

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 23 October 2024

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I extend a very warm welcome to guests of the member for Lake Macquarie. A number of members of this House will know the first two of them, the former General Manager of Lake Macquarie City Council and a friend of mine, Brian Bell, and his wife, Cyd. Members representing the electorates of Charlestown, Swansea and possibly Wyong will have had quite a bit to do with Brian over the years. With those guests in the gallery are Chris Henderson, Robert Ryan and Julie Ryan. I also welcome Melanie Warren, wife of the member for Campbelltown, and two of their children, Amelia and Eliza. Also in the gallery as guests of the member for Campbelltown are members of the Macarthur Sunrise Rotary Club, including president Dianne Blyth.

I welcome Oscar Crakanthorp, son of the member for Newcastle. I note that he is high up in the upper public gallery. If he gets a nosebleed, we also have in the gallery members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, who will be able to help him. I acknowledge Pania and Rowan Gregson and Jesse Fitzpatrick, Mayor of Wingecarribee, who are guests of the member for Wollondilly. I also acknowledge members of the Kiama Mixed Probus Group, who are guests of the member for Kiama. I welcome teachers and students from Shellharbour Anglican College, who are guests of the member for Shellharbour. I acknowledge guests of the member for Charlestown from Full Stop Australia. I also welcome students from Beyond the Broncos.

Finally, I acknowledge Indonesian community leaders who are in the gallery. They are visiting New South Wales Parliament as part of the Australian-Indonesian Muslim Exchange Program, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They are accompanied by Mosaic Connections staff, led by Rowan Gould. Mosaic Connections organises exchange programs for Indonesian community leaders visiting Sydney. Selamat datang teman teman—I hope to speak to you all later. I welcome all guests to the Chamber and to Australia's first Parliament, the beating heart of democracy in New South Wales.

Bills

24-HOUR ECONOMY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (VIBRANCY REFORMS) BILL 2024

First Reading

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

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

Members

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr RON HOENIG: On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I inform the House that the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education will answer questions today in the absence of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney; and the Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault will answer questions this week in the absence of the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion.

Question Time

BROKEN HILL DISASTER RELIEF

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:07): My question is directed to the Premier. Small businesses in Broken Hill have lost thousands on perishable foods and been unable to open due to lack of power.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General will come to order. The member for Rockdale will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will restate his question. Members will come to order or they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Small businesses in Broken Hill have lost thousands on perishable foods and have been unable to open due to a lack of power. Families have been forced to throw out fridges and freezers full of food. It has been a week since the disaster and Broken Hill has been literally in the dark. Why has the Premier not announced any support for families and small businesses?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:08): That is incorrect. I do not know whether it is a deliberate attempt to mislead the House or the Leader of the Opposition has just not been paying attention. However, the New South Wales Government has declared a natural emergency in Broken Hill as a result of the blackout, in coordination with the member for Barwon. That means funding is available on the ground immediately. It also means that those communities are eligible for national and State disaster relief programs. It is important to note that the line was damaged as a result of a hurricane or a storm cell. There is only one connection to grid power in Broken Hill.

As a result of that damage, seven towers were knocked down and mains power was not switched on to the community. Sharp-eyed members of this House will know that a similar event occurred in 2009. Transgrid provided two gas-fired generators to keep the power on in the town during that period to 10,000 businesses, not just in Broken Hill but also in Wilcannia, White Cliffs, Menindee and the surrounding areas. As a result of that redundancy being in place, which is mandated under law by the Electricity Supply Act, Transgrid at the time was able to provide emergency power, notwithstanding the fact that mains power was down.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Premier will resume his seat. I will hear the member's point of order.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: The point of order is about direct relevance, Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: No, sit down.

[*Interruption*]

The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. If he takes one more point of order on relevance, he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: A natural disaster and members of the Opposition are not interested in an answer; they are interested in politics. The difference between 2009 and 2024 is that in the intervening period, the Liberals and The Nationals privatised Transgrid. The Leader of the Opposition neglected to include that in his question. Do not take my word for it; listen to the mayor of Broken Hill, who said this morning on radio, "When anything is privatised, a lot of companies look at their bottom line, and where they can save money, they will save money." The bottom line is the gas generator, the redundancy power, was not maintained by Transgrid and has been out of action since November last year. When something similar happened and it was owned by the New South Wales Government, redundancy power came on immediately. We have declared it a state of emergency. IPART is investigating the lack of reliability by Transgrid, and we will take every effort to ensure Broken Hill gets back up on its feet and can learn the lessons from a decade of privatisation from those opposite.

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order. I call the member for Strathfield. He will be heard in silence.

HEALTH INSURANCE LEVIES

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (12:12): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier please update the House on the Minns Labor Government's work to ensure the private health insurance sector is paying its fair share and not short-changing the taxpayers of New South Wales?

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:12): In 2019 private healthcare providers wrote to the State Government and declared that they would no longer pay the bed rate for use of public hospital beds in New South Wales. As a result of that, the Government loses about \$140 million a year, which, to put into perspective, is the equivalent of hiring an additional 1,000 nurses in the public hospital system. Prior to that, private hospital insurers paid the full rate to the New South Wales Government for using taxpayer assets. I report to the House that 44 of 53 private health insurers do pay the correct rate as charged and levied by the New South Wales Government. The big four do not. HCF only pays \$463; the rate is gazetted at \$892 so they pay about half.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: NIB pays \$491, Bupa pays \$501 and Medibank pays about \$515.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The Government has made a decision.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: In these circumstances, the Government is left with only one decision, and that is to bring in legislation to ensure that all private health providers pay the bed rate so that there is not an unfair advantage between some individuals who are with a fund that pays the full rate and some in a fund that does not pay the full rate.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: We have done that with legislation that was mirroring the Baird Government's legislation of about seven or eight years ago, introduced to the Parliament under the same circumstances by former Treasurer of New South Wales Mike Baird.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Terrigal that he is on one call to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The reason for that is so there can be a level playing field when it comes to private—

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Premier will resume his seat. I will hear the point of order.

Mr Mark Speakman: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was about ensuring that the private health sector pays its fair share.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: It is the exact same legislation moved by the previous Government being moved by this Government for almost the exact same situation. Although, this time, the Liberals and The Nationals oppose it.

The SPEAKER: The member for Myall Lakes will come to order or she will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I saw a Facebook post from the member for Vacluse last night. It reads:

More than 80% of people in the electorate of Vacluse have private health insurance.

...

We're asking Labor to return to the negotiating table with the big health providers to come and to get independent analysis.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Someone has to stick up for the big end of town, and it may as well be the member for Vacluse.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: We are faced with a situation now—

Mr Jason Li: Mr Speaker—

Ms Kellie Sloane: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I recognise the member for Strathfield but I will hear the point of order first.

Ms Kellie Sloane: It is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. The Premier is straying from—

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order under Standing Order 129. I have ruled previously that the Premier has been relevant. Members will calm down. I call the member for Strathfield.

Mr Jason Li: I request additional information from the Premier.

The SPEAKER: An extension of two minutes is granted. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The member for Vacluse claims massive increases paid by those who have private health insurance in New South Wales while neglecting to inform people in the State that it is up to the Commonwealth Government whether they pass those charges on or not. Last year the private health insurers asked

for a 6 per cent increase and the Commonwealth health Minister said, "No, you're only going to get three." I would argue, why would they pass it on? Why pass it on to New South Wales consumers when we consider that since the big insurance companies stopped paying the correct rates, their profits have doubled? Someone needs to stick up for them, Kelly.

The SPEAKER: Government members will come to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The industry has reported \$2.2 billion in profit, which is—wait for it—a rise of 110 per cent on the previous year. Someone has to stick up for them, Kelly, and it may as well be you. Ultimately, this is being robbed from the taxpayers in this State. It is creating an uneven playing field for those who have private health insurance from a provider that is prepared to pay the bed rate.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Ultimately, it means less frontline services for public sector patients in New South Wales. We are not demanding it for any other reason than that it is fair in the State of New South Wales to have that level playing field. We expected the Opposition to support the legislation but, ultimately, members of the Opposition only answer to the big end of town, and they have proven it yet again.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Coffs Harbour. He is lucky he is still in the Chamber to ask his question.

BROKEN HILL POWER SUPPLY

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (12:17): My question is directed to the Premier. Families in Broken Hill have been without power, internet and some supplies for nearly a week. Yesterday and earlier today, the Premier confirmed that one of the backup generators has been offline since last year. Why until now has the Government not enforced its contracted rights to have Transgrid fix it?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:18): Because you privatised the asset, and you were repeatedly warned at the time. I remember when this debate took place in the New South Wales Parliament, and over and over the then Government said, "Reliability is not in question." Go and speak to the people of Broken Hill whether reliability is in question. Speak to the small businesses as to why their shop, their business and their local community has been shut down.

The SPEAKER: The member for Coffs Harbour will be removed from the Chamber if he continues to interject.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The Government is very concerned about whether under these circumstances maintenance was not done by Transgrid. IPART is launching an investigation into that question. If that is the case, Transgrid has left Broken Hill stranded as a result. None of this would have been an issue if the previous Government had not privatised it. I understand that the Leader of The Nationals is on the ground in Broken Hill today. He needs to answer two questions: Firstly, does he regret selling off Transgrid; and, secondly, is Essential Energy safe from privatisation under the Liberals and The Nationals?

PUBLIC SCHOOL MOBILE PHONE BAN

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:19): My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education in his capacity representing the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Minister update the House on the community response to the Minns Labor Government's decision to ban mobile phones in all public schools?

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (12:19): I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question. Everything this Government does in education is about improving student outcomes. We want to give students in our schools the best opportunities. I particularly want them to be able to go on to vocational training or university after school, and they need to be in the best situation to do that. That is why in Labor's time in government the Deputy Premier has done such a great job of ensuring that teachers are in front of students in classrooms and that the best possible environments are created for students to learn and thrive. That is exactly why the Minns Labor Government promised to ban mobile phones in all public schools and why it has done it.

Parents were begging the former Liberals-Nationals Government to ban mobile phones. They wrote to the former Minister and presented petitions, one with over 25,000 signatures, yet the former Government ignored them. It also ignored the teachers and the principals. That is symptomatic of the former Government's entire approach to education.

The SPEAKER: The member for Port Macquarie will calm down.

Mr STEVE WHAN: But this Government listened and banned mobile phones, and a year on that decision has been vindicated. A Department of Education survey of around 1,000 public school principals found almost universal support for the Government's decision. Not just that, principals are also reporting that the benefits are overwhelming. Some 81 per cent of them say that students' learning has improved since the ban; 86 per cent say that socialising among students has improved; and 87 per cent say that students are less distracted. This should not be a surprise. We all know how distracting mobile phones are. The member for Wahroonga is on his phone at the moment. It must be a real distraction, sitting in the shadow Cabinet and texting Ray Hadley all the time instead of listening to what is going on in the Chamber.

The survey results come on top of anecdotal feedback. I am sure that every member of this place, when they visit their local schools, has heard that anecdotal feedback. My daughter, who is a teacher at Karabar High School in Queanbeyan, has told me that she has noticed students talking to each other, communicating and socialising more in the playground—what a fantastic idea. There has also been anecdotal feedback about less bullying, less disruption and less antisocial behaviour. Some schools are even reporting fewer suspensions and one high school has reported an additional 50 minutes of learning time each day. At Riverstone High School, which the Premier and the Deputy Premier visited on Monday—an excellent area with an excellent local member—principal Rosemary Daubney said that there is far greater engagement in the classrooms. [*Extension of time*]

Her office looks down on the quadrangle, where she said she used to see students sitting alone at recess looking at their screens. Now there is a lot more noise. They are playing touch football and basketball, socialising and doing more activities in the playground. Ms Daubney also pointed out that this was only possible because of the statewide policy to enforce the ban, which has empowered schools because they know they have the backing of the Government and the department to put this ban in place. I have heard the heckling from members opposite. They still do not support the ban, despite its clear and overwhelming benefits. The member for Hawkesbury said that we do not live in a communist state. She must think we are all communists for putting this ban in place. Wait until she finds out that a lot of members of her party also support the ban. She is in a party room full of communists, apparently. The Government acknowledges that there are some sensible arguments against the ban. Some members have pointed out the benefits of phones and technology, and that phones can be used as teaching tools.

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

Mr STEVE WHAN: But the benefits are well and truly outweighed by the cost to students. They are not worth the distraction and the disengagement, they are not worth the impact on teachers in the classrooms and they are not worth the loss of social interaction. The Government very proudly reports on the benefits of the ban on phones in public schools. This goes hand in hand with the fact that this Government has made sure there are enough teachers in classrooms, which the Opposition let slip appallingly. It led to areas like mine in Queanbeyan, in particular, desperately needing teachers.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Terrigal, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Cronulla and the member for Coffs Harbour that they are on one call to order. The member for Port Macquarie is on two calls to order and the member for Goulburn is on three calls to order. I might have to separate the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Goulburn if they continue to interject.

BROKEN HILL POWER SUPPLY

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (12:25): My question is directed to the Premier. The power outage in Far West New South Wales has exposed inadequate redundancy measures and a lack of planning for power if a single supply line is compromised. People and businesses have suffered and the private companies involved have provided inconsistent information, adding to the frustration. Will the Premier advise the House what the Government's response to the power outage impact in the Far West of New South Wales has been to date and how we can make sure this does not happen again?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:26): I thank the member for Barwon for working hard on behalf of his community in the past week, through meetings with the New South Wales Government and the energy providers in the area, as well as with emergency services and energy officials in the New South Wales Government. It is important to note that, as of today, as a result of backup generation being repaired, the power is on. But it is subject to load sharing and load shedding, particularly in the peak between 5.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. It is also important to remember that yesterday the temperature in Broken Hill reached 36 degrees, far hotter than in Sydney. Obviously, that meant the demand for air conditioning and other devices in the community was higher, which has led to supply challenges in the area.

The Government was assured under the energy supply agreements and the Act that redundancy must be in place. That is a minimum requirement to hold a licence to provide utility power in New South Wales. But, as the

member for Barwon has pointed out repeatedly, that was not the case in Broken Hill, and we know that because the lights went out. There used to be an A generator and a B generator. Both were gas. As a result of one going down, the other would kick in, which effectively meant a third source of power in the event that the transmission lines went down. This is not a periodic event. It last happened in 2009. When a community is isolated, with a single point of entry into the town for transmission lines, redundancy is fundamentally important. It is not like in Sydney, for example, where when a suburb goes down, generally speaking, electricity providers can provide power from the north, the south, the east and the west. There is only one way into Broken Hill so generation must be onsite, but that has not happened.

As I said earlier in question time, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, which is responsible for ensuring that energy utility companies are providing up-to-date, adequate infrastructure as per the Act, will launch an investigation and the Government has declared a state of emergency. I am going to Broken Hill tomorrow with the member for Barwon to ensure the services that have been promised to the community are, in fact, being provided. I reiterate to the House that this would not be an issue if a monopoly privatised utility was not in a position to sweat its assets to earn more profits. A government-owned utility would ensure it was in compliance with the Act. We have real concerns about whether that has taken place in Broken Hill. [*Extension of time*]

I point members to a 25 November 2015 media release by the then Government. It said, "New South Wales achieves outstanding result in \$10 billion Transgrid privatisation. The Government has today announced the successful lease of high-voltage electricity transmission asset Transgrid." It goes on to say, "We have taken a giant step in spending taxpayers' money more wisely on things that make a difference"—

Mrs Leslie Williams: Exactly.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The member for Goulburn just said, "Exactly."

Mrs Wendy Tuckerman: I did not.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The media release said, "We have taken a giant step in spending taxpayers' money more wisely on things that make a difference to their daily lives like better schools, hospitals, public transport and roads."

Mrs Wendy Tuckerman: Point of order—

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Go and tell that to the people of Broken Hill.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will resume his seat. The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

Mrs Wendy Tuckerman: The Premier just made an assertion that I made a comment, which I did not. I ask him to withdraw his assertion.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Apparently the member for Goulburn now does not back privatisation either. We have a backflip in real time.

The SPEAKER: The member for Goulburn will resume her seat. She has asked the Premier to withdraw his comment—

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I did not think I was defaming the member for Goulburn. This is Liberal Party policy.

The SPEAKER: Will the Premier withdraw his comment to resolve the point of order?

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I thought I heard it from the member's general direction but I will withdraw the comment in the interests of the debate.

The SPEAKER: It has been agreed that the comment may not have come from the member for Goulburn.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: That is what happens when monopoly utilities previously owned by the people of New South Wales are sold off. I make it very clear that this exact situation was repeatedly denied by the previous Government when it was quizzed by the then Opposition. It was not an unreasonable assertion by the then Opposition—and by unions and by consumers—that if an asset is owned by the Government, then it had an obligation to voters and taxpayers to update and maintain that asset. We asked if those opposite were concerned that there would be a lower rate of maintenance, a lower rate of repair and a lower rate of redundancy if assets were privatised. The answer that we were given by the National Party was, "Absolutely not." So I say to the Leader of The Nationals, who is in Broken Hill today, that he should answer the question, "Do you regret the privatisation of Transgrid—yes or no?" He should tell the people of Broken Hill directly.

WATER CONTAMINATION

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (12:31): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on the release of proposed new drinking water guidelines by the National Health and Medical Research Council?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:31): I thank the member for her advocacy, particularly for the natural environment, not only as the Parliamentary Secretary but also as the member for Blue Mountains. Certainly all of us on this side of the House know firsthand the passion that she has for the beautiful environment in which she lives. I acknowledge and thank her for providing fact checking and information sessions to her community during a difficult time. I also thank her for standing up to those who may be fearmongering in the community about this issue. PFAS is an important issue that the Minister for Water in the other place, and others, are confronting across the board at the moment. But I emphasise—and I hope it is the case that all members are saying this—that our drinking water is safe.

In fact, we are lucky in this country and in this State to have, arguably, the safest drinking water on the planet. That is not something that any of us in this Chamber, or our communities, should ever take for granted. The NHMRC, or the National Health and Medical Research Council, has material on this issue on its website. I encourage and urge those members who are interested in public policy, particularly in the health space, to spend some time having a look at it. It is the peak body that looks at health standards. It does health and medical research in this country and has released some early draft guidelines that change or look at the level of PFAS that would not cause harm in the community. Those draft guidelines are out for consultation at the moment.

Even with that, our drinking water remains safe. That is important. We have always had very high standards, and it remains safe. In the past couple of weeks, I have spent a lot of time with our Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant. She is the woman who, along with a number of other colleagues in NSW Health, and the former health Minister, helped guide our community through some of the most difficult times during COVID. She is working closely with WaterNSW and the teams across government to look at the draft guidelines. We will make some comments and contributions to those guidelines. Importantly, she is urging regional water suppliers to carry out the important testing. [*Extension of time*]

We are in the process of providing support, including financial support, to water authorities that carry out that important testing. We will continue to do that. Members need to understand clearly the role that NSW Health plays in that testing regime. Sydney Water and other water utilities manage the system in the more metropolitan areas, and WaterNSW manages the rest of the system. The exact date slips my mind but in early August there was identification of some PFAS in the upper Blue Mountains around Greaves Creek and Medlow Dam, in the electorate of the member for Blue Mountains, who is a resident.

We have essentially turned off that part of the system. Even though the levels were in line with the current Australian guidelines, they were a little bit off compared with the new draft guidelines. That is not an issue, but obviously the water utilities—WaterNSW and Sydney Water—and Dr Chant and her team are being cautious on behalf of the communities, as members would expect. This is an important issue. We are continuing to work with local water authorities. We are providing them support through a range of different funding, including the town water mitigation grants to help with town water supply. They are in place and will be for some time. I thank the member for her ongoing communication to her community in a difficult time. As always, we should be proud of the marvellous job Sydney Water and all our utilities do to make sure we get the best and safest water in the country.

BROKEN HILL DISASTER RELIEF

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (12:36): My question is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Given the Premier's earlier answer, precisely what support is available for families and businesses struggling in Broken Hill?

The SPEAKER: Government members will cease interjecting. The Minister has the call.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:37): I thank the member for his question. As was clear through the Premier's answers, a natural disaster has been declared. As members know, a natural disaster declaration is made by the State and the Commonwealth governments. It enables funding to flow to support communities. To step out the way in which a natural disaster declaration is made, when a disaster occurs, it is investigated and assessed. After that is done, the State and Federal authorities work together to put together a natural disaster declaration. In this instance, the natural disaster declaration was made public on Monday. We had been working on that over the weekend. Given that this so-called tornado or weather incident was ongoing from

Wednesday into Thursday, we needed people to assess that and work that out together. So the speed in which the natural disaster declaration was made was quite good.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat. I will hear from the member for Tamworth on a point of order.

Mr Kevin Anderson: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. We know the history. What are they doing exactly for families and businesses right now?

The SPEAKER: The Minister has been relevant but he will be directly relevant.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I was being directly relevant. I said that we have signed off on a natural disaster declaration.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 relating to direct relevance. The question was not about the natural disaster declaration. It was about precisely what support is available, not the level of disaster declaration. How much money is the community entitled to?

Mr JIHAD DIB: This really is all about politics and nothing else. I have been very clear. Let me give members opposite a good example. I go back to a press release by the Leader of The Nationals, who is not in the Chamber. He made a reference to a natural disaster that occurred in 2021.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Kevin Anderson: My point of order relates to direct relevance under Standing Order 129. We are asking what support is available. We have not yet heard that.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I disappoint Opposition members when I say they might wish to hear certain words in an answer but sometimes that is not possible. The Minister is being directly relevant.

Mr David Layzell: Nothing is coming.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I acknowledge that comment. They know exactly what is in a natural disaster declaration—support for the community. I refer to the press release from yesterday about a natural disaster in Narrabri. That declaration was made four days after the natural disaster. The natural disaster declaration by members opposite came 2½ months after the disaster. They need to get their facts right.

RAIL NETWORK

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (12:41): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's plans to improve the reliability of Sydney's rail network?

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:41): I thank the member for Leppington for his question. He is a big advocate for better transport for Sydney's south-west. His community is enjoying extra services from Leppington to Parramatta, connecting key parts of Western Sydney by public transport. The first briefing I received when I became Minister for Transport was about Sydney Trains. That was because in early 2023 multiple incidents across our network resulted in thousands of people being stranded and unable to get to work or home to families or wherever they needed to go. That is unacceptable, but that is what happened under members opposite.

We assembled a group of independent experts to look at the Sydney Trains network to provide advice to government. That group found that the timetable implemented by members opposite in 2017 did not get the balance right. It wound down networks so incredibly tightly that it resulted in a five-year maintenance backlog across the rail network. There was not enough time for maintenance crews to get on the tracks and inspect, refurbish or replace what needed to be upgraded. Our train services were less reliable because the infrastructure and fleet were not maintained. Our system became less resilient because when one part of the network got sick, the entire thing got sick. It cascaded through the network and people could not get where they needed to go. That is why we introduced our Sydney Rail Repair Plan.

Our system also needed a new timetable that was fit for purpose to deliver services to get people where they need to go on time and with enough flexibility to recover when things go wrong. This big, old, complex network moves more than one million people every day. Things go wrong. It is important that the system is able to recover and continue to run services. The last major adjustment to our train timetable was in 2017. That is a long time ago. Things have happened since then, like a global pandemic. The way people travel and the services

they need have fundamentally changed, including commute times. There is now more demand in the hour between 9.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. Our great city deserves a fit-for-purpose timetable. We have made those adjustments. They started last Sunday. We are seeing positive results and a more reliable network in operation. A great example of that happened on Monday afternoon. [*Extension of time*]

On Monday afternoon at Redfern station, unfortunately, a passenger had a medical episode. Paramedics were called and they were able to remove that passenger from the train. They are okay. But that train was stuck at Redfern for some time. There was one major difference between the incident on Monday and other incidents under the previous timetable implemented by members opposite—the recovery of the train network took 30 minutes instead of one hour and 50 minutes. The T1, T9, Blue Mountains, Newcastle and Central Coast passengers were delayed by only 30 minutes. Under those opposite, there would have been a cascading effect for all passengers across the entire rail system.

Under our regime, through focusing on public transport and making sure we put passengers first, more people are able to catch a train and wait times are reduced. Those adjustments to the timetable also mean that we can deliver the new T6 line so that passengers, while we convert the Bankstown line to a metro service, can get a train to the city, freeing up capacity across the network. More people will get reliable services more often. We came to government saying that we would improve the reliability and resilience of the train network, unlike those opposite who ran it into the ground, left passengers stranded and treated the rail workforce with complete disrespect. On this side of the House, we will continue to work hard to deliver the services that people need so that they can choose public transport more often.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARES

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (12:46): My question is directed to the Premier. In a cost-of-living crisis, will the Premier rule out increasing fares on the New South Wales public transport network?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:46): That is not in line with inflation. I cannot do that. Across most of the heavy rail public transport network in the State, the fare paid by passengers covers about 20 per cent of the actual fare, with 80 per cent covered by other taxpayers, including people from places like Broken Hill, Dubbo and Queanbeyan. One-fifth of the fare is covered by the consumer. That is our model. It has been built under those parameters, and we accept that. That does not take into consideration that, if a public transport network is shut down or dramatically reduced, the number of people using roads would exponentially increase.

At the same time that we are trying to get more public transport services into communities that have been left without that kind of basic infrastructure—notwithstanding a massive increase in housing—we need that capital to invest in growing communities. I note that the previous Government did not make a call like that. The reason it did not make that call was for the same economic pressures on the public transport system. We want a public transport system that is fit for a twenty-first century city—Australia's only international city—but that requires investment. The amount that we charge commuters every day is only part of their passage to and from the city. I cannot ask regular taxpayers to pay more.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (12:48): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on the work of the Minns Labor Government to deliver homes alongside essential infrastructure?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:48): I am happy to update the House on that matter, particularly the member for Liverpool. She understands the need to make sure that we are connecting good housing with the infrastructure to support it that builds better communities for New South Wales. I have said this many times in this place, but I will say it again: This Government is committed to providing the infrastructure, services and amenities that people need, alongside housing growth. For too long, under members opposite, we saw the exact opposite. Communities got a dud deal. It was always about politics first and people last.

The election of this Government has been a fresh start for infrastructure funding. We want to provide that funding to our towns and our communities. We are committed to not only building more homes but also building better communities where people want to live. We are providing that infrastructure in line with housing growth. We are not waiting for a decade for it to maybe or possibly come along. We are not waiting for local members to complain to Ministers. Instead, we are making sure that we have not only the infrastructure but also a stream of funding through infrastructure contributions reforms. I note that members opposite voted against that. They do not want connection between schools, hospitals, roads, transport and homes. They are committed to division.

Last week the Deputy Premier and I were pleased to announce this Government's \$75 million investment to provide much-needed and long-overdue infrastructure in communities in Western Sydney, such as Blacktown—which the member for Blacktown will be pleased about—Camden, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury, the Hills and Liverpool. We are providing infrastructure for the people that members opposite forgot. Members opposite were happy to rezone everything for a decade and rezone every paddock they could see. They never delivered the infrastructure that was needed to accompany housing. It is not only in Western Sydney that we are doing this work. As the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads would say, we are the party of the bush, and we are making sure that infrastructure is delivered to the regions as well. We recently committed \$3 million of funding in regional New South Wales for local housing strategies, infrastructure and servicing plans, and local planning control changes to deliver new housing.

Mrs Wendy Tuckerman: Where?

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I hear the member for Goulburn asking where. It is an application process. The member might want to talk to her council about getting an application in rather than bleating and being perpetually negative about every single aspect of her community. She is perpetually the most negative member in this place.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I remind the member for Goulburn that she is on three calls to order. I note that things were going well until the Minister invoked the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. It went downhill from there, and it got the member for Goulburn far too excited. She should be careful. If the member for Goulburn does not come to order she will be removed from the Chamber until the Minister has concluded his answer.

Ms Charishma Kaliyanda: I seek further information.

The SPEAKER: An additional two minutes is granted.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Recently, this Government committed \$200 million to support 24,000 homes in regional New South Wales. I will tell the member for Goulburn where. I have said it before, but I will say it again because she clearly did not listen. She is more interested in talking and interjecting than listening. Where are some of those houses? The member for Bathurst will be excited about money coming his way. The funding will also support the Kew Sewerage Treatment Plant upgrade and 1,600 new homes in Port Macquarie-Hastings. The member for South Coast will be happy about funding coming to the Shoalhaven. Money is also going to the Tweed and Wagga Wagga. They are only some of the examples.

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Only last week I talked about the rezoning of Redmond Estate in Orange, which I know the member for Orange is pleased about. This Government is connecting infrastructure and homes. We are willing to break a 12-year cycle of neglect that members opposite were locked into. Members opposite stand in stark contrast to those who have recognised the need to connect infrastructure and housing, which the Government will continue to do.

Earlier in the year we released our housing targets. We are connecting infrastructure and cutting development times. In contrast, faced with the challenge of supporting infrastructure contributions reform, members opposite voted against it. This Government has a better plan. We do not want just houses; we want to build better homes and communities. We want to build vibrant communities with enabling infrastructure that is funded before housing has arrived, not the other way around. That is in stark contrast to members opposite. Members opposite stand for less home building, higher housing costs and lower standards of living for New South Wales residents, which is exactly the opposite of what we stand for.

PREMIER DIARY DISCLOSURES

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:53): My question is directed to the Premier. Today the Legislative Council condemned the Premier for misleading the public with his diary disclosures and the use of the term "meet and greet". Having had close connections with his friend Steve McMahon for 25 years, why did the Premier's diary fail to disclose the true purpose of the Premier's meeting with him on 30 October last year by calling it a "meet and greet"?

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Transport will come to order. The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces will come to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:54): I thought we were getting another conspiracy theory or another allegation.

The SPEAKER: Government members will come to order. The Premier is capable of answering the question.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: How are those secret sources going? Did anyone tip members opposite off to anything new?

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order. The Premier will be heard in silence. The Premier has the call.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: We did meet and greet. That is why it was in the diary. I do not think that is anything unusual. In my spare time, in between functions with the King, I madly went through the previous Government's ministerial disclosures to see what everyone else got up to. I had a look at the former Attorney General; I cannot remember what he is up to at the moment. In 2022 he had 24 meetings. Eight of the meetings were described as "general discussion". What happened in the general discussion?

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The conspiracy man is back. What does he have to say now? What will he allege now?

The SPEAKER: I anticipate what the point of order will be. The Premier will resume his seat. I will hear the point of order.

Mr Alister Henskens: The question was very specific about the Premier's diary disclosure and the description of "meet and greet" with someone whom he has known for 25 years.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahroonga will resume his seat. The Premier will be directly relevant to the question.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I had a look at the diary of the environment Minister, and he wrote 78 times "portfolio matters". That could be anything. What was it about? The same standard applies, and we want to know. If I had put "portfolio matters", would that have been all right?

[Government members interjected.]

Righto. We will switch it around then and use "portfolio matters". I draw the attention of the House to a member from the upper House, Mr Damien Tudehope. When he was in government, he unsuccessfully tried to move an amendment requiring Opposition MPs to disclose their diaries. He moved a motion saying, "I want the Opposition to disclose their diaries too." Guess what has happened? Now in opposition, he says, "Everyone is entitled to change their mind. I don't like it anymore. I don't want to do that anymore."

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Port Macquarie rises on a point of order. The member for Oatley will come to order.

Mrs Leslie Williams: The point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question was specifically about the Premier's diary, not about anyone else's. The Premier has not gone anywhere near that in his answer.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: When members opposite change their office, they change their mind. That is what happened with Mr Tudehope. Now that they are in opposition, it occurred to me that it might not be an attempt to not disclose who they are meeting. It might be a lack of meetings taking place. Who are they not meeting with? I saw a photo at the Penrith shadow ministerial meeting of an empty room. Nothing has to be disclosed if no-one turns up.

Ms Robyn Preston: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Premier has completed his answer. Members will come to order.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:58): My question is addressed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Ahead of the fiftieth anniversary of Full Stop Australia next week, will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is working with Full Stop Australia to address gender-based violence across the State?

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (12:58): I thank the member for Lismore for her question and her strong advocacy in this area, particularly to support victim-survivors of sexual and domestic and family violence. Today I share with the House that Full Stop Australia, which is one of the country's leading sexual, domestic and family violence response and recovery services, marks its fiftieth anniversary next week on

29 October. Full Stop plays a really crucial role in our response to sexual, domestic and family violence. I acknowledge that Kristoff Adelbert, Sonia Scali and Izzy Batty from Full Stop Australia are in the gallery today. I pay tribute to the work they do.

NSW Health funds Full Stop's Sexual Violence Helpline, which is 1800 424 017, and provides free 24/7 confidential counselling. That means the first person that someone who calls Full Stop Australia's counselling service speaks to is a trauma specialist clinician. They provide the person with appropriate counselling, care and support. Full Stop also delivers a national service for anybody who is impacted by violence. That can be accessed on 1800 Full Stop. It delivers a redress service for institutional child sexual abuse that can be accessed on 1800 211 028. It also provides a rainbow sexual, domestic and family violence service on 1800 497 212.

But Full Stop Australia does so much more. Since the 1970s, when the then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam—a man who did incredible work supporting issues relating to family and women in this country—provided funding to the Sydney Rape Crisis Collective for a 24/7 support service, the organisation has had many names. People may have known it as the NSW Rape Crisis Centre in the late 1990s, as the Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia in the mid-2000s and finally as Full Stop Australia from 2021. Full Stop Australia now reaches communities across every State and every Territory in this country. One thing over those 50 years has remained the same: Full Stop Australia has been there helping victim-survivors of sexual violence heal and recover, and has advocated for reform and community education. Full Stop provides about 15,000 counselling sessions each year. [*Extension of time*]

Those 15,000 counselling sessions are available to people of all genders who have been subjected to sexual, domestic or family violence, and their family and friends. In the last quarter, in a sample of 546 clients, 87 per cent of those clients reported a reduction in distress after contacting Full Stop Australia. It does amazing work. In advocating for change since January this year, Full Stop Australia has made 14 submissions on reforms to laws, policies and practices to better prevent and respond to sexual, domestic and family violence. I thank it for its advocacy in those 14 submissions. Full Stop Australia also provides best practice training and professional services to support safe and respectful workplaces, educational environments and communities. Since the start of this year, it has delivered 91 separate training programs to over 2,200 participants.

While our focus has provided increased attention—and rightly so—to the scourge of domestic and family violence, we cannot ignore the fact that sexual violence is one of the most under-reported crimes across the country. In fact, two million adults have experienced at least one sexual assault since the age of 15. A recent Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research report shows that reports of sexual assault incidents have increased 8 per cent a year on average, with sexual touching, sexual acts and other sexual offences also increasing by 3 per cent a year on average. Our partnership with Full Stop Australia is incredibly important. It recently stood beside us when we launched our primary prevention strategy, Pathways to Prevention, last year. We thank Full Stop Australia for its advocacy and support and we look forward to continuing to work with it.

HEALTH WORKFORCE

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (13:04): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. With the number of practising nurses and midwives in steady decline across New South Wales and with those remaining nurses and midwives working longer hours and being among the lowest paid in the country, what is the Government doing to ensure skilled nurses and midwives are being retained in our public health system?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (13:04): I thank the member for Balmain for the question. On behalf of the House, I acknowledge the Nurses and Midwives' Association members who are in the gallery today. I thank them for being here, as well as Adam Hall, who is representing the Health Services Union. I have a lot of people watching me today.

Ms Sophie Cotsis: And your mum.

Mr RYAN PARK: It doubles the audience of mum and dad. It is not just mum; it is mum and dad today. The overall health workforce has increased. To be blunt, I said from day one, with the Premier, that the biggest challenge we face in health at the moment is not new buildings or equipment but recruitment and retention of staff and creating a pipeline of healthcare workers that every one of our communities needs to deliver the services they expect. I also said that the Government, from a healthcare perspective, is going to be more about people and less about plaques because we know that, whilst investment in infrastructure is important, nothing can beat investment in the frontline healthcare workforce that our communities need and deserve. At the moment just over 140,000 people are employed by NSW Health—an enormous number that has increased by about 3½ thousand over the past 12 months. In terms of the nursing workforce, we have seen that number increase by about 3.8 per cent. That is equivalent to around 2,500 additional nurses and midwives.

Every Minister wants to have retention at 100 per cent. All of us do. I am sure all Ministers do in their own portfolios. Certainly that is what we want in NSW Health. Now, getting to 100 per cent is near impossible because people want to move and make changes, and because of family circumstances. At the moment the retention rate of our nurses is sitting at around 93 per cent. There is more work to do—100 per cent, yes. But that is an increase of about 1 per cent. Everyone would understand that there is far more work to do in that regard. Last year we removed the wages cap that for over a decade had ensured that the pay of nurses and midwives and healthcare professionals in this State was a lot less than in other States that did not have a cap. I have explained previously to this House the power of compounding and how, when it is going against you, it also works— [*Extension of time*]

It is important that we acknowledge that we are in continued discussions with the Nurses and Midwives' Association around pay and remuneration.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: I am sure the association wants fast answers. We are working with it literally every other day and week on this issue. But I will tell members what I will not do. I will not cop criticism from members on the other side of the Chamber, who had a legislated wage cap in place that meant increases of no more than 2.5 per cent for over a decade.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: In the first year of the Premier taking over, nurses and midwives and other healthcare professionals received the largest increase in pay in over a decade.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: I will listen to the concerns of nurses and midwives. I will not listen to comrades on the other side of the House.

Mrs Wendy Tuckerman: We're not comrades.

Mr RYAN PARK: They're not comrades—okay!

Ms Kellie Sloane: Point of order—

Mr RYAN PARK: I thought Vacluse was.

The SPEAKER: The member for Hawkesbury will come to order. The Minister will resume his seat. I will explain to the member for Vacluse how to take a point of order. First, she will stand in her place and get the attention of the Speaker. When she has done that, I will ask her to come to the table.

Ms Kellie Sloane: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. This answer does not cut to the core of the question and is insulting to the nurses and midwives who are in the gallery.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Vacluse will resume her seat. I call the member for Vacluse to order for the second time. I call the member for Newtown to order for the first time.

BUILDING INDUSTRY

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (13:09): My question is addressed to the Minister for Building. Will the Minister please update the House on the new Building Commissioner's role in helping to deliver the Minns Labor Government's plan to restore confidence in the State's building sector?

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (13:10): I thank the member for East Hills for her question and interest in a very important subject for the New South Wales building industry. I am pleased to advise the House that Mr James Sherrard has been appointed as the new Building Commissioner by the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service. The appointment of Mr Sherrard follows a global recruitment process. He brings more than 30 years of public and private sector experience to the role. Mr Sherrard has led civic, residential and sporting infrastructure projects, including the Sydney Olympics, and has a wealth of international construction experience, having worked on projects in the United Kingdom, Algeria, Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

Mr Sherrard will start on 2 December, following the retirement of former Building Commissioner David Chandler in August. Mr Chandler was an outspoken force who created positive change in the building industry in New South Wales. He made no apologies for being a tough cop on the beat, which is what the sector needed at the time. I am confident that Mr Sherrard will build on Mr Chandler's legacy and continue to strongly enforce legislation, where necessary, without fear or favour. However, the Building Commission is now in a new

phase of growth, and the new commissioner must necessarily take a different approach. Mr Sherrard will lead a mature, professional regulator that will focus also on recognising what good building looks like through education and collaboration.

I am very proud that last year the Minns Labor Government fulfilled its election commitment to establish the Building Commission, transforming the 10-person office of the Building Commissioner into a more than 400-strong standalone regulator. The regulator uses sophisticated data matching and intelligence to target bad players, and it has a presence in the State's regions. I am proud to say also that we are restoring confidence in the construction sector by removing the shonky operators, fly-by-night cowboys and phoenixing of bad companies, while also increasing building industry capability to ensure that we deliver the State's housing needs. While we must boost housing supply, we will not—I repeat, we will not—compromise on quality.

To that end, we have boosted the powers of the Building Commission in the following ways. First, last year we expanded the powers of the commission to class 1 buildings, so inspectors are now able to enter a house under construction, request documents or information, and examine and test building work. Secondly, the Building Commission can now also issue orders compelling developers to fix defects and stop building work when continuing could lead to significant harm to the public or occupiers. That is because we want residents to be confident that the biggest purchase they will likely make in their lifetime is built to the highest standards. *[Extension of time]*

The Government has also expanded powers for the Building Commission to combat intentional phoenixing activities and insolvency abuse in the construction industry. That includes stopping people from holding contractor licences when they have been involved in insolvencies or intentional phoenixing activity. This is also a move towards greater accountability and transparency against those who would exploit Australian corporate laws for personal gain at the expense of honest tradespeople and hardworking home owners. We have also updated the Home Building Act to close a loophole, making it clear that builders are not entitled to progress payments where work is done without a licence or insurance.

Finally, we have tightened up the rules around unsafe products being used in the industry because anyone involved in specifying or supplying building products must ensure they are compliant with the National Construction Code, standards and laws. Those reforms demonstrate that the Building Commission has the powers and resources in place for its next phase of growth. With the depth and breadth of experience that Mr Sherrard will bring to his role as commissioner, I am confident the commission will continue to have the leadership it requires to do the important work it needs to do. I congratulate Mr Sherrard on his appointment and very much look forward to working with him.

Ministerial Statements

GOVERNMENT AGENCY MERCHANT FEES

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:15): It is rightly the expectation of citizens that their governments and its agencies operate lawfully and exercise due probity whenever and wherever there is doubt. I inform the House about a serious matter that has recently come to this Government's attention and poses a significant risk to public trust in administration during the previous term of government. I have been advised of the following. In July 2024 the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service was made aware of an issue relating to the charging or recoupment of merchant fees by Service NSW and Revenue NSW when customers make a payment using a credit or debit card.

The issue was raised in the course of finalising the department's financial statements for 2024, which was done in consultation with staff from the Audit Office of New South Wales, prompting further inquiries. The secretary was informed that in 2016 Service NSW was advised by the Crown Solicitor's Office that government agencies could only charge or recoup merchant fees with clear statutory authority. Charging or recouping merchant fees without clear statutory authority was unlawful. The secretary was also informed that the issue had been raised again in 2022 and that the Department of Customer Service and NSW Treasury had then sought advice from the Crown Solicitor's Office in relation to the charging or recoupment of merchant fees. The secretary then raised the issue with the Secretary to the Treasury as the responsible policyholder, and the Department of Customer Service and Treasury sought further advice from the Crown Solicitor's Office.

Pending receipt of the advice, the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service directed Service NSW and Revenue NSW to take immediate steps to identify how they would implement a decision to cease charging merchant fees, and to cease charging fees if the further Crown Solicitor's advice confirmed that the fees were unlawful. In September 2024 the Crown Solicitor's Office advised that government agencies could only charge or recoup merchant fees with clear statutory authority. Following receipt of that advice, the Secretary of the

Department of Customer Service directed Service NSW and Revenue NSW to cease charging merchant fees. The department identified that merchant fees were also being charged by other parts of the department and that those charges must also cease.

While the amounts charged for merchant fees on individual transactions may be relatively small, that does nothing to excuse the actions of government agencies in charging or recouping merchant fees without lawful authority. Accordingly, the secretary has referred the matter to the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the NSW Ombudsman, noting the apparent failure to act on the 2016 Crown Solicitor's advice. After becoming aware in July and seeking further legal advice, the department made me aware of a potential issue in September and I was formally briefed in early October. Our most immediate priority has been to stop charging merchant fees as quickly as possible, without breaking the system and preventing customers from being able to complete necessary and essential government transactions. An incident management taskforce and governance structure has been established within the Department of Customer Service to lead and coordinate this work.

Revenue NSW and the Rental Bond Board have been able to quickly remove merchant fees from the payments they receive directly from customers. Removing merchant fees from transactions conducted through Service NSW has been more complicated. Service NSW accepts payments on behalf of other New South Wales government agencies through a technically complex range of systems: seven different channels, nine transactional systems, three payment platforms and four banking layer systems. In spite of the complexity of these systems, Service NSW tested and then commenced the removal of merchant fees for some transactions and payment channels on 15 and 16 October. This has been progressively extended to more transactions and payment channels.

It was vital that this work be undertaken with careful planning and testing to ensure that the changes did not jeopardise customers' transactions. It would not have been acceptable for customers to believe they had successfully renewed their car registration or driver licence or paid their fine through Service NSW, only to have the transaction reversed or rejected. Jeopardising these sorts of transactions would have significant consequences, including the risk of persons inadvertently driving unregistered vehicles, driving unlicensed or defaulting on fines. Because of the complexity of the payment systems, Service NSW's work to cease charging or recouping merchant fees is ongoing. Merchant fees have ceased on most digital transactions. Work to remove merchant fees for over-the-counter card payments in Service NSW centres is proceeding. There are now fee-free payment options for all transactions conducted through Service NSW. Information is available on the Service NSW website and in all service centres and contact centres, to help customers to complete their transactions without paying merchant fees. Service NSW will continue to provide updates on its website to keep customers informed about the progress of this work. Customers can register on the Service NSW website to receive updates.

I will give examples of the impact. If a customer renewed their driver licence for three years last month, using a Mastercard or Visa credit or debit card, they would have paid the licence renewal fee of \$162 plus a merchant fee of 71 cents. If a customer renewed their car registration for a small car for private use, using a Mastercard or Visa card, they would have paid the registration cost of \$438 plus a merchant fee of \$1.92. However, the relatively small size of individual charges points to the bigger issue and principle, which does not diminish my concern that government agencies have acted without lawful authority despite repeated legal advice stating that surcharges were not lawful. It would be astounding if a government agency had received advice in 2016 that it could not charge or recoup merchant fees without lawful authority but it continued to charge these fees. We do not yet know who knew about this advice. We do not know how far it went in Service NSW or whether members of the former Government were informed.

The New South Wales Government takes this matter seriously. Millions of transactions over almost a decade are affected. That is why I joined with the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance to formally refer this matter to the NSW Ombudsman and request that he consider conducting an investigation in relation to the conduct of the Department of Customer Service, including Revenue NSW, Service NSW, Treasury and any other relevant agencies, including the circumstances in which legal advice relating to the lawful authority to recover merchant fees was obtained, whether appropriate steps were taken in response to the receipt of legal advice, whether sufficient action was taken to prevent the collection of merchant fees by agencies without legal authority to do so and whether conduct in relation to this matter amounts to maladministration or conduct of the kind outlined in section 26 of the Ombudsman Act.

NSW Treasury is leading a process across the government agencies to ensure that they are not charging or recouping merchant fees without lawful authority. This will fix the problem for the future. To address the problems of the past, we need to get to the bottom of this possible failure of administration. This is what we hope the Ombudsman will be able to do by conducting an appropriate investigation. It is not acceptable that government agencies have charged fees without lawful authority for years, possibly with knowledge that the charges were unlawful.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (13:24): The Opposition acknowledges the serious issues that have been raised by the Minister. We hope that any reporting and work done by the Ombudsman will be shared in the interests of transparency and resolving the issues that have been raised.

Committees

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

The CLERK: In accordance with the Legislation Review Act 1987, I announce receipt of the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 21/58*, dated 22 October 2024, received on 22 October 2024.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Reports

The CLERK: In accordance with Standing Order 305, I announce receipt of report No. 2/58 of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development entitled *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill 2024*, dated October 2024, received on 22 October 2024.

[Notices of motions given.]

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

Bills

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 22 October 2024.

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (14:31): I support the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I am proud to be a member of the Minns Labor Government, which is making some of the biggest changes to the rental system in a decade to protect over 2.2 million renters across our great State. This bill will introduce the most significant changes to rental laws since the current Residential Tenancies Act became law in 2010, ending no-grounds evictions for fixed-term and periodic leases and making it easier for renters to keep pets. It is the next step in fulfilling the Minns Government's commitment to make renting fairer. The bill will also limit how often rent can be increased, ban renters from being asked to pay for background checks and ensure renters have a free and convenient way to pay their rent.

These rental reforms will provide cost-of-living relief to renters in Parramatta. Some 57 per cent of residents in my electorate are renters, which is why I am so focused on delivering these reforms to support the people in my community and across New South Wales. In March 2023 Labor went to the election with a promise to the people of New South Wales that we would make renting fairer for tenants and owners. With this State containing the largest rental market in Australia, we understand how significant it is that our Government strikes a fair balance between the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. On 24 July this year the Premier announced that our Labor Government would introduce the biggest rental reforms in a decade, modernising the New South Wales rental market, and on 14 October we delivered on our promise, introducing the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 in this place.

These comprehensive reforms are only possible under a Labor Government. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government failed to act on this issue and renters have been living with the fallout. The Coalition had an election commitment to end no-grounds evictions for periodic leases only. That would have created two classes of renters: one protected from the threat of no-grounds evictions and one without that protection. Australians pride themselves on living in a classless society. As such, the Minns Labor Government would not stand for this inequity, which would have resulted in perverse outcomes such as renters being pushed onto rolling short-term leases, which we have seen happen across our borders.

The people of New South Wales can rely on one party, the Labor Party, to make such historic changes to the rental system by ending no-grounds evictions across all lease types. The changes in the bill build on the momentum we started when we passed the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 to remove the loopholes in rent bidding laws and facilitate a portable bonds scheme. With close to one-third of the

New South Wales population renting their homes, and renting becoming a longer term option for more people of all ages and circumstances, these reforms are critical.

More than half the population in my electorate should not be in a situation where they do not have the stability and security to make their rental property into a home. They should not be forced to move frequently, preventing them from developing strong links within their community. It is not right that children should have to face regular moves, often leaving behind established friendships and connections at their schools or with extended family and friends. Unexpected moving costs can also add to cost-of-living pressures. For those reasons, ending no-grounds evictions is the cornerstone of these reforms. It will enable all rental reforms and support the rights and requirements under the Act to operate effectively.

I have attended several Sydney Alliance events in Western Sydney and heard firsthand from tenants that the ability for a landlord to end a tenancy without reason makes them fearful of asserting their rights or raising issues with their landlords. One young woman spoke to me of her family's experiences with mould in the house they rent in the Cumberland local government area. Several of her family members have experienced poor health as a result of the mould but are too scared to raise the issue with the real estate agent due to the threat of a no-grounds eviction.

The Western Sydney Tenants' Service, known as WESTS, is a program run through the Western Sydney Community Legal Centre and based in the Parramatta electorate. It has presented numerous case studies outlining the unfair and completely unreasonable experiences of its clients. Client B, an elderly woman relying heavily on her Age Pension, was provided a rent increase notice. A financial counsellor from another community service assessed her benefits and indicated she would be left with a mere \$20 for the fortnight to spend on food, medication and other necessities. Client B was already living a reclusive lifestyle, given that the original rent on the contract was already quite high for her and her partner. The social isolation from friends and family due to their financial position was demeaning for them both.

