their first birthday to their fourth birthday enabling them to select a suitable book from the library. By July 2023, there had been 1092 applications received and during the 10 years, the club has sponsored over \$7,000 on books, book vouchers and postage together with support from the local Beyond Bank. Leeton Lions Club is to be commended for their work and fundraising in promoting literacy in the Leeton shire.

WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL'S FROCTOBER: A FASHIONABLE STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—Wingecarribee Shire Council has used a month long celebration to draw attention to the serious matter of fast fashion through their event 'Froctober: A Fashionable Step Towards Sustainability'. Froctober is an inspiring initiative promoting sustainable fashion while raising awareness about it's environmental impact, highlighting how our clothing choices can help reduce waste, conserve resources, and protect the planet. The council has held various events such as a clothes mending workshop and clothes swap along with a temporary exhibition. At the atrium exhibition, visitors can explore innovative sustainable fashion designs and solutions in the Froctober gallery, featuring items from local textile and mixed media artists. One standout exhibit is the plastic dress worn by Craig Reucassel on the War on Waste documentary, which tells a powerful story about plastic use in clothing. With fast fashion contributing up to 8% of global carbon emissions, it's crucial that we take action. By supporting sustainable fashion, we take meaningful steps toward reducing pollution and preserving our environment for future generations.

DAMFEST 2024

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—DamFest Warragamba 2024 is always an event that residents of Warragamba and beyond look forward to, and this year it was better than ever. Bringing together the community for a day of fun, entertainment, and celebration of local culture this annual festival has become a springtime tradition, offering something for everyone. The community minded organisers ensure there are a range of activities to showcase the best of Wollondilly, with market and food stalls, thrilling rides, the ever-popular car show, kids games and live performances throughout the day. Beyond the fun, DamFest also supports local causes and charities, strengthening the community spirit that makes Warragamba so special. It's a fantastic opportunity to

come together, celebrate the town's rich history, and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of the Warragamba Dam. Congratulations to Warragamba Silverdale Neighbourhood Centre Inc for the outstanding achievement on this event.

CLASSICS AT PICTON

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—I would like to recognise the contribution that Classics at Picton has made to the cultural landscape of Wollondilly. Much like the new Performing Arts Centre, this concert series has brought world-class music and a rich cultural experience to our community, making classical music more accessible and enjoyable for everyone. The efforts the team to feature both classical masterpieces and contemporary Australian compositions has provided a platform for both established and emerging artists, enriching the musical diversity of our region. Concerts this year have included Sirius Chamber Ensemble and Bach After Dark, with the pianist Kevin Tamamini coming up in November. This series offers a unique opportunity to enjoy live classical music right here in Wollondilly. I offer my appreciation for Classics at Picton for their ongoing efforts to bring culture and the arts to our community, and I encourage everyone to support these wonderful events.

EQUESTRIAN STARS

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise to recognise Charlie Breakspear, Kendyl Applegate, and Lola Keegan who all attend Moss Vale High School. Their outstanding performances at the NSW Pony Club State Show Jumping and Equitation Championships are a testament to their dedication, skill, and love for equestrian sports. Competing in various categories and achieving top placements is a remarkable accomplishment that reflects their commitment to their sport. Their success at the championships, coupled with the recognition from Olympic equestrian Shane Rose, highlights their potential and the high standards they have set for themselves. These young athletes have not only brought pride to Moss Vale High School but also to the wider community, showcasing the strength and talent of our youth. I look forward to seeing their continued success in future competitions and wish them all the best in their equestrian endeavours.

CROOKWELL VIEW CLUB

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise to recognise Crookwell VIEW Club which was first established in 1981. The Crookwell VIEW Club has been raising money for underprivileged children through the Smith Family. Overtime it was recognised that children living in poverty required financial support to assist them to access vital resources to support their educational pathway. The Smith Family Learning for Life Program commenced providing children with access to uniforms, books, computers, and money to attend excursions. Crookwell VIEW Club currently sponsor three children each year to support their educational journey with other fund-raising activities supporting other Smith Family projects. The benefits for students have been remarkable, with many being the first family member to graduate from high school and go to TAFE or university and progress to take up professional roles in teaching and social work. I acknowledge the lifetime difference that this has made for students who have accessed this program and congratulate the Crookwell VIEW Club on their steadfast support of students. I sincerely congratulate and thank all present and past members on their 40th anniversary, which they celebrated in September

JEREMIAH GOOD, RILEY WALLACE AND ISAIAH WEBB MOSS VALE HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise to recognise Moss Vale High School's vocal talent in Jeremiah Good, Riley Wallace and Isaiah Webb. Jeremiah, Riley, and Isaiah's participation in the Boys Vocal Program, run by the NSW Department of Education, was a unique opportunity that highlights their passion and talent for singing. The program provides them with a chance to further develop their vocal skills, perform at a high level, and collaborate with other talented young singers from across the state of NSW. Their involvement is a testament to both their and their school's dedication to the arts and their willingness to embrace new challenges. This experience has both enhanced their musical abilities but also enriched their personal and artistic growth. Their participation reflects the supportive environment at Moss Vale High School that encourages students to pursue their passions and excel in their chosen fields.