WESTS attempted to negotiate with the real estate agents on her behalf. However, given the rent increase was already in line with the median market rate for the Parramatta area, this attempt was immediately dismissed. WESTS then advised client B of her option to challenge the rent increase at the tribunal given disrepair issues had been ignored by the landlord. Client B, though grateful for the assistance offered by WESTS and the knowledge it possesses, knew full well that if she were to challenge the increase she would likely meet the prospect of a no-grounds termination. With a heavy heart, client B accepted the rent increase despite being unable to afford it comfortably, foregoing medication essential to maintain her quality of life. People in Parramatta should not have to live this way.

In another case study, client C resides in a property within the Parramatta electorate with her young family. This household has a dual income and yet also faces the prospect of financial hardship in the current housing crisis. Client C was served a rent increase notice, which has asked for more than the median market rent for the area. Her partner immediately moved to negotiate the amount, given their history as tenants under the same agency and landlord; however, this was unsuccessful. Client C called WESTS asking for assistance and guidance on how to pursue the matter at the tribunal. WESTS provided client C with the necessary tools to make an application to the tribunal and how to best argue her case with the evidence on hand, including listings from applicable websites for leases.

Client C then chose to withdraw her application shortly after, having caught wind of her agency wishing to serve her with a no-grounds notice. Fearing that this would negatively impact her children, client C chose to pay the new rent increase whilst simultaneously attempting to find other properties that would be within her budget. Given that the cost of living has made Sydney unaffordable, client C has thanked WESTS for all that it has done and is moving out of the metropolitan area. They are real people living real lives in our suburbs and in the Parramatta electorate.

How can a renter feel comfortable requesting much-needed repairs or raising concerns about the safety of their home with the threat of a no-grounds eviction hanging over them? For that reason, ending no-grounds evictions is the foundational reform to enable all other rental reforms to proceed and to support the rights and requirements under the Act to operate effectively. The bill will introduce the most significant changes to rental laws since the current Residential Tenancies Act became law in 2010. The Minns Labor Government will limit rent increases to one per year for periodic and fixed-term leases, closing a loophole in the existing legislation and making renting in New South Wales fairer, simpler and more certain, while aligning New South Wales laws with the National Cabinet's Better Deal for Renters.

The Government will end no-grounds evictions to give renters and owners more clarity, prescribing reasonable and sensible reasons to end a fixed-term or periodic lease. The changes to end no-grounds terminations will apply to all rental agreements, including those that commenced before the changes come into effect. That will

ensure that all renters are able to benefit from the new protections. The reforms to end no-grounds terminations are sensible and balanced. Limiting the reasons for evictions to the grounds in the bill will improve certainty for renters and give them the confidence to raise problems with their landlord without fear of a no-grounds eviction. At the same time, the changes acknowledge that the property is a financial investment for the landlord and that changing financial or life circumstances may mean that they need to change how the property is used. [*Extension of time*]

The bill will ensure that renters have a free way to pay their rent, including bank transfer and the Commonwealth Government's Centrepay, and will protect renters from having to pay for background checks when they apply for a property. Whether a renter has a budgie, a goldfish, a cavoodle or a cat, a pet is another member of the family. Renters should not have to prioritise a place to live over their pet. The pets in rentals reform will mean a tenant can apply to keep a pet, with landlords only able to decline on certain grounds. Landlords must respond within 21 days, with grounds for refusal and appeals available via the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The proposed changes follow extensive and detailed discussions with renter advocates, industry stakeholders and tenancy experts, as well as 16,000 submissions and survey responses received during public consultation.

In addition, the bill will ensure that renters can pay their rent easily and without being charged extra fees, because every dollar counts for every renter. When admin fees can add up to hundreds of dollars a year, we know how important it is to tighten the law to require landlords and agents to offer free electronic methods of payment, such as EFTPOS or the Commonwealth's Centrepay system. That will be a welcome relief for many renters. In fact, 92 per cent of survey respondents supported the reform, including 82 per cent of landlords who responded. Relieving the cost-of-living pressures across New South Wales is our number one priority, so the Government's suite of rental reforms also puts a stop to renters having to pay for their own background checks when they apply for a rental property. The Government is introducing Rent Check, a new free website to allow renters to check if the rent they are being asked to pay is fair. That is also a win for landlords, who can set more competitive prices by using the Rent Check tool.

I commend the Minister for all the work he has done, along with his team and the relevant departments. I also acknowledge the appointment and contribution of the NSW Rental Commissioner, Ms Trina Jones, who has taken every effort to consult widely and bring fairness and equity to these significant reforms. At a recent Sydney Alliance event in Parramatta, Ms Jones stayed for the entire forum discussion. She sat at the table and listened to the concerns and feedback from renters from across the Parramatta and Cumberland local government areas. A big issue in Parramatta is international students who rent. While the rental reforms in the bill will assist them, we hope that we will be able to build on those reforms to make New South Wales a safer and more inviting place for renters. They have come to this country trusting in us to provide them with a great education and a great experience of living in Australia, and it is up to us to provide that support.

As the Deputy Chair of the Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2024, I acknowledge the work of the committee members and the secretariat that contributed towards the final framing of the bill. I note that the member for Newtown and the member for Cessnock were also on that committee and are in the House today. I also acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues who have worked collaboratively to get us to today, as well as the union movement, which has advocated for its members to improve housing stability and affordability across New South Wales. I am confident that our Government has listened to stakeholders, considered the issues and taken the most appropriate course of action to get the balance right and introduce a fairer rental system. As I said at the outset, the electorate of Parramatta has the second highest number of renters in the State. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (14:45): I contribute to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I know the bill will be welcomed broadly across New South Wales, including in my electorate. More than 43 per cent of people who live in my electorate are renters. In suburbs like Bondi, the number is more than 60 per cent. My community cares about renters and the way that they are protected under New South Wales law. We talk about the cost of living, and one of people's largest expenses is their rent or their mortgage repayments. My community is feeling that. We pay the highest median rent throughout the entire State and have the highest median mortgage repayments.

It is important to provide protections for renters to ensure that they feel they are not just in a rental property but in a home, where they can put down roots and have some longevity and a feeling of security. That is so important; I hear it from many people in my community all the time. They have told me that they want fair and reasonable provisions to ensure that there is that stability and longevity in leasing. People in our community want to make sure it is easier for nurses, teachers, firies and other key workers who are struggling to afford rent in the community that they are serving. It does not seem fair. We want inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods, and the bill will help us move towards that. Likewise, we want investors to keep purchasing rental properties, which will

increase supply and keep rents as low as possible. Striking that balance is difficult. The bill has been improved thanks to broad input from stakeholders, the Coalition and the crossbench. I thank the Government for listening to those diverse voices and for presenting legislation we can all get behind.

Under the bill, property owners would now be required to provide a prescribed reason for terminating a tenancy. The reasons are various but include provisions such as a breach of the tenancy agreement; sale of the premises; significant renovation, repairs or demolition; and many others. 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. Whilst that provides predictability and stability for tenants, we cannot kid ourselves that it will solve the core issue of long-term housing affordability.

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. The bill enables a rental bond rollover scheme, which seeks to ease the financial strain on tenants moving from one property to another. That is very practical. It also eliminates unnecessary financial hurdles for prospective renters and promotes a more equitable system where tenants are not burdened with extra fees. As the shadow Minister noted, together, those measures offer practical solutions to ease financial pressures on tenants and improve the overall fairness of the rental market.

Many of the provisions were Coalition policy, and that bipartisanship should have seen those changes introduced well before now. Labor came to the 2023 election promising to make a difference for renters across New South Wales, but it stalled for 18 months before introducing this bill for consideration. I note that many of the changes in the bill had bipartisan support at the election. This delay has left both tenants and landlords in limbo and has imposed a financial cost on my community. In this time, rents have gone up by 11 per cent across the State while interest rates have also gone up, but vacancy rates have gone down to 1.6 per cent. To the renters in my community I say that while the bill will make a substantial difference, I know that there is more work to do. I welcome the bill.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (14:49): The time has come for the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the Minister responsible, Minister Chanthivong. The bill fulfills the Government's commitment not just at the last election but also at elections past. The reforms in the bill are important and overdue because New South Wales is the only State that does not offer proper protections for renters, and this Government is changing that. I am pleased that, despite the odd little jibe from Opposition members—because that is how they roll—there is broad support for this reform across the Parliament. There was a time when members opposite would have led the charge for resistance—I call that the last term of Parliament. Under the current legislation, 32,000 renters have been evicted from their homes for no reason at all. The bill will change that and make the lasting change that the 2.3 million renters, and growing, in New South Wales want and expect this Parliament to deliver. This Government is true to its word and is doing exactly that.

The bill is particularly important in the context of Wollongong because, according to the most recent statistics, outside of the highest ranking areas of the Sydney metropolitan area, the electorate of Wollongong has the highest proportion of renters in the State at 39 per cent, which is a fraction under two in every five households. To put that in context, that is nearly 14,400 households. More than half of residents in households in a number of suburbs in the Wollongong area are now renters. In North Wollongong, nearly two-thirds of residents of households are tenants; 53 per cent of households in Gwynneville are tenanted; and in Wollongong, a suburb with more than 10,000 households, more than 5,000 are rented. Dropping down to the next rung, Warrawong, which is one of the lowest socio-economic communities in the State, at 45 per cent—or just under half—has one of the highest proportions of rentals in the region.

Renters deserve to live in certainty, but by the same token home owners of rental properties also deserve a degree of certainty, which the reforms in the bill address. The Government believes it has got the balance right between providing the additional rights that renters need, should have and deserve, while also maintaining the protections that home owners need, should have and deserve. It is important that we have both. The majority of people who own a rental property own only one and it is often a substantial part of their retirement savings. While a rental property is a home to many people, it is also part of an investment strategy for owners looking to their retirement income. With more people renting and more renters renting for longer, if not for their entire lives, it is important that properties are not only seen through the prism of the property investor, but also that they are seen as the homes they are. People are proud of the homes they live in and that deserves to be recognised, hence the need to recognise and treat both sides of the rental equation appropriately.

Ending no-grounds evictions is an important part of the Government's reforms, but it is not the only part. I am pleased that the bill also introduces a portable bonds scheme, which I have advocated for for some time. Given that the Government already holds rental bonds on behalf of tenants and home owners, in the days of digital transactions there seems to be no good reason to continue to undertake convoluted transactions when a renter moves from one rental property to another. A portable bonds scheme would protect the interests of both tenants and home owners by saving renters moving from one property to another the thousands of dollars they need to find up-front before they can move. A digital transfer of the bond from one property to another, while still allowing the owner of the first property access to the funds, should they need them, is a simple but effective measure. Again, I congratulate the Minister on driving the scheme through.

In other improvements, the bill addresses digital transactions involving rent, making sure that all tenants have a fee-free way to pay. Such a protection should not be needed in legislation, but it is. I do not have to pay an additional fee when my mortgage comes out of my account, so nor should those who are paying their rent. Property owners and agents will be required to offer fee-free ways to pay, such as a bank transfer or the Commonwealth Government's Centrepay scheme. There is no need for an additional cost—it makes no sense—so I am pleased that, through this reform, it will go.

Another important reform will see the closure of the rent increase loophole and cap rent increases to one per year. This will not cap rent increases but cap the number of times they can be imposed, stopping multiple rent hikes. This applies to fixed-term leases of less than two years or when there is a change to the type of lease, such as periodic to fixed. The bill also bans charging renters fees for background checks. More people are calling rental properties home for longer periods, so the bill makes sure that, as for someone who owns their own home, it is easier for renters to have a pet. People deserve to live with their pets. Tenants can apply to have a pet, with landlords being able to decline only on certain grounds.

The reforms in the bill come after an extensive consultation period. I reject the criticism from some that the bill should have come sooner. The Government would have liked to have introduced it sooner, but I blame the last term of Parliament. The extensive public consultation included 16,000 submissions and survey responses. The Government is taking that response seriously because this is a serious issue. The current rental market in New South Wales, particularly in parts of the Illawarra like Wollongong, is one of the toughest I have seen for decades, with historic low vacancy rates and median rental prices for houses having increased by 7 per cent in the past 12 months. Labor was elected with a mandate to modernise the rental market and this bill will do that. The Government is building a fairer rental market for tenants and owners. The bill reduces stress for renters while getting the balance right for owners. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (14:57): I contribute to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. In recent years, many articles have clearly indicated that the number of renters in New South Wales is increasing relative to other tenure. Prior to 2021, the proportion of households reported as being privately rented had been increasing by about 1 per cent every five years. In the latest census, from 2016 to 2021, that proportion increased to about 3 per cent and renters now make up close to one-third of all households in New South Wales. In my electorate of Cabramatta, the figures are similar, with renters making up 34.4 per cent of all dwellings.

The over two million people who rent in the New South Wales private rental market continue to face challenges, including the cost of living, increases in rents and high energy bills. Rental prices are related to house prices and house prices are related to the supply of houses. To have sufficient supply of homes in New South Wales for our current population, the Government has committed to building 377,000 new homes within the next five years—by mid-2029. Labor understands the current and immediate pressures on renters, which is why the Government is introducing this bill, which will alleviate the pressure on the roughly one-third of households, or over two million people, in New South Wales. The bill will do this by making renting fairer, ending no-grounds evictions for fixed-term and periodic leases, and making it easier for renters to keep pets. These changes are the most significant changes to rental laws since the current Residential Tenancies Act became law in 2010.

The bill will also limit how often rent can be increased, ban the seeking of background check payments from renters and ensure renters have a free and convenient way to pay their rent. The bill builds on the work that this Government has done with the passing of the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 to fix loopholes in rent bidding laws and facilitate a portable bonds scheme. The current Act allows the landlord to end a lease if there are reasonable reasons, such as if the renter breached the lease or if the landlord has sold the home with vacant possession. In addition, landlords can also terminate a lease under section 84 for a fixed-term lease, once that fixed term ends, or under section 85 for a periodic agreement, if sufficient notice is given, without giving any reason. That is known as a no-grounds eviction.

The bill will end no-grounds evictions for both fixed-term and periodic leases. The bill replaces sections 84 and 85 of the Residential Tenancies Act with new grounds for termination. The new termination grounds, in proposed new sections 87E to 87M of the bill, are as follows: the property is up for sale with vacant possession; the premises are subjected to significant renovations or repairs; the premises are subjected to demolition; the tenant is no longer eligible for the affordable housing scheme; the tenant is no longer eligible for the transitional housing program; the premises are part of a New South Wales Government key worker housing scheme; the tenant is no longer eligible for student accommodation; the premises no longer to be used as rented residential premises; or the landlord or family will reside at the premises. Landlords will still be able to end a tenancy if a renter has breached the tenancy agreement or the law.

The bill also introduces provisions to prevent against the misuse of the termination provisions and to give the community confidence that the laws are being used as intended. Exclusion periods will apply for each termination ground. That is the period after the termination within which the property cannot be re-let on the tenancy market. Evidence will be required to prevent the misuse of termination grounds. New section 85 allows the regulations to require supporting documentation or information that must accompany a termination notice. The section makes it an offence to provide false or misleading documents or information when giving a termination notice. New section 86 also makes it an offence to give a termination notice on a ground that is not genuine. Significant penalties apply for these offences: 100 penalty units, which is equivalent to \$11,000, for an individual, and 650 penalty units, equivalent to \$71,500, for businesses. For all of the new termination grounds, the notice period for terminating a fixed-term lease is 60 days if the lease is for six months or less, and 90 days if it is for longer than six months.

Currently in New South Wales landlords can refuse permission for any pet in a rental property, unless it is an assistance animal such as a guide dog. The landlord does not have to justify or give any reason for their refusal, and a renter who keeps a pet at a property without the landlord's approval may be in breach of their lease. Our Government recognises from studies that pets can provide emotional and psychological benefits, which reduce stress and loneliness, and promote overall mental health. New section 73B provides that renters who have entered into a residential tenancy agreement are still required to seek a landlord's consent to keep a pet in their home, other than for an assistance animal. A consistent process for applying for this consent from the landlord is set out in new sections 73C and 73D, where the application for consent must be made in the form approved by the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service. The landlord's response to the request must also be in a form approved by the Secretary. That means the application process is more standardised and consistent.

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

Our Government understands that some landlords may have genuine reasons to refuse a pet. New section 73F lists the reasons for which the landlord may refuse a renter's request to keep a pet. Some of those reasons include 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; or keeping the pet would break another law or rule. As with the changes to end no-grounds evictions, the changes to the rules about keeping pets will apply to all tenancy agreements, including those entered into before the changes commence. That will ensure that all renters are able to benefit from these new protections. Any consent to keep a pet that is already in place will not need to be applied for again but will become a consent under the new laws.

The bill will also broaden the protection against rent increasing more than once in every 12-month period to all types of leases, including fixed-term leases of less than two years. The bill requires a landlord to offer renters the choice of using electronic bank transfer and Centrepay to pay their rent. The landlord is also required to ensure they enable the payment by whatever method chosen by the renter. The section also prohibits a landlord from charging any fees or passing on costs incurred by the landlord or the landlord's agent to the tenant. New section 23 of the bill means that tenants cannot be asked to pay for background checks. A breach of that provision will be an offence with 20 penalty units, which is equivalent to \$2,200.

The bill will also appoint the Rental Commissioner as a permanent member of the Rental Bond Board, to advise the Government on rental issues, work with both government and community to protect renters, and to rebalance the rental market. The reforms are necessary to improve the lives of the more than 2.2 million people

across our State who rent. They will provide clarity and certainty for everyone in New South Wales. I thank Minister Chanthivong, who is currently in the Chamber, and his team for their wonderful work on the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:06): I make a contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024, which aims to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 by introducing significant changes to tenancy laws in New South Wales. The reforms are said to be designed to create greater security for tenants, particularly by restricting the use of no-grounds evictions, while also providing clarity on rent increases and pets in rentals. The bill also builds on prior efforts to modernise the regulatory framework around rental agreements. Those issues are particularly relevant in my area of the Tweed where we have a shortage of rentals. I think it is down to about 1 per cent or 2 per cent at the moment, which is making it extraordinarily hard for renters. After COVID a lot of people from Sydney and Melbourne moved to the Tweed to live, which caused real estate prices to increase dramatically.

Before I continue, I will highlight a particular issue in the Tweed with the current rulings of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. If the owner of a property lives outside New South Wales, then NCAT cannot deal with that issue. For example, if someone lives in Coolangatta, has a unit in the Tweed and there is a dispute about rentals or bonds et cetera, NCAT cannot deal with it. This was an outstanding issue in the term of the previous Government, and it continues to be an issue. It is very localised. We have a large number of people who live outside the area of New South Wales and have rental properties in the Tweed.

The bill removes the ability of landlords to issue no-grounds eviction notices for both fixed-term and periodic leases. Instead, landlords must provide a valid reason for terminating a lease. Hopefully the Minister will be able to respond to this. If the landlord actually lives outside of New South Wales, then what effect does the bill have? As I said before, NCAT cannot deal with the issue. I hope that the Minister's great advisers, who are in the advisers' gallery, will take that on notice and be able to give me some form of solace. The bill requires that landlords cite one of the following reasonable grounds for terminating a tenancy: a breach of the terms of the tenancy agreement; the sale of the premises; significant renovations, repairs or demolition of the premises that necessitate the tenant vacating the property; if the tenant is no longer eligible under an affordable housing scheme, transitional housing program or a scheme for students; or if the premises is required for key working accommodation, which is very interesting.

Already the Northern NSW Local Health District is indicating that it is one of the four areas recognised in the Treasurer's recent budget for building affordable accommodation for frontline or key workers. That was one of the beautiful things about our Tweed hospital. Mr Temporary Speaker Barr, I know you are facing something similar in Cessnock. Even though there are double the number of beds, the hospital now has the potential for 499 beds. It only takes up 11 hectares of land and there is at least another seven hectares surrounding it. It is built for the future. Governments on both sides of politics have not been able to achieve that in the past in this place. You have been in this place as long as I have, Mr Temporary Speaker Barr. That is really good.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery is working on that. Recently we had a meeting of key community workers. My area is now looking at the pods that were used in Lismore, and I note that the member for Ballina is deeply interested in key workers. The bill will limit rent increases to once every 12 months for all tenancy agreements. That is currently the case for periodic leases, and the bill aims to make it more uniform for fixed-term leases as well. The bill also addresses keeping pets in rental properties, which is big for my area. My electorate probably has the highest number of people over the age of 65. We are neck and neck with Port Macquarie and Forster.

Dr Marjorie O'Neill: Definitely not me.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I acknowledge the member for Coogee. We have more people over 65, about 30 or 35 per cent. I have found that most single people like a little pet dog.

Dr Marjorie O'Neill: Love it!

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: They love a pet dog and often they will not go anywhere without them. The pet dog is probably more a part of the family than anyone else. Overall, the amendments proposed by the Minister are good. It is a work in progress. The problem is only about 1 or 2 per cent of housing are rentals, although two or three housing estates each with 5,000 new homes should come online in the next five to 10 years. That should make a difference. My problem with that is that most of them are fairly expensive—well over \$1 million—and that raises the question about what is affordable and what is not, particularly for first home buyers. Without further ado, I commend the bill to the House.

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:12): I make a brief contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. Before I begin, I address something that the member for Tweed just spoke

about. Somebody does not have to be over the age of 60 or a single person with a little dog to benefit from the changes in the bill. I am a single person with a big dog named Hermes, after the Greek God. He is a big, fluffy Samoyed.

Ms Jenny Leong: You do not have to be over a certain age to be single or to have a dog.

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL: No, you don't have to be over a certain age to be single or have a dog. Talking about pets is getting to the crux of the bill. The type of housing that someone lives in should not determine whether or not they can enjoy the company of a pet. That is a core element of the bill. My lovely little Hermes—who is not that little; he is quite big—goes to what we call long day care during big sitting weeks. He goes to live with my mum. As I said, a form of housing should not limit whether or not somebody can have a pet. I feel a huge amount of satisfaction, joy and love from my dog. I was lucky enough to grow up with a family of pets. We had everything from dogs to cats to chickens, and bunny rabbits at different times. Again, a form of housing should not determine whether or not somebody can have a pet. Evidence shows that pets help us live longer and boost our mental health. People should not be forced to choose.

I bring to the attention of the House a New South Wales parliamentary inquiry into pounds. That inquiry highlighted the significant number of pets that have to be surrendered to the RSPCA and to pounds because of insecure housing and housing limitations, which the bill will fix. Members have already spoken about the fact that there are now 2.2 million renters in this State, and that number is increasing. In the Coogee electorate 49 per cent of people are renters. In parts of my electorate that number is as high as 60 per cent. At its core the bill is about making renting fairer and more secure and having a more compassionate system for the people of the State who choose to rent or who are forced to rent. The bill will have a profound impact by ending no-grounds evictions, making it easier for renters to have pets, limiting rent increases to once a year, and making sure that renters are not forced to pay for background checks.

Ending no-grounds evictions is particularly important because that creates secure housing and makes renting fairer, improving the rental conditions for those 2.2 million renters in our State. People need to have secure housing in order to build a life in their suburb, to pick schools for their children and to secure a job. People want to be able to plan their lives. We need a system that creates more secure housing and ensures more stable housing. All of the changes in the bill—ending no-grounds evictions and limiting rent increases so that people can financially plan for the future—are critically important. This legislation is well overdue. I want to see it pass through the House. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (15:17): I support the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to provide reforms to create a fairer and more modern rental market that balances improved protections for renters with the rights and interests of owners. According to the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics census data, more than 43 per cent of homes in Fairfield are rented. Moreover, about 50 per cent of households that rent had rental payments greater than 30 per cent of their household income, which is the highest level of rental stress in New South Wales. With successive rent increases over the past few years, many people in Fairfield are feeling the pain. That is why rental reforms are so important.

The bill implements the New South Wales Labor Government's election commitments that are part of a comprehensive overhaul of rental laws benefiting individuals across the State, including renters in Fairfield. By requiring landlords to provide a valid reason to end a residential lease, ensuring renters no longer foot the bill for background checks, and ensuring renters have a free way to pay their rent, including bank transfers, the bill balances the rental marketplace. Reasons to end a periodic or fixed-term lease include, but are not limited to, when the property is being sold with vacant possession, when the property's use will change, when the landlord or landlord's family member will move in, or when the property will undergo significant renovation or repair. The amendments also include a ban on re-letting a property within a certain time period after termination for each ground to deter misuse of the termination grounds. The bill also makes it easier for renters to have pets by introducing a process to apply for a pet with a standard form. Landlords have 21 days to respond to the request to keep a pet, providing a list of limited grounds on which a landlord can refuse their consent.

Another key reform in the bill is the limitation on rent increases to once every 12 months for all leases, including successive leases with the same tenant. This provides renters with greater financial stability and predictability, which is so important. The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 represents a significant step forward in creating a fairer and more equitable rental market in New South Wales. By strengthening protections for renters, the amendments in the bill will improve the lives of countless individuals and families across the State, including the many renters in Fairfield. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:20): I speak in debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. Growing up, my family lived in 13 houses in 15 years as renters. I completely appreciate the insecurity of rental living.

Mr Geoff Provest: Did you have a dog, Liesl?

Ms LIESL TESCH: Yes, we had a dog in those days. Back then people were possibly more amenable to pets than they are today. I cannot understate how important this piece of legislation is to me, as I reflect on my background, and also to the people in my electorate. This is exciting reform that we committed to at the election, as we understood the great stress on renters. Approximately a third of the population in New South Wales are renters. We committed to requiring landlords to have a valid reason to end a residential lease and to making it easier for renters to keep pets. Some 33 per cent of the population are now renting, which is an increase of 17.6 per cent since 2016. On the Central Coast, over 30 per cent of our population are tenants. That is over 40,000 renting households on the coast. With 11,500 renters in Gosford, nearly 34 per cent of my community are renters.

While I do not know what it is like in Cessnock, I have spoken with Temporary Speaker Barr about people from the Central Coast having to translocate to Cessnock because they just cannot afford to live on the Central Coast any more. Realistically, renting on the Central Coast is like *The Hunger Games*. It is horrible for people because of the lack of availability of housing, which places so much pressure on those trying to find somewhere that is cheap enough for them to survive. I understand that rents are possibly cheaper in Temporary Speaker Barr's electorate of Cessnock than they are in Gosford, but rents have gone up considerably across the board in New South Wales. We have listened to our renters speak about their fragile tenure on their homes, the price hikes they have endured and the number of times people have been kicked out of properties so that owners can hike up the rent.

I speak of an elderly gentleman who visited my electorate office whose rent had gone up by \$110. He was absolutely distraught. On another occasion, two police officers could not find a place to rent in my community. It is important we do everything we can to help renters and make their living situation more secure. The bill aims to create a fairer, more modern rental market that balances improved protections for renters with the rights and interests of owners. On this side of the House, Government members understand that we are in a housing crisis. On the Central Coast, renters are doing it tougher than ever before. I know how challenging renting across the coast can be, with increased rents and limited supply. I have heard from renters across the coast who are desperately calling for a fairer rental market. Property owners are also calling for increased clarity.

The reforms will mean that renters can focus on making homes, free from anxiety and uncertainty. A key part of this legislation is ending no-grounds evictions, which is an important concern that renters have raised. At the last election the Labor Party promised that, if elected, we would end no-grounds evictions. We are delivering on that commitment. Under this legislation, a landlord will be required to have a valid reason to end a lease, whether periodic or fixed term. Valid reasons include that the property will be sold, the property will be demolished, the landlord or a family member will move in, or that the property will undergo significant renovation or repair. These are commonsense reasons that are reasonable for landlords—it is not about just putting up the rent. The current rental market is the toughest that renters have seen for decades and the system leaves them vulnerable to eviction at any time.

The bill will also cap rent increases to one per year across periodic and fixed-term leases, closing a loophole in existing legislation. 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 change to limit rent rises to one per year will make renting in New South Wales fairer, simpler and definitely more certain. This is a legislative loophole that must be fixed to protect renters. The bill will also ensure that renters are no longer charged for background checks when they apply for a rental property. Property owners and agents will be required to offer free ways to pay, such as bank transfers and the Commonwealth Government's Centrepay, and the bill will make it easier to have pets in rentals by introducing a new, fairer and more streamlined application process. I note the comments of the member for Sydney in this debate about the importance of pets for people's mental health, which can be a saviour for vulnerable people living in rental properties. I cannot understate how important pets are. My little dog, Mouse, was important to me as a vulnerable kid growing up.

It is important to acknowledge the 16,000 submissions received during the public consultation process. A range of stakeholders, such as rental advocates, landlords, real estate agents and industry bodies, were also consulted. I thank the Minister and his team for their incredible work in bringing together this challenging piece of legislation and ensuring a fair outcome for all stakeholders. The important changes in the bill will genuinely make an impact on renters' lives. It will give security to renters and to the market. More people are renting than ever before—around 33 per cent in New South Wales, which is an increase of 17.6 per cent since 2016. However, the Government knows the current rental market is the toughest that renters have seen for decades, with historically low vacancy rates, median rent prices increasing by around 7 per cent over the past 12 months and a system that leaves renters vulnerable to eviction at any time.

Across the coast there are 40,000 renters. In my electorate alone, there are 11,500 renters. It is important that we make these changes to give those people some sort of security. It is also important that we get the balance right. I have spoken to real estate agents who report that some landlords do not want to have their houses in the rental market. Hopefully, the bill will help release more properties onto the market so we can pick up renters who were displaced. Once again, I thank the Minister and his team. I also thank the Premier for his commitment to the reforms. I also commend the member for Newtown for her passion and advocacy in this space. Renters in the inner city and in the inner west are definitely cheering about the changes we have introduced. This legislation is part of our plan to address the housing crisis for renters and for people wanting to enter the housing market. I am proud to support the bill and I commend it to the House.

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (15:27): The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 will introduce the most significant changes to rental laws since the Residential Tenancies Act became law in 2010. The long-overdue changes would never have seen the light of day under members opposite. One by one, we have seen them stand and speak about the importance of these reforms, yet they never had the endurance to lead themselves. The Minns Labor Government made a commitment to making renting fairer in New South Wales 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.

The bill builds on our great work delivered since forming government. We immediately started work in this space by passing the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 to fix loopholes in rent-bidding laws and facilitate a portable bonds scheme, which was much-needed reform. Having to find a new place to rent, leaving a bond behind, finding a new bond and then paying for removalist fees et cetera all add to cost-of-living pressures. My family and I can relate to that after renting for 17 years. I thank Minister Jackson in the other place and the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading for introducing the portable bonds scheme. It will make a real difference. This tranche will alleviate further heartache, anxiousness and fear of homelessness for New South Wales citizens. The unfair conditions that have resulted in real pain to many have to stop. Only a Labor government, which understands the significance of housing and having a roof over your head providing stability and security, has the leadership, foresight and courage to deliver.

As Minister Jackson from the other place has said, it is a human right to have a home. Whilst those opposite criticise us for taking our time, we have done more in this space in 18 months than they ever did in 12 long years. Around a third of the New South Wales population are renters and renting is becoming a longer term option for many people of all ages and in all life circumstances. Nearly 20 per cent of folks in the Heathcote electorate rent. I turn to some changes that we know are pivotal to renters, including the right to call out much-needed repairs or maintenance without fear of eviction—things like mould, mildew and other items that need urgent attention. Unfortunately, it is all too common for renters and landlords to be pitted against one another. I acknowledge Caitlin Lalor and her sister Bethany Lalor, who live with their mum. Their mum is disabled and needs 24/7 care. The Lalor family reside in my electorate and have had a long-running mould infestation at their residence of 15 years. They have taken their landlord to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] to address landlord neglect of repairs, providing an unsafe residence and excessively increasing rent. Bethany writes:

I am writing on behalf of my family. We have been caught in a legal blind spot where our landlord has been neglecting repairs, providing an unsafe residence, and increasing rent excessively. All the while we have paid over \$400,000 in rent ... We already feel vulnerable in today's rental market and also have absolutely no spare time to navigate complicated systems (we barely have time to sleep, and regularly go without ... rest to make sure our mother is taken care of).

It eventually [goes] to the point where our family are suffering significant health issues from living in mould for 15 years, so we registered with NCAT. We found this stressful and complicated, but went through the process. On appearing before the NCAT ... we were then told they have no jurisdiction as the landlord lives in South Australia (we had not known where they lived, or that it changed anything).

Bethany goes on:

I understand this is because of a high court decision, but it is not fair and does not allow equitable protections for NSW residents.

The member for Tweed brought up the same decision when he addressed the House. That decision by the New South Wales Court of Appeal in 2017—when the previous Government was in office—was that NCAT cannot exercise judicial power under the Constitution. Now the Lalors have no other option but to go to the Local Court of New South Wales. They are in the process of doing that. It is a complicated case due to the interstate issue. As I said before, the landlord resides in South Australia. Because the Lalors raised the health issues within their residence of 15 years, they have now received an eviction notice, which will take effect from 12 November. They are now taking legal action. I support their fight. I am doing all I can, continuing to work with the Attorney General and his office and with the relevant stakeholders, to find a better and fairer outcome for the Lalor family. I will do my best for Bethany and Caitlin under the current laws and the High Court decision.

I now turn to the changes in the bill to make it easier for renters to keep pets. Currently in New South Wales landlords can refuse permission for a pet in a rental property unless it is an assistance animal such as a guide dog. The landlord does not have to justify or give any reason for their refusal and a renter who keeps a pet at a property without the landlord's approval may be in breach of their lease. The Minns Labor Government recognises that pets provide profound emotional and psychological benefits. Owning a pet can reduce stress, combat loneliness and promote overall mental health. We know that pets form part of the modern family. We went to the election promising to make it easier for renters to keep pets in a rental home. That is what we are doing. Consistent with our broad reform agenda, the reforms in the bill relating to pets are sensible and balanced. Our approach values the right of renters to make their property into a home while also recognising a landlord's right to manage their investment.

The bill provides that the landlord is obliged to respond to an application within 21 days. They must either grant consent, with or without conditions attached, or refuse consent on one or more of the prescribed grounds for refusal. The 21-day time frame provides adequate time for the landlord's consideration and response. If a landlord does not respond within the 21-day time frame, consent is automatically assumed. That is necessary to prevent renters from being left in limbo or waiting too long for a response. If consent is refused, the landlord must provide the reasons for refusal and outline why they consider that the ground for refusal applies. That will provide transparency for the renter and support an application for dispute resolution between the parties if required. If the consent is granted subject to reasonable conditions, the landlord is required to include those conditions in their response, which would then form part of the terms of the residential tenancy agreement if accepted by the renter. By making it easier for renters to keep pets, we recognise the many benefits that pets bring and that pets can help renters to turn their house into a home.

The Minns Labor Government has now delivered many reforms for renters. There is still more to do. I say to Bethany, Caitlin and their mum that I will keep fighting and supporting them. I thank the Minister and his staff for their incredible work and reforms. I thank the young people and the families who I have spoken to about this issue for their submissions and their feedback. I also recognise the member for Newtown for her long advocacy in this area. I hope that New South Wales renters now have some peace of mind and feel that there has been a restoration of fairness.

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (15:36): I make a contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I thank members on both sides of the Chamber for their support and advocacy during the debate. Ensuring that renters across the State have access to fair rental laws requires bipartisan support. It is reassuring to hear that this issue is being addressed in the best interests of our constituents because I know that that is the expectation of our communities and how they want to see politics being done in this State. According to the 2021 census, 36 per cent of constituents in the Drummoyne electorate rent their property—their home. That is over one-third of the population, who come from all walks of life, including students, young people, families, pensioners and self-funded retirees. The list goes on.

At the same time, nearly one-third of those renters are spending more than 30 per cent of their household income on rental payments. It is important to note those statistics to show the gravity of the issue that is before us in this place. As cost-of-living pressures continue, it is becoming increasingly apparent that current rental laws do not provide adequate security and assurance for tenants. These reforms are about protecting the best interests of both tenants and landlords and getting the balance right. Protecting tenants under this legislation will not come at the cost of protections for landlords; however, I note that raising land taxes, which this Government has done, means renters will pay more as landlords pass on increases to their tenants.

Earlier this year I was contacted by a distressed constituent who was facing homelessness due to the difficulty of finding a suitable rental property after being given notice to vacate. It is one of those constituent emails that will stay with me forever. I will read a small part of her email. She wrote:

Dear Stephanie

I'm a local single mother to two kids and a dog. We have been living in the area for many years. My kids go to school [locally]. I work [in the Drummoyne electorate].

Up until the 1st of May we were renting in Abbotsford but on the 1st of May we had to vacate the property.

I am still getting rejected for any rental properties I apply for and I am looking anywhere in the inner west so we could stay in the area.

It is a very difficult time for us. I am trying to stay strong for my kids but I am at a point where I just want to disappear.

So I am begging for any help possible from anyone, we need help with finding an appropriate home for our family.

I share my constituent's email today with the House to show the very real impacts that no-grounds evictions can have on people, especially families.

When we rent a property, we create a home and a safe space. I empathise with those who are faced with the difficulty of someone taking their home away from them and who fear homelessness upon vacating that home. These rental reforms offer protections for renters and ensure equitable access to the housing market, which my community cares about. I speak to constituents every day about the rising cost of living, and that includes rising rents, which are putting a strain on households and families in my community and across New South Wales. The Opposition will move amendments in the other place to strengthen the bill, and I support those amendments. The bill is a step in the right direction towards addressing the rental crisis in New South Wales. I thank all members for their advocacy, including the Minister and the shadow Minister, both of whom are in the Chamber. There is more work to do.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (15:40): I contribute to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. There are 13,987 renters in my electorate of Canterbury. It has been very difficult for many of them given the cost of living and housing instability, which the Government is trying to fix with this bill. I acknowledge Minister Chanthivong, who is in the Chamber. I thank him, his staff and the agency for the incredible work they have done. I thank also the thousands of people across the State who have made their representations, and my colleagues who have put forward their very important views.

I understand that the Opposition supports the bill. However, it had 12 years to make these changes and fix the social housing waiting list. I was shadow Minister for Housing when a former social housing Minister, Pru Goward, sold a lot of public housing, did nothing to maintain other properties and, in fact, boarded up many properties. We fought for public housing in Whalan, Millers Point and Drummoyne. What members opposite did to housing over the past 12 years was disgraceful. I understand they have now seen the light, which is fantastic.

Mr Tim James: The data shows we did it well. Rental affordability reached a record high in 2021.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: It was disgraceful because the former Government left thousands of people on the waiting list; it did absolutely nothing. Former Minister Pru Goward should hang her head in shame because she sold, boarded up or failed to maintain many public housing properties. I am very proud of the work of Premier Minns and the Minister to end no-grounds evictions and establish a set of reasonable grounds to end a lease, providing greater certainty to renters and owners. Property owners will now need a reason to end a tenancy for both periodic and fixed-term leases. Renters will no longer be charged for background checks when they apply for a rental property. Property owners and agents will be required to offer free ways to pay rent, such as by bank transfer or via the Commonwealth Government's Centrepay.

Those provisions are critical. Constituents have reported that their new agents would not accept any other form of payment, which adds to their frustration at a very difficult time. Sometimes the little things make a big difference in people's lives. We are making it easier for tenants to have pets in rentals. That is critical for renters, particularly older women. We raised that issue in 2011, 2012 and 2013 when I was the shadow Minister for the Status of Women. We directed the former Government to look at forecasting regarding homelessness among older women. Again, I credit Government members who have raised that issue, as well as those who helped to ensure that people can keep pets in rentals, which is absolutely critical.

The Government has introduced the portable bonds scheme and established Rent Check and the Rental Taskforce within NSW Fair Trading. One of my constituents applied for housing in 2022, soon after injuring his back and shoulder. He could not work because of those injuries. He is the father of four children aged between five and 11, and his wife is pregnant. He told me that one of his children has a disability and that he and one of his sons have sleep apnoea. He said that his rent increased from \$350 to \$460 in 2024, and he cannot afford to pay the increased rent. He feels overwhelmed and depressed because his children are growing, his wife is pregnant and he is unable to provide an adequate home for them. He has sought urgent assistance. They are the people who live in our constituencies about whom we made representations to the former Government for help.

We asked the former Government to build more social housing and not to sell off public housing, because those families are way behind and it is having an effect on their livelihoods and on the wellbeing of their young children. It is having an impact on those families. The Minns Government is putting stability and certainty back into people's lives, which is very important. We have brought the dial back to the middle. Housing is no longer just about one side, the landlord side. I will not further rehash how the former State Government sold all those properties. I acknowledge that housing in all its forms is critical, and this is not the only work the Government is doing on housing. It is also building more housing, including essential worker housing and social housing. This legislation is very important to renters, and the Minister is doing even more work to help them. I congratulate the Minister on this very important bill.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (15:46): I support the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024, which amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. I thank the Minister for introducing the bill. These are probably

the most significant reforms to the rental system in our State in a generation. The Minister is personally invested in this issue. We have talked often about these reforms. His advocacy and consultation have been second to none. I thank the Minister for his efforts. The reforms will create a fairer rental system in a modern rental market, with improved protections for tenants, while also balancing the rights and interests of owners. The bill delivers the commitment of the Minns Government and the Australian Labor Party to provide greater protections for tenants and address the housing crisis in New South Wales.

More people rent than ever before. Some 33 per cent of people across the State rent. That number has increased by 17.6 per cent since 2016. Some 35.6 per cent of people, or about 11,200 households, in my electorate of Blacktown rent. While those numbers are expected to increase, we must also remember that behind every number is a life. My office has received dozens of requests for assistance from private tenants, as have the offices of every other MP in this place. Those requests for help come from people and businesses who have received no-grounds eviction notices. In fact, one of my constituents has received an unfortunate rental increase notice in the past week or two. It is crushing people's lives. Even not-for-profit organisations are receiving eviction notices. They can have life-changing impacts for tenants, who have very little time to plan, adjust and move house.

My office and I have respectful working relationships with the local real estate agents, which allows us to work together for commonsense outcomes in the best interests of tenants and landlords. Whilst ultimately the agent is working in the interests of the landlord, sometimes it is important to have an opportunity to reset problems and issues before they become costly and time-consuming through the tribunal process. My staff and I have played some role in reducing tensions and finding a better pathway. I thank all parties involved—tenants, landlords and agents—and my staff members Elizabeth, Nick, Kim and Wendy. They are negotiating and going the extra hard yards to at least get all the parties to try to listen to each other and work through to get a better way. But this cannot happen all the time, so these tenancy reforms are so important. I thank all the agents, tenants, landlords and other interested parties who have reached out to provide support and advice while these reforms have been worked through.

The Government and the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading have undertaken extensive consultation on improving the rental laws in New South Wales. I thank the Minister for his continued commitment to ensuring that our State is the best place in Australia to rent in. Over 16,000 survey responses and 400 written submissions were collected during a substantial consultation process. The Rental Commissioner, another tenant protection created by this Government, has met with a range of stakeholders, including tenants, tenants' advocacy organisations, landlords, real estate agents, industry bodies, academics and housing market analysts. NSW Fair Trading has undertaken targeted consultation on the draft bill with key stakeholders, including Unions NSW, tenants' advocacy organisations, and the property and real estate sector. They have probably been bombarded by our wonderful crossbencher, who have been so strong in their advocacy for change.

The single biggest reform in this bill is, without a doubt, our plan to end no-grounds evictions entirely. I have often described no-grounds evictions as the tenant's sword of Damocles. Under the current system, tenants live with a sense of impending doom, the potential for eviction hanging over their heads leaving them constantly uneasy and insecure. The sword can fall at any moment, for any reason, and they are powerless to stop it. No more. The bill will end no-grounds evictions by requiring landlords to have a valid reason to end a lease, whether it is periodic or for a fixed term, and outlines nine grounds for an eviction, including that the property is being sold or offered for sale with vacant possession, that the landlord or a family member will move in, and that the property is to undergo significant renovation or repair. Regulations will prescribe the evidence required to terminate a lease on each valid ground, and the bill will create penalties for providing false or misleading evidence to erroneously claim a valid termination ground. The bill will also ban re-letting a property within a certain period after a termination for each ground, to deter misuse of the valid reasons to end a lease.

Ending no-grounds evictions will provide tenants much-needed certainty and housing security and will make renting in New South Wales a more enticing option. This bill will end a practice that brings upheaval to people's lives at a moment's notice, with no explanation or reason. Take Patricia from my electorate, a model tenant who has lived in the same rental property for 40 years, which is more than half of her life. She came to see me recently because she received a no-grounds eviction notice ordering her to vacate her home in only 30 days. As an elderly person on a fixed income, Patricia was worried about finding a new home in her price range, especially in a limited time period. This bill will ban the sorts of practices that have caused so much stress and insecurity for people such as Patricia. This change alone is an enormous reform to the rental market in New South Wales, but the bill introduces even more protections for tenants.

This bill will also make it easier for tenants to have pets, by introducing a process to apply for a pet, with a standard form, giving the landlord 21 days to respond. New limited grounds for refusal will be introduced, including that the property is unsuitable for keeping the animal, that the animal is likely to cause damage that would cost more to reasonably repair than the rental bond, and that consent to keep the animal is subject to a

reasonable condition the tenant will not agree to. Even more, the bill will extend to all leases the existing provision that limits rent increases to once every 12 months. It will also ensure that tenants are able to pay their rent by bank transfer and Centrepay and will prohibit landlords from passing on their costs for using those payment methods. Prospective tenants will also no longer be slugged with the cost of background checks conducted by landlords. These are all commonsense amendments that strike an appropriate balance between the interests of landlords and tenants. I thank the Minister, his department, everybody who has been working on this and the crossbench. At the last minute, even the Opposition has come to the party, which is good to see. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (15:55): I make a brief contribution in support of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024. I support this bill because it strikes the right balance of fairness and power. More than 40 per cent of residents in my electorate of Strathfield rent. At the core of this bill is the notion of ending no-grounds evictions. Currently, at the end of every fixed-term lease a landlord can evict a tenant with just 30 days notice. In the context of today's housing crisis and housing shortage, 30 days is not enough time to find a new home. This bill will fix that. It will also fix an egregious situation where, because of the lack of rental stock, landlords in bad faith can evict a tenant simply to put up the rent.

In my electorate of Strathfield, though more than 40 per cent of residents are renters, there are a lot of people who are landowners and landlords. A knockdown house in the centre of Strathfield sold recently for \$12.5 million. There are many property owners in Strathfield. I say to the property owners of Strathfield that this bill strikes the right balance. If they wish to sell their property, they can still evict a tenant. If they need to do major renovations to their property, they can still evict a tenant. If they want to live in their property again, they can still evict a tenant. If they need to put up their rent, they can still do so, once a year. What they cannot do is evict a tenant for the sole reason of putting up the rent, in the middle of one of the worst housing crises in a generation. I thank the Minister and his team for this important reform. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (15:57): In reply: I thank members for their contribution to the debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024, particularly my colleague the member for Willoughby, the shadow Minister. I thank members representing the electorates of Newcastle, Sydney, Maitland, Davidson, Blue Mountains, Newtown, South Coast, North Sydney, Granville, Balmain, The Entrance, Ballina, Mount Druitt, Ryde, Parramatta, Vacluse, Wollongong, Blacktown, Cabramatta, Tweed, Coogee, Fairfield, Gosford, Heathcote, Drummoyne, Strathfield and Canterbury. Such a long list goes to show the level of support for this bill across the Chamber.

The bill represents another significant step forward in our commitment to make renting fairer in New South Wales. The debate on the bill has underscored the importance of rebalancing our rental market, given the significant challenges facing the people of New South Wales, from rising living costs to low rental vacancy rates. I take this opportunity to address some points made by members. I thank the shadow Minister for his contribution and the Opposition for its support for the bill. Once again, I am slightly by perplexed that the shadow Minister and the member for Vacluse criticised the Government for taking too long to introduce these reforms. They need a gentle reminder that the former Liberal-Nationals Government had 12 long years to deliver for renters in New South Wales but failed to act. The Minns Labor Government will not be lectured about timing by those opposite. They turned their backs on renters.

This Government has acted to deliver the most significant reforms to the rental market in a decade. The shadow Minister also claimed that ending no-grounds evictions for both fixed-term and periodic leases will disincentivise investment. Make no mistake, other jurisdictions have already acted, some of them decades ago. Despite the shadow Minister's doom and gloom predictions, investment has remained strong. We have learned a lot from other jurisdictions' experiences. Across all jurisdictions, investor lending as a proportion of total lending has increased. Down south in Victoria, it is up 24 per cent. In South Australia, it is up 12 per cent. In Queensland, it is up 18 per cent. In fact, leading market analyst CoreLogic says these changes are not likely to have any impact on investment. The bill proposes changes that will deliver certainty and security to both renters and owners in this State. The shadow Minister has foreshadowed that the Opposition will move an amendment to the bill in the Legislative Council for the reforms to apply to only periodic leases.

That amendment would have distorting effects on the rental market. The reality is that most leases in New South Wales are fixed term. Limiting the reforms to periodic leases would leave a significant number of renters without the protections they need. Most landlords do the right thing, but renters often feel like they are playing a game of chance. They live in fear of asking for basic repairs or making reasonable requests, unsure what kind of landlord they might face. The inclusion of fixed-term leases is an important part of these reforms and will give renters more confidence to feel secure in their homes without fear of eviction. Some Opposition members

also criticised the bill for not addressing the supply of rental properties. Let me clear: The Government cannot address supply through the Residential Tenancies Act. This bill focuses on modernising our rental market.

I remind the Opposition that the Government already has significant work underway to improve both the quality and availability of housing supply, including a new planning assessment pathway for residential developments, a multibillion-dollar housing infrastructure plan, transport oriented development planning reforms, a record \$6.6 billion investment to deliver 8,400 new social rental homes and a maintenance program, and the establishment of the Building Commission NSW to ensure we do not compromise quality for quantity. The member for Willoughby mentioned concerns about purpose-built student accommodation. The member said that providers will experience challenges with fixed-term leases not aligning with university semesters. Renters need certainty about where they will live and why their leases may end.

That reality does not change because the renter is a student. Allowing a student accommodation provider to end an agreement when the tenant is not at fault and still eligible for the accommodation would not provide certainty to renters about when or why their leases could end. We will monitor these reforms to ensure they are effective. The Rental Commissioner is working with industry stakeholders, including in the student accommodation sector. To clarify for the member for Willoughby, this bill does not introduce or alter the provisions for a portable rental bonds scheme; it merely ensures that the Rental Commissioner is a member of the Rental Bond Board. Work on the portable bonds scheme is progressing well.

I thank the member for Sydney for his contribution and his support of the bill. He foreshadowed that he will move amendments, which the Government will support. The member for Sydney also asked me to flag the Government's commitment to reform the rental application process, particularly to keep pets in rentals. The Government knows that more work is needed to ensure renters are not discriminated against during the application process, including for simply having pets. Next year, the Government intends to introduce reforms that focus specifically on the application stage, and to address what information is collected through applications to ensure a fair approach for all pet owners. Those reforms will be part of a larger initiative to improve privacy protections in tenancies to protect renters and industry.

I acknowledge the comments made by the member for Sydney about the provisions in the bill that require a renter to challenge a landlord's refusal at the tribunal. Similar sentiments were shared by the member for Newtown, the member for Balmain and the member for Ballina. The Government's model strikes the right balance by setting out all the reasons a landlord can refuse a pet. It gives a landlord appropriate discretion to consider not only the renter's request but also the risks for the property or animal, and their own situation if they reside at the premises. Importantly, the New South Wales model avoids every landlord refusal going to the tribunal, including reasonable refusals, which could impose an unnecessary onus on landlords and the tribunal. However, the tenant will still be able to dispute a refusal at the tribunal if they believe the grounds specified for the refusal are not applicable, or where consent has been given subject to a condition that they believe is unreasonable.

I note the comments of the member for Sydney about the need to also protect tenants in boarding houses. I appreciate the member's advocacy on this issue, particularly for the residents of Selwyn Street in Paddington. I thank him for inviting me to meet with those residents last week. The Government is committed to improving fairness and access to housing for all, including members of our community who currently live in boarding houses, which play an important role not only in the supply of affordable housing in New South Wales but also in the diversity of our neighbourhoods. People such as Steve, Barry, Ray, Rod, Brian, Richard, Manny, Alfie and the rest of the residents of the boarding house on Selwyn Street are great examples of the value affordable housing brings to the community.

Stable and low-cost boarding houses are essential for individuals who, under previous governments, often fall through the cracks because they do not meet the requirements to access social housing programs but cannot afford access to the private rental market. The Government is also exploring sensible recommendations to reform the Boarding Houses Act 2012 to provide more protections and clarity for residents. I have instructed the Department of Customer Service and the Department of Communities and Justice to continue work on how we can implement the 21 recommendations of the statutory review conducted back in 2020.

I acknowledge the support of The Greens and the contributions of the member for Newtown, the member for Balmain and the member for Ballina. The member for Newtown flagged that she will move amendments to the bill, including amendments relating to the reasons for eviction and the provisions for applying for a pet. I will respond to those amendments once moved. The member for Newtown raised concerns about tenants at risk of homelessness when they become ineligible for affordable or transitional housing. The Government has a commitment to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. Every effort is made to support people to retain safe, supported housing. This work will continue and is further strengthened by the Government's record investment of \$6.6 billion in social housing, including \$100 million for a homelessness innovation fund.

I acknowledge the concern of the member for Newtown that the term "significant repairs and renovations" may need to be further clarified. Repairs and renovations can vary greatly, and the issue of whether a repair is significant will depend on the circumstances. However, they will need to have a major impact on the property. The Government will develop further guidance on this matter. The termination ground not only requires repairs or renovations to be "significant" but also stipulates that the property needs to be vacant for the works to be properly carried out. This approach will ensure that renters do not have their tenancies terminated when they do not actually need to leave the property.

The member for Newtown raised her concerns about the frequency of rent increases. I make clear that the bill prevents rent from being increased more than once in any 12-month period for all renters. That provision addresses a gap in the current Act, where renters who are under a fixed-term agreement of less than two years do not have that protection. Additionally, to prevent landlords entering into a new lease with the tenant in order to increase the rent, the changes will apply to subsequent leases, for example, when a lease is renewed. In response to the concern raised by the member for Newtown about how this protection will operate for group households, I confirm that the term "subsequent leases" includes situations where the landlord and at least one tenant remain the same in the subsequent lease.

The member for Ryde asked a question about what kind of landlord could use the provision for key worker housing. I can confirm that this ground is specifically intended for key worker housing managed and leased by the New South Wales Government. The portfolio of properties is identified for use by key workers to ensure that those workers are able to be housed close to their workplace. I also note the concern raised by the member for Ryde about the keeping of pets in strata schemes. An owners' corporation can only prohibit the keeping of a pet if it unreasonably interferes with another occupant's use or enjoyment of their home. However, we are aware that some landlords, agents and owners' corporations are not sufficiently aware of these changes to strata laws.

NSW Fair Trading will promote those protections as part of the Government's campaign to raise community awareness of these landmark rental reforms. I respond to the concerns raised by the member for Tweed about the enforcement process for renters whose landlord resides outside our State. Firstly, there are provisions in the bill such as fines that can be enforced by the regulator directly, regardless of where the landlord resides. Secondly, a renter whose landlord lives outside the State can also apply to settle disputes and enforce their rights through the Local Court of NSW. The fees to lodge an application with the Local Court are the same as what the tenant would pay to exercise their rights through the tribunal.

This bill represents a significant leap forward in creating a fairer and more stable rental market in New South Wales. For far too long our renters have lived under the shadow of uncertainty, fearing that at any moment they could lose their homes without reason or recourse. We recognise that landlords have legitimate needs to terminate leases to regain possession of their properties. It goes without saying that landlords will still be able to end a tenancy if a renter does not pay their rent, seriously damages the property, uses the premises for an illegal activity, or seriously or persistently threatens or abuses the landlord, their agent or contractors. However, by establishing specific grounds for termination, we ensure landlords can manage their properties without undermining the stability and security that renters so dearly need.

The reforms to make it easier for renters to keep pets recognise that, for many of us, pets are not just animals but beloved family members. The Government's approach to making it easier for renters to keep pets strikes the right balance between allowing renters to keep a pet and the reasonable needs and concerns of landlords. The bill provides a simple process for renters to request consent via a standard form, a limited set of reasons for the landlord to refuse permission, and an appeal process for the tenant.

The bill's other reforms aimed at making renting fairer include broadening the protection against rent increasing more than once in a 12-month period for all types of leases, including fixed-term leases of less than two years and successive leases between the same parties; requiring landlords to offer renters the choice of using electronic bank transfer and Centrepay to pay their rent; and ensuring renters cannot be asked to pay for background checks. The bill will also appoint the NSW Rental Commissioner as a permanent member of the Rental Bond Board to ensure she is able to fulfil her role.

These changes are not just about policies or about politics. They are about people: families, individuals, and the vibrant communities we are building. I thank all those who contributed to shaping these critical reforms, and the tenants, landlords, agents, and industry and advocacy leaders who have collaborated with the Government and provided insight and advice on the drafting of this important bill. Particularly, I thank the NSW Tenants' Union, Better Renting, UNSW Sydney City Futures Research Centre, the RSPCA, Domestic Violence NSW, Lucy's Project, Shelter NSW, Community Housing Industry Association, the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales, Ray White, Harcourts, Laing and Simmons, LJ Hooker, Committee for Sydney, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Legal Aid. Together we are delivering a rental system that is modern and fair for the people of New South Wales.

I thank those in NSW Fair Trading who have worked so hard to support the development of this bill: NSW Rental Commissioner Trina Jones, Diana Holy, Katerina Pavlidis, Anna Wade, Cassie Jacobs, Corena Sloper, Ragini Sood, Shivani Roy, Nancy Kha, Elizabeth Weisske, Joshua Greenwood, Teri Mrena, Prue Phillips, and Deb Fernon. I also thank hardworking department liaison officers Laura Gregory and Khamena Zaya, who provide great support to my office. I acknowledge the work of Katelyn Meredith from the Premier's office on these reforms. Lastly, I thank my staff members Alicia Sylvester and Brooke O'Rourke for their dedication to this important work and their commitment to this reform, which the rental market and the people of New South Wales greatly need. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Alex Greenwich and Ms Jenny Leong.

Consideration in Detail

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

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:15): By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 to 3 on sheet c2024-204H in globo:

No. 1 Data collection

Page 2, clause 2. Insert after line 6—

(a1) Schedule 1[21A]—on 1 July 2025 or an earlier day to be appointed by proclamation,

No. 2 Advertising about pets

Page 8, Schedule 1[9], proposed Part 3, Division 8. Insert after line 13—

73H Advertising

A landlord, landlord's agent or other person must not advertise, in relation to residential premises for lease, that a tenant's animal will not be permitted to be kept at the residential premises.

Maximum penalty—20 penalty units.

No. 3 Data collection

Page 17, Schedule 1. Insert after line 39—

[21A] Section 222A

Insert after section 222—

222A Collection of data of evictions

- (1) The Secretary must collect data on the grounds used by landlords to give termination notices, including the evidence given by landlords.
- (2) The regulations may impose requirements on landlords and landlords' agents to give to the Secretary the information required to exercise the Secretary's functions under this section.
- (3) The Secretary must, each year, publish on the Department's website a summary of the data collected.

More people are renting for longer and they need security of tenure. Owning an investment residential property comes with responsibilities that must align with the need to protect housing security in the community. Having an option to evict a tenant for no reason has provided a loophole for landlords to evict tenants in retaliation for exercising their rights. No-grounds evictions have kept tenants vulnerable to unfair evictions. They have made it a risk to dispute rent rises or request maintenance, repairs or anything else. I welcome the bill replacing this option with a comprehensive list of lawful reasons for evictions. However, there are concerns that landlords could try to game some of those reasons to evict tenants they want to get rid of, and we need to monitor how these new laws operate.

My amendments will require data collection by the secretary on all evictions, including the reasons for each eviction, with the data published on the NSW Fair Trading website annually. The data will enable the Government and tenant advocates to assess any alarming trends, which the Parliament can address in the future if needed. The data can be used for the statutory review proposed in the amendment foreshadowed by the member for Newtown. My amendments will also place a ban on advertising a property for rental that prohibits keeping companion animals. If blanket companion animal bans are no longer permitted then landlords, agents and classified platforms should not be advertising properties where animals are refused. The housing affordability

crisis has left renters vulnerable. I hope these amendments will strengthen the relief provided in this bill. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (16:17): I thank the member for Sydney and indicate that the Government will be supporting his amendments. The Government recognises the need for good data to effectively monitor the reforms to no-grounds evictions. Collecting data on the reasons a tenancy has ended, including data on the evidence provided, will enable NSW Fair Trading to monitor compliance with the new termination provisions and understand how the reforms are working in practice. The most practical way to report on termination of grounds would be during the administration of a bond claim. This will be outlined in the regulations, which will require the landlord, agent and tenant to provide information, including the date of termination, prior to the processing of a claim. Setting a date of 1 July 2025 to commence data collection requirements is practical for landlords and agents, who will need to familiarise themselves with new requirements, and gives enough time for the department to develop the capacity to collect and report on this data.

The amendment banning advertising that effectively says "no pets" in a rental property is complementary to the Government's work to make it easier to have pets in rentals. Prohibiting landlords and agents from continuing to advertise their property as "no pets" despite these reforms will prevent landlords from undermining their intent. Such advertising would also mislead renters about their rights and inhibit efforts to educate all parties about the change in the laws. A decision on a pet should be made on the actual pet and should not be made in advance by landlords acting in bad faith. Banning "no pets" advertising will encourage renters to be up-front about the pets they keep, knowing that the landlord's decision must be actually applicable to them and to their animal.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:19): I will be very brief. The Opposition will be supporting the amendments.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:19): The Greens also wish to express our support for the data-related amendments. We also circulated a similar amendment. It is absolutely critical in the context of undertaking these significant reforms that we know whether or not the information is there. As Mr Temporary Speaker and the member for Willoughby will recall, there was a lot of debate in the committee inquiry about the lack of available data and how much of an impact that has. I do not want us to be having future discussions and debate on the legislation weighing up the merits as to whether or not people gamed the system, whether or not they used the right reason or the wrong reason, and how those reasons were used or not used. The amendment is valuable, and I thank the member for Sydney for the amendment.

The Greens do not oppose the pets amendment, but we have some concerns that putting a ban on putting "no pets" on an advertisement has the potential for someone with a pet to apply thinking that it is okay to have a pet but the landlord being ready to go with a whole lot of reasons as to why they cannot have that pet. Our concern is that the legislation is pushing further into the very murky area of an application process, and the arbitrary nature of a landlord or a real estate agent then being able to make a determination based on which applicants have a pet and which do not, which we do not have any line of sight to. The Rental Commissioner does not have a line of sight to that.

We know from previous inquiries that serious discrimination occurs unseen within the application process. While we appreciate the good intentions of the member for Sydney in saying that there should not be a no pets provision on the advertising, the concern The Greens hold is that landlords will know full well they are not intending to allow a pet in that premises, they are banned from putting "no pets" on the advertisement but when an applicant with a pet puts in an application, they are immediately disqualified from being considered for that property.

I note that the Rental Commissioner is in the Chamber listening to the debate and I understand that a lot of work has gone into the application process. I thought it was important in that context to put The Greens' concerns on the record. The amendment may be well meaning. We absolutely think that all properties should allow pets; if the owner can have a pet then the renter should be able have a pet. Having said that, solving it at the advertising point and not addressing it throughout raises concerns for us. That said, we will not be opposing the amendment in relation to advertising about pets and we 100 per cent support the data amendments.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:22): I thank the Minister, the shadow Minister and The Greens for their support of the amendments. I also thank the Minister's staff, the departmental staff and the Rental Commissioner for their work with me, The Greens and others through the amendment process. I acknowledge the amount of time that has gone into negotiating some of the amendments. I acknowledge the point made by the member for Newtown. As the Minister and his staff know, when it comes to reforms around the application stage for rentals, I will be advocating in the strongest possible way to ensure that they are

companion animal friendly policies and provide pathways for that. I think we can all agree that companion animals do a lot for our health and mental health, such as exercise, and we have so many beautiful companion animals in rescues that people in rentals could really benefit from having. I thank the Government for its support of the amendments, and I commend them to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that amendments Nos 1 to 3 of the member for Sydney on sheet c2024-204H be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:24): By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 1, 4 and 5 on sheet c2024-199D in globo:

No. 1 Commencement

Page 2, clause 2. Insert after line 6—

(a1) Schedule 1[12]—on 31 January 2025,

No. 4 Information to be given with termination notice

Page 8, Schedule 1[12], proposed section 85(1), line 30. Omit "may". Insert instead "must".

No. 5 Additional penalty amount

Page 8, Schedule 1[12], proposed section 85. Insert after line 39—

(4) If a landlord or landlord's agent is convicted of an offence under this section in relation to a residential tenancy agreement, the landlord or landlord's agent must pay an amount to the tenant equivalent to the bond amount.

(5) Subsection (4) applies in addition to a penalty that may be payable under subsection (2).

As my colleagues the member for Balmain and the member for Ballina and I have already expressed, The Greens wholeheartedly support the bill's prescription of specific grounds on which an eviction can occur. That said, certain elements of the bill can be tightened to ensure that the ban on no-grounds evictions is as effective as possible and maximises the positive impact that the significant reforms can have for tenants. The amendments specifically include ensuring that there is a hard deadline on the commencement of provisions that ban no-grounds evictions and replace them with a specific ground requirement; making the provision of evidence with a termination notice mandatory; and, finally, requiring a landlord who issues termination on grounds that are not genuine to provide compensation to a tenant.

It is absolutely critical that we strengthen the reforms as much as possible. While we appreciate there has been a lot of discussion with the Government about the amendments and acknowledge the way that both the Minister and his team have worked with us on the amendments, we recognise that the Government is not in a position to support the amendments. That said, we are putting them on the record because we believe it is critical for us to address the gaps that we have identified in the bill. Amendment No. 1 inserts subclause (a1) to require that schedule 1 [12] commence on 31 January 2025. Schedule 1 [12] makes specific grounds a requirement.

Currently, only the provisions in the bill that limit amounts payable by a tenant before entering into a rental agreement, that limit rent increases to once every 12 months for every lease type, and that appoint the NSW Rental Commissioner to the Rental Bonds Board will commence on the date of assent. The remainder of the bill will commence on proclamation, meaning there is no deadline by which these hugely significant reforms actually need to come into effect. That will only further contribute to the insecurity and uncertainty faced by renters. Given how long it has taken to enact the reforms and how much we know this is a contested space, The Greens have serious concerns with that. We also believe that components of the bill will require administrative and systems change, as well as education and information campaigns. While we recognise that some elements may not be able to have a deadline put on them, we believe there should be a deadline that everyone is collectively working towards on the no-grounds eviction clauses.

The Greens' concerns around that are not unfounded. Members will recall in 2018 when both Houses of Parliament passed the Modern Slavery Act, with the Premier leading on the passage of that bill in this Chamber, but it never came into force in the form that it passed because the Government did not like what it would be required to then do. While we appreciate the Government is not interested in setting a specific deadline, we ask that the Minister provide some more detail of the timeline he is working with. Amendment No. 4 deals with the evidence that is to be provided and changes the word "may" to "must" to remove the risk that the regulations will not require evidence to be required. It is critical that we futureproof the legislation for future governments. While we know that that may be this Minister's intention, it may not be future Ministers' intentions.

Amendment No. 5 deals with compensation for tenants, which the bill does not address. As the bill is currently drafted, there are significant and very welcome penalties for landlords that game the system and fudge

the evidence. However, in a cost-of-living crisis, there is no compensation for the tenant. That means the State government will, through its revenue collection as a result of a penalty being issued, collect in the order of tens of thousands of dollars, and yet the tenant who was falsely required to move will not receive a single cent. The amendment will see the tenant who is made to move under unlawful circumstances provided with compensation in the form of one month of bond. The Greens think it is only fair that both the tenant and the Government benefit from the penalties for a landlord who games the system. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (16:29): I thank The Greens members and the rest of the crossbench for working so collaboratively with the Government to pass this very important reform to a rental market that certainly needs modernising. I state from the outset that the Government does not support the amendments. Amendment No.1 proposes to commence the changes to grounds for termination notices on 31 January 2025. The changes to end no-grounds evictions in the bill require landlords to have a valid reason to end a lease, currently intended to commence on a date set by proclamation. Before commencement, the Government must amend the Residential Tenancies Regulation 2019 to provide supporting detail for the no-grounds and pet reforms. This includes, for example, prescribing the evidence that must be attached to a termination notice. These changes will be progressed as a matter of priority in the coming months.

The property management industry also needs to be given time to learn about the changes and adapt its own processes and forms so that they align with the new requirements. It is important that property managers understand the changes properly so the renters they deal with are given the benefit of the changes. The Government intends to roll out communications and education about the changes before they commence. The Government will also consult with key stakeholders in considering an appropriate commencement date for the changes to end no-grounds terminations. An exact commencement date will be set once the regulation changes have been made and in consultation with stakeholders. The Government will keep stakeholders and parliamentary colleagues updated on the timeline for the commencement of the reforms, but it is expected that the ban on no-grounds evictions will commence in early 2025.

Regarding amendment No. 4, the Government did not envisage that evidence would necessarily be prescribed for every ground. For example, there are grounds where the reason for a termination relates to a tenant's eligibility. A tenant already has the information about their own status as a student or as an eligible participant in an affordable accommodation program and does not need their landlord to give them evidence that they already know. The intention of the bill is that evidence will be required to accompany a termination notice when there is the risk of misuse of the ground to help ensure that the ground is genuine and to facilitate the tenant challenging the termination if it is not. The provision in amendment No. 5 is unnecessary. If a landlord makes a false termination, that is in breach of the Act. The tenant already has the ability under the Act to apply to the tribunal for an order for compensation. For those reasons, the Government opposes the amendments.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:32): Once again, I will be brief. The Opposition will not be supporting the amendments.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:32): I thank the Minister specifically for his comments on compensation. The Greens look forward to strengthening the awareness campaign around compensation, if the Minister believes it will provide an avenue for renters. A lot of tenants are not in a position to take compensation action, which is one of the challenges that renters face. Tenants have the right to make a compensation claim through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] process, but that requires a level of privilege, time, knowledge and expertise, so often renters cannot exercise that right. I put on record the significance of the evidence that was heard by the Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2024, which I chaired, about requiring landlords to provide evidence when claiming a specific ground.

This is crucial not just to stamp out dodgy behaviour and ensure transparency, but also, as the New England and Western Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service highlighted in its submission, because the current lack of evidence requirements allows landlords to issue terminations on the basis of discriminatory or bigoted grounds while claiming a legitimate ground like financial hardship. One of the concerns The Greens have is that there are no clear evidence requirements in the bill. The strength of evidence required needs to be objective so that tenants can make an informed decision about whether to challenge a termination notice through NCAT. The more transparency and visibility tenants have when they are issued with a termination notice, the less risk there is that compensation claims will clog up NCAT in the future. The Greens look forward to working with the Minister and the Government to put these reforms in place.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 1, 4 and 5 on sheet c2024-199D be agreed to.

Amendments negatived.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:35): By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 2 and 3 on sheet c2024-199D in globo:

No. 2 Unreasonable conditions

Page 6, Schedule 1[9], proposed section 73E(3). Insert after line 37—

- (c1) a condition requiring a tenant to carry out or pay for maintenance works,

No. 3 Approval of Tribunal required to refuse consent

Page 7, Schedule 1[9], proposed section 73F. Insert after line 25—

- (1A) The landlord must apply to the Tribunal for the approval of the Tribunal before refusing to give consent.

- (1B) If the landlord makes an application to the Tribunal under this section—

- (a) the landlord must give written notice to the tenant of the application as soon as is reasonably practicable, and
- (b) the period for giving a response to the tenant set out in section 73D(1)(b) is taken to commence when the Tribunal decides the landlord's application.

These amendments seek to improve provisions relating to pets, which The Greens do not see as much of a game changer compared with the no-grounds evictions reforms. Some members have spoken about their pets in this debate, and it may surprise many of them that amendment No. 3 crucially puts the onus on the landlord to request approval to refuse to give consent for a pet. This significant amendment requires the landlord to go to the tribunal if they do not consent to the tenant having a pet rather than the other way around, reversing the current onus. New section 73G creates a pathway whereby a tenant who has been refused consent or has been given consent with conditions that they consider to be unreasonable can appeal to the tribunal.

Amendment No. 3 reverses this onus by inserting subsections (1A) and (1B) into new section 73F, meaning that a landlord refusing consent for a pet must bear the onus of applying to the tribunal for permission. This is in keeping with The Greens' pets policy but is also built on the principle that people should be supported to have pets as part of their families and everyone should have the same right to have a pet, regardless of whether they rent or own. This is reflective of the fact that landlords and their agents have more resources and direct understanding of how the tribunal process works than many tenants in New South Wales. Landlords and their agents also have the ability and the power to take issues to the tribunal more easily than renters. In addition to making money from an investment property, they presumably have the relevant training, access to legal and financial advice, and the qualifications to make informed decisions about taking matters to the tribunal.

Meanwhile, nearly 60 per cent of low- to moderate-income rental households in New South Wales live in rental stress and grapple with the very real and immediate pressures of housing insecurity and the cost-of-living crisis. Consulting with stakeholders in the domestic violence and animal welfare spaces to formulate a position on the bill, The Greens heard that placing the onus on renters to go to the tribunal is unacceptable. We also heard disappointment that the bill does not do anything to improve the application process. Again, I acknowledge that this work is underway. We must do everything we can to make it easier for people to have pets in their homes, including those fleeing domestic and family violence who are moving into new rental accommodation. We have heard consistently that the rental system needs to be animal inclusive by default, because that saves lives.

I thank the RSPCA, Domestic Violence NSW, Cat Protection Society of NSW, Lucy's Project, Sydney Dogs and Cats Home, and Companion Animal Network Australia for meeting with The Greens to discuss the bill. I also acknowledge them for their continued work and advocacy in this space. Together with the Tenants' Union of NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW, these groups have recently facilitated a letter writing campaign that encouraged community members to get in touch with the Premier and urged Labor to go faster and harder on genuine reform around the application process in the allowance of pets. We strongly support that call. I also appreciate that everybody has put the name of their pet on the record. I give a shout-out to Coco, because it seems inappropriate to not do so.

We moved amendment No. 2 because we are concerned that the grim state of rental properties in New South Wales means that people have not requested maintenance changes because of the risk of potentially being booted out due to unfair no-grounds eviction. The amendment is critical to ensure that a landlord does not put the requirement that the tenant pay for basic maintenance as a condition of having a pet. We believe that this would be an unreasonable condition and the proposed subsection (c1) seeks to prevent this from happening. I commend these amendments to the House. I hope that the Minister will respond in relation to the concerns raised about those issues.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (16:40): I thank the member for Newtown and The Greens for their contribution on this particular section of the bill and their proposed amendments. I acknowledge the position of The Greens in relation to the Government's model to make it easier to have pets in rentals. I also acknowledge all the stakeholders who have collaborated with the Government to make it easier for renters to have pets. The Government does not support the amendments of the member for Newtown.

Under section 63 it is the landlord's obligation to provide and maintain the residential premises in a reasonable state of repair. The Act already prevents this responsibility from being passed on to the tenant. This is because terms that are inconsistent with the Act or regulations are void under section 21. Terms of an agreement are void if they exclude, limit or modify terms imposed by the Act. Under section 51 the tenant already has a responsibility to return the premises in nearly as possible the same condition at the end of the tenancy, except for fair wear and tear, so a landlord does not need to impose such a term requiring a tenant to carry out or pay for maintenance works.

I now turn briefly to the amendment that would require a landlord to apply to the tribunal before refusing to give consent to an application for a pet. Placing the onus on the landlord rather than the tenant to apply to the tribunal would, in effect, create a blanket acceptance of all pets by default. This would severely limit the landlord's ability to make a decision regarding their property, including weighing any likely risks arising from the animal residing at the premises. Importantly, the New South Wales model avoids tribunal consideration of every refusal, which could impose an unnecessary burden on landlords and the tribunal. However, the tenant will still be able to dispute a refusal at the tribunal if they believe the grounds specified for the refusal are not applicable, or where consent has been given subject to a condition that they believe is also unreasonable.

New section 73E (2) (b) will allow a landlord to require carpets to be professionally cleaned at the end of the tenancy if the renter keeps a pet, and further clarifies that this condition may be imposed only if reasonable for the type of animal and premises. Whether a landlord can impose a condition in relation to fumigation is unclear in the current Act. The Government considers that it is reasonable for a landlord wanting to ensure that any likely parasites are eliminated from the premises at the end of the tenancy, where the animal is a mammal, for example. This limitation recognises that not all animals carry the types of parasites that can be easily transferred to humans and can cause a persistent infestation. The drafting provides landlords with the assurance that the property will be cleaned and free of infestation without having to enter into a dispute with the tenant at the end of a tenancy. This protection is not just for the landlord but also for the next tenants who will reside at the property. I can assure the member for Newtown that NSW Fair Trading and the Rental Commissioner will monitor the implementation of the reforms.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:44): I will be very brief and consistent. The Opposition does not support the amendments.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 2 and 3 on sheet c2024-199D be agreed to.

Amendments negatived.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:44): I move The Greens amendment No. 6 on sheet c2024-199D:

No. 6 Proposed sale of premises

Pages 10 and 11, Schedule 1[12], proposed section 87E, line 37 on page 10 to line 16 on page 11. Omit all words on the lines.

On principle, The Greens do not support the inclusion of the proposed sale of a residential premises as a specific ground for termination. Indeed, we never have. In bringing our own private member's bill to end no-grounds evictions earlier this year, and in consultation with stakeholders, we made the conscious decision to omit this ground. Amendment No. 6 would bring this bill in line with that bill, and indeed that position. To address concerns of those like the Tenants' Union of NSW, Shelter NSW and Better Renting, we wish to remove in its entirety new section 87E relating to "Proposed sale of premises".

It is not, and never has been, clear to The Greens at what point the sale of a property is considered to be "proposed". While we appreciate that new section 87E (1) (a) requires that the residential premises be offered for sale, the absence of information about evidence requirements means that the meaning is still unclear. We are moving this amendment because while we recognise the Government has made a policy decision to include "proposed sale" in the bill, we seek genuine clarification from the Minister in relation to what that means. Is the sale of a property proposed when a home owner first suggests this idea to their partner? Is it proposed when they message a real estate agent requesting information about fees to list a property? Is it only proposed once an

advertisement for the property has gone live or they have signed a contract with a real estate agent to sell the property? Is it proposed once pamphlets gauging the interest of the off-market sale have been letter boxed?

The evidence requirement here will be absolutely key. I appreciate that we are moving this amendment without seeing what the evidence requirement will be. We need to see an objective measure or something else that can clearly demonstrate the property is going on the market and is being proposed for sale. Without an evidence requirement that provides clear and tangible demonstration about the genuine intention to sell, there is a real risk that this will be used as a de facto no-grounds because of the subjective nature of this part of the specific grounds clauses in the bill. In its submission to the inquiry into The Greens' bill, Shelter NSW was adamant that the preparation for sale, as opposed to the actual sale, is not good enough to evict a household of any type, highlighting existing provisions in the Act to enable termination if vacant possession is required at the time of sale. Shelter NSW went on to explain that evicting tenants on the basis of an intended sale:

... reduces the utilisation of existing housing stock, results in unnecessary forced moves (as the property may be sold to a residential investor who would have happily retained the tenants), and opens more possibilities for fraudulent terminations.

The inconvenience to a landlord or selling agent of having to navigate home viewings and interior decorations around the incumbent household must not win out over the inconvenience to the incumbent household of being evicted (potentially into homelessness).

The Greens agree with this analysis and share Shelter's position that a ground that does not require actual sale and the premises to be vacant will be prone to abuse and should not be included in the bill.

I thank Shelter NSW for its advocacy around all these rental reforms and housing affordability, and housing justice in this State. I acknowledge the team for their work. I appreciate the Government has made a decision in relation to this policy position, but I recognise that in other international jurisdictions it is indeed not the case that this is required. I also put on record the example shared by John Engeler from Shelter during the inquiry. He explained that there are many options for the Fair Trading and the Rental Commissioner to encourage negotiation about potential rent abatement and other issues. The options could address the desire, in some cases, to have open houses without the tenant's furniture and presence that would enable a discussion to occur without empowering a landlord to evict a tenant from their home before the property is sold. As such, I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (16:49): I thank the member for Newtown for her contribution to the bill and for moving The Greens amendment No. 6. The Government does not support the amendment because new section 87E allows a landlord to prepare their property for sale and present it in a condition that best suits their needs. We understand that landlords need to obtain the best price for their property and that how the property is presented can affect what offers are received. That is only fair. While the Government understands that not everyone supports this grounds for termination, it strikes the right balance between the interests of landlords and tenants. It is open to the parties to negotiate arrangements that would allow the tenant to keep living in the property while it is prepared and offered for sale.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:50): The Opposition does not support the amendment. The proposed sale of a property is a reasonable grounds for eviction. Accordingly, we do not support the amendment.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that The Greens amendment No. 6 on sheet c2024-199D be agreed to.

Amendment negatived.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:50): I move The Greens amendment No. 7 on sheet c2024-199D:

No. 7 **Statutory review**

Page 17, Schedule 1. Insert after line 39—

[21A] Section 229

Insert after section 228—

229 Statutory review

- (1) The Minister must review this Act to determine whether—
 - (a) the policy objectives of the Act remain valid, and
 - (b) the terms of the Act remain appropriate for securing the objectives.
- (2) The review must be undertaken as soon as possible after the period of 5 years from the commencement of this section.

- (3) A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 12 months after the end of the period of 5 years.

This final amendment is designed to ensure that we do not just pass the bill and then consider all the rental reforms fixed and done. We can do so much more in relation to the Residential Tenancies Act. Reforms to end no-grounds evictions are the bedrock on which all other rental reforms can be built. It is essential to continue work in this place to ensure that policies and laws to protect renters are as effective as possible. The Greens therefore move amendment No. 7 to insert new section 229 into the bill, requiring a statutory review of the entire Act after five years and a report on the outcome of the review to be tabled within 12 months. That review process is necessary to ensure that we are monitoring how the amendments in the bill and the Act overall are working and make informed decisions. I am pleased that the Government has indicated it will support this Greens amendment.

I note that the review will occur five years from now, which will be a full decade since the Residential Tenancies Act was reviewed. I put on record that the last statutory review of the Residential Tenancies Act occurred in 2018 and led to significant changes being agreed to in this Parliament, including capping rental increases for periodic agreements to once in 12 months, establishing basic habitability obligations for landlords, and prohibiting landlords and agents from publishing photos of a property in which a tenant's possessions are visible without their consent. I note that The Greens supported the passage of the bill that enabled those changes and supported what were unsuccessful amendments by the then Labor opposition that would have seen an end to no-grounds evictions all those years ago. It is important to put that on record, given that those members now sitting in opposition have expressed the position that the Government has taken too long to deliver these reforms.

While I agree with that in principle, I am the only member in the Chamber who is allowed to say that. In 2018 the then Opposition proposed an end to no-grounds evictions and the Liberal-Nationals Government opposed that reform. I also acknowledge that in 2018 The Greens sought to prohibit a blanket no-pets clause. It seems that now all members love pets in rentals. I welcome all members on board with The Greens' position from 2018. We still think it is unreasonable that rent for a property that is subject to four consecutive three-month leases over one year can be increased four times over 12 months. Once this reform is passed, we will certainly turn our attention to looking at how we can prevent successive rent hikes and place downward pressure on the market. I put all members on notice.

I conclude by expressing my gratitude to people who have been central to this reform. I acknowledge that the Rental Commissioner, Trina Jones, is in the Speaker's gallery. I also acknowledge the incredibly broad and successful consultation that was undertaken and led by her to change the debate on rental reform in this State. I thank Di from Fair Trading and Alicia from Minister Chanthivong's office for listening tirelessly to our endless amendments and discussions on the bill. I think Di and I have spoken about the Residential Tenancies Act more than most. I particularly pay tribute to Minister Chanthivong, who has delivered a reform in this Parliament when both Minister Dominello and Minister Kean were unable to do so. I pay tribute to him.

I also thank the member for Parramatta, the member for Cessnock, the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Willoughby, who were members of the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Prohibiting No Grounds Evictions) Bill 2024, for their willingness to shift the focus of the inquiry after the Government's announcement of its own rental reform. It is incredibly heartening to see bipartisan support for this long overdue reform. The Greens look forward to working to continue to engage constructively with the Government around this to ensure that everybody in New South Wales has a safe rental home to live in.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (16:55): The Government supports the amendment. We acknowledge that the changes in the bill are transformative, to say the least. They are a huge step towards bringing New South Wales rental laws into modernity. Renters, landlords and agents will have a new experience of renting. The Government understands that the breadth and importance of these changes warrant careful monitoring to ensure that they are operating as intended. A five-year time frame for a statutory review is reasonable. It will allow stakeholders enough time to familiarise themselves with the new laws and to provide more meaningful and knowledgeable feedback for the review. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:56): The Opposition supports the amendment.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The question is that The Greens amendment No. 7 on sheet c2024-199D be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

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

Third Reading

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 16 October 2024.

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:58): I support the Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2024. The bill makes a series of technical and relatively minor changes to tax and revenue laws. The Coalition Government regularly updated tax and revenue laws to address new matters. The bill will amend eight separate Acts. Interestingly, the bill already amends the Payroll Tax Act 2007 to ensure that the exemption for GP clinics that meet specific bulk-billing requirements also applies to similar arrangements where the general practitioner accepts, as full payment for a service to a patient, the specified payment under five Commonwealth Acts that provide for payments for the treatment of veterans. Despite the lengthy delay before settling this matter, it appears that the Minister overlooked the issue of veterans.

The bill also provides for additional penalties for tax avoidance schemes, which may be as high as "the amount of tax avoided by the taxpayer". The Act defines a "tax avoidance scheme" as a scheme that is entered into, made or carried out "for the sole or dominant purpose of enabling a tax liability to be avoided". It is fitting that there be appropriate penalties for such schemes. The penalty of 100 per cent of tax avoided is an upper limit, which would only be applied in the more egregious cases, with the bill setting out a number of matters that the chief commissioner must consider before deciding on the amount of the penalty. We are advised that Revenue NSW is intending to issue a practice note in relation to this matter. As a result, I will not address the other many detailed provisions of the bill. With that in mind, I commend the bill to the House.

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

Public Interest Debate

BROKEN HILL DISASTER RELIEF

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:00): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Condemns the Minns Labor Government's lack of urgency in declaring a state of natural disaster in Broken Hill.
- (2) Calls on the Minns Labor Government to provide immediate support for impacted healthcare facilities, schools, small businesses and local residents.
- (3) Recognises the important community support being provided by the Broken Hill Musicians Club, Rural Fire Service and local volunteers.

Last Thursday a powerful tornado ripped through parts of far western New South Wales, resulting in a number of electricity transmission towers failing and electricity supply being cut and interrupted in many parts of the region. Affected townships include the city of Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Tibooburra, Menindee and White Cliffs, as well as many other smaller communities. On Monday the redundant generators failed, and power was finally restored to the region this morning after nearly 36 hours in the dark. People are still experiencing blackouts and brownouts, as they rely on seven alternate backup generators to meet their needs. This is an unreliable electricity situation at the moment. During the evening peak, communities are being asked to reduce their energy use between 5.30 p.m. and 10.30 p.m., with advice from the Government to turn off non-essential appliances, using lights only in occupied rooms and raising the temperature of the thermostat in air conditioners.

The feeling on the ground is not great. The community is tired and angry at the lack of urgency displayed by the Minns Labor Government to recognise the severity of the situation and offer the support that is needed. I acknowledge that the Premier has decided to plan a trip to the region tomorrow, which is good, but the residents are disappointed that it has taken so long. A disaster like this has many facets. Families, particularly those who

live on a station or out of town, often buy food in bulk. Without electricity, their fridges and freezers are failing, and they are having to throw food out. Businesses are closed and having to throw food out. Yet their bills, their rent and their staff payments still come out at the end of every week. There is a fair degree of uncertainty about how long this situation will last. In a cost-of-living crisis, people obviously have strong hesitation to buy more food, only for the electricity supply to potentially fail at a later date, and then they would have to throw more food out.

During question time today, the Opposition asked the Premier to outline specific supports that will be available. The Premier answered, "That means funding is available on the ground immediately." The Premier also said that he has declared a natural emergency and twice said that the Government has declared a state of emergency. What was actually signed this morning was an electricity supply emergency. Families are suffering in Broken Hill and surrounds. Having a young family is hard enough, but I cannot imagine surviving a 35-degree day without air conditioning or a fan, especially with young children to care for. That is a tough ask. During a cost-of-living crisis, people are reluctant to go out and buy food.

A second question asked the Minister for Emergency Services—in what almost seemed like a Dixer—to precisely outline what support is available to families and businesses in the Broken Hill area. Disappointingly, he was not able to name a single tangible support. Following question time today, at approximately 1.15 p.m., a new page went live in the natural disaster declarations section on the Service NSW website, "Financial year 2024-25 disaster declarations". Some assistance is available, such as small business concessional loans, transport subsidies, loans up to \$12,000 and grants up to \$2,000 for sporting and recreational clubs, and concessional loans up to \$25,000 for not-for-profits. However, information is missing on when the money will hit bank accounts, when it will need to be repaid or about the interest rates.

Based off today's question time, the Government's response will predictably be to talk about privatisation. In his answer today, the Premier said that it is assured, under the energy supply agreements and the Act, that redundancy must be in place and that it is a minimum requirement to hold a licence to provide utility power in New South Wales. That has not been done in this case. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] is responsible for providing that energy utility companies are providing up-to-date, adequate infrastructure as per the Act. An inquiry has been put in place. However, we need to ask ourselves who the Minister responsible for IPART is. I did a quick Google search, and it is "Chris Minns, MP".

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:07): I start my contribution by saying that Government members are thinking of the people in the communities of Broken Hill, Tibooburra, White Cliffs, Wilcannia, Menindee and everyone in the Far West who is going through what can only be a difficult and frustrating time. They can be assured that they have excellent representatives out there and in this place, including the local member, who will be visiting with the Premier tomorrow. Those representatives are knocking on doors and making sure that the community is doing well and able to get back on their feet. I have spoken with Darriea Turley, the former Mayor of Broken Hill, about how things are going, what it is like on the ground and what the impact has been. Power has been coming on and off, but there will still be long-term impacts after power is restored permanently.

In order to cooperate, some of the organisations have effectively been going slow or shutting down. The aged-care facilities are going slow, which means that some of the workers will probably be impacted through loss of pay. Mines have shut down in order to save power. They have effectively asked workers to take leave. I know that some of those workers were planning to use that leave in the Christmas and New Year period, so this is going to impact people and families for months to come. But I want everyone in the Far West to know that members on this side of the Chamber back them.

The tone of the contribution of the member for Coffs Harbour was subdued but, make no mistake, the wording of this motion shows that members opposite are attempting to play politics with what is a very serious situation. I presume that between the time he circulated the motion and the time he got up in the Chamber to speak he has probably been told to pull his head in and stop playing politics with this situation. While those opposite are focused on politics, we are focused on getting the power back on. We do not care about scoring political points. We are making sure that we are doing everything in our power to get the power back on and ensure that the people of the Far West are being supported and looked after.

There are serious questions to be asked, including: Where were the concerns of those opposite when they decided to privatise Transgrid in 2015? Make no mistake, this is a direct consequence of the privatisation of Transgrid. If you privatise a company, it becomes driven by one thing and one thing only, and that is the profit motive. It has cut back on maintaining the network. I have spoken to union members and delegates who work for Transgrid. It had a choice several years ago about investing in the network. It could have duplicated supply into Broken Hill or it could have maintained and upgraded the existing line. Of course, it took the cheaper option, which was to maintain and upgrade the existing line. Now we see the consequences of that. That is not from me.

That is from delegates and representatives of the Electrical Trades Union [ETU], who I spoke with today about the impacts of privatisation and what has happened with Transgrid. Do not take my word for it. As I said, I am not playing politics.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Take the ETU's word for it.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: No, let us take the word of the Mayor of Broken Hill, Tom Kennedy, who said this morning, "When anything is privatised, a lot of the companies look at their bottom line and, where they can save money, they will save money." The consequences of that are what we are seeing today.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Opposition members will come to order.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: When there was a similar outage several years ago, things were up and running because there were service standards and two maintained generators. One of those generators has failed—as has the philosophy of those opposite about privatising anything they can get their hands on. They need to answer some more questions. Do they still support privatisation? Do they regret their decision to privatise the State's transmission network? I take the opportunity to acknowledge the community effort that is underway. People are using their generators and solar power to look after their neighbours. They should know that the members on this side of the House are with them every step of the way. The Premier will be out there tomorrow to assist.

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:12): I speak on the public interest debate motion moved by the member for Coffs Harbour. There are elements of the motion I support and other elements I do not, and I will explain why. The storm that took out seven towers responsible for bringing power into Broken Hill and surrounding remote towns showed us how tenuous the infrastructure is in the west and the Far West of New South Wales. If that storm passed over without any damage, we would not know how serious the situation is for Broken Hill, Milparinka, Tibooburra, Packsaddle, White Cliffs, Sunset Strip and Silverton.

The storm showed us that our power grid has severe problems regarding resilience and redundancy. It is not acceptable that only one of the two large-scale turbine generators was in place as a redundancy plan for Broken Hill as the other was going through scheduled maintenance. There was no other backup for such an emergency. You would imagine, if you knew one was offline, that you would make more generators available to be able to plug in should something go wrong. I am pleased that the Premier has requested the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to investigate Transgrid's arrangements. The questions around the backup generators will be resolved through the inquiry; however, with the broader impacts this power outage has caused, further inquiry must be made to dig much deeper.

Declaring a natural disaster is one step towards compensation to the communities impacted. Still, compensation will not cover everything, like lost business and the disposal of thousands of dollars of perishable food by residents and businesses alike. We need another pathway for those people, and I am working on that. If there is an upside, any silver lining to what has happened—and it is a terrible situation for my communities—it is the generosity and compassion we have seen from volunteer groups like the RFS and SES and from businesses, clubs and individuals that have stepped in to help their own and nearby communities. Throughout my career and as a local member, I have seen that the worst situations often bring out the best in people and communities. I offer my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all those who have been helping others through this.

We are not out of the woods yet. With a temporary supply line estimated to be completed by 6 November 2024, we could see more challenges if the lone mainstay turbine generator encounters issues. It is a serious and stressful situation for people in my communities. The importance of keeping remote businesses running cannot be underestimated. I know Vicki at Tibooburra made the decision early to hire a generator to keep her store operating and keep servicing her community. Tibooburra is in the unincorporated area around 330 kilometres north of Broken Hill and right near the Queensland border. There is no Coles or Woolies nearby, and locals need to be able to buy grocery items. There are only a couple of places in Tibooburra where you can buy them.

Another isolated business is the Emmdale Roadhouse. It is about 160 kilometres west of Cobar and 100 kilometres east of Wilcannia. It is a really important oasis for travellers and locals alike. Emmdale is often where injured people will wait for emergency services following an accident. There is an airstrip across the road. It is an important business for so many reasons. Virginia, the owner, has a generator but had trouble getting clear information about if the power was actually on and so had to keep running the generator. Many of those remote businesses—and there are more than I could mention in five minutes—do much more than just sell fuel and groceries or food. It is hard to explain if you have never seen just what can end up happening in regional New South Wales.

I urge members not to take a disaster and use it for politicking. We do not need to add any more stress or anxiety to those affected communities. They need accurate, timely information and clear pathways to access information and support. Anything else is not helpful. As I said, a broader inquiry is required. We need to understand how we were left with one generator as a backup and how the Telstra towers have no fixed backup generation. We also need to know why, when we had extra generators coming into town, we did not have the appropriate fittings to connect them and how we can distribute the backup power that we do have equitably throughout the communities. There was a situation in White Cliffs where 000 could be contacted but the emergency services could not contact the local facilities.

The reality is there are straightforward solutions to fix the situation but they are not available to us in the Far West. I appreciate the tone of this debate so far. I hope that we can conduct it in a way that reflects the seriousness of the situation and the difficulty that people are going through, especially with the real possibility of some hot days coming. That will put additional load on the grid as people turn on their air conditioners. Frankly, in the Far West of the State, on a 40-plus degrees day, especially if you are well aged, you are going to want to use an air conditioner. It is not going to be a choice. I thank everyone who has been working towards this, and I hope the tone of the debate continues to be in support of the Far West.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:17): I add my deep concern that the Liberals and The Nationals are playing politics with this issue. The people of Broken Hill, Tibooburra, White Cliffs, Wilcannia, Menindee and other communities in the Far West are understandably frustrated and distressed. As such, I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after "House" and inserting instead:

- (1) Recognises the frustration communities are experiencing in the Far West of New South Wales and acknowledges the huge community effort under way in Broken Hill and the surrounding towns.
- (2) Notes that an electricity supply emergency has been declared by the New South Wales Government under the Electricity Supply Act and that a natural disaster declaration was issued on Monday 21 October 2024.
- (3) Recognises the important community support being provided by Wilcannia Golf Club, Broken Hill Musicians Club, White Cliffs Hotel, Central Darling Shire, Broken Hill City, Rotary, ABC Broken Hill, Menindee Local Aboriginal Land Council, Royal Flying Doctor Service, SES and RFS.
- (4) Condemns the former Coalition Government's privatisation of Transgrid that is responsible for providing redundancy power in Broken Hill and surrounding towns, and calls for the National Party to rule out the further privatisation of electricity assets, including Essential Energy. Having been a member of this House since 2011, I can certainly assist the member for Coffs Harbour on the reasons these problems have emerged in Broken Hill recently. Let us go back to 2014, when I was in my first term of Parliament. I had only been here for a few years, but I had the Liberals and Nationals all figured out by then. They were on a mission to destroy the very fabric of our society in New South Wales, including in Broken Hill, via the destructive force that is privatisation. In a private member's statement about the then Liberal-Nationals Government's proposal to sell our electricity assets, I said:

First, we know that prices will go up; secondly, we know that jobs will be slashed by the razor gang opposite; and, finally, we know that investment and maintenance will decrease.

I must have had a crystal ball. The part of that statement that is relevant to the good people of Broken Hill was my concern that investment and maintenance would decrease once the assets were sold—and look at what happened. Transgrid's backup generator failed and it has had to apologise to residents and businesses. It was obvious to everyone back then that a private company would not have the same incentive as a government to maintain electricity assets like backup generators. Those opposite are clearly trying to blame the Minns Labor Government for a decade of destruction.

I would have expected better from The Nationals than this blatant attempt to rewrite history and attribute the blame to the new Government. I know they are just the junior partner of the Coalition, but Nationals members must have had their doubts about what privatisation would do to regional and rural communities. We saw privatisations for 12 years under those opposite—I do not include in that list the member for Barwon or the member for Orange, although they are seated on the Opposition benches.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Opposition members will come to order.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The Liberals and Nationals lined up for every single division, with their hands up like air puppets outside a cheap car yard, to vote in favour of privatisation. We saw that day in and day out from members opposite. It is interesting that former Government members promised to build new infrastructure with the funds received from the sale of our assets, but they did not think to invest any of those funds back into electricity infrastructure to prevent the blackouts that we have seen recently in Broken Hill. The unfortunate state of affairs in Broken Hill is a direct result of the gross incompetence of the former Liberal-Nationals Government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): I call the member for Oxley to order for the first time.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I assure the people of Broken Hill that I did everything I could as a member of this Parliament to prevent the sale of our public electricity assets. I voted against every single privatisation. I wish the very best to the impacted residents and business owners of Broken Hill and the surrounding areas as they recover from last week's disaster, which was caused by severe weather. It is heartbreaking to see so many people and business owners suffering, but the Minns Labor Government is on their side. We are acting as fast as possible to restore full power.

I have a list of all the assets that were sold off by the former Government. I will read them out in my remaining time: Transgrid, which was fully sold; Vales Point Power Station, which was fully sold; Ausgrid, 50 per cent of which was sold, along with a 99-year lease; Pillar Superannuation, which was sold; the land registry office, which was sold; Country Energy Gas, which was sold; and it goes on and on. There are about 50 items on the list.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (17:22): I will first address the comments made by the member for Leppington and the member for Shellharbour, which were focused on an inquiry into the electrical challenges that have been faced out west due to a storm that knocked down seven towers. Not once did they talk about the people or what the Government is doing to support them; instead, they focused on privatisation, history and blame. They are politicising. But forget about blame; how about looking after people! If we take care of people, the politics takes care of itself. The Labor Government has not done that on this occasion.