POWER UP FESTIVAL

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today, I would like to acknowledge the work of the organisers, performers, and community groups who brought together the Power Up Festival at the White Bay Power Station. From Friday 20 September through to Sunday 22 September members of our community came together at the White Bay Power Station for the Power Up Festival, comprising works from 250+ local artists, captivating live music performances, delicious fare from food vendors, craft brewers and distillers, and special finds from local community stalls. I was lucky to spend time at the festival over the weekend, and some highlights that were shared with me by people who attended were many of the musical acts, including the Inner West Community Band, as

well as making the trip on the special event vintage buses operated by the Sydney Bus Museum. Congratulations to Craig Donarski, Manager Arts, Culture and Creative Industries at the White Bay Power Station, the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, the Glebe Art Society, the Inner West Community Band, the Sydney Bus Museum, the Balmain Association; and to every artist, performer, vendor, volunteer, and staff member that contributed to making this year's festival so successful.

UNION AID ABROAD - APHEDA , 40TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today, I would like to acknowledge the work of Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA , the global solidarity organisation of the Australian Union movement, who recently marked 40 years of solidarity across borders. APHEDA's work facilitates Australian unions working in global partnership for the achievement of dignity at work, social justice, economic equality and the realisation of human rights. I was honored to be able to join APHEDA at their 40-year anniversary event recently. This was a wonderful opportunity to hear from keynote speakers Felix Anthony, the National Secretary of the Fiji Trade Union Congress and Sandar Soe, Assistant General Secretary of the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar, about the ongoing struggles for justice in two regions where APHEDA's assistance has made a real impact. APHEDA has played a vital role in supporting unions and social movements overseas to become stronger and more self-reliant for forty years. They deserve congratulations for all they have achieved in that time. I thank the chair of APHEDA's Board Andrew Mattmer, the event organisers, and all members of APHEDA who continue this crucial human rights work.

DOLLY FESTIVAL 2024

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—I would like to acknowledge the incredible success of the 2024 Dolly Parton Festival in Narromine. This vibrant event brought together fans of all ages, creating an exuberant atmosphere that truly honoured the spirit of Dolly Parton. A highlight was the Best Dressed Dolly and Best Dressed Kenny competition, where creativity shone brightly. Congratulations to all the winners for showcasing such an array of talent! I would like to thank the dedicated volunteers, especially Susie Ray and the "Double D's" (the Dolly Doers). The support from Narromine Council, VRA, St John's Ambulance, NSW Police, and the security team ensured a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone. It was also wonderful to connect with Transport for NSW's regional apprentices and our new acting Regional Director, Holly Davies. Meeting Narromine's new Mayor Ewen Jones and Deputy Mayor Stacey Bohm further strengthened our community ties. Brooke McMullen's fabulous performances of Dolly's greatest hits captivated the crowd and great to see Dollys of all ages enjoying the event. If you missed it this year, be sure to mark your calendars for next year's celebration!

CAMP QUALITY CONVOY NEWCASTLE

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to all involved in the successful launch of the 2025 Camp Quality Convoy Newcastle. This incredible event will bring the transport community together to support kids facing cancer, providing them with moments of joy and fun. I congratulate Leonnie and Josh Carter from Carter Heavy Haulage at Rutherford for their leadership of this event, ensuring for the first time ever this event comes to Newcastle and Maitland. Thank you also to Simon O'Hara and Road Freight NSW for their support of Camp Quality through the event. The launch was such a special night, where we were all reminded of the impact this event will have on sick children and their families and communities by the stories shared by the Camp Quality team. It was great to see the trucking industry, local businesses and the community come together to show support and share the excitement in preparation of the inaugural Camp Quality Convoy Newcastle in March 2025.

JUDY WILLIAMS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Telarah's Judy Williams on the recent launch of her first book Navigating Money, Markets and Men I was thrilled to join Judy at the launch and talk to Judy about her book. The focus of the book is one that has hit a chord with women in the community, particularly those facing unique financial challenges. Judy's insights not only demystify complex financial concepts but also addresses the often-overlooked interplay between personal relationships and financial decision-making. Her approach is refreshingly candid and relatable, making her work accessible to everyone. The launch event was a colourful celebration filled with engaging discussions and performances, highlighting the importance of community support in fostering such talent. Her dedication to sharing her knowledge is commendable and inspires us all to strive for financial literacy. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Judy on this remarkable achievement. Her passion and commitment to helping others navigate the often-tumultuous waters of finance is so important to many in the community. Congratulations Judy and here's to many more successful endeavours ahead!

PENRITH STUDENTS TAKING CHARGE OF THEIR FUTURE IN HEALTH

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—69 HSC students graduated from the VET in Schools [VETiS] program at Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District [NBMLHD]. After completing 2 years of VET study, these students are the future of our health system, with 59 students gaining a certificate III in Health Services Assistance and 10 students gaining a Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance. The graduation ceremony held at Penrith Panthers honoured the significant time commitment from the students, with students completing 1 afternoon per week during school terms and 80 hours of work placement in their school holidays. With over 30 schools being represented, the program fosters an awareness of health issues and improves health literacy within the community. 35 of the graduating students have since secured a position within NBMLHD as casual Assistants in Nursing. The ceremony honoured four students with awards in Clinical Excellence. The award considers all aspects of clinical placement and is based on feedback from ward staff themselves, highlighting the students' conduct on the wards and their interactions with other team members. Congratulations to all our students.