Today in question time the Premier quoted the Mayor of Broken Hill, Tom Kennedy, and the member for Leppington quoted the former mayor in his contribution to this debate. But Government members did not pick up the phone and talk to the mayor until five days after the power cuts. People were in blackout, their food was spoiled, their communications were gone and their loved ones were uncontactable, but Government members have played politics and focused on privatisation throughout this debate. I say to the member for Leppington that when he is in a hole, he should stop digging, and the member for Shellharbour should stop blaming privatisation. They should look after the people.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Government members will come to order.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: The good member for Barwon talked about compensation. In fact, there is no compensation. On behalf of the Labor Government, the member for Barwon has declared that a national disaster declaration has been issued, unlocking State and Commonwealth disaster funding for the Broken Hill and Central Darling Shire local government areas—I am reading from a Labor press release. That disaster funding unlocks concessional loans and transport subsidies. People are in desperate and dire need of support and help, and the Government is offering loans. It could take a leaf out of the books of ClubsNSW and other community members who are backing in Broken Hill. For example, ClubsNSW has pledged up to \$50,000 for whatever they need, and Mounties has pledged \$100,000 to be used as residents see fit, whether that is for logistics, freight, fuel supply or water.

That is what support looks like. There are no strings attached. That is real support, and that is what the Government could offer. That support can be spent on fresh water, diesel, communication, wi-fi, freight and fuel supply. In times of need, people have turned to their clubs for assistance, including the Wilcannia Golf Club and the Broken Hill Musicians Club. The pseudo-member for Broken Hill, Michael Boland, has gone over and above by opening his musicians club yet again to provide meals, showers and communications for loved ones to contact each other. People can use the wi-fi to find out what is going on with their local businesses. Meanwhile, the Labor Government wants to offer loans of up to \$130,000 to people who are in desperate need. We should look after the people first and let the politics take care of itself.

If the Government is going to offer loans, what are the interest rates, when does it hit the banks and when do repayments start? The Government is offering loans to people who have nothing. They have been in the black, in darkness, without food. They are concerned about communicating with their loved ones—and the Government is offering loans! Today in question time I asked the Minister for Emergency Services precisely what support the Government is offering the people of Broken Hill in their time of dire need, with those blackouts, and he could not answer. He gave a bureaucratic response about a natural disaster declaration; he was unable to say exactly what was being offered. ClubsNSW and Mounties are doing it. That is what support looks like. Again, clubs have come to the forefront. Labor should take a leaf out of their book by offering real support instead of loans.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:28): I am normally delighted to make a contribution to debate, but I am not delighted to contribute to this public interest debate. In fact, I was disappointed by the first two paragraphs of the motion. This is a time of darkness for a community that is suffering. I learnt a long time ago, even before I came to this place, that one should never seek fortune from another's misfortune, and I thought members of this place were better than that. The motion is polarising and divisive. However, I will focus on what matters most, and that is the people of Broken Hill. I say to the people of Broken Hill and Barwon: Thank goodness

for Roy Butler, because he has done exactly what I and any other good local member would do. His community is at the forefront of his mind. That is why he will be out there tomorrow. We know, though many people out there do not, that ultimately it is compulsory for us to be here unless we get a pair. But he is going to his community to support it in person, on the ground, as soon as he can. I commend him for doing so.

But the reality is we find ourselves in this dark situation, and I will not try to lay any blame. I acknowledge the cause and effects of privatisation, and I will call them out and call out those responsible. But there will be time to debate them, and now is not the time. That petulant style of politics is not cohesive or consistent with the situation of the communities we represent. This is not about politics. Everyone in this place should be focused on getting the power back on in Broken Hill—nothing else. A storm tore down seven towers. Many members know I am from Dubbo, in western New South Wales. When I was growing up, people in western New South Wales, particularly the Far West, felt disengaged from society, and overlooked and unconsidered by this Parliament. That is still felt today. I say to them that they are not.

I again refer to the member for Barwon as a representation of how comforted and cared for they are. In the darkest times, communities shine, and this community is shining. I do not know everyone who is doing everything. The member for Barwon will have more to say about the volunteers, clubs and organisations in the future. But I know that this community is stepping up to help itself in a time of darkness. I thank the Federal Government for the natural disaster declaration a couple of days ago. I thank the New South Wales Government and the Premier for taking action as diligently as they could. There will be time to discuss accountability and Transgrid's responsibility to provide certainty of power supply, after adequate and appropriate investigation, which must happen.

I had the privilege on the way down here to meet Mal Lanyon, who is the chief executive officer of the NSW Reconstruction Authority, sitting with the Hon. John Robertson, who was doing some work around there. I saw a woman who was passionate about helping this community. She was waiting to see the Premier, who is committed to helping that community and is going out there himself. I give him credit for that. It is a good example of how the best things are achieved by working together. Like everything in this place, there is a lot of politics in what we do, but let us never lose sight of the most important process of politics, which is helping people to make their lives, hopefully, a little better tomorrow than today. I wish for the people of Broken Hill a much better tomorrow, and I know that everyone is working hard to achieve that. I thank them.

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (17:33): As the member for Clarence, I absolutely know the stress that communities are under during times of natural disaster. My electorate is one of the most prone to natural disasters in New South Wales. When I was Mayor of Clarence Valley Council, between 2008 and 2016, I had five declared natural disasters in three years. Not knowing what comes next, when the water will go down or when the fire will go out or when the wind change will come through, is extremely stressful for a community. In the case of Broken Hill and the district, it is when the lights will come on and, when they do, whether they will stay on. I can only begin to imagine the smell of rotten food that would be starting to develop in the town and the region.

One thing people should always feel is that a government that moves quickly to support a community has their backs. It has been a week since the storms ripped through a vast area of western New South Wales. I acknowledge the member for Barwon, whose electorate is bloody huge. The effect of wind gusts up to 200 kilometres per hour on a large part of regional New South Wales has now been felt. The lack of power is having a tragic effect on communities, and it will take them a long time to recover. If we want a case study of what it is like without strong baseload power, this is it.

I put on record my thanks for the community of Broken Hill—from the Broken Hill Musicians Club, providing relief, meals, wi-fi and air conditioning, to the gold-plated Rural Fire Service and SES volunteers. Imagine it was your business throwing out fridge-loads worth of rotten food. Imagine your homestead was a couple of hundred kilometres out of town, where you cannot go to Woolworths every day to get the milk and bread. Imagine throwing out freezer-loads worth of food with little or no hope of getting into town tomorrow to get it replenished. Imagine it was your mum or dad, elderly relative or newborn child, husband or wife sitting at home on a 40-degree day, without air conditioning, stressed because of the heat. I heard today that residents have been throwing out food, with no confidence to restock because they have no confidence in the power staying on.

The Government must do more. I hope that, when the Premier visits tomorrow, he does everything in his power to support those people: that he gives them compensation and cash to let them buy food, and that he gives the local businesses compensation and cash so that they can keep the doors open. Simply going there and reading a press release that offers nothing but loans, with an interest rate, with no terms and conditions, will not cut the mustard. Those 500 workers on forced leave at the mine need a compensation package. To go out there and regurgitate the press release will not cut the mustard. I hope that tomorrow Broken Hill gets the best of what the New South Wales Parliament can deliver. As a rural MP who has lived and breathed natural disasters more often than I want to count, I urge the Premier to do more for the people of Broken Hill and surrounds. That is

unquestioned. He must do more than turn up and re-announce the packages that have been announced today. It is over to him.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (17:38): In reply: I thank the speakers in today's public interest debate: the members representing the electorates of Tamworth, Barwon, Clarence, Leppington, Shellharbour and Campbelltown. Predictably, members of the Government could not refrain from politicising this issue. Starting from this morning, the talking points from the other side were nothing but the politics of defence because they knew they had not done enough. Our original motion condemns the Minns Labor Government's lack of urgency because it has taken nearly a week to call the mayor. That is an unacceptably long period.

It has taken a week and pressure from the Opposition in question time for the Government to actually detail the support that it is providing for the families and businesses of Broken Hill. The Government can absolutely do more. I acknowledge that it is not only the State Government; the Albanese Government also has a big role to play. A lot more can be done to help the community get through the next couple of weeks and, when they get through to the other side, to recover back to the way they were. The second paragraph of the original motion deals with that.

The third paragraph is replicated in the Government's amendment. Opposition members acknowledge all the people who have helped during this emergency situation, particularly the volunteers who have come from out of town. People are going above and beyond. Predictably, during the debate, Labor members spoke only about the past and took no responsibility for the present. That is a common theme for Labor members, who continually forget that they occupy the Government benches. They are in charge. They are responsible for the welfare of the people of New South Wales, especially during the circumstances that the community of Broken Hill and surrounds are going through at the moment.

I particularly feel for the students who are studying for the HSC at the moment. They are in the dark and studying by candlelight, without lights or internet. It cannot be easy. The member for Clarence mentioned the mine employees who have been forced to take leave. During a cost-of-living crisis, that is not ideal. There is a lot more to be done. We hope the Government takes responsibility and starts doing its job.

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

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Bills

REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:44): I am delighted to contribute to debate on the Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2024. The bill amends several Acts to improve the administration of revenue, fines and debt in the great State of New South Wales. The bill makes about 55 changes to eight Acts: the Duties Act 1997, the Fines Act 1996, the Land Tax Act 1956, the Land Tax Management Act 1956, the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, the Payroll Tax Act 2007, the State Debt Recovery Act 2018 and the Taxation Administration Act 1996. I will not comment on all of the amendments in the bill.

Mr Adam Crouch: That's a good thing.

Mr DAVID MEHAN: I know some of my colleagues want me to, in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and to help out Minister Houssos. However, I will concentrate on the more important provisions. Firstly, the bill amends the Taxation Administration Act to deter tax avoidance. A tax avoidance scheme is a scheme that a person enters into, whether alone or with others, for the sole or dominant purpose of avoiding tax liability. To deter tax avoiders, the bill amends the Tax Administration Act to introduce an additional statutory penalty that may be imposed on a person who enters into such a scheme. The penalty will be in addition to the penalty tax and interest that any person has to pay when they default on paying tax. The Chief Commissioner of State Revenue will have the discretion to impose that penalty and determine the amount of the penalty, up to a maximum of 100 per cent of the amount of tax avoided.

The bill also strengthens payroll tax provisions to address phoenixing and the avoidance of payroll tax debts. Phoenixing occurs when an entity accrues significant debt, often including tax debt, and then transfers its assets to a new entity controlled by the same person who controls the first entity. The new entity then continues the business, while the first entity liquidates without paying off any of its debts. The new entity is then able to carry on debt free. Phoenixing is a problem that not only deprives the State of due taxes but also erodes community confidence that everybody is paying their fair share of tax. The bill amends the Payroll Tax Act 2007 to address phoenixing by enabling a former entity that owes a payroll tax debt to be grouped with a successor entity so that the successor is held jointly and severally liable for the former's payroll tax debt.

The bill bolsters the phoenixing grouping provisions by clarifying that a former entity includes a company that has entered into a deed of company arrangement, which is a binding agreement between a company that is in voluntary administration and its creditors that seeks to either continue the company's business or provide an improved return to its creditors. The bill makes it clear that a company under a deed of company arrangement can be a former entity for the purpose of the phoenixing grouping provisions and that the successor can be held jointly and severally liable for the balance of the debt under the deed of company arrangement. Importantly, that amendment is not intended to target companies that enter into a deed of company arrangement for the genuine purposes of rescuing a business or paying out its creditors as best it can. An existing discretion in the phoenixing grouping provisions enables the chief commissioner to not group an entity with another if satisfied that there is no intent to avoid tax or other commercial obligations.

The bill also amends two duty exemptions. The first relates to an exemption for transfers of primary production land between family members, which I will refer to as family farm transfers. The exemption for family farm transfers is intended to make it easier for family businesses to be passed on and continue through the family. The second duty amendment provides an exemption for the transfer of relationship property as a result of a breakdown of a marriage or de facto or domestic relationship. To be exempt, the transfer must be to a party to the relationship or their child. Currently, if that party or child has died, the exemption does not extend to the deceased person's legal personal representative. That means the duty is payable in what are already difficult circumstances. The bill provides relief by extending the exemption to the legal personal representative of the deceased party or child.

The bill also provides duty amendments that, I am pleased to say, will support investment in our State. Currently, landholder duty applies when shares in a company or units in a unit trust owning land with an unencumbered value of \$2 million or more are acquired above a certain threshold. On 1 February 2024 the acquisition threshold for private unit trusts was lowered from 50 per cent to 20 per cent. However, the lowered threshold does not apply for wholesale unit trusts and imminent wholesale unit trusts. Private unit trusts are generally used for asset protection or income tax minimisation and set up to benefit a small number of investors. By contrast, wholesale unit trusts are set up and managed by a funds manager for wholesale investors, such as complying superannuation funds and State-owned investment companies. Retaining the 50 per cent threshold for wholesale unit trusts supports their use as vehicles for genuine long-term investment by larger numbers of investors.

To be a wholesale unit trust or imminent wholesale unit trust and retain the 50 per cent acquisition threshold, certain conditions must be met, including that at least 80 per cent of the units must be held by qualified investors. Currently the definition of "qualified investors" includes a wholly owned subsidiary or trust of a complying superannuation fund but not wholly owned subsidiaries or trusts of other types of qualifying investors. This is considered overly restrictive. Investors may hesitate to transact in our State and funds may hesitate to accept investors because of the risk of adverse landholder duty consequences. The definition of "qualified investors" also includes the Crown and any statutory body representing the Crown in the right of the Commonwealth, State or Territory. However, it is not always abundantly clear whether a body constitutes the Crown because of how it is constituted or governed. Again, this lack of quality can hinder investment decisions.

The bill addresses both issues by amending the definition of "qualified investor" to include wholly owned subsidiaries or trusts of a qualified investor and enabling the statutory body to be prescribed a qualified investor by regulation. These changes will commence retrospectively on 1 February 2024, in line with when the landholder reforms commenced, ensuring that they are operating effectively and as intended. The Legislation Review Committee referred to this provision in its *Legislation Review Digest No. 21/58*, dated 22 October 2024. The committee commented:

The Committee generally comments on provisions that are drafted to have retrospective effect because they impact on the rule of law principle that a person is entitled to have knowledge of the law that applies to them at any given time.

However, the Committee recognises that the Bill is intended to create a fair and efficient revenue system to enhance integrity and compliance and in these circumstances, the Committee makes no further comment.

I note the digest advises:

Where the Committee concludes to make no further comment on an identified issue in the report, the Committee considers that the issue may technically engage with the criteria under section 8A or 9 of the Act—

that is, the Legislation Review Act 1987—

but, given counterbalancing considerations (e.g. legislated safeguards), it is unlikely in practice to raise the issues under the relevant section.

The bill also supports investment in New South Wales by clarifying the tax treatment of corporate collective investment vehicles [CCIVs]. These vehicles are a relatively new type of Australian company used for funds management. They are companies limited by shares and made up of sub-funds, controlled by a single corporate director. While the use of CCIVs in Australia is still in its infancy, it is important that our revenue legislation stay up to date with these new investment vehicles. In 2022 the Commonwealth Government legislated to register and regulate CCIVs. For Commonwealth tax purposes, CCIV sub-funds are deemed to be separate unit trusts. Their tax treatment is intended to be aligned with how attribution managed investment trusts and their members are currently taxed.

In 2023 Victoria passed amendments to its duties, land tax and payroll tax legislation to deal with CCIVs. This bill follows suit by amending both the Duties Act 1997 and the Land Tax Management Act 1956 to deem a CCIV sub-fund to be a separate unit trust. In doing so, the CCIV is deemed the trustee, while the business, assets and liabilities are the trust's property, and the members of the sub-fund are the beneficiaries. Such deeming carries through to how the Acts apply to the CCIV sub-funds, including in determining whether a CCIV sub-fund is a foreign person for the purpose of surcharge taxes. [*Extension of time*]

I thank my colleagues in the House for their indulgence. For duties, there are additional amendments to ensure existing provisions related to custodians also apply to CCIVs, which can also have custodial and sub-custodial arrangements. This largely involves extending the concessional duty for transfers of dutiable property that are internal to a managed investment scheme to also apply to such transfers for CCIVs. For land tax, the bill makes clear that a CCIV sub-fund, deemed as a unit trust, is also taken to be a special trust for the purposes of land tax. This will simplify administration and provide certainty for the taxpayer. In addition, the bill amends the Payroll Tax Act 2007 to provide that any fees paid or payable by a CCIV to its corporate director are not wages. This is in line with how management fees retained by the responsible entity of a managed investment scheme are not subject to payroll tax. I assure the House that these changes do not introduce a new tax for CCIVs. I could go on about this bill, but I will not. This is an important bill both for the people and the administration of this State. I commend the bill to the House.

Business interrupted.

Business of the House

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS: QUORUMS, DIVISIONS AND GAGS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:55): I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended from 7.30 p.m. today to provide that:

- (1) No quorums be called.
- (2) Any divisions called for during Government business be deferred until 10.30 a.m. on Thursday 24 October 2024 and all remaining proceedings on the items of business be considered.
- (3) During consideration of all remaining business this day, the following motions may not be moved:
 - (a) member be not further heard;
 - (b) member be now heard; and
 - (c) question be now put.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:56): I thank the Leader of the House for moving this suspension of standing orders and providing it to the Opposition in advance. The Opposition supports the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Business resumed.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (17:57): I make a brief contribution in support of the Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2024. The bill introduces various changes to State tax laws in New South Wales aimed at enhancing clarity, reducing inefficiencies and ensuring alignment with Federal laws, especially those in relation to new financial structures like corporate collective investment vehicles [CCIVs]. These amendments streamline tax laws, reduce red tape and ensure that exemptions serve their intended purpose. For instance, changes to the Duties Act 1997 address anomalies like the duty imposed on the creation of bare trusts in family farm transfers, which previously contradicted the goal of supporting family farm businesses. Expanding exemptions to include legal representatives of deceased parties also makes the tax system more compassionate and practical.

The State debt legislation amendments are designed to simplify the allocation of recovered funds and improve the administration of debt recovery processes. The fines legislation amendment clarifies how postal addresses are sourced for the service of fines. The bill aims to improve accuracy and reduce disputes. This will enhance compliance and enforcement. CCIVs are a new type of company used for fund management, introduced by the Commonwealth in 2022. CCIVs are structured as companies made up of multiple sub-funds. This bill aims to bring New South Wales tax laws in line with Federal legislation. Each sub-fund of a CCIV will be treated as a separate unit trust for tax purposes, with the CCIV itself deemed as the trustee holding the business, assets and liabilities of the sub-fund as trust property. That also classifies the sub-fund members as beneficiaries. By aligning State tax law with Federal legislation, the bill facilitates more efficient management of CCIV property, extending concessional duty arrangements, which are typically used in managed investment schemes, to these vehicles. That means that transfers of property between a CCIV and its custodian or sub-custodian will only be subject to concessional duty, ensuring greater flexibility in the management of the funds.

Like the changes in the Duties Act, the bill amends the Land Tax Management Act 1956 to treat each sub-fund of a CCIV as a separate unit trust. The sub-funds will also be categorised as special trusts for land tax purposes. Additionally, the bill extends the land tax exemption to registered native title bodies corporate, aligning with the existing duty exemptions. That change ensures that land owned by such entities is not taxed unfairly, offering support for Aboriginal and native title holders. Further land tax amendments address a drafting oversight in the mixed-use land concession, which applies to land used both for residential and commercial purposes. The principal place of residence exemption excludes companies or trustees from benefiting, but the mixed-use land concession inadvertently allowed trustees of special trusts to claim it. The bill corrects that inconsistency, ensuring uniformity in how exemptions are applied.

The bill introduces changes to the Payroll Tax Act 2007, addressing issues like phoenix activity and the new bulk-billing support initiative, and clarifying payroll tax rules for CCIVs. Phoenix activity involves businesses avoiding tax obligations by liquidating one entity and transferring assets to a new one. The bill strengthens provisions that address this by grouping the old and new entities, holding the successor entity responsible for payroll tax debts. The amendment ensures that phoenix activity cannot be used as a loophole to escape State tax liabilities, particularly through deeds of company arrangement, which some companies use to renegotiate debts. To combat tax avoidance, the bill introduces a new statutory penalty for individuals or entities entering tax avoidance schemes. The Chief Commissioner of State Revenue will have the discretion to impose penalties up to 100 per cent of the tax avoided, depending on the seriousness of the violation. That new provision serves as a deterrent, signalling the State's intent to curb such behaviour.

Amendments to the State Debt Recovery Act 2018 focus on improving debt recovery processes. The bill clarifies the definition of "referable debt" and allows for more flexible allocation of recovered amounts, particularly prioritising debts with the earliest expiring limitation periods. It also provides a mechanism for debts to be returned to the referring agency without refunding any payments, thereby avoiding complications in managing recovered funds. Overall, the amendments in the bill strengthen revenue laws, clarify inconsistencies and align New South Wales legislation with Federal frameworks, ensuring an efficient and fair tax system. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (18:03): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2024. Revenue legislation requires regular revision to ensure that it is up to date and fit for purpose. The bill amends eight Acts. The changes fall broadly into the following four categories: State taxation legislation, State debt legislation, fines legislation and minor amendments to legislation to update out-of-date references. For State taxation legislation, the bill amends the Duties Act 1997, the Land Tax Act 1956, the Land Tax Management Act 1956, the Payroll Tax Act 2007 and the Taxation Administration Act 1996. The duties and land tax amendments will broaden certain exemptions to ensure that they operate equitably and as intended; broaden the definition of a "qualified investor" for the landholder duty purpose in line with modern business practices; clarify the tax treatment of corporate collective investment vehicles following legislation introduced by the Commonwealth and in Victoria; and address other minor inconsistencies and uncertainties in the legislation.

The payroll tax amendments strengthen the phoenix grouping provisions, including by capturing companies that enter into a deed of company arrangement; broaden the payroll tax rebate for medical centres engaging contractor general practitioners by counting services provided to veterans under Commonwealth legislation towards the centres' bulk billing threshold; and clarify the tax treatment of fees paid by a corporate collective investment vehicle to its corporate director. The bill also amends the Taxation Administration Act 1996 to introduce a new statutory penalty for those who intentionally engage in tax avoidance schemes and allow foreign currency amounts to be converted at a rate of exchange determined by the chief commissioner. The Fines Act 1996 amendments will clarify that postal addresses for service of penalty notices and reminders may be obtained from the National Exchange of Vehicle and Driver Information System for interstate driver licences and vehicle registrations.

Finally, the amendments to the State Debt Recovery Act 2018 will clarify that a referable debt includes a debt prescribed as such under other legislation; clarify how recovered amounts may be allocated to debts across more than one debt recovery order and that limitation periods may be considered when prioritising allocations; clarify that the Limitation Act 1969 still applies to referred debts; enable a referred debt to be returned from Revenue NSW to an agency, without any debt recovery action or money recovered being completely reversed; and remove a requirement to include the debtor's date of birth on a debt recovery order. The bill also makes a number of minor statute law revisions to update the names of Acts and government departments, and to remove redundant references to repealed legislation. The revisions are made to the legislation that I mentioned previously and also to the Land Tax Act 1956 and the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002.

I note that the bill was considered by the Legislation Review Committee and addressed in *Legislation Review Digest No. 21/58*. The Government has considered the committee's comments and that the committee recognises that the bill is intended to create a fair and efficient revenue system and to enhance compliance. The bill intends to strengthen and modernise a range of revenue laws to ensure they are effective and current. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

WITNESS PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 16 October 2024.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (18:08): I contribute to debate on the Witness Protection Amendment Bill 2024 on behalf of the Opposition. The Opposition will support the bill. The witness protection program is undoubtedly a critical yet often overlooked component of our justice system, particularly in New South Wales. The program plays a pivotal role in ensuring that our legal system functions effectively, protecting not only the individuals who come forward to testify but also the integrity of our society as a whole. This system supports our police in protecting the safety and welfare of witnesses who give evidence on behalf of the Crown. The witness protection program is instrumental in protecting witnesses who testify in criminal cases, particularly those involving serious crimes such as organised crime, drug trafficking and corruption. By ensuring the safety and welfare of these witnesses, the program not only encourages individuals to come forward with vital information but also establishes a new identity for those who may be vulnerable.

Witnesses are often exposed to significant risk when they decide to testify against criminals, especially in cases involving dangerous individuals or organised crime syndicates. The potential for retaliation, intimidation, harassment and living in fear can deter witnesses from providing that crucial evidence. The witness protection program addresses these concerns and can offer a range of actions, including relocation, identity changes, accommodation, financial support, counselling and transport of property. Imagine for a moment being a witness to a serious crime and you see something that could help bring a dangerous criminal to justice. You know that speaking out is the right thing to do, yet the fear of retaliation looms large. For many, this fear is not unfounded. Witnesses often face threats of harassment or worse. This is where the witness protection program becomes essential.

The witness protection program provides safety and security to individuals who risk their lives to provide crucial evidence. It ensures that those who step forward can do so without the constant shadow of fear hanging over them. By relocating them and providing them with new identities, the program enables witnesses to rebuild their lives away from the dangers of their past. The importance of this program extends beyond the individual witnesses. Their testimonies can be the key to dismantling criminal organisations, exposing corruption and bringing to light serious offences that threaten public safety. By protecting witnesses, we are effectively protecting our communities. The ripple effect of their courage can lead to safer streets and a much more trustworthy justice system.

We must acknowledge that the need for such protection is growing. With the rise of organised crime and violent gangs, the threats faced by witnesses are increasingly severe. In New South Wales, the criminal landscape is evolving. So too must our approach to witness protection. We must ensure that the program is adequately funded and staffed, with resources to address the unique challenges of the modern criminal environment. The bill updates legislation to cover modern-day threats and the age of digital recognition. It is also essential to foster a culture of support for witnesses. It is a collective responsibility for both law enforcement and government to work hand in hand to ensure that witnesses feel safe and supported. The bill strengthens protections for current and former participants with new identities when they become involved in court proceedings and their identity could be exposed.

These proposed reforms have been developed by the NSW Police Force, based on nearly 30 years of experience operating the program. I acknowledge and thank the police officers who are involved in the operation of the witness protection program. These officers assist some of the most vulnerable people in our State, who are going through an experience they probably never anticipated they would go through, nor would they know how to navigate it without the expertise of our police. These individuals are putting themselves at great risk for the safety of our State and, therefore, should be able to trust New South Wales to protect them in turn.

I point out one particular case study. In 2013 a major murder trial in New South Wales relied heavily on the testimony of a key witness who had witnessed the brutal killing of a man in a violent altercation related to organised crime. The witness, known to have valuable information, was aware that the individuals involved in the murder had connections to violent criminal networks. Given the seriousness of the case and the nature of the threats against the witness, the NSW Police Force decided to place the witness into the witness protection program. The witness, after receiving multiple threats from associates of the accused, was relocated and provided with a new identity, complete with housing and financial support. The protection allowed the witness to testify at the trial without the risk of being identified by the criminal organisation seeking retribution.

The witness protection program ensured that the witness's identity and location were kept secret, effectively, protecting them from the violent gang members who had previously issued those threats. Without the protection of the witness protection program, the witness would likely not have testified due to fears for their life. With the program in place, the witness gave crucial testimony that led to the conviction of the murderers. The successful prosecution of the murderers not only served justice but also sent a message to the broader criminal network that witnesses could come forward without fear, which enhances the overall deterrent effect on organised crime in the region. This case, like many, highlights the vital role of the witness protection program in protecting witnesses whose testimony is essential to securing convictions in serious criminal cases.

The program not only provides personal security for witnesses but also strengthens the ability of law enforcement to pursue justice in high-risk criminal investigations. The amendments proposed in the bill are essential to protecting the confidentiality of participants' identities and information about the program's operation and methods. The bill strengthens protections for current and former participants with new identities when they become involved in court proceedings and their identity is at issue. The Opposition agrees that these amendments are essential to protecting the confidentiality of participants' identities and information.

As crime evolves, so too must the strategies employed to protect witnesses. Technological advancements present both challenges and opportunities. For example, social media can expose protected witnesses inadvertently, necessitating continuous updates to security protocols. Law enforcement agencies must remain adaptable and innovative in their approaches to witness protection. I thank the Minister and her staff for the briefing that was provided in relation to the bill. In closing, the better we can protect our witnesses, the more people will feel comfortable placing their faith in the system and helping police fight organised crime. The Opposition supports the bill.

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (18:15): I speak in support of the Witness Protection Amendment Bill 2024, which strengthens the NSW Police Force's ability to protect the safety and welfare of witnesses who agree to give evidence on behalf of the Crown. I commend the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism for her work in this space, and the NSW Police Force for its tireless work in protecting witnesses to ensure that justice is served. The bill will modernise and strengthen the Witness Protection Act 1995, which forms the legislative basis

for operating the New South Wales witness protection program. The amendments have been developed and informed by feedback from a range of sources, including government, policing and legal stakeholders.

A key amendment includes the expansion of the types of witnesses who can be included in the witness protection program, such as persons giving evidence relating to applications for serious crime prevention orders. Participants in the program can also, on police application to the Supreme Court, have their identity records removed, if authorised, from certain New South Wales government agencies and other relevant agencies prescribed by regulation. The bill also strengthens existing offences to require participants and others not to disclose or record certain facts or information, and improves the operation of non-disclosure certificates, which are used to protect current and former participants with new identities from having their protected identities revealed during court proceedings.

The amendments proposed by the bill equip the NSW Police Force with the necessary tools needed to safeguard participants from exposure and potential harm. By protecting witnesses from modern threats and strengthening offences that ultimately serve to protect participants, the bill improves the witness protection program's operation and integrity. Based on my interactions with witnesses as a former police officer, in general, they do great work with respect to the administration of justice. I pay tribute to them because it is not easy, particularly in serious and organised crime matters. In addition, I pay tribute to police officers, particularly those who serve in undercover functions, for the work they do and the dangers they face putting themselves forward for the administration of justice. I also pay tribute to the people involved in the court processes who enable the administration of justice to flourish in this regard. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (18:18): I make a brief contribution in support of the Witness Protection Amendment Bill 2024. I commend the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism for bringing the bill to the House. The bill will modernise the Witness Protection Act 1995 to strengthen the integrity of the witness protection program in New South Wales and the NSW Police Force's ability to protect participants in the program from exposure and retribution. The Government is committed to protecting the safety and welfare of witnesses who agree to give evidence on behalf of the Crown. Witness testimony is a crucial tool for police in prosecuting serious and organised crime. The bill expands the definition of a witness who can be included in the program to include persons giving evidence relating to applications for serious crime prevention orders. This ensures that witnesses giving crucial evidence in these proceedings to prevent a person's involvement in serious and organised crime related activities can be included in the program.

The bill protects program participants from potential exposure by allowing police to apply for a Supreme Court order authorising an agency to remove an identity record that could link a participant's previous and new identity. The order may also authorise the creation of an identity record in the participant's new identity, including biometric, educational, legal or medical records. While the NSW Police Force expects to apply for a very small number of such orders each year, it is important that police have this ability to protect participants from exposure. These provisions will apply to government agencies in New South Wales and other persons or bodies prescribed by regulation. Police will be able to ask an interstate entity to remove or create an identity record of a participant. There is also provision for an agency or interstate entity to ask the NSW Police Force to keep the removed identity records for the rare situation where someone's previous identity needs to be restored.

The bill will strengthen existing offences to require participants and others not to disclose or record certain facts or information. That includes the fact that they are or were on the program, unless they have a reasonable excuse, and confidential information about the program. There will be appropriate exemptions, for example if the disclosure or recording is necessary for a Law Enforcement Conduct Commission investigation. That is critical to protecting the participant, other witnesses in the program, police operatives and the confidentiality of the program's operation and methods. The bill improves the operation of "non-disclosure certificates" that are given to a court to protect current and former participants with new identities from having their protected identities revealed during proceedings. That includes allowing police to give the non-disclosure certificate to the court before the relevant court proceeding commences, in the absence of a party, which protects the certificate's contents from being revealed unless the court decides to do so.

The bill clarifies that the Commissioner of Police may record or monitor a participant's communications with another person if that is set out in the participant's memorandum of understanding. Importantly, police cannot monitor a participant's communications with their legal representative, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission or its inspector, or police officers investigating police misconduct. That enables police to conduct the monitoring that is necessary for the safety of the participant and police operatives, while giving transparency to the participant before they enter the program.

The bill makes a range of other improvements to the program, including requiring that confidential documents about the program be kept and handled securely by agencies. It also allows for participants to be terminated from the program if they are given a sentence of full-time detention after being included in the program,

as police will have limited ability to protect them. The reforms in the bill were developed by the NSW Police Force, based on nearly 30 years of operational experience. These reforms have been refined based on input from a range of government, policing and legal sector stakeholders since 2023. The amendments in the bill will ensure that the NSW Police Force can assist those who need protection under the witness protection program. The reforms aim to introduce safeguards and improvements into the program, which will continue to support those in need. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (18:23): In reply: I acknowledge the members who have made a contribution to debate on this important legislation: the member for Bathurst, who reflected on the real-world example of the benefits and impact of the witness protection program; the member for Fairfield, who, being a former law enforcement officer, knows only too well how important these amendments are in protecting witnesses; and the member for Mount Druitt, the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism, who is a great supporter of police in New South Wales. I thank him for his fine contribution.

Witness testimony is a crucial tool for police in prosecuting serious and organised crime, which can involve the large-scale importation of illegal drugs, money laundering, human trafficking and terrorism. For that reason, the New South Wales witness protection program must facilitate the protection, security and safety of its participants. The Witness Protection Act was passed almost 30 years ago and requires updating to ensure it remains fit for purpose for the people of New South Wales. The bill will modernise the Witness Protection Act 1995, strengthening the integrity of the program in New South Wales and the ability of the NSW Police Force to protect participants in the program from exposure and, importantly, retribution.

The proposed reforms to the Act aim to protect program participants from modern threats, strengthen offences in the Act that protect the participant and the program from disclosure, protect current and former program participants who became involved in court proceedings, and enhance the program's operation and integrity. The reforms in the bill have been developed by the NSW Police Force, based on nearly 30 years of operational experience. The reforms have been refined through broad consultation over a long time with both State and Federal government agencies and with legal stakeholders.

I thank the NSW Police Force for its work on this legislation. In particular, I acknowledge Angela Zhang, who is here in the gallery tonight; Polly Yim; Jane Holden, who is also here—I thank Jane for her wonderful leadership; Acting Inspector Julian Llewelyn, who is here as well; and Superintendent Chris Goddard. They have all worked tirelessly over a long time to ensure that those protections for our witnesses are now enshrined in legislation. I also thank my staff, who have worked tirelessly. They have worked with everybody in this place to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the changes that are being made. They made sure that any inquiries were answered promptly and with the correct information. In particular, I mention Kelsey Sully for her efforts. Now Jane will not think that she is being stalked, so that is a good thing for Jane. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

24-HOUR ECONOMY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (VIBRANCY REFORMS) BILL 2024

Second Reading Speech

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (18:27): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024 to this House. This Government is working to put New South Wales on the world stage for its 24-hour economy: a night-life destination for locals and visitors alike. This legislation builds on our significant reforms from 2023 and helps restore vibrancy to the New South Wales night-time economy. The bill is about creating an environment in New South Wales for venues and artists to flourish. It is about simplifying the regulation of entertainment noise, removing red tape for local councils to host special events and supporting outdoor activation. This legislation is pro night-time economy, pro entertainment, pro venue and pro council.

Last year during the debate on the first vibrancy reforms, I said in this place that New South Wales had forgotten what it was like to have a vibrant night-time economy. Venues were closing; artists, musicians and performers were leaving Sydney and New South Wales; and hospitality workers were being put out of a job. We made a promise to the people of New South Wales to double the number of live music venues across the State within four years, and that is what we are delivering. Event by event, venue by venue, town by town, community by community, we are rebuilding the New South Wales night-time economy to what it should be.

The Government wants to make it easier and cheaper for councils and businesses to establish vibrant precincts and support local events. Our vibrancy agenda has unquestionably made a positive impact on the night-life across New South Wales. Since the Government's tranche 1 reforms, the State has seen a 77 per cent increase in live music and performance venues taking up incentives that give them a licence fee reduction and additional trading hours. As of 7 October 2024 there are 433 licensed venues claiming live music incentives across the State, with 179 venues across regional New South Wales. Some 41 per cent of the venues taking up the live music incentives come from outside the Greater Sydney region. Eating and drinking outdoors has seen a big uptick as well, with double the number of licensed premises approved for outdoor dining on private land in the first six months of this year, compared with the same time last year.

Our sound management framework has also been transformed since July as a result of the first round of vibrancy reforms. No longer can someone move in next door to a venue and then launch a campaign to close it over noise. Our vibrancy agenda has reduced regulatory barriers, streamlined approval processes and incentivised venue operators to support live music. We have also helped councils to grow thriving, unique local precincts by making outdoor dining and street activation easier. We look forward to seeing what springs up next as a result of this round of reforms. The 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024 is the next step in the Government's vibrancy agenda. The reforms we have developed aim to help music venues and cultural spaces to thrive, support significant events, create vibrant precincts, make it easier to do business outdoors and modernise the State's licensing system, with a commonsense approach to risk.

I outline our approach to help venues and events in New South Wales thrive. The bill will make it easier for venues to trade during special events, especially in regional areas. Last year the Government expanded section 13 of the Liquor Act 2007 to broaden licence type eligibility for special event extended trading. The bill further expands the eligibility to on-premises licences, which include cafes and restaurants, and producer and wholesaler licences. Those additional licence types, which include restaurants, cafes, and local breweries, distilleries and wineries, are particularly important for local communities. In addition to the larger venues that can take part in special events, these smaller venues will assist in promoting vibrancy in those same local areas celebrating special events.

The bill amends section 49 of the Liquor Act 2007 to make it easier for venues to apply for an extended trading authorisation for special occasions. Under the Liquor Act 2007, a special occasion is a unique or infrequent event of local, State or national significance. Under the existing process, before an authorisation can be granted, the licensee must provide evidence that persons independent of the licensee, owner or occupier of the premises, would like to celebrate a special occasion at the licensed premises concerned. This meant that if somebody wanted to apply for extended trading for their footy club's finals, or a charity fundraiser, they had to prove they were doing so. The bill proposes to remove that unnecessary administrative requirement.

Under the proposed changes, applicants would only be required to demonstrate to the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority that their event qualifies as being of local, State or national significance before an application can be granted. They would not have to provide supporting evidence from the local interest group to support their claim. That will help with a greater uptake of the initiative and increase the vibrancy of local communities, particularly in regional centres, as they support special events specific to their communities.

Another key area of reform contained in the bill relates to proposed amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The bill will make amendments that switch off conditions of development consent at all licensed premises. Those conditions have prohibited a whole range of types of performance at venues, including particular music genres, number or type of instruments, number of musicians, the playing of original music, whether dancing occurs, the presence of a dance floor, the direction in which a stage faces, or if there are decorations including mirror balls. Similar amendments will look to override conditions of development consent that prohibit live entertainment in hotels, clubs and small bars. Those are distinct venue types where any reasonable person should rightly expect live entertainment to occur.

Government should not dictate the style or type of music communities should listen to, or prohibit venues from being able to offer entertainment and live performance. We are not characters in *Footloose*, where people are not allowed to dance or sing or celebrate. We recognise the power of a creative and diverse culture that celebrates live performance and the impact that can have in fostering a safe night-time economy. That does not mean that venue operators are free to go around unchecked and to make as much sound as they like. Instead, our

focus is on removing directions about the culture of our night-time economy. It is about supporting local communities and venues to make decisions about the kinds of live music, performance and entertainment they want to see locally. I also note that any conditions on a venue's liquor licence that relate to the provision of live entertainment will remain in place.

I talk briefly about how these reforms build on the changes made to venue sound management, which passed this House late last year and commenced on 1 July. Under the changes that came into force on 1 July, Liquor and Gaming NSW became the lead regulator for entertainment sound from licensed premises. That replaced the previous arrangements where a number of different agencies were involved in entertainment sound complaint management. Those changes have been in place for almost half a year and, so far, the feedback received from the sector, communities and residents has been positive. Those changes focused on ensuring that music, culture and entertainment can thrive in venues across New South Wales. But, at the same time, it modernised the framework to ensure that agencies were given the tools to work with venues and members of the public to ensure that unreasonable neighbourhood impacts are managed.

Under the current framework, members of the public can make a disturbance complaint to Liquor and Gaming NSW about a licensed venue. However, the rules have been streamlined and strengthened to ensure the complaints process is simple and sensible and protects venues that want to put on live entertainment. The order of occupancy is now a key consideration under the Liquor Act. Complaints against venues putting on live music must meet a higher threshold if the venue was there first. Additionally, the order of occupancy will still be in favour of a venue if a longstanding licensed premises modifies its business plan to incorporate live music during certain hours of the day. That recognises the fact that live music should be considered an integral part of the offerings of licensed venues.

The changes made on 1 July also increased the number of complainants needed to lodge a complaint from three to five, and required complainants to attempt to resolve disputes before lodging complaints. The bill before the House keeps those successful changes in place. The staff at Liquor and Gaming NSW will continue to work with venues, councils and members of the public to ensure that venues are protected against unreasonable complaints, but at the same time ensure that neighbourhood impacts are managed in a sensible way. Finally, I assure the House that Liquor and Gaming NSW is being supported and resourced by the Government to take on this new role as lead regulator for entertainment sound from licensed premises. I also assure the House that the Government is monitoring the rollout of these reforms, and will be taking appropriate steps to manage any issues that arise.

I acknowledge the considered feedback received from members of the House to ensure that the sector and councils are fully aware of the impact of these changes. I can assure the Chamber that this is certainly the intention of the Government and the reason that these provisions commence on proclamation. This will give the Government time to continue to consult in detail on how to best communicate these changes so that all relevant stakeholders, including councils, venues, police and the community, understand and embrace the Government's intent for vibrancy in our State.

Major events are a significant contributor to our State's economy and social and cultural scene. This is supported by legislation with the Major Events Act 2009, introduced by the previous Labor Government, of which I was a member, as was Minister Whan who is in the Chamber. The Major Events Act 2009 allows the Government to prioritise and support the successful, streamlined delivery of events across New South Wales. As it stands, the Act is limited by a narrow definition, focused on large-scale sporting events. This bill amends the Act to better support music and performance, and improve the safety provisions for event goers. Further amendments in this bill will streamline the Major Events Act 2009 to make it easier to support significant major events via more favourable regulatory conditions. This is not for your everyday local festival but for significant events that are recurring and major contributors to local economics. They attract significant government investment and form part of the State's social and cultural fabric. These types of events encapsulate what our State is about and should be given every opportunity to succeed by government.

Furthermore, as it currently operates, the Act is administratively burdensome to employ. It requires a large amount of detail to be declared by regulation supporting an event, which, given timelines for regulation making, is unsuitable for the major event environment. The bill will make minor amendments to the Act to allow minor details about the event, which are often determined close to the date of the event, to be set out in a ministerial order rather than regulation. This allows government to be agile and responsive to the major events environment. The declaration of the event itself will still need to be made by regulation, to ensure that there is an appropriate threshold and Parliament has oversight of the major event status that is being applied. But, once that has occurred, the finer details will be able to be worked through and then gazetted as needed.

Consultation requirements will not change, and the responsible authority and event organiser will still need to work closely with all the relevant government bodies, which do such excellent work to support these events,

including but not limited to police, transport, emergency services and others, to make sure the event is well planned and delivered in consultation. In fact, the requirement to consult with these agencies and others is more explicitly spelt out in the amendments we have introduced. These changes to the Major Events Act 2009 will allow us to take a more strategic approach, to prioritise and realise the opportunity that sits with these events.

In addition to our support of major events, this bill seeks to further modernise the liquor licensing system and cut red tape for licensed venues. The Government is aware of the challenges faced by business navigating an array of regulatory frameworks, and we understand that promoting a vibrant, safe and inclusive night-time economy requires a commonsense approach. In a win for common sense, the Registered Clubs Act 1976 and the Registered Clubs Regulation 2015 will be amended, removing the rule requiring someone living within a radius of five kilometres to become a member to visit a club. This will help clubs to attract new patrons, as it will be easier to enter their local club and participate in their local community. It does not remove the club sign-in requirement, however, which importantly supports the State's harm-reduction and anti-money-laundering goals. The amendment provides clubs that currently have the five-kilometre rule incorporated into their club rules the discretion of whether or not to enforce the rule. This is a transitional arrangement, which will sunset on 31 December 2025. Clubs will be required to update their constitution by this time to reflect their preference for retaining the five-kilometre rule or not.

Administrative amendments will also be made to the Liquor Act 2007 and the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007 to omit provisions related to reviewing the live entertainment scheme in the Liquor Act. The live entertainment scheme has been the subject of other government evaluation plans, and these reviews have informed the development of this bill. In support of the Government's commonsense approach to risk and to further support live music, the bill proposes to exempt live music and performance venues from the risk-based loading fee in certain circumstances. Some venues can be disincentivised to host live music if, by taking advantage of the extended trading hours available, they become liable for the trading hours risk loading when they would otherwise not pay it. It also does not reflect the intent of the scheme. The bill includes an exemption so that these venues can take advantage of the extended hours without triggering the trading hours risk loading element. Amendments are also sought to update the demerit point offence scheme to ensure demerits apply to offences, as was intended with the first vibrancy reform bill in 2023.

Through this bill, the Government continues its commitment to a system of sensible sound management for licensed venues and communities in New South Wales. The bill will remove more red tape regarding disturbance complaints contained under the Liquor Act 2007. Currently, complainants are required to submit a statutory declaration attesting to their complaint. Section 79 of the Liquor Act 2007 will be amended to allow disturbance complaints to be lodged online, rather than needing to be printed out and signed in the presence of an authorised witness via a statutory declaration process. To ensure that complaints are authentic, existing powers under gaming and liquor legislation will be relied on to ensure that information provided to Liquor and Gaming NSW is not false or misleading.

Sound management has been one of the major changes our vibrancy agenda has brought to New South Wales. This bill updates the enforcement powers available under the Liquor Act 2007 and the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007 to regulatory agencies supporting Liquor and Gaming NSW to administer the New South Wales sensible sound management framework. These amendments mean police can issue improvement notices for entertainment sound-related complaints relating to noise emitted in the vicinity of licensed premises, not just inside the venue. These powers are consistent with the sensible sound management framework. They simply acknowledge that entertainment-related sound can occur outside of, but in the vicinity of, a licensed venue and that, in some instances, this will require an immediate response to balance public amenity rather than the current enforcement powers. It is important to note that this is not creating new powers. The old regime under the Protection of Environment Operations Act and regulation included first responder powers that were significantly harsher, including shutting down a venue for 28 days and, at times, slapping significant fines on venues.

The new approach provides police with the tools they need to address issues as they occur, without compromising our approach to embracing vibrant venues. This bill will also operationalise the powers given to NSW Maritime under the first tranche of vibrancy reforms. Amendments to the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007 and the Liquor Act 2007 will allow NSW Maritime to require a relevant person on a licensed vessel to provide information to the marine authority required for the issuing of an improvement notice under the Liquor Act 2007. Further, an amendment is sought to section 75 (2AB) of the Liquor Act 2007 to ensure that Maritime NSW may issue an oral direction to a licensed vessel in relation to noise. Again, this does not entail new powers, but it will allow improvement notices to be issued to licensed vessels without the need to physically board the vessel.

The bill amends provisions within the Liquor Regulation 2018 and the Liquor Act 2007 to set out the situations in which an improvement notice can be issued to a venue that is emitting excessive noise. The bill

achieves this by omitting clause 44C in the Liquor Regulation 2018 and section 79A in the Liquor Act 2007 and amending section 75 (1) in the Liquor Act 2007. The amendments provide that, under section 75 (1), an improvement notice may be issued by Liquor and Gaming NSW, the NSW Police Force or NSW Maritime if "noise is being emitted from the licensed premises in a way that unduly disturbs, or unreasonably and seriously disturbs, the quiet and good order of the neighbourhood in which the licensed premises are located". This change clarifies the intent of the noise framework and allows an on-the-spot power for officers to use when excessive noise is being emitted.

Years of red tape costs, the coronavirus pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis have put live music and performance venues under threat. This bill will establish a mediation framework within the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023, empowering the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy to refer significant live music and performance venues with legitimate disputes for mediation or case management. There is good evidence that early, low-cost mediation can benefit all parties and avoid more lengthy or costly processes, or can help parties reach a compromise where other processes would not have allowed.

The benefits of a mediation framework are clear. Even when mediation is not able to achieve an outcome, it can be helpful in ensuring all parties receive an unbiased appraisal of their position, understand the impact of relevant legal or regulatory considerations and are given an opportunity to understand the other party's grievances. These amendments will support important venues under threat from disproportionate or unfair treatment inconsistent with the Government's vibrancy agenda. It will help guide them and other parties to a workable solution for conflicts. It will not, however, override existing review or appeal pathways within our regulatory system, which are essential in maintaining a fair regulatory environment for all.

Finally, this bill builds on the hard work undertaken last year to improve the special entertainment precinct framework. We know there has been a significant amount of interest from local councils to discuss the potential establishment of a special entertainment precinct in their council area. Some 20 councils have submitted an expression of interest this year in relation to 42 potential precincts, including several in regional and rural New South Wales. Additionally, eight New South Wales councils have so far passed resolutions to establish or investigate a special entertainment precinct in their areas. This bill will support pathways to establish special entertainment precincts on State-owned land, opening up a whole new list of potential sites to enhance the vibrancy of New South Wales communities and maximising the potential for properties such as White Bay Power Station, Walsh Bay and our cultural institutions to be anchor points for buzzing and well-coordinated precincts in partnerships between the New South Wales Government and local councils.

We will make clearer rules for councils and regulators by making amendments to section 202 of the Local Government Act 1993 and the Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Regulation 2022. This will ensure consistent regulation of sound and trading conditions within special entertainment precincts and will mean clearer rules for councils and regulators, reduced costs for business and maximum participation in special entertainment precincts. These amendments will also safeguard businesses with pre-existing trading hours that run longer than a special entertainment precinct, ensuring the initiative is not exploited as an opportunity to restrict the operation of thriving, compliant venues.

Similarly, the bill will strengthen the special entertainment precinct framework by amending the Local Government Act 1993 to make clearer when and how councils notify potential property purchasers that the area is a special entertainment precinct. This will avoid the risk whereby a home buyer moves into a special entertainment precinct unaware of the associated sound and trading conditions. Additionally, amendments in this bill will also ensure brothels and restricted or adult entertainment venues cannot access incentives from the special entertainment precinct framework. This is intended to ensure local councils remain empowered to manage the planning for these business types in a way that suits their area and do not automatically override the trading hours that are in place for these types of businesses.

The Government has made a commitment to restoring our night-life across New South Wales and supporting a flourishing 24-hour economy. This bill is the next step in its vibrancy agenda, with reforms focused on support for live music and hospitality venues, activating vibrant precincts in our local communities, modernising the regulatory framework by removing red tape and supporting our special events. The Government will continue to work with peak bodies, including Local Government NSW, Australian Hotels Association NSW, ClubsNSW and the Night Time Industries Association, and across key agencies to help support both take-up of the opportunities and understanding of what they mean for councils, businesses and the general community. This will include roadshows, webinars, website materials, videos and plain-language explainer documents.

Finally, I acknowledge the large amount of work that has gone on across the many agencies that have collaborated to make this bill possible. I thank the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport, particularly the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, Sound NSW and Liquor and Gaming NSW; the Cabinet Office; the Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure; the Environment Protection

Authority; the Office of Local Government; the NSW Police Force; NSW Health; Transport for NSW; and the Department of Customer Service. Additionally, I thank the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy in the other place, Minister Graham, and my ministerial colleagues across the various agencies who have worked very hard to make this complex reform package happen.

Additionally, I thank the various industry bodies, health groups, local councils and venues who have been part of the consultation process to ensure we have a regulatory framework and reform package which works best for all. I recognise these reforms have had supporters from across the Chamber. This has been discussed over time. They are complex reforms, but I am very hopeful that they will get the support of the Parliament. It would be a fantastic sign to give our venues and sector a kickstart as we head into the summer and holiday season. I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (18:57): I contribute to debate on the Government's 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. The Opposition supports the bill. I commend my colleague in the other place, the Hon. Jacqui Munro, who has a great passion for Sydney's night-time economy particularly. She has worked tirelessly to improve the night-time economy both as a member of the Legislative Council and for many years prior to joining this place. I thank her for her contribution and support.

The former Coalition Government worked hard to turn the tide of the night-time economy, and the lockdown laws began to be lifted in January 2020. As the former Minister for Hospitality, I worked closely with industry representatives like the Australian Hotels Association, ClubsNSW, the Restaurant and Catering Association and others to support them through a difficult time, particularly during COVID. The New South Wales hospitality industry has faced significant adversity since the lockdown laws began to be lifted in January 2020. High interest rates, the high cost of living, workforce issues, rising rents and higher input costs are all significantly impacting hospitality venues. I note that 2024 has been labelled the toughest year ever for hospitality venues and, sadly, a number of venues have closed across New South Wales. Insolvency remains a real risk to the hospitality industry. Those issues need to be addressed, and I encourage the Government to look at measures to address them.

The bill seeks to make miscellaneous amendments to legislation to support live music and performance venues. I acknowledge that from 31 January 2023 to 18 September 2024, the number of live music venues in New South Wales rose from 198 to 355. In no small part, that is thanks to the bipartisan support of vibrancy reforms and an acknowledgement across the Parliament that it is our responsibility to support live music. The Government's vibrancy reforms are the next step in supporting the night-time economy in New South Wales. The Opposition is proud to have created the position of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner and the special activation precincts that the bill expands upon.

I now address key elements in the bill. The bill includes the removal of the five-kilometre rule. I acknowledge ClubsNSW for its advocacy in removing that requirement in New South Wales. Under the current legislation, anyone living within five kilometres of a club cannot enter as a temporary member and must join the club as a full member. That requirement was initially introduced to ensure that clubs were member driven and provided services to their local communities. However, the requirement limits the accessibility of clubs and disincentivises locals from visiting clubs in their area. The requirement was relaxed during COVID with no negative impact. Given the low barriers to becoming a member of a registered club, there is little reason to continue to enforce the rule. The bill amends the Registered Clubs Act 1976 and the Registered Clubs Regulation 2015 to achieve that aim. It will improve club accessibility and visitation, giving clubs and their visitors greater flexibility to visit without membership requirements, in parity with other licensed venues.

The Opposition welcomes the Government's adoption of Coalition policy but questions why further amendments in the Registered Clubs Amendments Bill 2022 have been omitted, particularly in relation to harm minimisation, given that this week is GambleAware Week. I acknowledge issues raised in the other place by the Hon. Jacqui Munro with regard to changes to the Liquor Act 2007. The bill inserts new section 75 (1) (b) (iii), which allows police to issue an improvement notice to a relevant person of a licensed premises when "noise is being emitted near the licensed premises by patrons of the licensed premises or staff or contractors of the licensee". The Opposition has concerns about the vagaries of this section and the lack of clarity about how it will be applied.

The section gives police regulatory powers to fine licensees up to \$11,000. I call on the Government to further clarify, and for police to be informed of, the Government's expectation regarding the new section. "Noise being emitted near a licensed venue" does not provide any surety to licensees. There must be a level of flexibility and understanding in the application of the law. The Government should be transparent in its expectations of licensees. I call on the Government to ensure licensees are appropriately educated and have the tools they need to adequately abide by the regulation.

The bill also seeks to amend the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to remove conditions of development consent at licensed premises that dictate the types of music allowed as part of the development consent. The Act is currently over-prescriptive in dictating the type of music, the number of instruments and the size of the bands that venues are allowed to showcase. The band, not the bureaucrat, should be creating the set list for the night's entertainment. I note that local government has the right to choose the kind of activity that occurs in each local government area, but venues should similarly have the right to choose the bands, DJs or other entertainment under the council's established framework. The Opposition supports that sensible amendment.

The bill creates a new pathway for venues to enter mediation for noise complaints. Legitimate concerns regarding the validity and vexatiousness of complaints deserve to be investigated by an independent body. The bill places responsibility for appointing a mediator with the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy. That amendment will require close examination and review to ensure it is meeting the policy aims of the Government and respects genuine complaints while also considering wider community sentiment. The Government has undertaken to expand special entertainment precincts following the success of the trial in Enmore. The special entertainment precinct concept has support among local government. This year, 20 councils submitted an expression of interest to establish 42 new precincts. I encourage the Government to do more to attract regional councils to the concept, and particularly to support councils with the process of paperwork.

The bill seeks to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to ensure clarity when councils notify potential property purchasers that an area is a special entertainment precinct. It seeks to ensure that property owners are aware of the environment into which they are purchasing. I note the potential conflicts of two Government policies. The Government's planned transport oriented developments will be substantively co-located with entertainment precincts and existing venues. The Government must clarify how those competing interests will work. Building high-rise developments next to live music venues and pubs is rarely a recipe for harmony, and the Government must urgently address that issue.

Finally, I address the proposed amendments to the Major Events Act 2009. Running a major festival is an incredibly complex and administratively burdensome task. My experience assisting with the organisation of the Tamworth Country Music Festival in 2008 and 2009 gave me great respect for the effort required to run a major festival. The bill makes minor amendments to the Major Events Act to allow for greater flexibility in time frames for determining details of the festival such as dates and site areas. That will be welcomed by festival organisers, and the Opposition supports those amendments. I note that a new section has raised some concerns. New section 4C of the Major Events Act states:

- (1) The Premier may cancel or vary an order of the Minister for a major event, including a Ministerial order, by giving written notice to the promoter for the event.
- ...
- (3) The Premier is not required to consult with the promoter before taking action under this section.

The substance of the bill acknowledges the extraordinary finances and organisation involved in running a major festival in New South Wales, yet also gives the Premier the power to cancel a festival without consultation. Surely the Minister, who has a deep understanding of and is in consultation with the industry, should be entrusted with that power. I fear the section may cause anxiety in an industry that is already struggling with high levels of uncertainty due to the cost of living, rising input costs and flagging ticket sales.

The bill also amends the Liquor Act 2007 to make it easier for venues to trade for special events. That is particularly important for regional areas, such as Tamworth and Parkes, that host major events such as the Tamworth Country Music Festival and the Parkes Elvis Festival, which are substantively based within the towns and the venues within those towns. It is important that venues are provided with an easier pathway to special event extended trading, and that venues such as cafes and restaurants are also afforded the opportunity to take advantage of those festivals. The Opposition welcomes the amendments in the bill to support major events. I acknowledge and thank the industry stakeholders I have consulted in relation to the bill. I have noted some areas of focus the Government must follow through on, particularly surrounding the relationship between vibrancy and the Government's transport oriented developments.

I acknowledge the Minister responsible for the bill in the other place, John Graham. The Minister and his team have a consultative and bipartisan approach to legislation, and I thank them for their collaborative approach. I also thank the Hon. Jacqui Munro in the other place for her work on the bill. Her experience with the night-time economy and her longstanding advocacy are invaluable. I thank her for her work. I encourage the Government to consider that these reforms are not just about the night-time economy and events at night; they are also about the daytime. Hotels, clubs and other venues often run entertainment during the day, including sensational Sunday sessions. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (19:07): I speak in support of the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. I am excited to share the Government's vision for a vibrant, safe night-time economy that celebrates live performance, creativity and diversity. We understand that a flourishing arts scene is crucial to fostering community spirit, connecting local communities and enriching the cultural fabric of our State. The bill builds upon the first tranche of vibrancy reforms, the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Act, which passed the New South Wales Parliament in November 2023.

This reform agenda delivers on the Government's commitment to reduce red tape, incentivise live music and performance and support a more diverse, vibrant, accessible and safe night-life in New South Wales. One of the reforms related to the management of noise complaints is making Liquor and Gaming NSW the lead regulator of noise complaints from licensed premises. Newcastle is a hive of culture and live entertainment, with a devout live music scene. My electorate is said to have more artists per capita than any other city in the country. Restoring vibrancy to our night-life and live music scene is essential to the people of my electorate. Sadly, several live music venues have had to close in Newcastle over the past few years, the iconic Cambridge Hotel being one of them.

Having established the Newcastle Live Music Taskforce in 2018, it is great to finally see reforms which we have discussed for over half a decade being implemented by a government that supports and prioritises Newcastle's live music and entertainment industries. I pay tribute to Minister John Graham, who came to Newcastle time and again, who is now delivering the policy that we worked on for so many years. I also acknowledge the Minister in this place, who is in the Chamber, and his hard work on this legislation from the other side of the clubs. Having lived in Newcastle, the Minister knows well what an iconic night-life that we have had and that we want to rejuvenate.

It is well established that live music has many significant benefits to the health and wellbeing of a community, no matter the demographic. Recent events over the past five years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, have emphasised the significant role that live music plays in our lives and the importance of celebrating live music acts together. Significant economic and social benefits are also associated with a thriving night-time economy. The State of the Scene report estimates that the live music industry contributed \$3 billion to the New South Wales economy in 2023 and directly employed over 14,000 workers.

Other benefits generated by the live music industry include attracting and retaining industry professionals and talent, increasing tourism, and improving social cohesion and inclusion. After-work hours and weekends should also be a time that brings people together to enjoy all that Newcastle and other towns and cities in this State have to offer. The vibrancy reforms introduced by this Government will protect live music venues by ensuring sensible sound management is in place, and by increasing opportunities for trade and events for restaurants, bars, pubs and clubs. I want Newcastle to be a vibrant city with a thriving night-life, live music and entertainment sector. Cutting the red tape will go a long way in ensuring the viability of Newcastle's night-time economy.

To ensure that our live music and performance venues can thrive, the bill introduces significant amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. The first of those changes will turn off conditions of development consent at all licensed premises that restrict specific music genres, the number or types of instruments, or even the presence of dance floors or mirror balls or the number of musicians. An affected venue could secure the Rolling Stones to play, but we would have to tell Keith Richards that he could not take the stage. It is time to recognise that music is a matter of personal taste, and it is not the role of government to dictate what communities should enjoy. Additionally, the bill will turn off conditions of development consent that prohibit live entertainment altogether in venues where it would naturally be expected—specifically, hotels, clubs and small bars.

The important changes in the bill generally mirror the amendments to the Liquor Act that were introduced and passed in this place in 2020. As was the case at that time, these changes are necessary to both remove red tape and prioritise music. The amendments do not free venue operators from regulation. The way that we manage noise and operating hours will not change. However, they will establish a presumption that live music and entertainment is integral to our culture, community and local economy. Our communities deserve access to a diverse range of entertainment options, and it is our job to support that access. The alternative would be for each venue to undertake a costly and risky development application that could attract even more punitive conditions. That is often the reason that venues do not take the risk of trying to remove those conditions and that councils are hamstrung by the decisions of previous decision-makers. When people move in next door to a pub or a bar, they should reasonably expect some entertainment, and historic conditions should not be used to artificially restrict it.

We recognise that dedicated live music venues face unique challenges, especially after years of excessive red tape, the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of the pandemic. To protect vulnerable businesses, the bill establishes a mediation framework within the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023. The framework will

empower the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy to refer important venues experiencing legitimate disputes for mediation. The goal is to prevent the loss of significant music venues that are integral to our cultural landscape. The mediation process will ensure that all parties involved have access to clear information and guidance, fostering constructive dialogue that reflects community interests. Other New South Wales mediation frameworks have shown that early, low-cost mediation can save time and resources for everyone involved, leading to outcomes that benefit our cultural economy.

Finally, I draw attention to another proposal designed to help live music venues. Last year we passed an amendment to the Liquor Regulation 2018 to allow live music venues the ability to trade later on the nights that they host a gig. To ensure live music venues are not penalised for taking up this incentive, we need to make a further amendment. This amendment will ensure venues that ordinarily cease trade before midnight, particularly those in regional areas, are not liable for the trading hour risk loading when they access late trading as live music or performance venues. The Government is committed to fostering a vibrant night-time economy that supports live music and creative expression. Through considered amendments to planning legislation, the establishment of a mediation framework and logical financial incentives, we aim to create an environment where our communities can celebrate creativity and enjoy a rich tapestry of entertainment. Together we can ensure that New South Wales remains a cultural beacon, promoting the arts and nurturing local talent.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp): Before I call the member for Wakehurst, I welcome to the public gallery Wajiha Ahmed, Maurice Edwards and Alexandra Duckett, guests of the member for Bankstown.

Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (19:17): I am generally supportive of the Government's vibrancy and night-time economy reform agenda. I spoke strongly in support of the first vibrancy bill that came through the Parliament last year, including a few too many Bono quotes—no such thing! I stress that I fully support the intent of the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024 to take away the ridiculous clauses that have been spoken about by the Minister today and in the media. However, I continue to hold concerns about some provisions in the bill before the House.

Working with the Minister's office, agency staff and the member for Balmain—who is in the Chamber—we have addressed some of those concerns in an amendment moved by the Government in the Legislative Council last night, which provided more precision and robustness to new clause 1A (2) in schedule 8 to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, amended by schedule 5.1 to the bill. The amendment will avoid the risk of turning off plans of management contained in development consents in their entirety, when the Government's intention was to target only specific provisions contained within plans of management. This was based on direct feedback from local government planning colleagues, who would have to deal with the consequences of the change at the coalface. I thank the Government for moving that amendment in the Legislative Council last night.

However, I think that it speaks to the level of consultation on the bill, which was not as thorough as it could have been. I was glad to bring together the planning director from the Northern Beaches Council and representatives from Local Government NSW with the Minister's office, agency staff and the member for Balmain to discuss the bill and its consequences. It is my view that consultation with local government representatives should have happened sooner. To me, this seems consistent with a theme of this Government, which is insufficient engagement with the local government sector. I will always be a champion for local government—Angud, I am looking at you.

To be clear, I will not seek to move further amendments. But I will speak to some ongoing concerns I have. My interest in these issues comes from my 15 years as a mayor and too much exposure to the angst and community division between venues and residents that can be caused by mismanagement of noise complaints. It is fundamentally about how we all live together as harmoniously as possible and how we manage competing interests. The bill is about deregulation, so I think caution is warranted. In particular, I have ongoing concerns about new clause 1A (4) in schedule 5 to the bill, which switches off conditions in development applications [DAs] that prohibit live entertainment for venues that hold hotel, club or small bar liquor licences. I appreciate the shift to a source-agnostic noise management framework, but let us be real about the fact that live entertainment is typically going to be louder than non-live entertainment.

We do not know how many venues across the State that change will impact—something I discovered in the past couple of days. That is because many DAs are not digitised and easily discoverable. For example, in my electorate I identified a specific bowling club to consider the implications of the changes proposed. That venue holds a club liquor licence; however, its conditions of consent are not digitised and accessible on the council's search tool. Let us assume that the no live entertainment condition does exist and will now be extinguished. Like many bowling clubs, that club is in a residential area. My understanding is that, under the bill, it could have live indoor entertainment, with no process before the fact to consider how the impact of the noise could be mitigated. Under the current noise management regime, with its reactive emphasis, five neighbours would need to complain

to Liquor and Gaming NSW, which would then investigate, apply tests under the Liquor Act and potentially impose conditions as part of the liquor licence.

In principle, if an existing no live entertainment provision is being extinguished, then there should be some process for site-specific consideration about how live entertainment occurs at that venue. I am fine if that process cannot result in a refusal, but there should be some process to consider the precise location in the venue or time limits. It is not whether it can occur but how it occurs. Going from no live entertainment to unregulated live entertainment is a significant change. It will occur at an unknown number of venues until conditions are reactively imposed due to residents having to proactively engage in a bureaucratic process, which is—at best—tedious. It is unreasonable for surrounding residents and could be divisive and distressing for local neighbourhoods.

Someone may have lived for 50 years in a neighbourhood near a bowling club that has had no live entertainment and suddenly the disused or underused bowling green is now allowed to have that entertainment. The legislation says it does not need a DA, but it may need one because of the change in nature. That is confusing. I will talk a little more about what we can do to help mitigate that. This move has the potential to be particularly problematic for bowling clubs, which are typically located in residential areas and are increasingly being gentrified—which is great—with more hospitality offerings. I have identified at least eight bowling clubs on the northern beaches with club liquor licences where this change could apply. There are also many down the road in Mosman and in other built-up areas in North Sydney and the like.

My concern comes from the experience on the northern beaches with a particular bowling club. I will not go into too much detail and identify it; however, I believe it is an instructive example. During COVID, council changed the planning rules to allow outdoor activities to meet the square metre distancing rules and the like. That included live entertainment, which was taken up by this bowling club. Noise and disruption then distressed surrounding residents and controversy ensued. It was on the radio. It was everywhere, and it continued. Reactively, council had to step in and initiate a DA process to impose conditions to mitigate the impact of the activities—not to disallow them, but just to mitigate their impact. That situation is analogous to what is proposed here—a step change in what is allowed and then a reactive process only after community agitation.

I am a firm believer that prevention is better than cure. That demonstrates the broader social value in acting pre-emptively. All I am asking is that members think about bowling clubs in their electorates with back fences hard up against disused or underused bowling greens, particularly if they have been there for decades, the potential they have and what councils, police and other agencies will have to deal with to mitigate issues. The bill's changes, together with the reforms in last year's vibrancy bill, highlight the need to properly resource Liquor and Gaming NSW to communicate the new noise management regime, respond to complaints and regulate venues. From discussions we had with Northern Beaches Council as part of deliberations around the bill, it became clear that there are already issues on the ground with police directing noise complaints to council.

More education and communication is needed so people are accurately directed to Liquor and Gaming NSW. Once they are, Liquor and Gaming needs to be adequately resourced to respond in a timely and comprehensive manner. As I understand, only 12 compliance officers are employed by Liquor and Gaming statewide. I might be wrong. There might be 10 or 20, but 12 was the number I heard. On face value, that does seem inadequate given the fundamental shift in the regulatory regime and the elevated role of Liquor and Gaming NSW. I urge the Government to closely monitor community demand and the responsiveness of Liquor and Gaming NSW and increase its capacity if needed. More broadly, I think there is an opportunity to better communicate the new noise management framework to residents, the more permissive policy settings and the shift in emphasis to a reactive complaints-based regulatory approach.

I strongly recommend that the Government make a mandatory addition to planning certificates, also called 10.7 certificates. I am so old that I know them as 149 zoning certificates, but they are now called 10.7 certificates. They are issued prior to property purchase to alert buyers to the current planning regime—what you can build on your land, what you cannot do, what State environmental planning policies are involved et cetera. But it would be good to also alert buyers to the current noise management regime, with a link to more information. That could be done via the environmental planning and assessment regulations. The bill introduces that requirement for properties within special entertainment precincts, but I think a universal addition to planning certificates is required. I have discussed that idea with local government colleagues, and they are supportive because it is only one small but impactful mechanism that could be applied across the board that helps communicate the message and at least makes the buyer aware.

We all want to make sure the buyer is aware. Someone might do their due diligence and see there is no entertainment—"There is just a bowling club. You just bowl." Now you can have live music there, which is fine. I believe we all agree with that in this Parliament. That should be supported, and we are supporting it. But if we can amend the planning assessment Act to put that on the planning certificates as a minimum, it is the least we can do. It has the support of local government because it is just easier. It will put it on the website. I thank the

Minister's office, particularly Angud, and Emily from the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner. They are amazing. I thank them for all their support and help. The agency staff are working through the issues and being so patient with me. It is very hard, I know.

Mr Jihad Dib: They do it for the love of it.

Mr MICHAEL REGAN: Yes, they do it for the love of it. I hope that the discussions with the stakeholders involved have been constructive in informing effective implementation of the Government's vibrant vision. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (19:26): I speak in debate on the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. Our Government has an ambitious vision for a vibrant 24-hour economy across New South Wales. This vision recognises that our State is not just a single entity but a tapestry of diverse neighbourhoods, each with its own unique character and needs. Our goal is to help local areas to flourish while fostering a dynamic environment where venues, artists and communities can thrive. I have a personal stake in this, having been a music teacher before I came into this place and, before that, a musician. This is very dear to my heart. I am still a musician and I am extremely tempted to sing this speech—but I will not.

Ms Anna Watson: Just do it.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL: Maybe the last paragraph. The Government is dedicated to restoring vibrancy in New South Wales by removing red tape to bring communities together. That includes supporting outdoor activations, streamlining processes to support special events and maximising participation in our local clubs. In essence, we aim to create spaces where creativity and community spirit can blossom. That connection is so important as many people struggle with loneliness and a sense of community. One pivotal aspect of our reform is aimed at registered clubs. We will amend the Registered Clubs Act 1976 to remove the requirement that local residents within a five-kilometre radius must become a member to enter.

Too often, people head to their local club eager to see what it is all about, only to be turned away at the door or be asked to sign up in advance. The change will allow more patrons to engage with their local clubs and strengthen community ties. Clubs will have the discretion to decide whether they want to keep those rules, with a transition period to provide time for clubs to formalise them. Clubs are important meeting places for communities where strong history and tradition permeates the room as we can eat, drink, gather and revel. Furthermore, the bill aims to bring more people together to share in the experience of special events across the State, particularly in regional areas.

Towns and cities across New South Wales host amazing events and festivals such as food and wine festivals, writers festivals, music tours and other major arts and culture events. By broadening the eligibility for special event extended trading to include cafes, restaurants, breweries and other venues, we will provide local communities with more places to gather, enjoy themselves and connect. That will increase participation and improve economic benefits across various business types. The Minister for Gaming and Racing will determine the specific licences eligible for extended trading, based on the nature of each special event.

Additionally, the Government will make it easier for venues seeking extended trading authorisations for special occasions. At the moment, the venue needs to find someone independent to provide evidence of the wish to celebrate a special occasion at the venue in order to get approved for extended trading authorisation. By removing that requirement, the Government will remove a layer of red tape for applicants and empower local venues to celebrate special events more freely, invigorating our communities and enhancing their vibrancy. A key component of the bill is the enhancement of the special entertainment precinct framework. Those precincts are areas where councils can change the rules to enable more live entertainment so that people can come together and express themselves.

We all proudly list off the incredible musicians who come from our towns, cities, States and country. The interest from local councils has been strong. This year 20 have expressed interest in establishing 42 potential precincts, and eight have already taken proactive steps to explore those opportunities in their local areas. The bill will also pave the way for those precincts to be established on State-owned land, in partnership between councils and State Government, including potentially utilising iconic sites like White Bay Power Station and Walsh Bay. To ensure a coherent approach, we will amend relevant legislation, including the Local Government Act 1993 and the Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Regulation 2022.

The amendments will create clearer guidelines for sound and trading conditions within special entertainment precincts, benefiting both businesses and local councils. Importantly, we are committed to safeguarding the interests of existing businesses by providing a "no worse off" guarantee for trading hours, ensuring that thriving venues can continue to operate without disruption. Our comprehensive initiative is about more than just legislation; it is about bringing people together as a community. In doing so, the Government aims

to revitalise our neighbourhoods, support local businesses and foster a thriving cultural scene across New South Wales. Together, we can make our State a beacon of creativity, community and opportunity. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (19:32): I contribute to debate on the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024, which The Greens support. I note that The Greens spokesperson on music and the night-time economy in the other place, Ms Cate Faehrmann, has worked extensively on the bill, which has the potential to help inject much-needed life into Sydney's night-life. It was disappointing to see the damaging impact of the lockout laws on what was once a vibrant and thriving global city. As my colleague Ms Cate Faehrmann noted in her contribution to debate on the bill, The Greens were the only party to oppose the lockout laws at the time they were introduced in 2014. Those laws were a kneejerk response from the government of the day to public concerns about violence and one-punch attacks in Kings Cross. While the public concern for safety was incredibly valid, the ongoing negative impact from the rushed lockout laws cannot be understated. Ten years on and Sydney's night-life has still not recovered from those restrictions. I thank the Government and the Minister for introducing legislation to encourage a revitalisation of Sydney's night-life.

I now turn to the substance of the proposed changes in the bill. The bill proposes to make changes to a number of Acts, including an amendment to the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act to facilitate the resolution of disputes in relation to live music through mediation and alternative dispute resolution. It will amend the Liquor Act to make it easier for venues to trade during special events, to allow venues to apply for an extended trading authorisation for special occasions, to allow amendments to the way disturbance complaints must be made, and to prescribe the method by which an improvement notice must be given to a licensed premises.

The bill will amend the Local Government Act to insert definitions of "entertainment activity" and "special entertainment precinct". It will amend the Act to allow for the establishment of special entertainment precincts and to clarify when and how councils notify potential property purchasers that the area is a special entertainment precinct. The bill will amend the Major Events Act to make the planning of events easier and to allow details to be determined via ministerial order rather than by regulation. It will also amend the Registered Clubs Act and accompanying regulation to remove the rule requiring local residents living within a radius of five kilometres to become members of registered clubs. Finally, it will amend the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act to get rid of provisions or requirements of development consents at licensed premises that include restrictive and at times bizarre rules for venues, such as dictating whether they can hang a mirror ball, how many musicians and performers they can have, or the type of music they are allowed to play and so on.

The bill will also ensure that those provisions are removed from any relevant plan of management for the venue. Those changes are welcome. I thank Minister Graham and Angud from his office for working with me, the member for Wakehurst and representatives from Local Government NSW to introduce a minor amendment in the other place to further clarify that provision. In particular, the amendment makes clear that only relevant provisions and requirements in a plan of management for a venue will be switched off, rather than the entirety of the plan of management. That goes some way to addressing concerns that local councils and communities have about maintaining the unique creative character of their suburbs and local night-life. I will speak to those concerns in a little more detail, while acknowledging the ongoing concerns of the member for Wakehurst.

While my colleagues and I are incredibly supportive of the work being done to revitalise our night-life, a one-size-fits-all approach to vibrancy reforms has its limitations. We must keep in mind the diversity of different precincts across our city. The inner west is a fantastic example of that. Inner west venues have been at the heart of our city's live music scene for generations, but different parts of the inner west have different things to offer. The diversity of venues and communities in our city and across our State should be celebrated and protected, and we must not push a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, in my electorate of Balmain, there is a significant difference in the night-life on offer in Pyrmont and Ultimo when compared with Glebe or the Balmain-Rozelle peninsula. Those differences make the inner west great. They are why locals love it, and they are why people flock to our suburbs to enjoy a night out.

We must nurture those unique precincts and respect the individual cultures of different parts of our city, as well as recognise the history and needs of people who live in our suburbs. While the bill is a welcome start, the focus of reform will likely make it easier for big corporates to step onto the scene, and it may not improve the situation for local small and independent venues, artists and creatives. We must create space for local creatives to thrive and not just look out for the big players in the entertainment industry. Until September, I was also a local councillor, so I have seen firsthand the importance of recognising and valuing local knowledge. To ensure we have a vibrant night-life, we need an integrated approach that supports local creative communities and provides the meaningful and practical supports they need to thrive. As part of that, we must ensure that local creatives have a voice in the process.

We must also look at more holistic reform options. It is not enough to allow a venue to hang a disco ball on their dance floor or play different kinds of music; we must do more. In a cost-of-living crisis, we should bring in changes to make it cheaper and easier for people to get out and about. Let us look at more free public transport options to connect people to entertainment and creative hubs. Recently Queensland introduced 50¢ fares on public transport; we could take similar steps to lower the cost of going for a night out. Let us make sure that precincts have decent transport connections so that people do not have to travel long distances to access a bus or train to get home late at night—and that is for both patrons and workers at night-time venues. Let us look at improving public spaces and ensure we have well-maintained, safe active transport options so people can ride their bikes home.

Let us make sure we have good street lighting so people can walk home safely at the end of the night. Let us reverse the cuts to arts and live music funding that we have seen over the years. Those practical changes would help not only the big operators but also the smaller creative and entertainment venues that are the lifeblood of our city. Again, while The Greens welcome the reforms in the bill, there is still more to be done to ensure that we have a thriving night-life—one that supports smaller venues and local creatives, one that respects and values diversity rather than one that adopts a one-size-fits-all approach, and one that recognises that different areas, venues and communities have different needs. That will take time, and The Greens are committed to working with local creative communities to help build a vibrant and thriving night-life. In the meantime, The Greens support the bill.

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (19:39): I support the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024, which is designed to drive a vibrant 24-hour economy by helping music venues and cultural spaces thrive. The New South Wales Government is committed to restoring vibrancy to the night-time economy of New South Wales. When Bon Scott sang the immortal phrase, "If you want to be a star of stage and screen, look out it's rough and mean", he was not talking about the legislation handed down in the Parliament of New South Wales to limit bands from playing in venues. This reform agenda delivers on the Government's commitment to reduce red tape; incentivise live music and performance; and support a more diverse, vibrant, accessible and safe night-life in New South Wales.

As of 30 September 2024, a total of 429 live music and performance venues have taken up the incentives—up 77 per cent since December 2023. That is 429 more venues where young bands can hone their stage skills. We have moved a long way from the age of Cold Chisel, INXS and Midnight Oil—some of the great Australian bands—who spent many hours on stage in music venues, honing their craft and their music, and making sure that their stage presence would be envied by people around the world and, in fact, was incredibly successful. The live music industry contributed about \$3 billion to the economy of New South Wales in 2023, because it directly employed over 14,000 workers. Other benefits generated include attracting and retaining industry professionals and talent, increased tourism, and improving social cohesion and inclusion.

Before I came to this place, I owned the Good Egg Studio. We took on many young bands and produced their music videos. I spoke to a lot of young artists about what it was to be a musician in Australia today. Almost every single one of them lamented that the places for them to perform live were incredibly limited. I said to one producer, a gentleman called Chris Elder from Haus Party, "I am going into Parliament. If there is one thing for the music industry I could change, what would it be?" The first thing he identified was making the music industry into a 24-hour industry. He said that it needs to reflect Australian work values and the changing nature of work in Australia, where people sometimes knock off early in the morning, sometimes late in the afternoon. The capacity for bands to play and for music to be shared is incredibly limited.

The bill will bring that kind of reform into reality by supporting young musicians. Like the member for Camden, I admit that I have a close personal connection to this. My son is a musician, and he has tried very hard to secure venues. He has spoken many times about how he could play either at a venue that could house 200 people, 300 people or 5,000 people. He said there are enormous gaps in the system for young bands to break through, practise and learn how to work a crowd and to become much better at their craft. The bill will help music venues to create an environment that encourages live performance, which is fantastic for them because, since those great '80s and '90s bands, poker machines have filled what used to be great music venues. Pubs and clubs have become more reliant on revenue from poker machines and have closed the spaces where once there was loud music playing, sticky floors under your feet, and hundreds of people having a fantastic time over a weekend.

The bill will remove development restrictions that dictate music genre, the number of instruments and the number of musicians for all licensed venues. It will remove conditions that prohibit live entertainment entirely at specific venue types, which will bring power back to the music industry, harness young talent and make sure that our next generation of musical superstars have places to perform in. The bill will empower the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy to refer live music and performance venues with legitimate disputes to mediation, making sure that pathways exist for our young musicians to break out and become global phenomena like we saw in decades past. One of the beauties of the bill is that it is not limited to the venues. Creating vibrant precincts

makes it easier to do business outdoors by giving flexibility and clarity to councils on how they manage special entertainment precincts, and removing red tape for mobile outdoor businesses. We can buy kebabs and other food from the food truck down the road. It provides a whole industry around people going out and just having a great time in our great city.

The licensing system needs further modernising, which will ensure a commonsense approach to risk. We are removing the requirement for people residing within five kilometres of a club to become members to attend. This is a fantastic move, though I encourage everybody to join their local club, particularly the Riverstone Schofields Memorial Club, which has membership for only \$5. The cost will be returned in the first round of drinks. If people join their local club, they are supporting their whole community. But I acknowledge that many people are casual visitors to venues. They may want to go and watch a band play or have a meal and do not necessarily want to become members. It is a great reform for those people who just want to use a venue for a short time without becoming a member.

Exempting live music and performance venues from paying the risk-based loading fee in situations where they trade for longer under live music extended trading is also an incentive. We should all be pursuing anything that reduces the cost and burden on bringing live music into our venues and making our city a more vibrant place, because it helps not only the vendors but also the customers and smaller businesses who can capitalise on that. Most important of all, it nurtures young musical talent in this country. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (19:47): I speak in support of the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. The bill introduces important reforms to support a vibrant, accessible and thriving night-time economy across New South Wales and revitalise our cultural spaces, live music venues and events. Its importance resonates in my electorate of East Hills, as part of the Canterbury Bankstown local government area, which is a key contributor to our State's night-time vibrancy. The New South Wales Government has committed to creating a vibrant, 24-hour economy that serves the diverse needs of our residents, visitors and business community.

Canterbury Bankstown plays a significant role in the State's night-time economy, both economically and in employment. Approximately 20 per cent of all employment in the area is linked to the night-time economy. These reforms will help to ensure that our council can support more events, markets and festivals, which will provide crucial employment opportunities for our young people and showcase our region's cultural diversity and creativity. The bill builds upon the success of the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2023, which has yielded remarkable outcomes, including a 77 per cent increase in the number of live music and performance venues, which have benefited from reduced licence fees and extended trading hours.

The bill removes outdated development consent restrictions that dictate the type and style of music or limit the number of musicians. Genre restrictions and unnecessary conditions will no longer hold back our live music scene. The bill empowers venues and creates space for music and cultural experiences to grow. This reform also allows the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy to refer legitimate disputes involving music venues for mediation, ensuring fairness and promoting dialogue, rather than heavy-handed enforcement. It focuses on supporting events that are foundational to our State's identity. New South Wales is known for its world-class events and festivals, and this bill will make it easier for venues to trade during special occasions.

The bill broadens licence eligibility for special event trading, simplifies the application process and makes minor but impactful amendments to the Major Events Act that will reduce the administrative barriers that previously hindered the staging of events. The creation of vibrant precincts will make it easier for businesses to operate outdoors. The bill provides local councils, including Canterbury Bankstown council, flexibility in managing special entertainment precincts and removes red tape for outdoor mobile businesses. It provides a pathway for these precincts to be established on State-owned land. It ensures potential residents moving into special entertainment precincts are informed prior to purchasing a property, balancing community interests with the vibrancy of the precincts. Moreover, the bill ensures that noise regulations are consistently enforced, while only restrictive conditions that stifle live entertainment will be overridden.

One of the most important elements of this legislation is the modernisation of the licensing system. The bill removes unnecessary restrictions that no longer serve their purpose, including eliminating the outdated rule requiring residents within a five-kilometre radius to become members of clubs to attend. Live music venues will be exempt from paying risk-based loading fees for extended trading hours under the live music incentive. By cutting red tape and streamlining processes, it will be easier for venues to host incredible live performances. These reforms will support venues such as the Revesby Workers' Club, which recently completed a \$15 million renovation of its function room and the Whitlam Theatre, which has a long history of live performances, which have sadly disappeared over the past decade. Acts like Tina Turner and Tom Jones and bands like Mondo Rock and the Choir Boys plus many more played at this great local venue. The bill will allow the club to continue its tradition of entertainment, live music and performances for the enjoyment of many in my local community.

The bill also enhances sensible sound management, ensuring that NSW Maritime and the NSW Police Force have the appropriate powers to enforce the new sound management framework. This bill represents the Government's ongoing commitment to create a vibrant, safe and inclusive night-time economy in New South Wales. It will help create stronger venues, more events, more jobs and a thriving cultural scene that attracts talent, tourism and investment. These reforms give our communities the freedom to enjoy their nights out, make it easier for businesses to succeed and ensure our State remains at the forefront of Australia's cultural and economic landscape. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (19:52): I contribute to debate on the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. This bill is the second tranche of the Government's legislative reforms to support and drive a vibrant 24-hour economy. This bill will help music venues and cultural spaces across the State to thrive by supporting events and the creation of vibrant precincts across New South Wales. It will make it easier to do business outdoors and modernise New South Wales's licensing system with a commonsense approach to risk. Sydney has just been named the best city in the world by Conde Nast. That is a tremendous achievement. In the 18 months since Labor was elected to government, the number of licensed venues that play music in this State has gone from 17,000 to 18,000. The Government is strongly supporting the take-up of live music in venues across New South Wales.

These reforms are really important. For too long, everyone moped about how Sydney was great during the Olympics, but went downhill, particularly as a result of the lockout laws. We heard that again and again. It is amazing that the Government has achieved these reforms and this turnaround in a very challenging economic time and during a cost-of-living crisis. The Government has supported live music and entertainment across the State through financial investment and incredibly important regulatory reforms that cut through the ridiculous amount of red tape to have fun and enjoy entertainment.

The first tranche of the vibrancy reforms had a huge impact. As of 30 September, 429 live music and performance venues had taken up the Government's incentives, including licence fee reductions and additional trading hours. In 2023 the live music industry contributed approximately \$3 billion to the New South Wales economy and directly employed more than 14,000 workers. These reforms are important for not only those workers and businesses but also the sense of community that comes from bringing people together to share and enjoy live music. It is incredibly important. This bill complements the important work the Government has done to support music festivals, through both regulatory reform in the Music Festivals Act and effective support. The music festival sector is really struggling in some parts of the State. Some of the great festivals are on their knees while others are closing altogether.

The bill helps music venues, significant events and cultural spaces thrive, encourages live performances and supports event. It removes development consent restrictions that dictate the music genre that can be played and the number or type of instruments that can be used. It removes prohibitions on original music and requirements to have only cover bands. It also removes restrictions that dictate whether dancing can occur. Last year the Government implemented reforms around licensing provisions to remove those restrictions, but they were still in a number of development consents. This bill will override those restrictions and ensure that venues can have original bands perform in places where the development application had strangely prescribed only cover bands. Venues can now play whatever genre of music they want. They will not have to submit a new development application to change the type of music they want to play.

These reforms are incredibly important to maintain vibrancy and make it easier for people to run their businesses. The bill also amends the Major Events Act to make it easier to support foundation events by reducing administrative barriers to use the Act. This will be especially useful for regional areas. The bill also broadens the licence eligibility for special event extended trading hours, which will be really helpful for restaurants and small businesses wherever major events are happening. The bill creates a consistent approach for how councils manage special entertainment precincts and removes red tape for mobile outdoor businesses. These changes will make it easier for people with mobile businesses to know what to expect in different council areas.

The bill also provides a pathway to establish special entertainment precincts on State-owned land and ensures that potential residents of a special entertainment precinct are aware that the property is in one prior to purchase. The bill ensures consistent definitions and enforcement of sound across regulatory frameworks as they apply to special entertainment precincts. It overrides conditions of development consent that prohibit live entertainment in special entertainment precincts. It prohibits brothels, sex services and adult entertainment venues of a sexual nature from receiving the benefits associated with the special entertainment precincts. That is very important to make sure the precincts appeal to a wide audience. They should not be places that put off more than half the population from visiting. Women do not really want to go places that are filled with those types of services.

It is also important to note that the bill removes the requirement for all residents within five kilometres of a club to become a member of that club in order to attend. In cases where the five-kilometre rule is in the club's

constitution, discretion will be allowed for it to continue to enforce that radius if it so chooses. The five-kilometre rule, which means people have to join a club in their suburb in order to go to it, is an annoying barrier that sometimes puts people off. In fact, it probably makes people more likely to go to the pub than the club. Those are all important measures to make our State more vibrant.

Shortly after the Sydney Olympics, long-established live music venue the Hopetoun Hotel in Surry Hills closed because of sound restrictions placed on it by the City of Sydney. New residents had moved in next to a pub with live music but decided it was noisy and had to go. The soundproofing requirements imposed by the council were so expensive that the venue closed. I was one of thousands of people who signed a petition to keep it open. Some 20 years on, I am glad we are going the opposite way and supporting live music. We want to see more venues, not less. We want homebuyers to take responsibility not buy a house next to a live music venue and then try to shut it down. A buyer does not need to do much in the way of due diligence. The Hopetoun Hotel was a very well-known venue for a very long time. Surry Hills is an expensive place to live, and those who chose to move there could instead have bought multiple houses in other suburbs. Those people knew what they were getting themselves into. I think what happened to the Hopetoun was disgraceful.

The bill will also support a lot of festivals in my electorate and make it easier for local businesses to benefit from them. In just the past year we have had huge, fantastic Nowruz celebrations in the main street of Merrylands. A lot of local restaurants benefited from that event being held outside, particularly the Afghan and Persian businesses. There were 15,000 people in the street. The bill will make it a lot easier for those businesses to participate further in such events. The local council has also run fantastic celebrations for Ramadan, Diwali and Christmas in places outside my electorate, such as the Wentworthville shops and the Auburn Botanic Gardens. In particular, the Ramadan Nights and Diwali celebrations benefit local shops. The bill supports what people want to be out there doing. In closing, I put on record a song that all members should look up entitled *Shut This Down*, by Twisted Melodiez and N3bula featuring Gladys. It is a fantastic song and an absolute vibe, and contains a sample of Gladys Berejiklian saying, "We want to shut this down!". Listening to it will remind members of how bad things were during the terrible time of the lockouts.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (20:03): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I contribute to debate on the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. The bill makes minor miscellaneous amendments to the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007, the Liquor Act 2007, the Liquor Regulation 2018, the Local Government Act 1993, the Major Events Act 2009, the Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Regulation 2022, the Registered Clubs Act 1976 and so on. While I applaud the bill, there is a lot more work to be done.

I believe I am the only member of Parliament who has ever held a liquor licence and a gaming licence. I worked in many clubs before I got into Parliament. The first was Georges River Sailing Club down at San Souci, where we had a lot of bands perform. Talking about entertainment in the late '80s and into the '90s, I was the entertainment manager at Revesby Workers' Club; I am probably the only Coalition member who could still go out there and get a drink with the directors. I probably would not know half of them now. Daryl Melham was the Federal member there at the time. I lived through the era of making arrangements for small and large acts like Tom Jones, Tina Turner, AC/DC and Mental As Anything. We had a lot of boxing and a lot of entertainment.

I strongly believe in entertainment. Many moons ago, Revesby Workers' was the number one licensed venue for clubs and the Revesby Roundhouse was the number one hotel. Literally thousands of young people used to come for the bands, and we needed a lot of security. However, it was a continual battle with residents who complained about the noise. We had noise monitors. At one stage, in conjunction with the Roundhouse, we had a number of security guards walking around the shopping centre and the train station late at night. We did everything we could. Often there were three or four young bands playing in different venues, and a number of them went on to greater things. A lot of them went on to support major international acts.

I recall a small story about Chuck Berry. Perhaps some in the Chamber do not remember him, but he was a famous guitarist. In those days \$25 was a fair amount to pay for a ticket, but on this particular Friday night it was a full house. I got a call from Chuck's manager, who said, "Mr Berry wants to see you in the green room." I went to see him. Chuck Berry said, "Son, it's like this. I tell you, I've been ripped off by so many venues in America that I want to be paid the 20 grand cash up-front right now. Otherwise, I won't perform!" I said, "Mr Berry, you're on stage in 25 minutes." I grabbed two of my security guards and started writing IOUs for \$1,000. I have never written so many IOUs. I left them in the cash registers and the change box in the pokie areas. We quickly counted the money and gave it to him. The show went ahead and was a great success.

Mr Jihad Dib: Did you get a cash discount?

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: No, I didn't get a cash discount! In my electorate, the Tweed Heads Bowls Club puts on a lot of famous acts, including some of the old ones. I hate to say it, given I was part of the Government for 12 years, but in some regards New South Wales has become a real nanny state. It has been really difficult. Some young guys in my electorate, Tommy Lee and Richie, developed Red Earth Brewery. The venue is quite successful up in the Tweed, but it is in a shed. The nearest neighbour is 250 metres away, but they have had to fight to have food available to patrons while they do a beer tasting. The development application prohibits food trucks on the property. Recently they had the great idea of having a guitarist singing a few songs in the corner from midday to four o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. One neighbour complained, and it looks like they will have to shut down. In the previous Parliament I was on the late-night lockout committee with a number of now Government members. I think the Hon. Mark Latham was on the committee.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Me too.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: The member for North Shore was there that particular night. The member for Sydney was there also. We went down to the Ivy and to some of the hotels in the Cross.

Mr Clayton Barr: Work's tough!

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I acknowledge the interjection. At the end of the night, I said, "I've never been to so many licensed venues without having a drink in my whole life." We ended up at the famous Stonewall Hotel. Some of the secretariat were with us and I remember the girls grabbed me and said, "Don't you leave without us." We did not; we looked after everyone. A lot of the live music venues were suffering too. I applaud Minister Graham for introducing this bill. I will speak about the five-kilometre rule. I was not in this place when I was leader of the clubs in the Tweed way back when. It was about the time that pubs got poker machines. We had a big debate and campaign about it. In those days there were all these different rules. The pubs said, "We'll reduce the rule to five kilometres; that's the only thing we will give the clubs. They are our chief competitors."

I note that, all these years later, I think the pubs are making a fair amount of money from poker machines and do not really care whether there is a five-kilometre rule. I think that reform will be easy. I note that Minister Graham is in the advisers area. I reviewed eBet and cashless gaming, and I think it is a good step. But I am concerned that I will have to join each club that I want to bet in, and I cannot take my membership from one club to another. There are 10 or so major clubs in my area so it will be costly. Cashless gaming will hurt my area because Queensland does not intend to introduce it. It will take a good 15 to 25 minutes to register when people can walk across the road to another venue and not do it. Anything we can do for live music is good—just look at the ratings for *The Voice*. The son of the previous member for Albury was a musical director on *The Voice*. We went there numerous times.

Mr Clayton Barr: Greg Aplin?

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Yes, Greg Aplin's son was the musical director. I think he still is.

Mr Kevin Anderson: He still is.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: He still is. The member for Tamworth is one of the best musicians in the pub world, and has a massive following. We might see him on *The Voice* in future. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Michael Kemp): I thank the member for Tweed for that enlightening stroll down entertainment memory lane. I would have given him as many extensions of time as he wanted.

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (20:12): I support the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. The New South Wales Government is showing that it is committed to restoring vibrancy to the New South Wales night-time economy. The bill builds upon the first tranche of vibrancy reforms, the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2023, which passed the Parliament in November 2023. The reform agenda delivers on the Minns Labor Government's commitment to reduce red tape, incentivise live performance and support a more diverse, accessible and safe night-life. The first tranche of vibrancy reforms made a positive impact. As of 30 September 2024, a total of 429 live music and performance venues have taken up the incentives, including licence fee reductions and additional trading hours, which is up 77 per cent since 12 December 2023 when the vibrancy reforms were announced.

While two venues in the Parramatta electorate took up the incentives, it is still a long way from where we want to be. Parramatta has a high youth population, is home to seven universities and is the second major CBD in metropolitan Sydney. We need to do so much more to provide opportunities for young creatives to have places to perform, rehearse and simply make music. One of the biggest barriers to date is the consent attached to a development application [DA]. As the Premier said, it should be the DJ and not the DA that selects the music that is played on the dance floor. The bill changes that by removing what the Minister has broadly characterised as no-entertainment provisions. Venues worry that if they make an application to remove a no-entertainment clause

or a clause that says they must play a certain type of music—for example, they must play disco music or jazz, not rock—they worry that the council will make other changes to their trading hours or the other conditions that their venues operate under. We will fix that by moving away from the former abatement notices regime to an improvement notices regime.

This is so important for young musicians. Yes, I have a non-pecuniary but significant interest because my sons and many of their friends are musos and are in search of a venue. Try to find a venue for a young songwriter west of the Iron Cove Bridge and it is really difficult. It should not be that way. We have as many, if not more, creatives in Western Sydney because it is slightly more affordable to live there or they still live at home. But there are no venues for them to play in and very few rehearsal spaces. The current legislation does not provide what the next generation needs. I have listened to members reminisce about the '80s and the '90s and all the bands they used to go and see. I was there as well. The problem is those bands are still around and people still listen to them on the radio. Nobody is listening to the music our young people create and play because they have no avenues to do that. They go to a venue and there is no-one in the audience because there is so much competition.

We went to see live music because there was nothing else to do. There was no sport on television other than what was on free to air, which was only the game of the day. We could not switch on the remote and have it all in front of us—whatever we wanted to watch from any corner of the globe. The only video games were primitive, and most of us were not into that. We went out to listen to live music. We went out dancing. We went to nightclubs. That is what we did. Now there is so much else for people to do, which is great. There are many vibrant opportunities for people in other areas of entertainment. That makes it hard for music. There is so much to compete with, and we are trying to unlock potential. I commend the Minister. He has been like a dog with a bone on this issue for years and years. His amendments to legislation from the previous Government have got us to where we are today. He made some changes so we could make some improvements.