PENRITH FOGO

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—Penrith City Council has been honoured at the Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards. Taking home the Resource Recovery Award for the 'We give a FUD – FOGO in Multi Unit Dwellings Rollout' project, this recognises Penrith's leadership in resource recovery and responsible waste management. Penrith's initiatives to create a more connected, resilient, sustainable and liveable City, demonstrates our commitment in this space. Council's initiatives have a positive impact on the environment and wellbeing of our communities, now and into the future. Penrith was the first Metro NSW council to offer separate collection of Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) to all households in their LGA, making them a front runner for change. Our community has embraced the FOGO service to Multi Unit Dwellings over 150 tonnes of material has been diverted from landfill for composting. Penrith Council was also a finalist in the Communication and Engagement award category for 'Trees for Mum' program, and the Liveable Cities category for Penrith's 'City Park'. Penrith's achievements are not only the result of our Council but of each of our residents contributes to the innovation, leadership and dedication to delivering the best environmental outcomes for our community.

AMBER LANE DISTILLERY

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)—Congratulations to whisky distillery Amber Lane from Yarralong Valley for taking out the Champion Small Batch spirit trophy for Alchemical Series – Air at the 2024 Royal Australian Spirits Awards in Adelaide. The Best Small Batch trophy recognises the best small-batch spirit across the entire competition, spanning multiple spirit categories. Amber Lane's Apera 100 received the Best Cask Strength Whisky medallion, while its Alchemical Series – Fire and Silk Road expressions, came second and third respectively in the cask strength category. The distillery also notched up gold medals for Alchemical Series – Air and Apera 100, along with silver awards for Alchemical Series – Water, Earth, and Fire, Pineau 350, Silk Road Quintessence. This year, judges blind-tasted 156 entries from both a technical and consumer appreciation perspective, noting each spirit's appearance, aroma, flavour, and overall impression. Amber Lane Distillery co-owner Rod Berry has achieved great results this year are now one of the most decorated whisky distilleries in the country and we're just getting started.

KAMBORA PUBLIC SCHOOL IN DAVIDSON

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Monday 21 October 2024, I visited Kambora Public School in Davidson to mark and celebrate the installation of new bubblers for students in the playground. It is important we keep our children hydrated at all times, especially in summer. These bubblers will ensure this takes place. I recognise Kambora Public School Parents and Citizens Association [P&C] that successfully applied for a grant via the NSW Government's Community Building Partnership program. A small school in a bushland setting, I always enjoy visiting Kambora. I recognise Kambora P&C president, Bronwyn Bruzzano and her team of parents and carers, together with principal, Lydia Janabi, who leads an enthusiastic staff, and all the Kambora students who made me feel so welcome. I am very proud to represent Kambora Public School.

HORNSBY RELAY FOR LIFE 2024

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On 2 November 2024 I will attend the Hornsby Relay for Life 2024 at Rofe Park in Hornsby Heights. The Hornsby Relay for Life is an annual event, held to recognise and celebrate local cancer survivors, those facing cancer and their carers, and to remember loved ones lost to cancer. It is a major fundraiser, enabling the Cancer Council to continue its research and maintain its cancer prevention and support services. The Hornsby Relay for Life is a 24-hour event, commencing with an opening ceremony; followed by a walk for survivors and carers; and a ceremony of hope in the evening. This ceremony with candles

will have us all reflect on those lost to cancer. The Relay for Life is filled with entertainment provided by local schools, musicians and dancers, a variety of food stalls and activities. The fundraising goal for 2024 is \$110,000 which will be a fantastic target to achieve. I recognise Jacqui Greenfield of the NSW Cancer Council, together with all local organisers and participants who will make this a special day for our community.

KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2024

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—In September 2024, the people of Ku-ring-gai voted for a new council. This election is for a four-year term between 2024 to 2028. Thank you to all the residents who put themselves forward for election. This is an important part of our vibrant local democracy. I recognise and congratulate the new mayor, Cr. Christine Kay of St Ives Ward; and deputy mayor, Cr. Kim Wheatley of Wahroonga Ward. I recognise and congratulate elected councillors, Cr. Cedric Spencer of Wahroonga Ward; Cr. Jeff Pettett and Cr. Matthew Devlin of Comenarra Ward, Cr. Martin Smith of St Ives Ward; Cr. Barbara Ward and Cr. Indu Balachandran of Gordon Ward; and Cr. Sam Ngai and Cr. Alex Taylor of Roseville Ward. I recognise retiring councillors Cr. Simon Lennon and Cr. Greg Taylor. On behalf of the community, thank you for your public service. I look forward to working with all councillors over the next four years, putting our local residents first at all times. This should always be at the heart of our decision making.