Today is about building on those changes. One of the biggest barriers to date is consent and development applications. Musicians are in search of a venue. Songwriters are in search of a place that will let them be creative rather than playing another dreaded cover. How long is it since we walked into a pub or a club and heard original music? It is hard to find.

Mr Kevin Anderson: What's wrong with dreaded covers?

Ms DONNA DAVIS: There is nothing wrong with covers. But if we did not have original music in the first place, the member for Tamworth would not have covers to play today. You might find original live music in venues in Newcastle and possibly Wollongong, Marrickville, Newtown, Darlinghurst and a smattering of others in the inner west, but aside from that it is tough. The bill will help music venues and cultural spaces thrive by creating an environment that encourages live performance and supports significant events, including removing development consent restrictions that dictate the music genre, the type and number of instruments or musicians at licensed venues, and conditions that prohibit live entertainment entirely at specific venues. It will empower the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy to refer for mediation live music and performance venues that are engaged in legitimate disputes.

When I was first elected to council seven years ago I was stunned to learn about the red tape surrounding live music and entertainment in our city, from the lack of double-glazed windows in shop-top apartments to policing bias towards particular music genres. Unfortunately, when I speak to police officers about their preferences for live music in Western Sydney, I hear that the red tape is still very real. One of the challenges the council faced was bringing along all the stakeholders as it developed its vision for a 24-hour economy in Parramatta. Many challenges were addressed in the first tranche of vibrancy reforms. However, there is more work to be done.

That is why I am so pleased to be speaking to this bill, which will make it easier for venues to trade during special events; broaden licence type eligibility for special events; extend trading to on-premises licences, including cafes and restaurants, as well as producers and wholesalers; and make it easier to apply for extended trading authorisation for special occasions. It will also make minor amendments to the Major Events Act to make it easier to support foundation events by reducing administrative barriers to using the Act. Parramatta is where it's at, which is actually the tagline for the City of Parramatta.

Mr Jihad Dib: She it is misleading the House!

Ms DONNA DAVIS: I know it has a lot of competition and the member for Bankstown opposes that, but Parramatta is where it's at. It is fitting to be speaking about the 24-hour economy on the first day of Parramatta Lanes, Sydney's massive four-day street festival, which started today. The event brings together some of the coolest national and international musicians, DJs and emcees to the laneways of Parramatta, including Sunset Bros, whom I know the Minister really wants to see. They are playing on Friday night at Parramatta Town Hall.

Sixteen laneways, car parks and gardens have been transformed into cool spaces, filled with food, music and art, and entry is free. Also, last week Little India in Harris Park was transformed into a festival of lights as people were drawn to Wigram Street to celebrate Diwali. One of the most common requests I receive from my community is for more council and State Government support for more special events. The bill supports the will of the people by establishing special entertainment precincts. [*Extension of time*]

A special entertainment precinct may be established by the council for the area in which the precinct will be located by identifying the precinct in a local environmental plan [LEP] that applies to the land on which the precinct will be located or in a State environmental planning policy at the request of the council for the area in which the precinct will be located, or if all of the following apply: an LEP does not apply to the land, or any part of the land, on which the precinct will be located; the planning Minister is the consent authority for development on the land, or part of the land; and the council for the area in which the precinct is located endorses the establishment of the precinct. A special entertainment precinct may consist of a single premises or a precinct, streetscape or an otherwise defined locality, such as Little India. If a special entertainment precinct is established, the council for the area in which the precinct is located must notify residents of the area and persons moving into the area about the precinct, including by publishing a notice on the council's website and by a notation on planning certificates for land in the precinct.

I am extremely mindful of the fine balance—like walking a tightrope—that governments have to strike when establishing these precincts. I have seen firsthand some of the challenges in Parramatta when the community is not brought along with these spaces. If they are not done well then the communities they are designed to support will not have a bar of them and people move out of the areas. To that end, I acknowledge the input from the diverse group of stakeholders who are broadly supportive of the reforms. A vibrancy regulatory reforms steering committee, co-chaired by the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner and the Cabinet Office, has coordinated input from internal New South Wales government agencies, including the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Liquor and Gaming NSW, the Office of Local Government, Transport for NSW, NSW Health, the NSW Police Force, the Department of Customer Service, the Environment Protection Authority and Create NSW. The proposed amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 have been tested with several councils, including the Inner West Council, which is the only council that currently has a special entertainment precinct, and the City of Sydney.

I know the people of Parramatta are keen to embrace the opportunities that the bill presents for business, creativity, fun and vibrancy. Last week Minister Graham, the member for Granville and I met with the Western Sydney Arts Alliance, which had so many ideas, so much passion and so many stories to tell about the incredible cultural diversity of Western Sydney. Without the right settings, those stories could never be told and our cities will not modernise to provide the places and spaces to support a twenty-first century, more densely populated city. I say to the member for Tamworth that I love a good old song from the 1980s, but New South Wales has a population that is full of incredibly diverse people who have their own stories to tell, their own dances to perform and their own songs to write and sing. The settings in the bill will help them achieve that.

I congratulate the Minister and all who have worked hard to get the bill here today on their vision, their consultation and their commitment to looking forwards, not backwards. Like many members in the House tonight, my youth was spent enjoying listening to the hits of the '70s, '80s and '90s. But, I tell you what, if I had to listen to some of those songs again and again and again, I think I would go crazy. We need them for sampling on the dance floor, but I will never listen to them over fresh, new music. There needs to be a change to the scene, so I welcome these reforms. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:26): I love the member for Parramatta's passion for live music. I know her son is a fantastic performer, so she has a particular voice for the future. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. Gosford has so much unlocked potential to become an incredibly vibrant music hub, and this bill is another step towards unlocking that potential. Most importantly, the bill is about reducing red tape. It incentivises live music performance and encourages people back to venues. Oppressive development restrictions that dictate music genre and the number of musicians, as well as the number and type of instruments, will be removed. Pocket Bar in Terrigal is an absolutely fabulous venue, but it was forced to turn away a choir because there were only three people there. It is time to make a change.

I thank the Minister for Gaming and Racing for his work on the bill to abolish one of the most irritating and antiquated rules for patrons in this State: having to sign in if you live within five kilometres of a registered club without first having to become a member. It means that residents of the Gosford electorate will be able to enjoy local clubs like the rejuvenated Gosford RSL without the hassle of the paperwork, which is worth celebrating for locals. There are so many clubs on the Gosford peninsula that residents live within five kilometres

of, so it is ridiculous and onerous for them to have to sign in without becoming a member. But I hope people continue to become members of our clubs, because they give back so much to their local communities.

The bill is about Gosford in 2030, 2040 and 2050; it is not about yesterday or next week. It is a vision for what Gosford needs to be in the future. People complain that Gosford is a quiet, sleepy seaside town, but it has so much more to offer. A five-star hotel is being delivered, as well as over 200 apartments in the new ALAND building. People will be fighting to live in Gosford in the future. It will be a gorgeous place. The night-time economy and the Gosford campus of the University of Newcastle are really important investments in Gosford. As the member for Terrigal said, we need to invest in the talent in the community. We have amazing talent across the Gosford electorate. We have a huge country music scene that celebrates and performs in Tamworth and in the United States. Yet we hardly see them in our local community because of the barriers to live music performance. The bill will make the difference so that artists can perform in our local community.

We have already seen the significant benefit from the first round of vibrancy reforms. Several live music and performance venues have taken up the incentives, including fee reduction and additional trading hours. Nights out are getting better. The night-time economy in Gosford has really benefited from the investment made by the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner and the music Minister. Our Gosford strip featured in the Uptown District Showcase. I encourage all MPs to participate in the Uptown District Showcase because it shows the best of our communities and it amplifies and celebrates the night-time economies in our communities. A number of the venues on the Gosford strip, including the Railway Hotel Gosford, Hotel Gosford, Lyons Den, the FunHaus Factory, the Bay Road Brewery and Pinocchios, are working together to get people to come into our community—rather than working alone. It is a beautiful collaboration. That is what we need to see happen. Pocket Bar in the Terrigal electorate is trying to get more people to celebrate the local community.

I celebrate and thank the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy and his team for their work on the vibrancy reforms. I thank the Minister for Gaming and Racing for working with the clubs sector and for inspiring people to get out and about. The bill is about celebrating vibrancy and working together. It is also about creating opportunities for regional communities to be more than just their daytime strip. It is a beautiful celebration of possibilities and of skills. The reforms have already helped over 50 districts through the Uptown District Accelerator Program. I also thank the Central Coast Council for its work to make our space in Gosford safer for women, as well as the work it will do into the future to make our town a vibrant and active part of the night-time economy. That is not necessarily our experience in 2024, but it is definitely how we can grow our community to be so much more. I fully support the bill.

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:31): I am proud to speak in debate on the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. What an exciting time to be in New South Wales under a Minns Labor Government. The bill seeks to amend 10 pieces of legislation, including the Local Government Act 1993, the Major Events Act 2009 and the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023. The bill is a part of a broader package of reforms, including delivering on a series of Government commitments to support a vibrant and diverse 24-hour economy. It will help music venues, significant events and cultural spaces to thrive; create vibrant precincts; and further modernise the liquor licensing system. The amendments also seek to improve consistency across regulatory frameworks to make it easier for people to understand the rules and access incentives. I am so proud to be part of a government that listens and acts. We have shown this over and over again.

Earlier this year I held an arts round table at Coledale RSL Club. Nearly 40 stakeholders met with the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy. Owners and workers came from Scarborough Wombarra Bowling and Recreation Club, local clubs, theatres, schools, the University of Wollongong, Wollongong City Council, TAFE, Farmer and The Owl festival, AUSTI. Dance and Physical Theatre, and the Illawarra Folk Festival—just to name a few. Those local organisations spoke about the red tape, the unclear guidelines and an anti-fun former Government that overregulated music festivals. Our reforms act on feedback provided by local government agencies, and the stakeholders for whom these changes will make difference. They will also make a huge difference to young people who are requesting our Government to open up the State and have events. They want to get off their phones and have fun.

We want the venues in New South Wales to reach their full entertainment, economic and creative potential, especially at night. Do members remember seeing Dragon, Midnight Oil and Cold Chisel? I do, at the Revesby Workers' Club. Let us get back to those days. The former Government put a cap on wages and they put a cap on fun. The Minns Labor Government reforms will provide additional support for live music and hospitality venues; continued emphasis on vibrant, activated precincts; further modernisation of the regulatory framework for licensed venues; and more support for special events. Regulatory ecosystems will support the growth of the night-time economy, protect and grow local live music venues and cultural spaces, and improve the ability of businesses and communities to make use of public and private assets.

We have many fabulous young talented artists who need a space to have their art showcased. In the Heathcote electorate, we have so many creative beings. The member for Parramatta spoke about her son; with me, it is my daughter and her friends. We do not want them moving interstate; we do not want them moving overseas. We want them right here in New South Wales. The Government recognises that a culture that celebrates live performance, creativity and diversity is more likely to foster a safe night-time economy. To make sure our live music and performance venues can thrive, the bill will make amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to switch off conditions of development consent at all licensed premises that provide for particular music genres, the number or types of instruments, the number of musicians, the playing of original music, whether dancing occurs, the presence of a dance floor, the direction of the stage or the decorations to be used.

As the Premier said, "When it was the DA and not the DJ choosing the tracks, the system has gone off the rails." It is unsurprising that the Liberals and Nationals was voted out—what a pack of wowsers! We should expect to have live entertainment in our pubs, clubs and small bars. I look forward to working with the Wollongong City Council, the Sutherland Shire Council and all stakeholders to bring back vibrancy to the Heathcote electorate. I urge all members to support the bill. I thank the Minister and his team for all their work in getting vibrancy back into New South Wales by promoting new talent and a strong night-time economy.

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) (20:37): In reply: I thank all the members for their contribution to debate on the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024. I thank the member for Tamworth, the shadow Minister for Gaming and Racing, for his considered contribution and for working in genuine partnership with us. I look forward to the member for Tamworth joining me when the Hoodoo Gurus burst onto the stage at Gosford Race Club next month; I expect a guitar solo from him at some point. I thank the member for Newcastle for his contribution. He is a strong supporter of live music and the arts in Newcastle and the Hunter. I particularly note his very early support for the Labor Loves Live Music group, which was established by Minister Graham to drive Labor's policy in this area over many years.

I thank the member for Wakehurst for his contribution. He has a particular passion for the night-time economy, as well as sensible management and regulation. I acknowledge his role as a champion for local government. I thank the member for Camden for her contribution and acknowledge her deep passion and appreciation for music. I look forward to hear her singing her Christmas felicitations later this year. I thank the member for Balmain for her contribution and acknowledge her engagement with the Government on the bill. I also acknowledge the great venues servicing her local community. I acknowledge the member for Riverstone for his contribution to debate and for his insight and passion for music. I acknowledge the member for East Hills for her contribution and her support for vibrancy, particularly for local clubs and venues in her community. The contribution of the member for Granville reflected her support for the arts, and I acknowledge her role as Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts.

I was very entertained by the member Tweed's reminiscent contribution, which included his support for a vibrant club industry particularly in northern New South Wales. He has organised many concerts over the years. I think he was skiting a bit about all the stars that he has met. The member for Tweed is always entertaining. I thank the member for Parramatta for her contribution and leadership in Western Sydney. I thank the member for Heathcote for contributing to debate and supporting live music and the arts. I acknowledge the member for Gosford for her passionate support of music in the Gosford electorate but also across the Central Coast. I particularly acknowledge the bipartisan support for this legislation and thank the members in this place and in the other place for their constructive engagement on the Government's vibrancy reforms.

I will make some general comments about the bill before touching on some of the matters raised in the debate. The bill progresses the excellent work we began last year through the first tranche of vibrancy reforms. We have achieved great success from those reforms, which I noted earlier but will highlight again. Since the reforms took place, New South Wales has seen a 77 per cent increase in live music and performance venues taking up the incentives that give them a licence fee reduction and additional trading hours. The number of licensed premises that were approved for outdoor dining on private land in the first six months of this year has doubled compared to the same time last year. Vibrancy tranche 1 reforms reduced regulatory barriers, streamlined approval processes and added incentives for councils to support more active communities by making outdoor dining and street activation easier. The bill continues that momentum by providing more support for venues and cultural spaces to thrive, supporting events across the State, creating vibrant precincts and communities, and further modernising the New South Wales licensing system with a commonsense approach to risk and removal of unnecessary red tape.

I now address some of the matters raised in the debate. I thank the member for Wakehurst for his detailed engagement on the bill and his contribution. I acknowledge that the amendment in the other place was driven by engagement with the member for Wakehurst and the member for Balmain. The Government agrees with the member's perspective about the need for clear communication. I confirm to the member that the Government is committed to ensuring that the hospitality sector, councils and members of the public understand how these changes will impact them. More broadly, communicating with all stakeholders on the Government's vibrancy agenda has been a main focus ever since this Government was elected. This is not simply a communications campaign; it is a culture shift. This work will continue into the future as we roll out the reforms.

Education is key to that culture shift. That is why the bill includes an eyes wide open approach by including a provision requiring councils to notify residents or people who purchase a property in a special entertainment precinct that the area is a precinct via their website and planning certificates. We want these precincts to thrive, but we also want to ensure that people know they are moving into a precinct that is focused on entertainment. We know that there is strong community support for our vibrancy agenda and that the community and businesses welcome these changes. At the same time, we are committed to giving communities, businesses and councils the information they need to make the most of the opportunities.

In relation to concerns raised about the switching off of music-related conditions of development consent, that is supported by both industry and councils. Enacting that as an automatic, statewide change is slashing red tape and significantly reducing the workload for councils. Importantly, Liquor and Gaming has the tools to address any issues that arise from any venues that see this as an opportunity to ignore their obligations under the Liquor Act to contribute to, and not detract from, the amenity of their community. These obligations under the Liquor Act exist to ensure that, as certain development application conditions are being removed from venues, those venues will be required to operate in a way that is consistent with community expectations.

The vibrancy reforms agenda is built on the basis that we want more live entertainment in New South Wales. Music and other entertainment should be encouraged and considered the norm in hospitality businesses. It can support clubs and pubs in particular to diversify and better respond to their local community's needs. Importantly, the changes brought about by the bill will not result in unregulated venue noise. In addition to the obligations under the Liquor Act, venues may, where appropriate, have conditions as part of their liquor licence that set decibel limits on noise that can be emitted, or establish times at which live entertainment can be performed. Those conditions can be placed on licences following a complaint or be put on as part of a liquor licence application process. The conditions on venues' liquor licences are not being removed as part of the bill.

I reassure members that Liquor and Gaming NSW is adequately resourced to oversee the new sound management framework that has been in place since 1 July 2024. Not only has Liquor and Gaming established a dedicated sound management unit, as mentioned in the debate, but all compliance officers in Liquor and Gaming contribute and can assist this effort if required. Liquor and Gaming's approach to sound also includes responding to community concerns that do not reach the threshold of a formal statutory disturbance complaint. Liquor and Gaming works informally with venues and their neighbours to prevent issues that may lead to formal complaints.

Importantly, as I mentioned in my second reading speech, the feedback received on the reforms introduced in July has been positive. Liquor and Gaming NSW has been actively working with stakeholders, including government agencies, councils, venues and members of the public, on how the new reforms will work. However, that work is not complete. More work is being undertaken by Liquor and Gaming NSW and the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner to assist councils and members of the public to understand the new reforms. The Government will continue to monitor the framework and adapt this framework if the evidence indicates further changes are required.

I thank the member for Tamworth for his bipartisan support for the reforms and for the night-time economy. I know he has been an advocate for a special entertainment precinct in Tamworth as well as other parts of the State. I am pleased to confirm that the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner will soon launch a resource library for councils including templates, sample plans and best practice guides. It will also provide one-to-one advice for councils considering establishing a special entertainment precinct. Finally, the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy has announced that a \$1 million grant program will open this year to support councils with the costs of setting up a special entertainment precinct. I hope all the members will encourage councils to consider the opportunity.

The member for Tamworth also referred to the intersection between transport oriented development [TOD] and special entertainment precincts. I do not agree that these two initiatives are in conflict; I do agree that it is essential that, when government establishes new communities, appropriate social and community infrastructure is included to support and activate them. Many new TOD precincts will be well placed to support night-time activity because other noise impacts on housing will also need to be attenuated, and venues can operate without significant impacts. They will also be able to set up precincts that are well served by public transport. There is

ample opportunity to take up our more decentralised network of night-time precincts, and to be more strategic as our population grows, through making sure transit oriented developments are, where appropriate, able to be set up to support entertainment being embedded around transport hubs. As the member for Balmain noted, public transport is an important part of an affordable night out.

The member for Tamworth also made remarks about the Premier's power to cancel or vary a ministerial order in relation to an event under the Major Events Act. That is modelled on existing provisions in the Motor Sports Events Act 2022. The Premier would only take that action in extraordinary circumstances. To activate that provision, the Premier will be required to be reasonably satisfied that the action to vary or cancel the order is necessary and in the public interest. The member asked for more information on some of the provisions in the bill. I note that questions about definitions in the bill were also raised by the Opposition in the other place. In relation to the definition of "noise", an improvement notice can be issued if certain noise limits are breached. Although the "noise" is not defined in the Act, it would take its ordinary meaning. In addition, noise-related conditions on liquor licences are quite often more specific. For example, a common noise condition on liquor licences will provide a decibel limit on the emission of noise after certain times.

In relation to the definition of "near the licensed premises", the bill inserts a power for police to issue an improvement notice for noise being emitted near the licensed premises but only where the noise is being emitted by the licensee, staff or patrons. The bill does not provide a specific definition for "near" as the exact geographical distance from the venue will depend on the venue. However, as a guiding principle, "near the licensed premises" generally means within 50 metres of the licensed premises. The new framework under the Liquor Act, with Liquor and Gaming taking over as lead regulator for entertainment noise from licensed premises, is focused on improvement and education. Liquor and Gaming will provide further guidance to New South Wales police and the hospitality industry on when and in what situations a noise-related improvement notice can be issued.

I also thank the member for Balmain for her comments and for her thoughtful input on the bill, which have improved the final version that will be put to the House shortly. I agree with her remarks that a one-size-fits-all approach is not suitable, and that is why we want to empower local councils through our agenda, not encumber them with red tape. Our special entertainment precincts in particular will support this, including, I hope, in Balmain and Rozelle, among other areas on public exhibition in the inner west. The Government will shortly move an amendment to address a drafting error, as a result of an amendment in the other place. The amendment will address the drafting error and clarify that the switch-off of "no entertainment" conditions in DAs also includes where the conditions are included as part of the venue's plan of management. The amendment will reduce ambiguity for councils and venues and make the Parliament's intent explicit.

In closing, the 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2024 is the next step in the Government's vibrancy agenda and will support the work already done. I thank the Opposition and the crossbench in this House and the other place for their detailed engagement and support for the bill and our vibrancy agenda. I extend my thanks to the many agencies that have collaborated to make the bill possible. It has been a complex set of reforms to bring together. I remember walking into the first meeting and seeing the size of the room. There was standing room only with all the different people involved there.

I recognise the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport, particularly the Office of the 24-hour Economy Commissioner. I also acknowledge Sound NSW; Destination NSW; Liquor and Gaming NSW; the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure; the Environment Protection Authority; the Office of Local Government; the NSW Police Force; NSW Health; Transport for NSW; the Department of Customer Service; the Cabinet Office; and the Premier's Department. It is quite an extensive list. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr David Harris.

Consideration in Detail

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 5 be agreed to.

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) (20:53): I move Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-218A:

No. 1 **Removal of prohibition on live entertainment—Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979**

Page 18, Schedule 5.1, proposed clause 1A (2), line 24. Insert "or (4)" after "(g)".

I acknowledge that the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy is with us at the back of the Chamber; the Minister should be happy about the compliments that he received throughout the debate on the bill. The Government appreciates the close interest and advice that members of this House and in the other place have provided on the bill, especially as it relates to local councils. I also acknowledge the expert advice provided by industry groups and peak bodies, including the Australian Hotels Association NSW and Local Government NSW. Throughout all of the discussions, we have agreed on the need for absolute clarity for councils about their role in supporting music to thrive, as well as for venues and the community. The amendment is proposed to provide that clarity.

We have been up-front with the community and industry that we are seeking to automatically switch off inappropriate consent conditions on hospitality venues so that live music can be a natural part of the going-out experience. This has been welcomed by businesses and the general public. From discussions with councils, we know that it will help ease the red tape burden for them. For some venues, compliance with a plan of management is a condition of their development consent. The amendment is to clarify that any relevant provision of the plan of management for a hotel, club or small bar that prohibits live entertainment will also cease to have effect, just as it does in the development application itself.

The other requirements of the plan of management, which may cover matters such as security, soundproofing, closed windows or doors and other matters, will remain intact. We have carefully applied this only to hotels, clubs and small bars because these are distinct licence types where a reasonable person would expect live entertainment to happen. It does not apply to restaurants, for example. The bill makes that consistent across the development consent itself and a plan of management that sits under it. It continues the work done by this Parliament of removing those conditions from liquor licences in the previous term of government. It delivers the intent of the Government and of this Parliament, which has so enthusiastically supported our vibrancy agenda, by providing clearer, more consistent and streamlined arrangements for venues and councils alike.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): The question is that Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2024-218A be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 5 as amended be agreed to.

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

Third Reading

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (STATE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT) BILL 2024

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 16 October 2024.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (20:57): Perhaps the content of this contribution will not have the same vibe as the previous contribution, but I will give it my best. On behalf of the Coalition and the shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Scott Farlow, I speak in support of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024. The bill responds to recent developments in the judiciary that have cast significant uncertainty over how major projects are assessed and approved in New South Wales. By addressing the implications of the *Bingman Catchment Landcare Group Incorporated v Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd* case, the bill restores clarity and efficiency to the State significant development pathway, known as the SSD, ensuring that vital projects can proceed with confidence whilst maintaining robust environmental and planning standards. I must note that this legislation does not overturn the court's decision in the Bowdens case.

SSD projects include large-scale infrastructure, critical public services and major industrial undertakings that are essential to the State's economic and social fabric. Examples range from renewable energy projects and mining operations to new hospitals, schools and data centres. The SSD pathway is an important part of New South Wales's planning framework, designed to expedite approvals for projects that are of critical importance due to their size, complexity or economic value. The bill will clarify the meaning of the phrase "single proposed development" for the purposes of section 4.38 (4) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to

allow the planning secretary to determine what constitutes a "single proposed development" for SSD applications. This approach will provide certainty with respect to the assessment and determination of SSD applications. The bill aims to reinstate the approach taken under previous practices for assessment prior to the decision in the Bowdens case.

The bill also validates SSD consents granted prior to the commencement of this legislation, ensuring that projects currently in the pipeline are not subject to protracted legal battles or retrospective assessments. The amendment is necessary to provide certainty for future applications and to validate previous consents that may now be called into question due to the ruling. Prior to the ruling, it was common practice for offsite enabling infrastructure [OEI] such as powerlines, access roads or water supply systems to be assessed under separate planning pathways—including, for example, as development without consent or as complying or exempt development. The previous approach allowed major projects to move forward through SSD while separate approvals for OEI were handled by other planning pathways.

The Bowdens decision, however, requires that all such components be included in a single SSD application if they are considered integral to the project. We have learnt that the decision was surprising and has significantly changed decades of previous practice. Because the judgement in Bowdens did not provide any guidance as to when OEI may be considered "integral" or when it has a "real or sufficient link" to the operation of a particular SSD, there is a concerning lack of certainty for industry. Several organisations in New South Wales have sophisticated arrangements for offsite enabling infrastructure to support major developments, including Transport for NSW and a number of utility companies. Those pathways have been successful and should be maintained.

The ruling has significant implications for numerous other projects across the State, potentially impacting projects worth over \$50 billion in direct investment. The Opposition has been advised that every time the department tallies up the impact, it finds more impacted projects, so the real figure is likely higher. The Coalition supports the use of the SSD pathway as a means of facilitating large-scale developments and reducing pressure on local councils. The bill ensures that we can continue to leverage the SSD pathway to support growth while preserving local councils' capacity to focus on other local developments.

We must maintain and strengthen confidence in our planning system, particularly as New South Wales suffers through a housing crisis. Developers need certainty not only about what is required of them but also about the timelines and outcomes of their applications. The Government has moved more assessments to the SSD pathway, but the Opposition cautions the Government to ensure that there are enough resources to conduct those assessments more quickly, which the SSD pathway seeks to ensure. It is not good enough to move the assessment backlog to a different part of the planning system.

I acknowledge the broad support for the bill from stakeholders including Transgrid, Urban Taskforce, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the Property Council, the NSW Minerals Council and the Climate Council. The Coalition puts on record its appreciation for the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for its quick action, in particular the deputy secretary, development assessment and sustainability, Mr David Gainsford, for his work on the legislation. I also acknowledge the always constructive engagement with the Opposition by Mr Gino Mandarino and Mr Jake Nicol from the planning Minister's office. I note the presence of the Minister in the Chamber.

In conclusion, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024 is a necessary and timely response to the uncertainties created by the Bowdens decision. Without that legislative intervention, the State faces a concerning effect on investment in critical sectors including housing, mining, renewable energy, health and education. The Parliament has a responsibility to enable SSD and other assessments to be conducted in an as efficient a manner as possible to allow the positive economic benefits of approved projects to be realised. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (21:02): I support the Government's Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024 and thank the Minister for introducing it. As the Minister outlined exquisitely in his second reading speech, these necessary and urgent amendments are required in response to the recent decision of the New South Wales Court of Appeal in the case of *Bingman Catchment Landcare Group Incorporated v Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd* [2024] NSWCA 205. The Minister and the department have identified that the decision has impacted on longstanding planning practices and will likely cause delays. It will cause unnecessary uncertainty in the assessment and determination of State significant development applications in the planning system.

Whilst the bill is not intended to overturn the court's decision, it will remove the uncertainty that has been created. As I understand it, the case created a principle that a development application ought to consider the wider impact of the development application on the surrounding area. Whilst the case was about the transmission line, if the broader principle is applied to schools, hospitals, housing et cetera, then the impacts of offsite enabling

infrastructure—roads, water supply or intersection upgrades—would not be determined under alternative pathways. The Minister stated in his second reading speech:

This approach presents many practical difficulties, particularly in circumstances where the precise details of the offsite enabling infrastructure required to support a particular development are not known at the time the State significant development application is made.

The planning system, including the development application, consultation and assessment phases, is complicated. But its integrity, approval process and timeliness are vital to supporting the creation of thriving communities, towns and cities for the people of New South Wales. The efficient operation of the planning system is of the highest importance to the Government, particularly in relation to significant development projects across the State. The amendments proposed by the bill do not seek to overturn the court decision but seek to be proportionate and balanced in dealing with the legal uncertainty created by the Court of Appeal decision. I thank the department and the Minister for their swift and decisive work. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (21:05): The Greens do not support the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024. The changes proposed in the bill would allow the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to determine whether a particular development forms part of a single proposed State significant development for the purposes of development consent requirements under section 4.38 (4) of the current Act.

That raises a number of significant concerns. If passed, it will enable State significant developments to be broken down into multiple separate components that all take separate approval pathways. The Independent Planning Commission will therefore not have oversight of all the environmental, economic and social impacts of State significant developments when approving any one component. That will fragment consideration of environmental, social and economic impacts for major projects, effectively making it impossible to properly assess cumulative impacts at the earliest stages of development proposals. Also of concern is the regulation-making power proposed under new subsection (4C), which specifies the following:

- (4C) The regulations may provide for the following in relation to a determination made under subsection (4A)—
- (a) the form and way in which a determination must be made,
 - (b) the procedure for making a determination, including requirements for consultation,
 - (c) the circumstances in which the Planning Secretary may make a determination.

It means that all aspects of the determination for a project and what it will look like will be decided after the bill passes Parliament. That is not the right way to introduce changes. It lacks transparency and oversight. The Greens will not give the Government carte blanche to make significant decisions like that as it sees fit, with no meaningful opportunity for input from the crossbench or key stakeholders in the space. I also note our disappointment at the way in which the reform has come about. It is a reactionary response from the Government following the New South Wales Court of Appeal decision in *Bingman Catchment Landcare Group Incorporated v Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd* [2024] NSWCA 205. In that decision, the proponent of Bowdens lead and silver mine did not provide the Independent Planning Commission with information about a transmission line that was essential to the development, claiming that it was still in discussions with landholders and that the information was confidential.

The Court of Appeal confirmed that because the transmission line was integral to the development, it was part of a single proposed development. The Court of Appeal also found that the Independent Planning Commission was required to consider the likely impacts of the transmission line when assessing the environmental impacts of the mine, and that requirement could not be avoided simply because Bowdens did not provide the planning commission with any information about the proposed location of the transmission line or its likely impacts. The court made orders declaring that the development consent for the mine was void and of no effect. Rather than recognising the individual issues in that particular case, the Government is seeking to circumvent the ruling and make it easier to split the components of a State significant development apart.

That is particularly galling at a time when we face the ongoing impacts of runaway climate change, fuelled in part by the decisions of governments to continue approving new mines. We must make it easier, not harder, to assess the cumulative impacts of major projects on our climate and the environment. The bill is a retrograde step. It is bad for our environment, future generations, and public transparency and accountability. The New South Wales community wants to see meaningful action to address climate change and protect our environment. It does not want to see kneejerk legislation rushed through Parliament that provides sweeping powers to make decisions about key processes out of sight and under regulations. The Greens urge the Government to reconsider the proposed bill. It is not in line with community expectations and it raises serious concerns about the assessment of significant projects in this State. I reiterate that The Greens will not be supporting the bill.

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (21:09): I speak in support of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for his work on the bill and for its introduction to the House. As the Minister said in his second reading speech last week, the planning system is vital in helping to design and create thriving communities, towns and cities for the people of New South Wales, and to determine the use of land. It helps to deliver development, including large-scale housing and renewable energy projects, which are necessary to confront the housing crisis and speed up our transition to renewable energy. Therefore, efficiency and certainty within the planning system are of the highest importance. The Parliament would agree that that is critical to the most significant development the State requires.

Certainty in the planning system is essential. Without certainty, the financing, construction and operation of State significant development projects become far more difficult. Unfortunately, that certainty was severely impacted by a recent decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of *Bingman Catchment Landcare Group Incorporated v Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd*. By way of background, that case related to a State significant development application for the Bowdens Silver mine project located near Lue in the Mid-Western Regional Council local government area. A 66-kilovolt electrical transmission line to connect the mine site to the regional network was proposed to be assessed and approved separate from the original State significant development under an alternative planning pathway, in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, or the EP&A Act. That method of assessment is longstanding practice within the planning system.

Infrastructure that is necessary to enable development to be carried out under a State significant development application is referred to as offsite enabling infrastructure. It is not unusual that the precise details of offsite enabling infrastructure, such as its size or exact location, is not known at the time a State significant development application is lodged and subsequently assessed. In some cases, the works may be geographically remote, and often they are delivered by a third party, such as a utilities provider. Prior to the court's Bowdens decision, it was general practice for offsite enabling infrastructure to be subject to a subsequent approval process in accordance with the EP&A Act, whereby its impacts were assessed in more detail once the precise location and information about the offsite enabling infrastructure was known. That could occur via another appropriate planning pathway—for example, under part 5, division 5.1, as development without consent, or as exempt, or as complying development under an approved code.

Therefore, before the court's decision on the Bowdens case, applicants had a degree of certainty about the process and the assessment of their applications according to the relevant planning pathway. The process was also efficient and robust, with projects assessed at a level appropriate to their impacts and in line with planning legislation. However, the decision of the court in the Bowdens case held that the Independent Planning Commission, as the consent authority, should have considered the impacts of the transmission line as part of the State significant development application, and it became part of the single proposed development—that is, the State significant development—as the Court of Appeal found, it was integral to the development of the mine. As such, according to the Court of Appeal the transmission line should have been assessed as State significant development.

It is worth mentioning that the Land and Environment Court held the opposite opinion to the Court of Appeal in its decision on the matter. Unfortunately, the Court of Appeal decision has generated uncertainty because it did not provide any clear guidance on how a consent authority should decide if the offsite enabling infrastructure is integral to a particular State significant development application. That uncertainty now extends to any other situations where offsite enabling infrastructure could potentially be considered integral to the operation of a State significant development project, such that it forms part of the single proposed development. Following the court's Bowdens decision, it is now unclear for any given State significant development application whether offsite enabling infrastructure will need to be included as part of the single proposed development—that is, the State significant development—or whether it can continue to be assessed via a different planning pathway, as appropriate and in accordance with the EP&A Act.

The court's decision has challenged longstanding planning practice and caused great uncertainty in the assessment and determination of applications for State significant development in the planning system. As the Minister said in his second reading speech, the court's decision has imposed uncertainty and impractical impacts on the planning system. The Parliament is now forced to resolve the dilemma. Following the Minister's second reading speech, it should also be re-emphasised that the bill does not seek to overturn the Court of Appeal's decision on the Bowdens project. Unfortunate media commentary from Greens spokesperson Ms Cate Faehrmann asserted otherwise. That commentary was wrong and ill informed. I advise the House that the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure sought legal advice from Ms Georgina Wright, SC, on the matter. On 17 October 2024 Ms Wright confirmed:

... the proposed amendments to the EP&A Act would not overturn or reverse the Court of Appeal in Bowdens ... nor would the proposed amendments reinstate the consent granted by the IPC on 3 April 2023 for the Bowdens Silver Mine Project.

The assessment and progression of essential development and infrastructure in New South Wales should be transparent, efficient and orderly. The bill makes necessary and urgent amendments to restore the certainty that should exist, and thereby improves outcomes from our planning system. The precedent established in the court's Bowdens decision affects both State significant development applications with offsite enabling infrastructure currently under assessment and those applications that have already been determined. That could amount to around \$50 billion worth of direct investment across 60 State significant development applications that are currently under assessment. It also puts at risk over 20 more State significant development projects that have already been determined. That is not to mention potentially hundreds of future State significant development projects already in the pipeline where an application has not yet been lodged.

More importantly, it should be noted that uncertainty and delays in the assessment and determination of those applications risk future investment in critical development across the State. The Government has worked hard to increase certainty and reduce assessment time frames while maintaining robust assessment practices, and to improve the planning system to deliver major development and infrastructure for the people of New South Wales. The bill is required to help ensure the benefits of that work are realised. The bill will, firstly, clarify the planning pathways that are available for the orderly assessment of State significant development applications, particularly those with offsite enabling infrastructure; secondly, ensure that projects can continue to be assessed efficiently and robustly using a planning pathway that is appropriate to the level of impacts, in accordance with the EP&A Act; and, thirdly, give both applicants and the people of New South Wales greater confidence in the assessment and determination of State significant development.

To sum up, the proposals in the bill will help to ensure our planning system can work as effectively as possible to support the delivery of essential State significant development projects for the people of New South Wales. The bill will provide certainty in the planning system to underpin investment in new housing supply, the transition to renewable energy, and the provision of key infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. The bill is proportionate and balanced, with appropriate safeguards to ensure transparency. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (21:19): My contribution to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024 will be brief. In the second reading speech, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces said:

The amendments will restore much-needed certainty to make sure the planning system can continue to work as effectively as possible to deliver the infrastructure we need for over 60 State significant development projects worth around \$50 billion in direct investment. Those State significant development projects include renewable energy, health, education, data centres, warehouse and distribution centres, mining and minerals, housing, and mixed-use developments.

While it may be true about the significant investment potential of these developments, in good conscience I cannot guarantee that the small communities who may be affected by this have their best interests served by the stroke of a pen. I fundamentally cannot support any more power being taken away from local communities that are reeling from the stripping of powers in their stakeholder consultations. This amendment would tip the balance even further. I look to each member in this place, whether they are in a party or Independent. How can they in good faith vote for this bill, which has such broad scope, without knowledge of those communities?

We talked about certainty, but my communities want the certainty that they can live just as they want to. Is this again the city versus the country, the metropolis versus the regions? This bill is far too broad, and the potential to affect future developments is too risky for this or any future government. That is not to say I am against any of those developments. Many would have enormous benefits. But the community must have a better say and be involved. In that way, we can find better outcomes. If any developments are of concern, the transparency will allow us to shine a light on them before it is too late. Looking at all the outcomes is much better than just concentrating on individual items.

If members think this will not happen to them and their communities, they should think again and perhaps ask a few of the former holders of my seat and former members for the electorates of Camden, Liverpool and other areas in Macarthur that have been failed by decisions made over the top of community desires without considering the cumulative effect. Those members are not here to tell the tale because their communities booted them out. That could be our future if we continue to enable the department and give it more control. Outcomes need to be great not only for State significant development projects but also for the communities we represent.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (21:21): I support the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024. I thank the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for his work in bringing this bill to the House and in continuing the Government's reforms to support the efficient, orderly assessment and progression of essential development and infrastructure in New South Wales. State significant development [SSD] is development that is important to the State for economic, environmental or social

reasons. For the benefit of the House, I note again that SSD includes important housing and renewable energy projects, schools, hospitals, warehouses and distribution centres, data centres, and mining and mineral sites located across New South Wales.

Infrastructure that is necessary to enable development to be carried out under an SSD application is referred to as offsite enabling infrastructure [OEI]. OEI can include, among other things, electrical transmission lines, road and intersection upgrades, water supply works and public domain works. By allowing OEI to be assessed via an appropriate planning pathway, in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979—the EP&A Act—a robust and informed assessment of its impacts can be undertaken when details about the nature, size, location and other critical elements of the OEI have been determined. The bill will provide that the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure may decide whether OEI forms part of a single proposed development that is SSD, within the meaning of section 4.38 (4) of the EP&A Act. When the secretary determines that OEI does not form part of a single proposed development, the development can be assessed via an appropriate alternative pathway, in accordance with the EP&A Act.

This includes, for example, a review of environmental factors for development without consent under part 5, division 5.1 of the EP&A Act, a local development application assessed by a council, or delivery of the project under an approved complying or exempt development code when it meets all the necessary requirements. The bill will also make provision for regulations to explain how and when the secretary may use this power to be made. This will help to ensure transparency and accountability in the decision-making process so that the power is used in a consistent and appropriate way. In making a decision on whether the OEI forms part of a single proposed development, the secretary will consider whether the OEI is integral and has a real or sufficient link to the operation of a proposed SSD.

I will outline the regulation-making powers in the bill and how they are intended to operate. The regulation-making provisions have been included to provide more clarity and transparency about how the secretary will make a determination under new section 4.38 (4A). Schedule 1, item [1] to the bill provides that the regulation may provide for the following in relation to a determination by the secretary: the form and way in which a determination must be made; the procedure for making a determination, including requirements for consultation; and the circumstances in which the secretary may make a determination. By including these provisions in the bill, regulations prescribe the way in which the secretary must decide whether the OEI forms part of a single proposed development that is SSD. I will be clear. The secretary's decision on whether OEI forms part of a single proposed development does not mean that the likely impacts of that OEI will not need to be considered.

The requirements under section 4.15 of the EP&A Act to consider the likely impacts of the development will continue to apply to the OEI, where appropriate. In addition, the impacts of the OEI will need to be assessed under an appropriate alternative planning pathway, in accordance with the EP&A Act. It is important to note that this bill and its provisions are not of the Minister's or the Government's choosing. From time to time, the courts—it is their institutional right to judicially review any case—make decisions that, rather than providing certainty, cause more uncertainty. This is the case with the Court of Appeal's decision. It is worth noting that the Land and Environment Court reviewed this case first and took the opposite approach decided by the Court of Appeal. Due to this uncertainty, it is now up to the Parliament to restore certainty on the assessment pathway for SSD applications, and the bill seeks to do this in a balanced manner.

I support the proposed amendments in the bill. It strikes the right balance in addressing the uncertainty created by the court's decision and, importantly, will provide much-needed clarity and certainty to enable SSD projects to be assessed and determined in an efficient and appropriate manner. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (21:27): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (State Significant Development) Bill 2024 and specifically acknowledge the contributions of the member for Manly, who led for the Opposition; the member for Blacktown, and Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Public Spaces, who made an exquisite contribution; the member for Balmain, who led for The Greens; the member for Riverstone; the member for Wollondilly; and, most recently, the member for Camden. It is worth summarising why this bill is critical to the people of New South Wales and the State significant development [SSD] projects that will be delivered with restored certainty as a result of the passage of this bill through the House.

Without the bill, around \$50 billion worth of direct investment across about 60 SSD applications with offsite enabling infrastructure currently under assessment is at risk of administrative law challenge arising from the Court of Appeal's decision in the Bowdens case. It also puts at legal risk over 20 other State significant development projects that have already been determined. The bill will help New South Wales to build the homes and create the jobs it needs to address the housing crisis by supporting the Government's key objectives of faster,

efficient and robust decision-making in relation to large-scale housing projects that might otherwise be delayed due to uncertainty arising from the court's decision. State significant development renewable energy projects, including solar and wind farms, will facilitate the development of the State's renewable energy resources, consistent with the Parliament's shared and legislated vision for a secure, reliable, affordable and clean energy future for the State. Warehouses and distribution and data centres can progress. Mining and minerals projects that are important to implementing the Government's Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy can move on. State significant developments for hospitals and schools across New South Wales can be built.

The bill provides for the continued use of appropriate long-standing planning pathways under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979—the EP&A Act—for the assessment and approval of infrastructure that is necessary to enable the delivery of State significant development proposals and projects. The bill's validation provision is necessary to provide certainty for State significant development project consents that were granted before the commencement of the bill that relate to the operation of section 4.38 (4) of the EP&A Act. The bill provides the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure with the authority to determine whether a particular development does or does not form part of a single proposed development that is a State significant development within the meaning of section 4.38 (4) of the EP&A Act. It is appropriate that this authority sits with the planning secretary, who, after all, has overall responsibility for planning and the administration of the provisions of the EP&A Act.

The bill will allow the planning secretary to clarify when offsite enabling infrastructure does or does not form part of a single proposed development within the meaning of section 4.38 (4) of the EP&A Act. The intention is for this power to be used by exception. The planning secretary will exercise this authority in a transparent manner, in accordance with any regulations that are to be made. To be clear, a decision from the planning secretary on whether offsite enabling infrastructure does or does not form part of a single proposed development does not mean that the likely impacts of that offsite enabling infrastructure will not need to be considered. The requirements under section 4.15 of the EP&A Act to consider the likely impacts of the development will continue to apply to the offsite enabling infrastructure where appropriate.

The bill's validation provision is an important measure to minimise the likelihood of legal challenge on administrative grounds against prior State significant development consents relating to the operation of section 4.38 (4) of the EP&A Act. A validation provision of this kind is necessary to provide certainty for State significant development consents that were granted before the commencement of the bill. It aims to protect past State significant development consents from legal challenge on administrative law grounds relating to the operation of section 4.38 (4) of the EP&A Act. Without the validation clause, around 20 recent State significant development consents could potentially be impacted by the court's decision in the Bowdens case.

I make clear that this bill does not in any way change the existing and established community consultation processes under relevant planning pathways. I reiterate: It does not in any way change the existing and established community consultation processes under relevant planning pathways. The community has an important role in the planning process, and consultation opportunities where the community can comment on proposals are maintained. The bill does not change or limit the community's ability to have their say on State significant development applications. It simply clarifies that alternative planning pathways under the EP&A Act may be available for offsite enabling infrastructure, as they were before the court's decision in the Bowdens case.

For the record, the bill does not—as has been asserted in some media commentary—overturn the Court of Appeal's decision on the Bowdens project. Any such assertion is wrong, inaccurate and untrue. In fact, those assertions were made about the bill before it had even been tabled. To be clear, in the Bowdens judgement, the Court of Appeal did not refuse the State significant development application of that project. Instead, it found that the consent was void and of no effect. The State significant development application for that project remains on foot to be determined by the Independent Planning Commission [IPC], as the relevant consent authority. If the proponent seeks to have the application re-determined, the consent authority will apply the law as it stands at the date of the determination.

This bill does not seek to relitigate the IPC application on the floor of the Parliament. It only seeks to resolve a dilemma created by the lack of clear guidance provided by the Court of Appeal as to when offsite enabling infrastructure may be considered "integral" to the operation of a State significant development project. As the court decision did not provide sufficient clarity, it falls on the Parliament to do so. If the court provided that certainty, relevant consent authorities would be able to apply with certainty the standard determined by the court, and this bill would not be necessary. That is not a criticism of the court, but a reflection of the circumstances the Parliament is being asked to address in this bill.

I acknowledge the cooperation of the shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Scott Farlow, and his adviser, Mr William Olive, in discussions and briefings on this bill. I thank the member for Manly for his carriage of the bill in this place on behalf of the Opposition. I acknowledge the Hon. Mark Banasiak in the

other place for his cooperation and recent advocacy on the Agriculture Commissioner Bill to make sure the commissioner has the scope to provide advice on State significant development bills.

I do not agree with The Greens or the contribution of the member for Balmain, and I do not agree with their attempt to narrowcast the purpose of this bill and mislead the House. I do understand that they are giving a voice to their constituency, although I look forward to hearing them explain to their constituency and the Clean Energy Council and Clean Energy Investor Group why they support delaying building State significant development renewable energy projects across the State. It is worth reporting the respective views of the Clean Energy Council and the Clean Energy Investor Group. In a letter to the shadow Minister, the Clean Energy Council stated:

We consider that these amendments are important to avoid the risk of delays to renewable energy projects, which could have occurred as part of a recent Court of Appeal decision relating to State significant development [SSD] pathways, which is what most renewable energy projects use.

The proposed amendments simply provide greater clarity within the administration of the EP&A Act to make it clear what is and is not covered by the State significant development process for a given project application. Community rights of appeal remain unchanged.

The Clean Energy Investor Group stated:

Our concern arises from the NSW Court of Appeal judgement in *Bingman Catchment Landcare Group Incorporated v Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd* [2024] NSWCA 205 (Bowdens), which failed to provide clear guidance on when off-site enabling infrastructure [OEI] may be considered 'integral' to a State significant development [SSD] or when it has a 'real sufficient link' to its operation ...

This bill will clarify the assessment process for development applications under part 4 of the EP&A Act, reinstating the approach taken prior to Bowdens. This is critical for ensuring the efficient and timely progression of essential development and infrastructure in NSW, including relating to renewable energy projects as well as other SSD projects including hospitals, schools, universities and housing.

I acknowledge the discussions my office and Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure officials have had with Ms Sue Higginson and her adviser. I acknowledge also the Deputy Secretary for Development Assessment and Sustainability, David Gainsford, and his team for their work on drafting this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CIVIL) BILL 2024

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Dr Hugh McDermott, on behalf of Mr Michael Daley, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (21:39): On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The New South Wales Government is pleased to introduce the Justice Legislation Amendment (Civil) Bill 2024. This bill will introduce several miscellaneous amendments to improve court and legal processes and ensure operational efficiency, improve and clarify government processes and functions, and clarify the regulation-making power of the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014. Regularly reviewing and updating legislation is an important mechanism to ensure that laws remain fit for purpose and keep pace with developments in the community and the legal system. Miscellaneous bills are a sensible and practical way to introduce amendments to multiple Acts in order to achieve this.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill will amend the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995 to authorise the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to employ contingent labour and allow for functions to be delegated to contingent labour. Currently, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act only authorises the registrar to employ staff under the Public Sector Management Act 1988—now superseded

by the Government Sector Employment Act 2013—and to delegate functions to persons employed in the public sector. In practice, this means that the registry cannot engage contingent labour because even data entry and administrative functions are performed under delegation. The provisions of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act also restrict the registry from engaging certain IT and cybersecurity specialists under contract if their work requires delegations in relation to the registry's core IT system. This may present significant business continuity risks.

Item [2] of schedule 1 will insert proposed new section 7 (2) into the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act to enable the registrar to engage contractors to provide services, including engaging persons through a labour hire arrangement. Item [3] will amend the definition of "authorised person" to allow the delegation of functions to contractors engaged under proposed new section 7 (2). Items [1] and [2] will remove references to the now repealed Public Sector Management Act 1988 and replace them with the Government Sector Employment Act 2013. Schedule 7 to the bill makes a consequential amendment to the Status of Children Act 1996 to remove an outdated reference to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages holding office under the now repealed Public Sector Management Act 1988.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 to confer power on the Land and Environment Court to order the forfeiture of chemical substances to the Crown on application by the Environment Protection Authority. On 25 March 2024 the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Act 2024 was given royal assent. That Act made a range of amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to implement national reforms to the management and control of certain chemicals and to strengthen the regulation of industrial chemicals in New South Wales.

Those amendments included inserting part 9.3E, "Chemicals", into the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, which contains provisions for the management and control of certain chemicals and deals with certain licences, applications and orders in relation to this. The amendment in this bill will confer appropriate power on the Land and Environment Court in relation to part 9.3E to empower the court to hear proceedings under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. This is a necessary amendment to confer appropriate jurisdiction on the Land and Environment Court and give full effect to the reforms implemented by the Environmental Legislation Amendment (Hazardous Chemicals) Act.

Schedule 3 to the bill amends the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to ensure that it contains a specific regulation-making power to support clause 65 of the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Regulation 2015. The Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act applies and modifies the Legal Profession Uniform Law in New South Wales. The application regulation is made under the application Act and contains machinery provisions that are required to ensure the effective operation of the uniform law in New South Wales.

Section 303 of the uniform law provides that in disciplinary proceedings, the relevant tribunal may make orders requiring a local regulatory authority or other such person, body or fund nominated in jurisdictional legislation to pay costs in certain circumstances. Clause 65 of the application regulation provides that, for the purposes of section 303 of the uniform law, an order for costs may be made for or against the Law Society of New South Wales instead of the Council of the Law Society. Clause 65 is required because while the Law Society brings disciplinary proceedings against solicitors, it is not in a position to pay costs orders as it is a governance committee and does not have its own finances. While it is arguable that section 303 of the uniform law provides sufficient authority for clause 65, it is preferable to put this issue beyond doubt by including a specific head of power in the application Act.

Schedule 4 to the bill will amend the Modern Slavery Act 2018 to allow for the tabling of reports of the Anti-slavery Commissioner when Parliament is not sitting. This implements recommendation 2 of the joint parliamentary Modern Slavery Committee report entitled *Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018*, which states that the Modern Slavery Act should be amended to explicitly provide for the commissioner's annual report and other reports to be tabled out of session or made publicly available immediately after being furnished to the Presiding Officers.

Section 19 of the Modern Slavery Act requires, among other things, the commissioner to prepare an annual report of the commissioner's operations, to be provided to the Minister and the Presiding Officers of each House of Parliament. However, section 19 does not specify when the Presiding Officer can make the report publicly available. This means that the default position is that it can only be made publicly available after it has been tabled in Parliament. The committee's report considers that this may lead to unnecessary delays in accessing the commissioner's report.

This amendment implements the committee's recommendation by providing that when Parliament is not sitting a report of the commissioner made under sections 19 or 22 (3) of the Modern Slavery Act can be provided

to the Clerk of the House instead. Proposed new section 19 (8), as inserted by this bill, provides that a report provided to the Clerk is taken to have been furnished to the Presiding Officers of each House of Parliament and therefore may be printed or published by the Clerk whether or not the Houses of Parliament are in session.

Schedule 5 to the bill will amend the Police Act 1990 to clarify that New Zealand citizens in Australia on a special category visa are eligible for appointment as a member of the NSW Police Force. Section 94 of the Police Act provides that a person is eligible to be appointed as a member of the NSW Police Force only if the person is an Australian citizen or a permanent Australian resident. Section 94 (3) defines "permanent Australian resident" as a person resident in Australia whose continued presence in Australia is not subject to any time limitation.

New Zealand citizens can apply for a special category visa under section 32 of the Migration Act 1958 upon entering Australia. Although this type of visa is categorised as a temporary visa, it does not have a time limit and remains valid until the resident leaves Australia. While this has been taken to satisfy the intention and definition of "permanent Australian resident" under section 94 of the Police Act as the visa is not subject to a time limit, the visa's categorisation as "temporary" under the Migration Act may lead to uncertainties in its interpretation. Schedule 5 will amend section 94 of the Police Act to clarify that a permanent Australian resident, for the purposes of eligibility for appointment as a member of the NSW Police Force, includes a New Zealand citizen who holds a special category visa within the meaning of section 32 of the Migration Act.

I now turn to the amendments to the Powers of Attorney Act 2003. Schedule 6 amends the Powers of Attorney Act 2003 to insert into section 25 a new definition of "interstate enduring power of attorney" that clarifies that the reference in that section to an "enduring power of attorney" made in another State or Territory of the Commonwealth includes an instrument in the nature of an enduring power of attorney, whether or not described as an enduring power of attorney.

Enduring powers of attorney are created under the Powers of Attorney Act and allow a person to appoint someone else to make legal and financial decisions on their behalf, even after the principal has lost decision-making capacity. Section 25 of the Act currently recognises "instruments that create an enduring power of attorney" made in other States and Territories. It is not clear whether this wording would apply to instruments that are in the nature of enduring powers of attorney but are called by a different name. This amendment will resolve that uncertainty. The bill is an important part of the Government's ongoing work in regularly reviewing and updating legislation to ensure that it continues to meet its objectives. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Community Recognition Statements

LISA LAKE AND OLA HAMED

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (21:52): I thank the outgoing Mayor of Cumberland City Council, Lisa Lake, and welcome the new mayor, Ola Hamed. Lisa Lake has been a member of Cumberland City Council since 2017 and was elected mayor in 2022. She previously served on Holroyd council from 2012. I have known Lisa for over 40 years, and I know that she is widely respected for her intellect, calm manner and desire to ensure that the council was outward focused and delivering at the grassroots. She has dedicated herself to our local community, which she adores, and we will miss her steady influence on Cumberland City Council. Likewise, it is good to welcome Councillor Ola Hamed as our new mayor. I have known Ola for over two decades; she is a long-term Cumberland resident, proudly raising her two children with her husband in Merrylands. Like Lisa, Ola has a passion for social justice and equality and is committed to working to make a real difference in the community she has spent her entire life serving.

NORTHERN BEACHES ANNUAL BUSINESS BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (21:53): On Friday 1 November 2024 I look forward to attending the Northern Beaches Annual Business Breakfast Fundraiser at Manly Leagues Club. First held in 2018, over the years the fundraiser has supported Aussie farmers affected by drought, brought hope to families for Christmas during COVID-19, addressed the plight of homelessness, raised awareness of the increase in family and domestic violence, and highlighted the issues faced by children and youth. In 2024 the fundraiser will support kids with disabilities, which is a truly worthwhile cause. I am a strong believer that a society and a government can be judged by the way they treat their most vulnerable. I recognise and thank Wendy Finianos for the amazing and inspirational work she does in supporting our northern beaches community. I also recognise Ruth Vumbaca, Daniel Dummer, Amy Tanti, Tony Loughran and Adam Tanti. I thank them for helping bring our community together and making sure we lead with our hearts to support people in our community.

KARWA CHAUTH

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (21:54): On 20 October I was moved to witness the Karwa Chauth ritual at the Hindu Council of Australia's annual Deepavali Festival in Blacktown. In the ancient Hindu ritual of Karwa Chauth, married women wake for a pre-dawn meal called sargi, usually prepared by their mothers-in-law. A picture of devotion, women observe a strict fast from sunrise to moonrise, praying for their husband's good fortune and a happy life together. Adorned in their best jewellery and festive red clothes to symbolise auspiciousness and marriage, the women unite in their devotion, fasting for 17 hours. With henna decorating their hands, they perform puja and celebrate generations of love, honour and marriage. I thank Pandit Siva Srinivasan and Nitin Jayaraman for graciously sharing the ceremony's rich history. I extend my warm wishes to all the women involved in the sacred ritual.

MARIE TAME

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:55): I acknowledge and congratulate a very special member of the Hilltops community, Mrs Marie Tame. Marie has been recognised as the Cootamundra Local Woman of the Year for 2024. Marie is a well-known member of the Young Lions Club, having served her community for decades. She is currently serving as the Lions district chairperson. Along with the Lions Club, Marie also spends her time volunteering for Meals on Wheels in Young. That volunteering sees Marie attend the Young and Region Farmers Markets every fortnight, organising high teas and other fundraisers, selling mini lottos, and working at the harness race and local picnic race meetings. Marie has also received several awards for her volunteer work, including the Melvin Jones Fellowship Dedicated Humanitarian Services Award, the Lion of the Year Award and the District Governor's Appreciation Award. I thank Marie for her service, her dedication and the joy she brings to the Hilltops and surrounding communities.

RIVERSTONE DOLPHINS

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (21:56): As we welcome October and the opening of the Riverstone swimming pool, we also celebrate the start of the swimming season. This year the Riverstone Dolphins mark an impressive milestone: their thirtieth season of competition and learn-to-swim classes. The milestone marks the club's longevity and highlights its commitment to nurturing young talent and promoting a love for swimming within the community. For three decades the Riverstone Dolphins swimming club has played a vital role in swimmer development in the Riverstone area. The dedication of families and the tireless efforts of the committee are a testament to the exceptional service the Dolphins provide. Their commitment has created a supportive environment that encourages swimmers of all ages to pursue their goals and has helped countless children acquire essential swimming skills. Everyone in Riverstone seems to know a family member who has swum with the Dolphins. May the tradition of Thursday race nights thrive, and I wish both new and returning Dolphin families a wonderful season filled with personal growth, teamwork and lasting memories. I look forward to hearing great results from the Dolphins squad.

TRIBUTE TO VALERIE LHUEDE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (21:57): On Friday 27 September, after enjoying a quiet lunch and a glass of wine, Valerie Lhuede passed away peacefully at the age of 101. Valerie was known for her generosity, vision and advocacy for one of the most remote towns in Wollondilly, Yerranderie. Yerranderie is a historic town in New South Wales and was once a bustling mining hub. However, the construction of the Warragamba Dam in the 1950s cut off its main access, leading to its decline. In 1947 the town was purchased by Aubin Lhuede, and his daughter, Valerie Lhuede, took over its management. A remarkable woman, Valerie dedicated her life to preserving Yerranderie's heritage. In 2011, at the age of 89, she handed the town over to the New South Wales government. Valerie's efforts have ensured that Yerranderie remains a testament to Australia's rich history, now serving as a regional park that combines remnants of the town with old mining sites and bushwalks. Her legacy continues to inspire, reminding us that one person can make a significant impact on a community's preservation. I thank Valerie Lhuede.

COASTIE CARNIE FAIR DAY

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:58): We celebrated Coastal Twist's Coastie Carnie Fair Day on the Central Coast on the October long weekend. Not only do we have the fair day, but there is also a week of celebration of the LGBTIQ+ community, with burlesque, drag, art shows, a youth disco and many other fabulous, safe activities for everybody to enjoy. I am biased because I love dogs, so my favourite event was the Puparazzi Pooch Parade, where dogs in drag walked the red carpet doing wonderful tricks and dogs dressed like their owners wagged it out for the fabulous prizes. They included a \$2,000 event package generously sponsored by Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Club and tattoos. An action-packed day fabulously revealed itself, with drag queens, drag story time and a safe disco for people of all ages and abilities. I express my personal gratitude to Glitter Supernova

and Juan Iocco for brilliantly crafting the magical event, as well as their amazingly fantabulous team of volunteers who worked so hard to make a dream come true for so many people from across our community and beyond.

NSW HEALTH AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (21:59): I am proud to announce that the Mid North Coast Local Health District was recently named as a finalist in the 2024 NSW Health Awards. It was also named as a finalist in the Excellence in Aboriginal Health Award and the NSW Health Innovation Award. Partnering with the Sydney Children's Hospital Network, the Mid North Coast Local Health District has been recognised for establishing the Daalbirwirr Gamambigu (Safe Children) model of care, coordinating training workshops for NSW Health clinicians and hospital workers. Meticulously developed with a team of Aboriginal healthcare professionals, the model of care focuses on providing a culturally safe care experience for Aboriginal children and their families. The second nomination was a collaboration with the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, NSW Health Pathology, and NSW Health for the New South Wales dried blood spot validation study. The study is the first of its kind, testing people at risk of contracting hepatitis using a standard diagnostic tool. The health district was named as a finalist in two categories across 12 awards from 186 nominations. An outstanding achievement, recognising the highest of standards in innovation and partnerships among government agencies. Congratulations to everyone involved.

PENRITH RELAY FOR LIFE

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (22:00): I congratulate Penrith Relay for Life on celebrating 23 years of extraordinary community service. For over two decades, Relay for Life has united my community in the fight against cancer, raising vital funds for the Cancer Council's research, prevention and support programs. Advocating and delivering for the community for 23 years is an amazing achievement. The event is not just about walking or running laps around Penrith paceways; it is about honouring and celebrating the strength of local cancer survivors, standing with those currently facing the challenge of cancer, supporting their carers and remembering those we have lost. It is through this community spirit that we move closer to a future free from cancer. Cancer Council is there for families in their time of greatest need, providing essential support, advocating for better outcomes and empowering us all to take steps to reduce our cancer risk. I thank everyone involved in making Relay for Life such a success for the past 23 years. Let us continue this important work together.

MERRIWA RETURN AND EARN

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (22:01): What a champion effort from the residents of Merriwa with their Return and Earn. In just 12 months they have managed to recycle over one million containers, reducing landfill by six full garbage trucks. Three years ago the Upper Hunter community asked for my help to get a Return and Earn machine, and the town that runs sheep in red socks down the main street every June long weekend mustered the numbers to help me argue the case with a petition of 872 signatures—that is half the population of the Merriwa district. I thank TOMRA Cleanaway Chief Executive James Dorney for listening to Merriwa's plea and for working through the logistics to make it happen. I thank James for the confidence he showed to enable Merriwa to recycle their drink containers. To Stephen Gowlland, the Merriwa District Progress Association and the community I say well done on an awesome first year. This is their vision and a big achievement.

LEYTE GULF LANDINGS

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (22:02): Eighty years ago the Leyte Gulf Landings—a land-sea operation even bigger than D-day in terms of the number of personnel involved—set the stage for the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese occupation. The war in the Pacific, though often not acknowledged, had very real significance for Australia. On Saturday the Visayan Association of Australia held a commemoration at All Saints Catholic church hall in Liverpool. Those present included Philippine Consulate-General Charmaine Rowena Aviquivil; Visayan Association of Australia President Jhun Salazar; Jojo Sebastian, who was emcee on the night; representatives of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration; Pet Storey from the American Legion Auxiliary; and Dr John Crozier. I also acknowledge Carol North-Samardzic for her star turn as General Macarthur and Father Ronny D'Cruz for representing the All Saints parish. Keeping this tradition alive is not only about honouring the sacrifices made by those who fought for freedom but also about passing on the values of courage, unity and hope to future generations. We must ensure that the lessons of the past remain with us, guiding us towards a more peaceful future.

KILLARNEY HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (22:03): I congratulate the Killarney Heights High School boys soccer team, who recently won the 2024 Bill Turner Cup. The team triumphed 3-0 over Queensland's Corinda State High School in an epic grand final match. The Bill Turner Cup and Bill Turner Trophy are highly esteemed annual competitions between approximately 850 high schools across New South Wales, Queensland—those pesky

Queenslanders—Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. Killarney Heights High School is the first comprehensive public school to have won the cup since 2002. What a phenomenal effort by those students. I especially pass on my compliments to the school and the boys' parents for dedicating their time and energy to help the team get over the line and achieve such an impressive goal. I congratulate the team on an outstanding accomplishment. All those training sessions and the time spent travelling to and from games have absolutely been worth it. They have made their families, their school and their entire local community very proud. Love your work!

BULLI CROP SWAP

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (22:04): There are few things that give me greater excitement than seeing a community come together to solve local issues, which is exactly what is done by Bulli residents at the Bulli Crop Swap. The crop swap, which facilitates the swapping of homegrown produce, seeds and edible plants through local markets, aims to build community, reduce food waste and help people eat better at a lower cost. On the first Saturday of every month community members come together at Millers Local Bakehouse in Bulli to swap their produce. The idea grew out of Illawarra Food Talks, coordinated by Bulli local Suzy Pickles, and a recognition of a shared passion for super fresh produce among many locals. Organisers—including Suzy Pickles, Sarah Anderson and Emma Huber—have been overwhelmed with the generosity brought to the table by the community. The swap has now been running for more than a year and has helped foster community spirit and improve mental health to an incredible extent. Congratulations to the organisers of this fantastic initiative. I look forward to seeing how this seed continues to grow over many years to come.

SHANE "GADGET" O'DONNELL

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (22:05): I recognise Shane O'Donnell, known locally in the hockey community as "Gadget", who is the Goulburn District Hockey Association complex manager. This is an important role, and without Gadget the association would not be what it is today. In August this year the Goulburn District Hockey Association hosted the 2024 Hockey Australia Country Championships. This fantastic eight-day event saw 40 games of hockey held at the recently upgraded Goulburn Regional Hockey Centre. At the conclusion of the country championships, Gadget was recognised for his service to hockey and received a Hockey Australia Country Championships service to country hockey medal. I acknowledge and thank Gadget for his tireless efforts in my hockey community. His hard work and dedication do not go unnoticed. I congratulate and again thank Gadget.

ARTHUR PHILLIP HIGH SCHOOL

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (22:06): With a very strong historic tradition, Arthur Phillip High School is leading the way as a twenty-first century city school, boasting a student population of around 1,300 students who reflect Parramatta's incredible diversity. I congratulate the new student leadership team on their recent selection. The role of school leaders is so important to everyone within the school community, as these young people are the conduit between teachers, parents and their fellow students, with an opportunity to enrich the education and school life of their cohort. I congratulate Jackson Rennie and Ashley Clavecillas on their appointment as school captains and Ahmad Naseri and Shayasta Shayasta on their appointment as vice-captains. I trust that they will all serve their term as school leaders dutifully and diligently, developing vital leadership skills that they will draw on for the rest of their lives.

ADRIAN GRABHAM

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (22:07): I congratulate Adrian Grabham from Eglinton Rural Fire Service on 28 years of service. Adrian has been an active and committed member of the Eglinton fire brigade. He has held the positions of deputy captain, permit officer, district duty officer and deputy group captain, and he is currently a group officer for the Chifley-Lithgow district. He has been on the district training committee for years and actively imparts his wealth of fire and service-related knowledge while mentoring new and developing members through training and community engagement. In 2023 Adrian was a worthy recipient of the commissioner's certificate of commendation for his involvement as a volunteer operational officer during the gas outage emergency. His dedication to serving the community is exemplified in the direst of times, like leaving his own home, which was inundated with stormwater, to sandbag and doorknock local residents to ensure their safety and volunteering countless nights of continuous service during the Gaspers Mountain fire. Adrian is an invaluable asset to the community and a worthy recipient of the National Medal first clasp. I thank Adrian for his service to the RFS.

GEORGES RIVER GRAMMAR

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (22:08): I congratulate Georges River Grammar School on its fortieth anniversary, a milestone that reflects a remarkable journey of growth, transformation and faith. Its journey

began in 1984 with the establishment of St Paul's Choir School. Just a few years later, in 1988, Bankstown Grammar School emerged as an independent Anglican secondary school. In 2004 these two institutions came together, merging to form the school that we now know as Georges River Grammar. The anniversary fete this weekend is sure to be a day of fun and laughter for the school community, with carnival games, rides, food stalls and market booths. It is a celebration of 40 years of educational and spiritual learning, as well as the vibrant and diverse community that has flourished within the school walls. I extend my best wishes for a memorable day to all attendees: past, present and future students, along with parents, staff, alumni and community members. I again congratulate Georges River Grammar School on its fortieth anniversary.

YASMIN TATRAI

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (22:09): The Parliament of New South Wales recognises Yasmin Tatrai on her successful election to Kiama Municipal Council. While Yas is relatively new to local politics, she has had a career in both the public and private sectors and running her own small business. I give a huge shout-out to her husband, Roger, for all his hard work during the campaign. I acknowledge those who stood alongside Yas as part of her team, including the inimitable Gail Morgan, who is a local poet, author and advocate for more live music in Kiama; Henry Clyde Streamer, who is a young and dynamic local building a bright future in the banking and finance sector; local teacher Daniel Hill, who is a long-term and passionate local whose no-nonsense approach went down so well on the campaign trail; Sue Mansfield, who has called Kiama home for decades and has done everything from manage banks to teaching Sunday school; and Andrew Prosser, the owner of Stoic Brewery, who was desperate to see real change for Kiama council—and did we not achieve exactly that? I also acknowledge Franky Warddell for the incredible role that he played during the campaign. I say well done to Yas and to her incredible team. I wish her all the very best for this council term.

ESCAPE ARTFEST

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (22:10): I congratulate the Escape ARTfest committee, past and present, on their remarkable contribution to the Shoalhaven community. Over the past 29 years, this festival has grown into a key event, celebrating and promoting the talents of visual and performing artists from Milton and Ulladulla, and villages from Bendalong to North Durras. ARTfest has become a staple on the State's tourist calendar, drawing attention from art enthusiasts both near and far. Escape ARTfest provides a unique opportunity for local artists to connect with the community by offering the public a glimpse into the creative process. Through open studios, workshops and exhibitions, visitors can not only view stunning works of art but also interact with artists and explore different forms of expression. I congratulate everyone involved on making Escape ARTfest a vibrant and successful event year after year. Their hard work has built a lasting legacy of art and creativity in the Shoalhaven.

SACKVILLE NORTH RURAL FIRE SERVICE BRIGADE

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (22:11): I acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Sackville North Rural Fire Service Brigade, which opened its doors to the community on 21 and 22 September this year. This was part of the Get Ready Weekend, a campaign geared towards urging community preparedness for the bushfire season ahead. As part of a shared goal, the NSW Rural Fire Service encouraged residents to attend brigade open days and plan for the fire season ahead. Landholders were encouraged to prepare bushfire plans and advised of effective steps that they could take to prepare gardens and homes for the potential threat. It was an honour to attend this event and witness the wonderful work of our dedicated brigade volunteers, which encouraged a proactive response to impending bushfires. I thank the Sackville North RFS Brigade for its community engagement and the support that it provides to keep our community safe.

BANGLADESH SUPER LEAGUE

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (22:12): The Bangladesh Super League, based in Kingsgrove, represents one of the best grassroots sporting organisations and is the pride of our diverse community. It brings people from all walks of life together. I acknowledge and commend the Bangladesh Super League cricketers for contributing to multiculturalism and generating warmth and a sense of belonging within the local community. As the member for Canterbury, I am immensely proud of the club and the members of the Australian Bangladeshi community who have contributed so much to the success and vibrancy of my local community. I am truly amazed by their contributions and grateful for everything they do for the advancement of our community. Together, we make our community a thriving place to live. I congratulate the organisers, the committee, the players and the volunteers. I am very proud to represent them in this place and I congratulate them on all the work they do.

ABBY PETERSON-HAMPSHIRE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (22:13): I am delighted to celebrate and congratulate Abby Peterson-Hampshire from Terrigal High School on her outstanding achievement as one of the eight State public school finalists in the recent 2024 Junior Secondary Speaking Award competition held here at the New South Wales Parliament. Abby displayed incredible talent competing against a remarkable group of finalists. She delivered a thought-provoking speech on the pitfalls of AI, followed by an impactful two-minute impromptu speech on "False Hope", where she discussed the evolution of the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show over the past decade. Abby highlighted how the show historically set unattainable beauty standards, creating false hope for viewers who aspired to achieve an unrealistic ideal. She powerfully addressed the damaging effects that these illusions have had on body image and self-worth, while also recognising the positive changes happening within the fashion industry today. Her insightful and passionate delivery earned her the silver medal and the runner-up award—a true testament to her hard work. I have the great pleasure of knowing Abby personally, and I congratulate her on this award.

INTERGENERATIONAL CARE INITIATIVE

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (22:14): I acknowledge a fantastic collaboration between Padstow Heights Public School and Beauty Point Retirement Resort. The initiative, grounded in the principles of intergenerational care, is a wonderful opportunity to foster meaningful connections between students and the resort's residents. Bridging generational gaps helps to enrich lives on both sides with the offering of companionship, shared learning and a sense of purpose for all involved. The positive impact that intergenerational care can have—enhancing communication skills, building empathy and combating loneliness—is rewarding for both young and old. This project not only creates opportunities for students to learn from the wisdom and experiences of older adults but also gives residents the joy of connecting with younger generations, reigniting their sense of purpose and vitality. I am thrilled to hear that the program has brought diverse participants together, including a refugee family. We look forward to its continued success. I say well done to everyone involved.

AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK SUTHERLAND AUTISM CARERS SUPPORT GROUP

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (22:15): I recognise the exceptional work of the Autism Community Network Sutherland Autism Carers Support Group in supporting autistic individuals, families and carers within the Sutherland shire. The support group is a forum for parents and carers of autistic individuals, with a mission to foster autism inclusion through advocacy, education, tailored events and support for families and carers. Among the group's activities are a monthly family day held at Zone Bowling Sylvania and meetings at Tradies Gynea. Importantly, the support group is also working to establish an autistic adults social club to provide community-based autism support for adults. None of this would be possible without the contribution of the support group members. I particularly acknowledge Vanessa Gauci, Frances Wade, Belinda Smith, Mark Agius, Sherry Zhou and Emi Chung for their efforts in building a world where autistic individuals and their families thrive in an environment of understanding, equality and respect. I again commend the Autism Community Network Sutherland Autism Carers Support Group for its work within our community and extend my best wishes for the future.

CATHERINE CRAIG

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (22:16): I acknowledge and congratulate Catherine Craig, who has been named both the 2024 South Coast Volunteer of the Year and the South Coast Senior Volunteer of the Year. Catherine is a deeply committed volunteer with the Ulladulla SES unit, where she coordinates and participates in the team's response to emergency incidents. Her leadership and dedication are vital in training other volunteers to provide life-saving support to the community during storms, floods, fires and other critical events. In addition to her work with the SES, Catherine gives her time generously to the local garden club and the town band, enriching the lives of those around her. Her passion for service extended internationally when she spent three years as a volunteer in Vietnam teaching English to young people and providing invaluable support to vision-impaired people. Catherine's contributions locally and abroad reflect her selflessness and dedication to improving the lives of others. I congratulate Catherine on this well-deserved recognition. She is a true inspiration to our community.

COUNCILLOR ANGELO ROZOS

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (22:17): I am pleased to acknowledge and congratulate Councillor Angelo Rozos on reaching the significant milestone of 12 years of dedicated service as a Willoughby City councillor. Recently Angelo was unanimously elected as Deputy Mayor of Willoughby City, which is a testament to the respect and confidence that his fellow councillors and the community have in him. For the past three terms, Angelo has been—and will continue to be—a tireless advocate for the people of Willoughby. His commitment to public service and his passion for ensuring the wellbeing of our local area has been unwavering. He has worked

diligently on a wide range of issues affecting our community, always prioritising the needs and aspirations of the residents he serves. His leadership and ability to work collaboratively have played a crucial role in shaping Willoughby into the vibrant and thriving community that we are all proud to be part of. I thank Angelo for his tireless service and dedication to the people of Willoughby. I also recognise and thank his family. Angelo's contributions have made a lasting impact, and I wish him continued success in his role as deputy mayor.

MAITLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (22:18): It is with immense pride that I wish Maitland Public School a happy 150th birthday. Today the doors were thrown open to students and teachers, past and present, and to the Maitland community. The hall housed a "Then and Now" display, with memorabilia showcasing the 150-year history of the school, including the year 6 time capsule to be opened at its bicentenary. Maitland Public School is a local icon, with family generations attending. The oldest living ex-student is 95-year-old Merle Daly of Raworth. Her granddaughter Elissa Brown, whose children Eamon and Owen attend the school, is the school librarian. Eamon is a school captain. Guest speaker at the event, Ruth Murdoch, was school captain when the school celebrated its 100-year anniversary. A feature of the day was the unveiling of a mural painted by year 6 students and designed by local artist Amanda O'Bryan depicting 150 years of educating students. Happy Birthday, Maitland Public School!

FRIENDS OF OYSTER BAY

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (22:19): I acknowledge the incredible efforts of Friends of Oyster Bay in advocating for the needs of its community. Located along the banks of the Georges River with its large mangroves, Oyster Bay is one of the most beautiful parts of the Miranda electorate. It is also home to Oyster Bay Oval and the beloved Georges River Football Club. When the focal point of community facilities was impacted by the Oyster Bay Oval masterplan, Friends of Oyster Bay sprang into action to voice the concerns of the local community. Of particular note is the significant removal of trees, loss of parking, relocation of the Cubby House Turners and Woodies facilities and frustration with representatives from Sutherland Shire Council. I acknowledge the grassroots advocacy of Kylie Mulholland, Delia Smith and Debbie Kearns from Friends of Oyster Bay. I commend them for their advocacy on the Oyster Bay Oval masterplan and look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that the needs of the Oyster Bay community are met.

MRS NORMA SMITH

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (22:20): I congratulate Mrs Norma Smith on her 100th birthday. Mrs Smith grew up in Earlwood and lived in the area for most of her life. Her parents built their family home there and she and her sister attended Clemton Park Public School. Mrs Smith has enjoyed a wonderful and legendary life. Through the ups and downs of the last century, she worked as a dressmaker and a personal assistant. Her husband was a war veteran who fought courageously in the Second World War. These days, Norma enjoys knitting and handicraft and has also developed a special bond with her carers and neighbours. Indeed, her carer Lyn describes herself as almost like a daughter to Norma, and often brings her wonderfully cooked curry. Norma also enjoys pumpkin soup cooked by her lovely neighbours. I congratulate Norma on this milestone and wish her a happy birthday. She is the pride of our community. May she enjoy many more years of good health and happiness.

MAURICE AND LOIS SLADE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (22:21): I bring to the attention of the House the celebration of the Maurice and Lois Slade. On Sunday 12 October 2024 nearly 400 people gathered at the Nancy Gray Pavilion at the Quirindi showground to celebrate a lifetime of love and memories with Maurice and Lois. This wonderful couple celebrated two very special milestones—their combined ninetieth birthdays and their seventieth wedding anniversary. It is indeed a rare occasion to reach such milestones. Well-wishers came from all over New South Wales to celebrate, including dozens of family and friends and wedding party guests from all those years ago. It was a wonderful celebration with many stories told and friends reacquainted after many years. I give my sincere congratulations to Maurice and Lois. It was a real pleasure and honour to join in the celebrations with their family and friends on that day.

Private Members' Statements

HUNTER VALLEY FLOOD MITIGATION SCHEME

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (22:23): The Minns Labor Government has completed significant levee repair works to help safeguard Morpeth and the surrounding community from flooding. Crews have now fully rebuilt a section of the Morpeth levee, part of the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme, after major flooding significantly eroded the infrastructure in 2021-22.

The site is now stronger than ever thanks to funding from the New South Wales Government to carry out emergency repairs and permanent restoration works to the damaged sections of the scheme. The complex restoration involved using multiple barges along the Hunter River carrying 48-tonne long-reach excavators to place more than 25,000 tonnes of rock along a 280-metre stretch of riverbank. Crews used innovative technology to position larger rocks sized 60 centimetres to one metre underwater to strengthen the levee's foundation, and then place smaller rocks sized 40 to 70 centimetres along the upper embankment to reinforce the integrity of the levee.

With the permanent repairs now complete, council can reopen Brisbane Fields Road without the load limit restrictions that have been in place since emergency stabilisation works were first carried out. That has been a real challenge for the communities in the area. I have had many conversations with those residents over a long time. Garbage trucks and cattle trucks could not get access to properties along the levee. Morpeth levee is one of 14 locations in the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme that is damaged due to previous flooding, and the New South Wales Government continues to repair works on these sites. The Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme is a lifeline for local communities, starting in Newcastle and stretching to the Upper Hunter. It safeguards more than a quarter of a million people and their properties from flooding events. It was solidified in 1955 after the terrible Maitland floods and is worth in the order of a billion dollars. It is good to see investment into its restoration. The region is flood-prone and the scheme's network of levees, floodgates and spillways gives the community confidence that they can weather the next storm. That is why we have committed to repairing it.

I note the presence of the former water Minister in the Chamber. I have had many long conversations with him about this, and also with the member for Upper Hunter. It is an important asset for our community. The 2022 floods across the State highlighted the importance of that network of flood levees. I thank the former Minister for his work, but we have built better infrastructure. We can all agree that something is better than nothing. This work is important, and there is more work to be done. The 2022 events saw three significant breaches. At the Maitland showground there was an emergency fix during the floods, there was work done at Horseshoe Bend and Raworth, and now there is this work. To this day people in my community are still struggling to get help with flood recovery. Some have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of flood activity in and around their properties. We must look after those assets and continue with their ongoing maintenance. I know some work had been done under the former Government, and we need to push on with that because it is important for planning for our community.

The number of houses will continue to grow in Maitland. That is important because there is a huge housing shortage in our area, with a 1 per cent or less rental vacancy rate. I acknowledge the planning Minister, who is doing a fantastic job. Maitland is doing its fair share. We are probably one of the stand-out councils contributing to meeting housing need. This Government is in the best place, with such a cohesive ministry and a great relationship between Minister Scully and Minister Jackson, to put that resilience piece at the forefront of housing and make sure that we are building more houses in the right places. Where we have critical infrastructure such as levees that can keep houses safe, we must make sure that they are well maintained into the future.

TAMWORTH ELECTORATE DRUG AND ALCOHOL RECOVERY AND TREATMENT

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (22:28): I update the House on the work of a very committed, hardworking group of advocates in the Tamworth electorate. The newly named Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Treatment team, or DART, is a group of social workers, clinicians, parents and concerned community members who share a desire to see improved outcomes for those suffering with drug and alcohol addiction in Tamworth and across the north-west. Their advocacy comes from lived experience because many of them have firsthand experience of the inequity in accessing drug and alcohol services when compared with metropolitan or coastal areas.

West of the great divide in regional New South Wales, we know that service delivery is inadequate. The tyranny of distance means that we do not have access to the same support as those who choose to live in the cities. That is despite, according to the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, evidence demonstrating that people who live in regional and remote Australia are more likely to drink frequently or at levels harmful to health. We also know that alcohol abuse is higher in regional Aboriginal populations and among farmers. Amphetamine use is a serious, ongoing issue in the regions and is overtaking alcohol as the most commonly treated drug of dependence. These stark facts should concern anyone who has any regard for public health and community cohesion. In a 2020-21 pre-budget submission to the Commonwealth Government, 14 organisations in drug and alcohol treatment fields stated:

According to the best estimates, up to 500,000 people can't get the help they need from alcohol and other drug treatment services ...

The cause for it is varied. It can be anything from extremely long waitlists extending beyond four months to access help, a lack of detoxification facilities to come off substances, concerns in the region about substances, or a lack

of harm reduction support. Those issues are not easily solved across New South Wales. They will require substantial investment from State and Commonwealth governments. But there is a plan in Tamworth, which includes retaining the existing Banksia mental health unit in public hands for the purpose of a drug and alcohol detoxification facility.

A new Tamworth mental health unit is being constructed, meaning that the existing mental health unit on the Tamworth hospital grounds will become vacant, and it should be repurposed into a drug and alcohol detox centre. That is an urgent must for government. I have already written to the Government and Hunter New England Health about the proposal, and it is time for a commitment. Once that facility is secured and the Government commits to repurposing that facility to a drug and alcohol detoxification centre, the next phase is rehabilitation. Tamworth needs a residential rehabilitation service. We need a site, and we need to provide that residential support, not just day programs. We also need a mentoring program and a culturally appropriate trauma-informed wellness centre to ensure that all those who are affected by drug and alcohol addiction can feel comfortable accessing tailored support.

The services and facilities are the next obvious step in improving healthcare services in Tamworth and the north-west, but they require government investment. I have been working with DART to raise the voice of our community, and I can update the House that a petition is currently underway in Tamworth that calls on the Government to act to improve health and social outcomes for our community. The petition has my support, and I look forward to tabling it in the Parliament soon. I encourage the people of the Tamworth area and the New England-North West to get behind the petition so that it can make a real change for the benefit of our community. I thank DART and its committee for their outstanding work. I look forward to continuing to work alongside them.

TRIBUTE TO JANET GOOD

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (22:32): Tonight in this Chamber I honour the late Janet Good, who passed away in July. My chief of staff, Ayshe Lewis, who has known Janet since 1983, delivered the eulogy at Janet's funeral. I will share an extract of Ayshe's eulogy for the *Hansard*. Janet was born in Portsmouth in the United Kingdom. She migrated to Australia in 1972 and got a job in the New South Wales public service and then as a librarian at TAFE. Janet was known to those who worked with her—including Public Service Association [PSA] general secretary Stewart Little—as a powerhouse intellect, a tireless trade unionist and political activist. As chair of the PSA's Women's Council, she led the driving force for structural change that saw the adoption of departmental committees and workplace groups in 1986. The structure remains today and is the strength of the democratic process of the union.

In 1987, Janet was elected the PSA's first female president; she was the first president elected by members in a general ballot. She lost the position in 1989 but returned as president in 1991, and in 1993 she became the general secretary, becoming the first member of the PSA to hold both positions of president and general secretary. Janet's leadership was marked by her intellect, her pragmatic and solution-focused approach, her support of women and providing opportunities for women's advancement. Janet showed leadership through many of the tough times, fighting the 1988 New South Wales Greiner Government's cuts to the public service. She took members to the streets, joining tens of thousands of union members protesting the bludgeoning industrial reforms by Peter Reith. Janet promoted unity not only within the PSA to fight those attacks but also across the union movement. On becoming president, she wrote in her column to members:

Unity must also mean unity within the union movement as a whole. In the face of attacks on unions by the new Right and the general climate of hostility to the labour movement, it is important that we demonstrate our support for other unions who come under attack so that we can look for their support to defend our rights as public sector workers.

I touch on some of the many significant achievements that were won under Janet's leadership. In 1993 the Fahey Liberal Government wanted to wipe out all existing awards and registered agreements and replace them with specific, closed enterprise agreements in every department. Janet Good was president at the time and was very clear about her views. She was not opposed to genuine enterprise bargaining on workplace reforms, but she was not going to stand by and allow the abolition of statewide awards or any attempt to kill off the arbitration system that PSA members depended on for wage justice and resolution of disputes. Janet described it at the time as "an unprecedented attack on the award system".

Janet Good led the PSA in taking the fight to the Industrial Relations Commission. She said at the time that it was not just about securing a pay increase; it was aimed at preserving the award system and the role of the Industrial Relations Commission as the independent umpire. That system continues to this day, despite the interlude of the former Coalition Government. But the fights that she had to face came not just from the government—the employer—but from within the union movement. In 1991 she successfully pushed back the

attempts to implement the grand plan for huge industry unions, which threatened the PSA's right to represent ancillary staff in schools.

Of course, Janet Good also did great work on pay equity. The librarians case, filed in 2000, was the first in New South Wales to be heard under the new pay equity principles. While Janet had already retired at that time, she supported the PSA submitting librarians as a suitable case study in the New South Wales Pay Equity Inquiry of 1998. A librarian herself, she championed that very successful case. In her last *Red Tape* column before her retirement in 2000, she wrote:

Enjoyment in your working life depends so much on being able to feel committed to the organisation you work for and the service you are providing.

Janet Good was certainly committed to the roles that the members entrusted her with. Vale, Janet Good.

MUSWELLBROOK EARTHQUAKES

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (22:37): Tonight, in a state of utter disbelief, I provide the House with an update on the earthquakes and aftershocks that shook Muswellbrook and the district during August and September. But the greatest "shock" is more recent than the nerve-racking experience that my constituents in the Upper Hunter recently endured. Today Muswellbrook Shire Council advised me that its application to have the event declared a natural disaster has been rejected. The council's media release stated:

Council was advised on Tuesday that "after careful consideration" the NSW Reconstruction Authority decided not to recommend a Natural Disaster Declaration for the event as it did not meet the criteria of "eligible disaster" as defined in the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) 2018.

The media release was headlined "Council frustrated by post-earthquake knock back," but "frustrated" barely touches the sides of my reaction. It is the icing on the cake of the frustration that is only now coming to the surface in Muswellbrook and the surrounding shire. On Friday 23 August, just as the midday radio news bulletin was going to air, my electorate office shook violently. It was 10 or 15 seconds that my staff will never forget. The Federal Government's earthquake monitoring agency, Geoscience Australia, recorded the seismic event near New South Wales's largest open-cut coalmine, Mount Arthur mine, as a magnitude 4.7 earthquake.

There were varying reports about the impacts. Some workers at the Mount Arthur mine suffered minor injuries. The NSW Police Force and the State Emergency Service were made aware of minor infrastructure damage. Being a Friday, some Muswellbrook schools sent their students home and businesses that had suffered damage closed early. But, generally, Muswellbrook dusted itself off and got on with the preparations for the weekend. I note that in media coverage that Friday Geoscience Australia's senior seismologist Dr Hadi Ghasemi said that there have been more than 150 events in the region in the past 20 years, with the last significant event a magnitude 4.4 in 2019. That tally would continue to grow in the hours, days and weeks that followed this event. According to Muswellbrook Shire Council there were more than 30 aftershock tremors. They included a 4.4 magnitude event just over 24 hours later on the Saturday, only to be followed by a dramatic wake-up call a week later when a 4.5 event hit just before 6.00 a.m. on Saturday 7 September.

The number of "moderate" earthquakes recorded by the Australian National Seismograph Network prompted Geoscience Australia to install four monitoring stations around Muswellbrook and Denman. Their task was to gather specific information about seismic activity in the area, allowing researchers to study the events in more detail. The response from the NSW Reconstruction Authority was to facilitate free earthquake education workshops in Muswellbrook and Denman held in mid-September. It was described as an opportunity to be prepared and obtain access to practical information.

I mentioned earlier that the greatest shock for the Muswellbrook community has been more recent. It can only be described as gobsmacking. Despite the evidence that I have outlined about the seismic events, my office has become aware in recent weeks that insurance companies have started questioning whether the damage claims they have received are indeed earthquake damage. According to some reports, an engineer representing insurance agencies has allegedly provided various explanations for the damage to homes. One insurer, though, assured me that it assesses earthquake claims on a case-by-case basis and that it is in the process of reviewing the claims. I hope that is the case.

The NSW Reconstruction Authority's decision not to recommend the Muswellbrook events for a natural disaster declaration does have me confused because its 2021 guidelines do list earthquakes as a natural disaster. It states that the disaster criteria is \$240,000 worth of damage. I call on the Premier, the education Minister and the health Minister to provide a full account to this House of the damage to State infrastructure that occurred in the Muswellbrook local government area. There are anecdotal reports of damage at Muswellbrook High School, the ambulance station and the hospital. We need to know what is going on. I encourage the people of

Muswellbrook, Denman and the communities of the Upper Hunter to come to me with their issues. I will continue to prosecute this case.

SENATOR LIDIA THORPE

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (22:42): Today I address the implied freedom of political communication, a right the High Court of Australia has identified as a fundamental part of the representative and responsible government that our Constitution upholds. That freedom is essential to ensuring that all voices, especially those historically marginalised, can participate in public discourse, even when that discourse is uncomfortable or controversial. Over the past week debate has been unfolding regarding Senator Lidia Thorpe's decision to disrupt the visit of the British monarch to the Federal Parliament. Some have labelled her actions as disrespectful and attention seeking, and they have drawn considerable media and public criticism. The truth is that there is an inherent, ongoing problem in Australia regarding the treatment of First Nations people—a problem that is closely tied to our colonial past. Frontier massacres, perpetuated in the name of the Crown by colonial forces, are a dark chapter in our history.

The injustices do not end there. We must acknowledge the systematic removal of children from their families, the denial of the right to work, the forced evictions from traditional lands and even the refusal of banks to provide home loans to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The list of abuses suffered by First Nations people is long, and it is one that continues to reverberate in our society today. If we take a moment to examine the statistics, the gravity of the situation becomes clear. Personal income for First Nations people is 60 per cent less than that of non-Indigenous Australians, and in remote areas the figure is as high as 85 per cent less. Nationally, in 2023, 44 per cent of children in out-of-home care were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander—a troubling increase of nearly four percentage points since 2019.

Life expectancy for Indigenous men is 72 years compared with 82 years for non-Indigenous men. For Indigenous women, it is 76 years compared with 86 years for non-Indigenous women. The incarceration rate for non-Indigenous Australians is 208 per 100,000 adults, whereas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it is a staggering 2,651 per 100,000, and that figure continues to rise. Those statistics represent more than just numbers; they reflect the lived reality of First Nations people. It is a reality marked by disadvantage, discrimination and generational trauma. The long-lasting impacts of colonialism are evident in nearly every aspect of life for Australia's Indigenous population, so is it any wonder that a figure like Senator Thorpe, in her protest, felt compelled to speak out? Whether or not we agree with her methods, the message she was trying to convey was clear: Truth-telling about Australia's colonial past and its ongoing effects must be heard.

Political expression is a right in Australia, and while some may view her actions as inappropriate or disrespectful, there is no denying that her protest brings attention to issues that are far too often ignored. In a country that values free speech, sometimes uncomfortable truths must be voiced in ways that capture the public's attention. Yes, Senator Thorpe's protest may have caused outrage, but it is also a reflection of the frustration felt by many who see little meaningful change in the lives of First Nations people. For those angered by the lasting legacy of colonialism, there are few ways to express that anger and ensure it is truly felt by those in power. If our national media were to dedicate any coverage to the complex challenges faced by Indigenous communities, rather than endless columns about the fictional stories of the monarchy visiting the races, then we might be in a more informed and empathetic society.

Too often, the voices of those suffering are drowned out by the noise of pomp and ceremony, yet those voices have every right to be heard. As for the outrage directed at Senator Thorpe, we should remember that our current British monarch is no stranger to dissent. When he was first invested as Prince of Wales, he was met with protests, hunger strikes and public ridicule by Welsh nationalists. He was shouted down and walked out on at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Aberystwyth. In the face of such resistance, the world kept turning, and so it will again. Ultimately, whether we agree with the methods or not, the freedom to protest is a crucial part of our democracy. It is a reflection of our commitment to political expression, even when that expression challenges the status quo. The legacy of colonialism and its impacts demand our attention, and it is only through facing these uncomfortable truths that we will move forward as a nation.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE POLICE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (22:46): I argue strongly for many things in this place because my community has missed out for too long. I always talk about the 30,000 homes with no sewer, schools or services, which is an awful outcome for a community to contend with. On top of that, we have a community that lives in villages about to be filled with infill developments, but still has no services. Letters fired off from council by countless mayors have led to nothing. The election of members on both sides of politics at both the State and Federal level has also led to nothing. While I feel that we may have had great success with the Picton bypass

promise and planned construction, we need schools and other State services. It is time that the State plans for the future, not just cleans up what we are left with from the past.

That brings me to tonight's topic. Picton Police Station, on Argyle Street, is next to the historic courthouse. It is underutilised to the point that, when I visited with the Premier and we knocked on the door, no-one answered. Adjoining the station are two additional buildings that have been closed for many years due to asbestos. One of the most expensive pieces of real estate in Picton sits dormant. The station is merely a stop point for breaks for police vehicles that drive through our area from the central police area command, or PAC, at Narellan. On a good day a decade ago it may have taken 20 minutes door to door to Picton. Now that we have traffic and additional intersections at Spring Farm, the journey can be 30 to 40 minutes. In the north of my electorate the story in Warragamba and The Oaks is the same. Both stations are little houses that have small phones with a blue button that rings the police. To be honest, a Telstra phone box would be more useful.

Wollondilly is in dire need of a police area command so that officers are central and do not need to drive long distances between jobs and my people do not need to wait to get help. Fortunately, we have the land in Picton. The police own the corner precinct adjoining the commercial land. The building could be a few storeys higher and, if it was set back, it would not look too bad. It would certainly be less of an eyesore than the council-planned government services building they are constructing on the same block, which is four storeys high. The police block also has access to Margaret Street and the car park adjoining IGA behind the courthouse. It would be suitable to house the vehicles required for the PAC. The town would benefit from the business provided by the officers, and the community would feel safer with the permanent 24-hour access provided by the PAC in Wollondilly. It is an opportunity worth taking, and the Government must consider it.

I understand the complexities of government and I know things take time. However, I can only judge the Government on the basis of my experience with it. While I have been very happy with my engagement with the Premier and much of the Cabinet, the action or inaction of some departments has made that relationship difficult, particularly in this instance. I have written to the Minister and met with the Government to discuss the matter. The union is supportive and the police want it to go ahead as soon as possible. The hold-up is not from lack of information or data; at present, the delay rests with the Minister.

I get upset with politicians who are unnecessarily alarmist. While I do not mean to bring alarm to the House or my community by mentioning the matter, we have needs and crime is increasing, along with development. Without police, that increase in crime must be the fault of someone. I look forward to receiving a reply and seeing action from the Government. I have faith that good people in good places can lead to good things. It is time for the Government to do the right thing and support the police, the union and my community by giving Wollondilly its own PAC in Picton. I am still waiting for the information that I was promised a couple of months ago.

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH FUNDING

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (22:50): This afternoon the Parliament held an event for the Parliamentary Friends of Heart Health, co-hosted by the member for Willoughby and organised by the Cardiovascular Research Network. We heard from four outstanding early- and mid-career researchers about the groundbreaking research they are doing into cardiovascular health. That research included the use of nanotechnology in medical devices to predict heart attacks and heart disease, studies of the genetic markers for those who might have heart disease or heart health issues in the future, and investigations into the comorbidity link between cancers and cardiovascular disease. Sometimes cancer treatments like chemotherapy have to be stopped because of their impact on a person's heart. That groundbreaking Australian research could potentially underlie innovation and commercial discovery, and it underpins Australia's future.

At the event I was struck by what is going on politically around universities, and by the lack of understanding among the general public and in public discourse about Australia's research funding model. Very few people understand that for every dollar of research funding that a researcher receives, its affiliated institution—generally a university—needs to find another dollar for the infrastructure for that research. Some 30 per cent of that money comes from government-related sources, so another 70 per cent has to come from somewhere. Successive governments over many decades have reduced the amount of government funding for Australian research. Where does this money come from? It comes from international education.

That 70¢ in the dollar is used to fund laboratories, software and research assistants, and it comes from international education. Public commentary is very often about the impact of international students on Australia's labour force and on the \$40 billion that international education brings to Australia, but what is not talked about is the impact of international student caps on our world-class universities' ability to fund future-focused, world-leading Australian research. What is often not understood is that every dollar that a university makes from international education is a dollar that the Australian taxpayer does not need to put in to fund that groundbreaking Australian research.

We recently witnessed the Olympics, and when you turned on the TV or radio, you heard about our well-deserved achievements in sport, in the pool, on the track and in the field. But if somebody were to ask me what the top five world-leading Australian research achievements are, I am not sure I could name them. But they exist. I believe that, as a country, we need to do much more to celebrate our research achievements because they are there. We need to elevate, celebrate and promote world-leading Australian research, most of which is done through universities. We need to do that in a way that engenders a sense of national pride so that when we turn on the radio or TV, we hear about the world-leading work that Australian researchers do. If that happens, then perhaps we can build the public support that world-leading future-focused Australian research could and should have in our public discourse. This debate goes beyond the migration debate and how many international students universities should have. It is really about the proper funding model for Australian research, such that it can be successful and result in innovations that can underpin future Australian economic prosperity.

TREE VANDALISM

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (22:55): I wish to address the serious and growing issue of tree vandalism across New South Wales, including in my electorate of Willoughby. The poisoning and removal of trees, often to improve property views and increase property values, is an act that not only damages the local environment but also undermines the social and environmental integrity of our urban spaces. Regrettably, tree vandalism has become increasingly prevalent in New South Wales in recent times, yet official data remains scarce and hard to garner. Councils find it difficult to track and record instances of tree vandalism due to the high burden of proof required to hold culprits accountable and the often long lead times associated with establishing accountability for such crimes. Trees, many of which are decades old, are being poisoned or illegally removed, with local wildlife and communities paying the price.

The recent unlawful destruction of over 260 trees on Crown land in the protected escarpment below Willowie Road in Castle Cove in my electorate is a stark example of how far this issue has escalated. Another recent and smaller example involved simply a number of trees on a quiet suburban street in Chatswood. The rate of illegal lopping, poisoning and cutting down of mature trees on both private and Crown land is shocking. We all understand how beautiful and important trees are, especially given their role and number in an urban environment. It can often take decades to replace the sorts of trees we have seen lost at a local level in my area. Trees play a crucial role in absorbing heat, sequestering carbon, generating oxygen and supporting the flora and fauna that rely on our urban bushland. Their destruction impacts not only the environment but also the quality of life in our communities.

Clearly, the penalties for tree vandalism in New South Wales are inadequate. The current fines—\$3,000 for individuals and \$6,000 for companies—fail to act as a strong enough deterrent. Fines at that level are too readily seen and treated as a cost of doing business. In other jurisdictions—for example, the Australian Capital Territory—fines can reach as high as \$80,000. It is evident that New South Wales needs stronger measures and tougher deterrents. Local councils, including Willoughby and North Sydney, have been calling for the Government to review penalty infringement notices and increase fines to reflect the real value of trees in urban areas. This is an issue across Sydney's North Shore and beyond, with high-profile recent cases of tree vandalism in Balmoral and Longueville to name just two more.

Yet the challenges do not stop at fines. Prosecuting offenders is difficult due to the lack of direct evidence, and even when fines are imposed, they are often seen as just another development cost for those seeking to improve property values at the expense of our environment. In addition, the tree lopping sector in New South Wales is largely unregulated. While tree removal requires council approval, the practice of tree lopping remains largely unchecked. All of the above means that, too often, property owners and and/or their agents, whether tree loppers or otherwise, are able to remove trees without adequate consequence, often leaving councils with little power to act.

Other jurisdictions in Australia have more robust frameworks, and we should look to those models to strengthen our own protections. Stronger fines, clearer regulations and perhaps stricter qualifications for those carrying out this work could help ensure that New South Wales is equipped to better protect our trees. I call on the New South Wales Government to urgently address this issue and to increase the penalties for tree vandalism. Many local residents have raised it with me. I have spoken up in community meetings on the issue and in the media, and I have written to the Minister in this place. The Minns Labor Government's response has been slow, noncommittal and somewhat unclear. Real action is needed now. This could include criminal convictions and even prison sentences for the most serious cases, and should include consideration of substantial rewards for information that leads to a conviction.

Without greater deterrents, these illegal acts will continue to undermine our urban environment. I believe that this is an issue where bipartisan support can be achieved. I urge the Government to step up. Trees are critical to the environmental and social health of our communities, and we must act now to ensure their protection. The

destruction of our urban trees cannot continue to be tolerated. This Parliament should act. I thank Pia Barnett, who has done some research as an intern in my office and whose paper has helped to prepare and underpin these remarks. For Pia's generation and for all generations I will keep advocating for better when it comes to preserving our local natural environment.

WESTFIELD PENRITH LOCAL HERO

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (23:00): I am proud to inform the House that dedicated volunteer Elizabeth "Beth" Spanos, coordinator and committee member of the beloved Penrith Community Kitchen, has been honoured as the 2024 Westfield Penrith Local Hero and has secured a \$20,000 grant for her organisation. Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted on by their communities. The finalist with the most community votes becomes the Westfield Penrith Local Hero. It was no surprise that Beth was nominated and received the highest number of community votes. With Beth's unwavering support, the Penrith Community Kitchen has recently expanded its service to collaborate with 12 local schools on its Food for Local Kids program.

The weekly service provides breakfast, lunch, snacks and emergency food for students to take home to family members. This program helps to ensure that students have access to basic nutrition, enabling them to focus on their studies and participate fully in school activities. Beth's empathy and dedication stem from her own childhood experiences of community support following her mother's passing. This personal history drives her to give back and support others in need. Penrith is the richer for her volunteering. Beth said:

My belief is that if you can avoid going hungry, your outlook can change. And if you have someone who will listen to and care for you, even if it's only briefly, you can feel safe. And that's how the world can become a little brighter.

Under her guidance, Penrith Community Kitchen serves 500 people per week and impacts many more by addressing hunger, fostering a supportive community environment and combating social isolation. The kitchen not only provides meals to our most vulnerable residents but also distributes emergency food hampers all year round and puts on Christmas meals each year. The \$20,000 grant for Penrith Community Kitchen will be put to good use in the community, as the kitchen does not receive any ongoing funding. It relies solely on the generosity of local businesses and community members to sustain its operations. The annual rent is approximately \$39,000, and monthly food expenses are around \$1,500. Without the support of local food drives, OzHarvest, Foodbank, and local schools, Rotary clubs and Lions clubs, meeting the increasing demands would be challenging, especially given the economic hurdles in 2024.

The kitchen is managed by one paid coordinator and a team of 40 dedicated volunteers, who work on a roster, cooking with love for the community. The volunteers find fulfilment and friendship while giving back. The volunteer committee works tirelessly to raise funds, collaborate with local businesses and offer hands-on assistance in times of emergency, such as during fires, floods and the pandemic, but especially at Christmas time, when the need is always greatest. The Penrith Community Kitchen celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in July 2024. It continues to honour its mission that no-one goes hungry. With the support of the community and its unwavering commitment, we look forward to many more years of it serving those in need and strengthening our local community.

I also congratulate the other two Westfield finalists, Joshua Montillano, a youth drug and alcohol counsellor at Ted Noffs Foundation, who has built a strong rapport with at-risk youth. Through harm reduction and creative therapeutic workshops, Josh provides treatment to over 100 young people each year. He is motivated to give back to the community and advocate for those in need. The other finalist is Sue Bor, a dedicated advocate for children in crisis and a volunteer with Kassie's Cases. That initiative provides suitcases filled with clothing, toys and essentials for kids entering foster care or escaping domestic violence. Each bag packed and distributed by Sue offers children a sense of belonging and dignity. Both of this year's finalists have secured a \$5,000 grant for their respective organisations.

BATHURST ELECTORATE RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (23:05): The NSW Rural Fire Service is a vital organisation that supports communities across most parts of this State. Brigades are made up of volunteers who have selflessly decided to dedicate their time and energy to protecting the communities they are part of and the land they live on. They play a significant role in ensuring the safety of our families, homes and the natural environment, but their role extends beyond fighting flames. RFS volunteers are involved in prevention, education and community engagement around natural disasters, helping to build awareness and preparedness in our neighbourhoods. They share their knowledge, instilling confidence and fostering a sense of security in those around them. Their efforts ensure that our communities are better equipped to handle emergencies, and for that we are truly grateful.

The reason I stand before this House today and raise the contributions of the RFS in New South Wales is that last weekend in my electorate of Bathurst and the surrounding region we received over \$6.5 million worth of

facilities and infrastructure and acknowledged over 1,900 years of service by local volunteers. I was privileged to attend two new fire station openings, hand over four firefighting vehicles and present over 30 long service clasps and national service medals. The Yetholme Brigade has been without a station since 2019, when snow damaged the previous structure beyond repair. This is the third shed for the brigade in 15 years due to a tree falling on the shed before that. It is third time lucky for those dedicated volunteers, and they sure do feel lucky with the brand-new facility they have received. Boasting two engine bays plus an indoor bathroom, which they had not had before, they are extremely exciting additions. The new structure is much better equipped to withstand the unpredictable weather of Yetholme.

In Blayney, multiple brigades from across the Canobolas Zone gathered to open the new Blayney fire station. That was a first for members in this region who, until now, never had a premises of their own to call home. Prior to last week Blayney RFS members had been storing equipment and working out of a shed attached to the Fire and Rescue NSW station. With an upgrade complete for Fire and Rescue, it was only right that the RFS facility got an upgrade as well. With three engine bays, training facilities and over \$230,000 worth of concrete, the new fire station has everything the members have been wishing for. Without those members, these sheds would be left empty and collecting cobwebs, calls for help would go unanswered, and fires would burn through farmland, homes and maybe even towns.

RFS volunteers are not just volunteers; they are heroes. Each time the alarm sounds, they answer the call, leaving behind their daily lives to face the flames and the unpredictable elements. Their courage and commitment are nothing short of inspiring. They embody the spirit of resilience, standing shoulder to shoulder with their fellow firefighters in yellow, ready to face whatever challenges come their way. During the ceremonies we heard stories of sacrifice, bravery and unbelievable circumstances. One family indicated that, as members, they were often called out on Christmas Day. They spoke about one Christmas when the alarm sounded for a house fire. The volunteers left their families, meals and presents, and sprang into action to tackle the raging fire that had engulfed a house in the small rural village. They brought the blaze under control and prevented it from spreading to neighbouring properties. The volunteers did get back to their Christmas dinner, but it was late in the evening and by then it was cold.

A long-serving volunteer reminded me of how times have changed. When he joined his local brigade as a young man, he was equipped with a hessian bag and dropped off in a fire zone to combat flames by stamping them out with the bag. Once that had disintegrated, he was left to use tree branches and his boots to get the job done. He could not wipe the smile off his face as he recounted to me the very first time he saw an aeroplane extinguish a blaze with one squirt. He marvelled at the advancement of technology and the positive benefits it has brought. He also vowed to never again use a hessian bag. We have lost a lot in these times, and there is a lot more that we could lose, including not only houses but also farms, livelihoods and industries that generations of families have built up and that we rely on as the backbone of this State. We would be lost without the Rural Fire Service.

The knowledge members of brigades have to minimise the impact of disasters when they strike is unmatched. Their expertise has been built up over decades. In Blayney alone, I acknowledged 900 hours of long service to the RFS. Members received clasps for 50 to 60 years of service. There is no doubt RFS members support one another through thick and thin, demonstrating the power of camaraderie and selflessness. As I reflect on the impact the firefighters have made, I cannot forget their sacrifices: missing family gatherings, working long hours and sometimes putting themselves in harm's way. Their sacrifices are profound and I want all RFS firefighters to know they do not go unnoticed. Last weekend the keys were handed over to four new firefighting vehicles for Neville, Lyndhurst, Emu Swamp and Barry-Hobby's brigades. Today I express my deep gratitude to members of the RFS across the State.

WYONG ROAD

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (23:10): The world has many famous roadways. The United States has Route 66, its oldest highway. France has Champs-Élysées, which is more of a cultural experience than a roadway. I am quite fond of Karl-Marx-Allee in Berlin, which is an example of density done well. But my favourite roadway is Wyong Road in the Entrance electorate. The scenic showpiece main road stretches from the freeway at Tuggerah all the way down to the Central Coast Highway at Long Jetty. It traverses the beautiful suburbs of Berkeley Vale, Killarney Vale and Tumby Umbi. It carries people from the interior to the beachside suburbs of The Entrance, Toowoong Bay, Bateau Bay and Shelly Beach. For much of its life, the road featured roundabouts at every intersection, including the grandest roundabout at the Central Coast Highway. The thing that makes Wyong Road great—and is still a feature of the road—is its generous landscaping. It has wide, tree-covered medians dividing the four lanes. The verges are not covered in concrete, but generously landscaped. That landscaping was planned.

The road, in the form it takes today, was a vision of what was Wyong Shire Council and the former Labor mayor and shire president Tony Sheridan. We do not often talk about council engineers, but back then Kerry Yates

was a well-regarded council engineer. Sheridan and Yates had a vision to link several local roads into a main road, which would become Wyong Road. That ambitious vision required money and, of course, the road has a political context. I thank the Parliamentary Library for providing me with a bunch of resources about the history of Wyong Road. Back in 1985 the then member for Tuggerah, Harry Moore, announced the Central Coast Road Improvement Program, which included better link roads connecting to the freeway.

In 1987 that was followed by an announcement by the Minister for Public Works, Laurie Brereton, to upgrade Wyong Road from Shelly Beach to Tuggerah to a four-lane, high-standard road. In 1988 there was a change of government. Bob Graham was elected the member for The Entrance, which was a newly created seat. Soon after, he issued a press release that announced that the commencement of the construction of the road was just around the corner. In 1990 Bob Graham, as was his style, had Premier Greiner visit the coast to open the road. A press release states:

90 children from nearby Berkley Vale Primary School will be there at the opening to watch the Premier and the other dignitaries drive down the new road in a fleet of vintage cars.

That was Bob Graham's style. A press release that came out soon after in 1990 noted:

The Premier, Mr Greiner, officially opened these sections on April 9 this year, but traffic couldn't use them for several days after that because of the weather.

Bob Graham was returned to Parliament in 1991, but by 1992 a by-election was ordered by the Court of Disputed Returns. The Labor candidate, Grant McBride, gave a commitment to complete Wyong Road. Bob Graham lost the by-election, probably in part because of the delays and underfunding of the road. It was finally finished with Grant McBride as the local member.

There have been changes since that time to what is now called B74 State Main Road. Traffic lights have replaced some of the roundabouts. The bean counters who managed our council in administration over the past couple of years have failed to maintain the vegetation landscape as it should be. I assure my constituents that I respect the vision and hard work of my predecessors, Tony and Bob, in creating a showpiece boulevard for the Central Coast. I will do all I can to see that vision become a living and enduring reality for the Central Coast and The Entrance electorate.

SHOALHAVEN CANCER SERVICES

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (23:15): One of the reasons I stood for State Parliament was to fight for vital State funding for a cancer service in the Shoalhaven following my mum's first cancer diagnosis. That fight united the community in a campaign and fundraising effort because so many people had been touched by that insidious disease. I remember meeting people who had to travel between the Shoalhaven and Wollongong to get cancer treatment. Now, we have a fully functional cancer centre with two linear accelerators. My mum has had two subsequent cancer diagnoses, and I am very proud to say she has beaten them both. My mum grew up on the backstreets of Edinburgh, and she is the toughest person I know. I am so proud that I could play a part in helping her and so many others get the treatment they needed.

I stood for Parliament to get things done, and I am very proud to have lobbied and secured more than \$1 billion in health infrastructure to improve hospitals that service my community. That funding was allocated by the former Coalition Government but, to be frank, no-one actually cares which side allocates the funds as long as the services are delivered. Currently the Shoalhaven Hospital is receiving a much-needed upgrade, and a brand new hospital for Shellharbour is now under construction. Planning for both those hospitals started well over a decade ago, and I am proud to have played my part in constructively working with the Government and NSW Health to make the case, secure the funds and deliver the projects.

I am passionate about getting results that matter and improving local health services. In spite of \$780 million of taxpayer money being spent on a new Shellharbour Hospital, that once-in-a-generation opportunity is sadly lacking a number of things that the Government continues to ignore. Having been a Cabinet Minister, I know how the system works. The bureaucrats deliver the project, but Ministers can and should intervene as required, based on good judgement. Two things that are missing from the new Shellharbour Hospital beggar belief. The Government is well aware of the problems but continues to ignore them. Building a new hospital happens rarely. We should be building it once and building it right.

The first issue I raise is the lack of a helipad at the new Shellharbour Hospital. The existing Shellharbour Hospital has a helipad. The new \$780 million hospital, which is currently under construction, will not. Whilst the Minister says that the design of the new hospital incorporates a helipad, the fact is that the helipad remains unfunded and will not be open on day one of the operation of the hospital unless the Minister makes a decision and directs Health Infrastructure—his department—to build it. Labor's current plan is to fly critically ill patients into Shellharbour Airport at Albion Park, which is several kilometres from the new hospital, and then transport

the patients by road all the way down the Princes Highway and all the way down the often heavily congested Dunmore Road, past a major school that services both primary and secondary students.

If one is going to have a serious medical episode, according to the logic of this Government and its bevy of Sir Humphrey Applebys, one should not have it during school hours. How utterly ridiculous. If the lack of a helipad at the new hospital when the existing hospital has one seems ridiculous, it gets far worse. Since Sir Humphrey has gained a mention, I recently received an answer to a question on notice from the health Minister that Sir Humphrey would deem "courageous". On 15 August I asked a rather innocuous question about access arrangements to the new Shellharbour Hospital.

I thank the Minister for at least being honest—come in spinner! In response to my question, the Minister confirmed that Health Infrastructure is working with Transport for NSW to "ensure there is suitable pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the new hospital". We do not have a helipad for critically ill parents, but we do have a cracking, you-beaut, absolutely mint cycleway. I knew this Government was good at peddling nonsense, but that takes the cake. With answers like that, the Minister does not need a pushbike; he needs a unicycle. Does the Government expect people who have broken their legs to ride to emergency? Does he expect those having a heart attack to just stroll down a perfectly formed path? It appears this Government is more concerned with pedestrians than patients. I would say strike me pink, but I am too far gone.

The second thing missing is a maternity unit. The southern Illawarra is the fastest growing area in New South Wales, outside of south-western Sydney. The new hospital should be servicing the needs of a growing community, but this brand-spanking-new hospital will not have a maternity service because the Government refuses to allocate resources. To her credit, the member for Shellharbour has called for the same thing. Health should not be about politics, but the Government is about politics. Recently, a photo op with Labor members for the announcement of BESIX Watpac as the successful contractor excluded both the popularly elected Shellharbour mayor and me as the neighbouring State member. Those sorts of photo ops and people taking of credit for projects should not be occurring, particularly when we have all been involved. The Premier had the good grace to involve others in the metro project opening. I suggest he should do the same with health.

SHEPHERD CENTRE ORAN PARK

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (23:20): Today I speak about two important achievements in the field of health care in New South Wales. Both milestones highlight our State's leadership and medical innovation in paediatric care, particularly for those with hearing loss. On 30 July this year I had the honour of representing Premier Chris Minns and the Minister for Health at the official opening of the Shepherd Centre's newest facility in Oran Park. I was joined by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the Federal Minister for Health, Mark Butler, along with local MPs and community leaders. The Shepherd Centre is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing specialised programs for children with hearing loss and their families. Over the years it has been at the forefront of offering vital support and services that transform lives, enabling children to develop speech and language skills that give them the best chance of reaching their full potential.

The new centre at Oran Park marks a significant milestone for paediatric care in Macarthur and the south-west. With the area being home to many young families, it is a much-needed addition to our community. The centre is expected to support over 2,500 children and their families, providing them with the resources, guidance and care they need as they navigate the challenges of hearing loss. Importantly, that achievement would not have been possible without the support of the Australian Government, which committed \$2.4 million, and the New South Wales Government, which contributed \$2.5 million.

I thank everyone involved, from the Government representatives to the dedicated teams at the Shepherd Centre, led by CEO Dr Aleisha Davis, for making the facility a reality. The project is not just about bricks and mortar but about creating a brighter future for thousands of children. In the centre's short existence, I have had the pleasure to witness firsthand the difference it is already making to young lives. In April I had an early look at the Oran Park facility prior to the official opening. It was then that I met a young boy named Kadir, a recent cochlear implant recipient, and his mum. Both were also in attendance in July for the big opening. It was remarkable to see the impact Kadir's implant was already making and how quickly his language and broader communication skills were developing.

The launch of the centre is fitting as this year marks the fortieth anniversary of the first successful cochlear implant surgery in our State and an extraordinary legacy of medical innovation in New South Wales. On 15 August we remembered the life-changing moment for Sue Walters, who became the first person in New South Wales to receive a cochlear implant. After becoming deaf in her twenties due to meningitis, in 1984 she volunteered for a groundbreaking procedure at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Although controversial at the time, that surgery, performed by pioneering surgeon Professor Bill Gibson, would go on to change the lives of countless individuals

around the world. Six months after the implant, Ms Walters became the first deaf person in the world to make a phone call using her cochlear implant—a remarkable achievement in medical history.

Today about 15,000 Australians are living with cochlear implants. However, it is worth noting that only 10 per cent of those who could benefit from the devices are currently using them. Over the past four decades, continuous advancements in technology have resulted in smaller, more comfortable and more precise cochlear implants that integrate seamlessly into daily life. Professor Gibson and the team that pioneered these efforts deserve our deepest gratitude for their relentless commitment to pushing the boundaries of what is medically possible. Their work continues to impact lives both in Australia and globally.

We continue to build on this work by funding and supporting programs that enable our brightest medical minds to continue their research in New South Wales. The importance of fostering innovation in medical technology cannot be overstated. We have an obligation to ensure that this legacy of cutting-edge medical advancement continues, and that our State remains a global leader in medical technology innovation. Our State is the birthplace of the development and manufacture of these life-changing devices. Both the opening of the Shepherd Centre in Oran Park and the fortieth anniversary of the cochlear implant in New South Wales are milestones that remind us of what we can achieve when we invest in innovation and care for the most vulnerable among us.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (23:25): I speak tonight about housing supply and planning in New South Wales, specifically in the Davidson electorate. To get straight to the point, the Minns Labor Government is failing when it comes to housing supply and conducting good planning public policy. More supply is required to make housing more affordable, to ensure that rents do not continue to skyrocket and to boost home ownership. Let us look at the facts. Firstly, there were 42,446 total dwelling approvals under the Labor Government in 2023-24. This is the lowest number in 12 years and is well below the target of 377,000 over five months, by 2029, as set by the National Housing Accord. In contrast, in 2020-21 there was a high of 60,213 dwelling approvals under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government.

Secondly, there were 74,592 housing completions in 2018 under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. Thirdly, the Liberal-Nationals Government had a strong result for approvals and completions without the policy of Transport Oriented Development [TOD] by Labor. These are simply snap rezonings by a big, centralised government that completely ignores the community. How is it that a Minister for Planning and Public Spaces from Wollongong with a public service based in Parramatta is determining rezoning policy in Ku-ring-gai? TODs are ineffective, bad public policy, both for the lack of public consultation and for the lack of policy effectiveness. I note that this is not just my opinion. It is also the opinion of the Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment, which held an inquiry into TODs. The report states:

There are legitimate questions, however, about the design and execution of the Transport Oriented Development program as a response to the housing crisis.

...

This inquiry heard arguments that the TOD program's one-size-fits-all approach is not well enough designed to stimulate appropriate housing supply, address affordability issues, or ensure that the type of housing delivered meets the needs of communities for long-term, liveable homes.

The report contains the Coalition response to planning policy and TODs. The shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces said:

The Government has put the cart before the horse with the introduction of the TOD SEPP. The Labor Government told councils this SEPP will be in place until councils have finalised strategic planning and rezoning. Generally, it should be the other way around. The Coalition proposes a different approach—affording Councils the opportunity to formulate their own plans in consultation with their community to achieve meaningful increases in housing supply with a very strict timeframe and clear sanctions for non-participation.

I believe that a good housing policy is one about which the community is consulted and the community has a say on what rezoning is and is not acceptable. It is one in which investment is made in local infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, roads, transport, water and energy infrastructure, and one that respects the character of the community, such as the natural and built environment. It is a policy that actually increases housing supply. TODs fail on all five of these housing policy points.

In the Davidson electorate, there are TODs in Roseville, Lindfield, Killara and Gordon. They commenced in April 2024. I cannot emphasise enough that I have seen firsthand the anxiety, stress and discomfort that residents have felt because of the TODs. This is because, firstly, residents are concerned they may be missing out on getting a good deal from developers. Secondly, residents who live in heritage properties are concerned their properties will suddenly be surrounded by seven- to nine-storey buildings. Thirdly, residents who are not within 400 metres but live close or on the border will suddenly have their properties surrounded by seven- to nine-storey buildings.

Finally, residents worry that the character of the community is forever destroyed. I conclude by reflecting on my inaugural speech, in which I said:

... a piece of advice from my former colleague and member of this place Peta Seaton. She said, "There will come a time that you fall in love with your electorate." It is very true. In Davidson we love our historic homes, our coffee shops, our world-class schools, our bike trails, our Roseville Bridge and our North Shore rail line. But wait, there's more. We love our tree canopy and national parks—Garigal, Ku-ring-gai Chase and Lane Cove

I know that all members of this House absolutely love their community. They love representing it, love the people and love the character. I love my community of the electorate of Davidson that encompasses both Ku-ring-gai and the northern beaches. I ask the Minns Government to start respecting communities and not destroy them.

DR DAVID GILLESPIE

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (23:30): It is a bittersweet moment this week as I commend the remarkable contributions of the Hon. Dr David Gillespie, the member for Lyne. As David looks forward to his well-deserved retirement and time with his family, his tremendous impact on both his community and the Australian Parliament are not overlooked. David's impact on rural and regional Australia stretches beyond politics. It is rooted in a deep connection to his community, where his genuine care for the people of Lyne is evident in everything he does. His approachable manner and unwavering commitment have set a gold standard for what it means to represent rural Australia.

Born and raised in Queanbeyan, David's deep affinity for rural life shaped his perspective on politics, and that understanding has driven him to always place his community at the forefront of his decision-making. Before stepping into politics, David built a distinguished career as a doctor and later as a specialist gastroenterologist, dedicating over 20 years to improving regional health care. His work in medicine was not just about diagnosing illnesses or writing prescriptions; it was about listening to people, understanding their concerns and providing them with the best possible care. That same compassionate approach carried seamlessly into his political life. Whether it is through his advocacy for rural hospitals or securing incentives to attract healthcare professionals to stay and work in regional areas, David has long been a champion for improving healthcare access in rural and regional Australia. Long may that continue. He knows that quality health care should not be a postcode lottery.

Beyond health care, David's vision for his electorate has led to transformative infrastructure projects that will benefit the mid coast for generations. That includes securing over \$10 million for the Taree Universities Campus, an investment that will shape the futures of countless families and students, who will hopefully take up medical degrees; securing \$130 million for the Newcastle Airport runway upgrade and international terminal, connecting regional Australia to global opportunities; and his advocacy in helping secure 80 per cent of the funding for the \$820 million duplication of the Oxley Highway to Kempsey and \$1.75 billion for the M1 to Raymond Terrace. That has not gone unnoticed. The list of David's accomplishments goes on and on, each project a testament to his commitment to delivering for his electorate.

David's tireless advocacy has been instrumental in cutting through bureaucratic red tape to create real opportunities for farmers and small business owners, people who are the backbone of our rural economies. With personal experience running a business in Port Macquarie, David deeply understands the challenges faced by small business owners and primary producers. David has always believed in creating a level playing field for our farmers and graziers, ensuring they are not unfairly burdened by excessive regulation. For him, it is about more than just policy; it is about ensuring that rural communities not only survive but thrive. For the past 11 years, David has been supported by his wife, Charlotte, and their family. He has often spoken about the sacrifices his family has made, with the job taking him away to Canberra for Parliament and across Australia as a Minister for more than half the year, every year. I often see Charlotte at events with David, and the sacrifices they have both made are appreciated.

That time away from home is something I know all too well. I can only imagine the relief that David's family are feeling as he looks forward to spending more time at home with them. But, without a doubt, it is a loss for the Federal Parliament and for his community to have David retire. David Gillespie's contributions to the Australian Parliament, his electorate and rural Australia speak volumes about his character. The people of Lyne have every reason to be immensely proud of the man who has represented them so diligently. On behalf of his constituents, I thank Dr Dave. His commitment to rural Australia, health care and his community has made a difference that will be felt for years to come.

HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE ENTERPRISES

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (23:34): I bring to the attention of the House the success of several businesses and growing community organisations within the Hawkesbury electorate, ranging from restaurants showcasing their cuisine and culinary experiences, to not-for-profit organisations geared towards addressing hardships faced by constituents. Carrying the significant title of being the third oldest site of British

settlement on the Australian mainland, Hawkesbury offers several historic establishments for the public to experience. The Macquarie Arms Hotel, built in 1815 and opened by Governor Macquarie, plays a pivotal role in the heritage and community of Windsor. Considered to be the oldest pub on mainland Australia, operators continue serving meals and beverages to consumers amid the historical architecture and artefacts that the hotel possesses. The Macquarie Arms now offers the opportunity for local bands and solo artists to showcase their talents live at the venue. This expansion allows for effective connection between the interests of modern pub goers and the historic nature of the enterprise.

Richmond Club also has historical significance. It originated as a meeting site for a group of returned servicemen in the 1940s. Over several decades, the club has diversified its offering to suit the market and recently opened Goji, a restaurant aimed at providing modern Asian cuisine in the heart of the Hawkesbury, in my hometown of Richmond. Following the legacy of pride, belonging and mateship, Richmond Club, with its associated establishments, is one of the leading private employers of the region. A number of organisations geared towards supporting vulnerable individuals have also been founded in the region. Resident Jacky Turano tells her story of using her own birthday money to purchase and donate beanies and blankets to the homeless shelter in Windsor during an intense winter. Jacky's actions transformed into a vision of extending compassion, love and support for those in need, and that is when the Jeremiah Project evolved.

This not-for-profit organisation operates today as a ministry for people experiencing homelessness across Sydney. A charity fun run, winter sleepout appeal and food drives during the festive season have all provided yield and elevated the stature of the Jeremiah Project, particularly around Hawkesbury. Resident and beacon of strength Diane Russell also offers support to the region through her Hope4u Foundation and the Jarron Project. Driven by the loss of her two sons to suicide, Diane established this charity to aid those navigating the turbulent waters of mental health, suicide grief and domestic violence. Advocating for those experiencing those issues and others, including PTSD, depression and anxiety, the foundation now partners with several mental health support ambassadors to provide effective care and therapies to individuals. Workshops aimed at empowering and educating those with trauma, as well as grief support groups and animal-assisted therapies, are recent expansions of the organisation, achieving goals of giving long-term assistance to people in need.

The establishment and expansion of businesses post-pandemic has had its own real challenges. It is with great pride and admiration that I congratulate many local businesses for adapting so effectively. I acknowledge their work and success in integrating their business changes whilst respecting the rich history of Hawkesbury. Businesses and not-for-profit organisations are vital to the support of Hawkesbury's local economy and wellbeing, offering the chance for unique experiences and providing unwavering support to residents. I thank Hawkesbury business owners and volunteer groups for maintaining a community-focused approach. I look forward to seeing the area prosper both as a tourist destination and a resilient community that stares down the devastation of natural disasters to repeatedly restore the beauty and history of this unique territory.

PLASREFINE PLASTICS RECYCLING FACILITY

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (23:39): I speak again against the plastics recycling facility in Moss Vale. The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has handed down a recommendation to the Independent Planning Commission to approve the Plasrefine plastics recycling facility despite the significant, numerous and hazardous flaws that have been presented for the project and essentially ignored by the department. It is clear from the department's report that it failed to investigate the information provided by the proponent. Its scrutiny was merely a tick-and-flick exercise, clearly evident from two pages into the document when the author advises that the Wingecarribee River will now flow backwards.

The site was selected because the land was for sale and affordable, not because it was the most suitable location for a plastics recycling facility. That is a fact. The site is in a predominately rural landscape that is classified as an enterprise precinct. The land is flagged for low-impact industry, allowing a buffer for adjoining residential land and not offensive industry that requires a licence from the Environment Protection Authority. The site is in close proximity—approximately 200 metres—to residences, recreational spaces and schools. Each day the development will generate a total of 100 heavy vehicle movements, with 50 in and 50 out, and 280 light vehicle staff movements, with 140 in and 140 out. The proponent's traffic assessment conservatively estimates 10 heavy vehicles, five in and five out, and 120 light vehicles, 60 in and 60 out, per hour.

This is not the right site for a recycling facility. It contradicts local zoning, the council's strategic plans and the community aspect. There are significant flaws in the project that remain unanswered by the proponent. Despite the fact that this project has been proposed for many years, the department has ignored all community concerns and has failed to ensure that the proponent provides clear information. In turn, it has recommended the project with conditions that the proponent provide plans, to be ticked off by the department, without any clear transparency for the community. The proponent has had four years to do this but it has failed to do so.

The potential environmental impacts remain, with most solutions proffered by the proponent hypothetical. The release of microplastics into the environment will grievously impact our air, water and soil. This is a serious health concern on top of the odour and toxic emissions that will be released from the facility and its stock transportation and storage. The facility sits in the Sydney drinking water catchment, so not only people in the Southern Highlands but also the entire population of Sydney will be affected.

The community has expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with the planning process. There has been a severe lack of transparency, continuously inconsistent information and ongoing hypothetical plans provided by the proponent to appease the department. The proponent has disregarded community sentiment and failed to provide concise factual information within its responses to the hundreds of submissions received during the exhibition stage. The project is not in the right location and it should have been prevented from ever reaching this stage in planning the process. The proponent has several infringement notices for environmental misdemeanours in Beijing and has been involved in court cases across Australia. It has admitted that it has never recycled plastics, only visiting facilities in China.

Without experience from the proponent, the project is merely a money grab. The Minister should be asking questions about how the department has managed the process and how it arrived at its recommendations. It is quite frankly one of the worst cases of a planning process I have seen. It is beyond belief that a planning department could recommend this proposal on this particular site with the information that was available. Over 500 people gathered in Moss Vale on Monday night, furious about how this recommendation could be made by the planning department. The simple fact is that the Moss Vale site is not the right location for a facility of this magnitude. The department should not endorse a proponent with a history of failing to manage and protect environmental outcomes. Alarm bells are ringing. This facility is a disaster waiting to happen that, if approved, will be laid squarely at the feet of this Government.

EATING DISORDERS

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (23:44): In May 2023 I shared with this House the bravery of Jayda Cousins and her family as she battled an eating disorder, and the concerns that my community of Albury-Wodonga hold regarding critical eating disorder intervention and support. Disordered eating, anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorders are some of the most complex and devastating mental health conditions, and yet they often remain under-diagnosed and under-treated, and recovery is extremely challenging. Early detection and treatment of eating disorders reduces time spent in hospital, prevents relapses and supports individuals and their loved ones throughout their recovery journey. It also eases the strain on our health services by preventing more intensive emergency interventions.

Many families have shared with me the desperate need in the Albury-Wodonga community for dedicated treatment and recovery services, along with clearer pathways to care. Today, I am pleased to be able to share significant steps being taken by Albury Wodonga Health to address eating disorders. Eight staff, including physicians and psychiatrists, recently attended specialised training delivered by the InsideOut Institute in Wagga Wagga. This training marked the establishment of an integrated cross-border response that connects clinical expertise, early intervention and related resources to offer a holistic approach to care. This new acute clinical pathway will allow medical and mental health professionals to detect and treat eating disorders earlier, ensuring that individuals receive the right care at the right time.

This important development follows Albury Wodonga Health securing \$645,000 from the Victorian Government over the next three years to further improve eating disorder care. The investment will allow for the recruitment of an early intervention and integration lead by the health service, which is a linchpin position dedicated to providing a much-needed wraparound response, linking acute care, community services, primary care and mental health services. Albury Wodonga Health's public health executive director, Dr Lucie Shanahan, said the role would ensure a cohesive approach to patient care, addressing the complexities of eating disorders more effectively. Lucie says it will improve care coordination and navigation of care for people living with an eating disorder, with the aim of reducing hospital stays and minimising readmissions. It will ensure our patients receive the best possible support throughout their recovery journey.

Albury Wodonga Health, working with Gateway Health and La Trobe University, will now design a coordinated approach to early intervention. La Trobe University's clinical and health psychologist, Professor Leah Brennan, has welcomed the funding commitment. Professor Brennan said that it is fantastic to see this important issue getting the attention it needs. It is a positive start and, further, it is great to see the strategy specifically targeting the supports needed in rural and regional areas. We are starting from a much lower baseline in rural and regional settings, and we need so much more to get us up to speed in addressing a huge need.

I am also pleased to share that Albury Wodonga Health is in ongoing discussions with the New South Wales Ministry of Health to consider the potential co-funding of an eating disorders coordinator role, expected

by July 2025. This is a significant role that I have long been advocating for. If secured, the eating disorders coordinator will further strengthen the ability to coordinate care for patients across both north-east Victoria and southern New South Wales, ensuring timely support is available. This collaborative effort would bring together funding, expertise and clinical leadership from both States, working together to ensure that eating disorder care becomes a fully integrated part of our mental health and primary care systems, rather than a standalone service.

This is a story of hope and progress. It is about improving the lives of individuals and families living with eating disorders by giving them the support they need to recover and thrive. I acknowledge those who do so much good work in our community as we advocate for better eating disorder services: organisations such as Albury Wodonga Health, Gateway Health and La Trobe University, and clinicians and advocates, including Professor Leah Brennan and journalist Jodie O'Sullivan. Importantly, I acknowledge those with lived experience—people like Jayda and their families. You are not alone.

I also mention Sarah Maguire from the InsideOut institute. We will continue our advocacy for further funding and improved services, recognising that the battle cannot be won in isolation. It requires the dedication of clinicians, the backing of government and the ongoing support of our entire community. I commend the steps taken so far and strongly encourage ongoing discussion between health officials in New South Wales and Victoria to further strengthen our response.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 23:49 until
Thursday 24 October 2024 at 10:00.**

Written Community Recognition Statements

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

AFRICULTURES FESTIVAL

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—On Saturday, 28 September 2024, I was thrilled to attend the Africultures Festival, held at Sydney Olympic Park for its 16th consecutive year. This vibrant event showcased the rich and vibrant cultures of Africa, bringing together more than 60 stalls, an impressive line up of musical talent, and food from across the continent. From energetic dancers and drumming sessions to bold and colourful fashion, the festival was a beautiful celebration of African heritage. The festival featured an African marketplace, providing entertainment for children, along with an exclusive Ethiopian dance workshop. Cultural workshops, sports clinics, and a variety of performances further enriched the experience, offering festivalgoers an opportunity to immerse themselves in the diverse traditions of Africa. The success of the Africultures Festival is a testament to the hard work and dedication of its volunteers, who generously give their time and energy to make this celebration possible each year. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the organizers and volunteers for their unwavering commitment to showcasing Africa's culture richness and fostering a spirit of community and inclusivity.

SYDNEY MURUGAN TEMPLE – COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL HALL DEVELOPMENT

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I am honoured to recognize the Sydney Murugan Temple for its continued growth and the remarkable achievements of its community. Established in 1986 with a vision to enhance the role of Saviam and Tamil culture, the temple originally served as a primary place of worship for Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus. Over the years, it has diversified, becoming a spiritual and cultural hub for all ethnic Hindus. This milestone reflects the strong spirit of unity and dedication that continues to drive the temple's efforts in supporting and uplifting the local community. On 15 September 2024, the temple marked a significant occasion with the stone laying ceremony for this new community hall. This project will not only provide a valuable space for cultural, social, and educational activities but will also strengthen the bonds within the community, offering a place where people can come together to celebrate their heritage and engage in shared experience. I commend Sydney Murugan Temple for their vision and commitment to this important initiative. I look forward to witnessing the continued positive impact this new facility will have for generations to come.

EUGOWRA FLOOD RECOVERY COMMITTEE RECOGNISED

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—It is with a deeply personal sense of pride that I congratulate the Eugowra flood recovery committee being recognised as the Central West Volunteer Team of the Year. The dedicated locals of Eugowra have stepped up to help each other since the very early stages of the flooding disaster of November 2022. This is a time that I will never forget, and the spirit of these volunteers have left an indelible impression on me, so I am overjoyed they have been recognised by this award from their peers. The committee and its work were formalised initially in the immediate aftermath of the devastating floods and now two years on, committee members Sean Haynes, Liz Mitchell, Kim Storey, Janet Moxey, Ash Wright and Tim Wright are proudly carrying on this tradition and valuable work. This wonderful committee is still advocating for resources,

and support for those people still trying to return to their homes. Janet Moxey said "the work isn't about seeking recognition; it's about making the world aware that Eugowra is still rebuilding and still needs support " I congratulate all involved and thank you for your ongoing dedication.

WYALONG ART RECOGNISED

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Artwork from Wyalong local artist and painter Ralph Tikerpage has been selected to exhibit at the world-famous Sculptures in the Garden event. Ralph's unique contribution to the event is his three sculptures, each crafted from wood and painted. These pieces, among over 250 sculptures from 130 artists, promise to be a highlight of this year's event, which is regional NSW's largest and most renowned outdoor sculpture exhibition. Currently in its 14th year, the annual exhibition, which is set in the picturesque Rosby Vineyard and Gardens in Mudgee, provides artists with an opportunity to exhibit their work. This event, which draws artists and visitors from all over, has a significant impact on the local community, making it the biggest display in the event's history. Like many works of art, sculptures often tell a story. They transform someone's imagination into a tangible piece that can be enjoyed by many and serve as a common ground that connects people from all walks of life. I would like to congratulate Ralph on his exceptional artwork and look forward to visiting soon to hear all about the exhibition.

GRENFELL SES CONTINUES TO SHINE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I wish to recognise and commend the Grenfell Branch of the State Emergency Service [SES], for continuing to train and prepare for Mother Nature's worst. The Grenfell SES conducted vertical rescue training to equip its members with the skills necessary for high-angle rescue operations. This training is crucial for responding to incidents like rescues from cliffs, ravines, or tall structures. Participants in this training learn techniques such as rope handling, knot tying, belaying, abseiling, and the use of specialised equipment to manage rescues in challenging vertical environments. The goal is to ensure that the rescue operations are carried out efficiently and safely, both for the rescuers and the individuals being assisted. Local members Declan Laybutt and Heather Morgan attended over two weekends and whilst wet weather confined the training initially to the classroom the second weekend saw operators able to practice all newly learned skills. I congratulate all involved for your wonderful service to our community.

BAILEY MYERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Local Worimi man Bailey Myers, aged 22, has walked across Australia, coast-to-coast, raising around \$12,000 for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation [ILF]. Bailey set off on March 3, walking for six months from Perth to Newcastle, with his hand-cart. He relied on the generosity of strangers – people like grey nomads, tourists and locals - from many walks of life, with an initial plan to just "wing it". Bailey's cart is decorated with the handprints of Indigenous students from his old school, Callaghan College Waratah Campus. Weighing 56 kilograms, the cart took him months of work to build, and is fitted with most things he needed to survive on the road: clothes, safety maintenance gear, water bottles, food and a book to help him live off the land. His longest daily walk was around 60 km, the shortest around 4-5 km, depending on how he felt. From Perth, Bailey trekked to Kalgoorlie, across the Nullarbor Plain into South Australia, up into Queensland, concluding the expedition in his hometown, Newcastle. Bailey travelled 4,500 km and went through four pairs of shoes, constantly making connections with himself and his culture. Well done, Bailey!

LAMBTON - NEW LAMBTON RSL SUB-BRANCH

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—The 2024 theme for National Volunteer Week in May was "Something for Everyone", recognising the diversity of talents and passions that volunteers bring to their community. The Lambton – New Lambton RSL Sub-Branch continues to make a difference to the people of our community. President Warwick Budden (Corporate Governance); Secretary Andrew Fullerton (Administration); Treasurer Alan Haigh (Financial Operation); Alan Proud (Welfare Officer); Mick and Sheila Farrell (Outreach Program - Organising visits to nursing homes/running remembrance services); Pat McMahon OAM, (Head of the Ladies Auxiliary - Commemorative activities); Irene Chandler (District Council Officer – representing the sub-branch at the Newcastle meetings); Christopher Lee, (Schools Liaison Officer - visiting schools within the area, maintaining a connection with the sub-branch/arranges Anzac and Remembrance Day services); Alan and Paulina Playford (assisting the Auxiliary and organising memorial boxes for families of deceased members); Gary Marshall (audio for meetings and functions); Jack Lyon (arranging/providing leadership for the Anzac Day march); Alan Chester (arranging functions); Alan Playford (currently working with Council and the community to create a mural at Lambton Memorial Swimming Pool). My thanks to all of you who do so much for our community.

JENNY BAILEY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—65-year-old mother and grandmother from Lambton, Jenny Bailey, was presented by NSW Sports Minister Steve Kamper with a Distinguished Long Service Award for outstanding achievements and contributions in sport at the 2024 NSW Community Sports Awards on Wednesday, 19 June at CommBank Stadium. Jenny, also a waitress at Williams Artisan Bread & Espresso, Lambton, is a familiar face at training and games, and a long-serving Lambton Jaffas Junior Soccer Club volunteer. As the Secretary and Life Member, Jenny has served on the club's committee in various roles for 34 years which commenced when her son started playing and she became Assistant Secretary. Jenny allocates weekends for her "love job" – being out there and active with sport - seeing young players who have grown up and returning with their own kids. She is there every game with a smile, ready to serve, going above and beyond. In 2017, Jenny was awarded life membership of Newcastle Football for dedication and commitment to the club and football over many years. Thank you, Jenny, for your years of selfless dedication which has enabled generations of children, men and women to participate in sport and enjoy community spirit.

CHALLENGE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS GALA FUNDRAISER

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—On Friday 18th October 2024, I had the pleasure of attending the Welby Garden Centre and Challenge Southern Highlands Gala fundraiser. A highlight of the evening was the heartfelt celebration of the outgoing and much-loved General Manager, Mr. Tony McElhinney, who has been at the helm of Challenge Southern Highlands—an NDIS-registered charity—for an impressive 22 years and 20 days, as Tony proudly shared in his speech. Tony's leadership has been instrumental in the success of Challenge, and his impact has been felt by everyone involved. He stands tall on the shoulders of his achievements, alongside his wife Carol, who has been a steadfast partner throughout his journey. Both Challenge and Tony have equally benefited from his exceptional leadership. I also warmly welcome Mr. Aaron Malouf, the newly appointed General Manager of Welby Garden Centre and Challenge Southern Highlands, as he steps into this important role. It was also a pleasure to reconnect with Rod D. Aistrope, Chair of Challenge Southern Highlands Ltd, and other board members. The sense of community and shared purpose is what makes Welby Garden Centre such a special place, Growing Abilities by Growing Plants.

WOLLONDILLY WRITERS CELEBRATE LITERATURE WITH BOOK LAUNCH

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—It was a pleasure to attend the recent book launch at Bonnie Cottage, celebrating the works of Gaynor Mason and Jean Mills, hosted by the Wollondilly Branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers. Gaynor's Acts of Kindness and Jean's Whatever Happened to Leslie Laughton and Duck with the Waggy Tail are noteworthy additions to our community's literary offerings. Hearing passages from these books, along with works from other members of the group, made for an enjoyable morning, and I'd like to thank the fellowship for their contributions to our local literary scene and supporting the local writing community. The event was well-organised, providing a great platform for local writers to share their work. Congratulations to all involved for making it a success. This launch is a just one example of how the Wollondilly Branch continues to encourage local talent and promote literature in our region.

RSL LIFECARE SPUR RANCH VISITS PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—I had the pleasure of seeing the RSL LifeCare Spur Ranch team at the NSW Parliament House today, during an event hosted in the beautiful Speaker's garden. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with this dedicated group of people who work tirelessly to support veterans. We had a great conversation about their ongoing efforts, and they even joked about wanting to bring a horse into Parliament House— maybe next time! RSL LifeCare Spur Ranch is located in the heart of Picton, and is a remarkable residential organisation dedicated to supporting veterans and their families. Offering a peaceful rural environment, Spur Ranch provides tailored care and essential services to meet the unique needs of veterans, promoting wellness, recovery, and a strong sense of community through equine skills. Spur Ranch offers more than just accommodation. It provides personalised health and wellness services, mental health support, and a range of social activities aimed at enhancing the quality of life for veterans. This facility continues the proud tradition of RSL LifeCare, ensuring that veterans have a place where they can feel supported, recover, and thrive in a caring and supportive environment.

CASS SENIOR MOON FESTIVAL CELEBRATION

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—I would like to acknowledge and thank CASS for their remarkable dedication and outstanding service to the culturally and linguistically diverse communities in my electorate and beyond. CASS provides a diverse range of health and education programs, supporting community members of all ages, from early childhood care to aged care and accommodation. In celebrating one of the significant cultural events in our community, on 10 September 2024, CASS organised a Moon Festival Celebration for senior

members in my electorate, which I had the privilege of attending. It was a joyful celebration, filled with laughter, music, singing, mooncake tasting, and above all, wonderful bonding among the members. On behalf of our senior members, I extend my heartfelt thanks to CASS, Director Mr Stephen Yang, Corporate Affairs Officer Mr Brian Guo, Ms Tam Nguyen, and everyone involved in organising this meaningful event. I wish the Moon Festival brings everyone joy, good health and prosperity.

37TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PIONEERS OF VIET TAN'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—The Pioneers of Viet Tan's Memorial Service is held annually to commemorate the Đông Tiến Heroes, the late Vice Admiral Hoang Co Minh, and the soldiers that made sacrifices for a democratic Vietnam. On the 31 August 2024, I had the honour of attending the 37th Anniversary of the Pioneers of Viet Tan's Memorial Service, hosted by the Sydney Viet Tan Party. Through video and oral presentations, songs and meaningful performances, the sacrifices made by the Đông Tiến Heroes for their homeland continue to be recognised and remembered. Viet Tan is an organization founded in 1982 that advocates for democracy, freedom, human rights, and reform in Vietnam. Their activities include nonviolent efforts such as raising awareness of human rights violations, mobilizing support from international communities, educating the public on political issues, and providing resources to activists within Vietnam. I also received the opportunity to present my Community Recognition Statement to the representative of the Viet Tan Party in Sydney, Mr Chau Van Kham for his activism. I would like to thank Mr Chau and the Viet Tan Party for their warm invitation to this significant event.

2024 WORLD CHINESE KING OF LION DANCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta)—On the 22nd September 2024, the Qing Fong Dragon and Lion Dance Team competed in the 2024 World Chinese King of Lion Dance Championships. The competition was held over a period of 3 days from the 20th to the 22nd of September in Nanjing, China. Qing Fong is a team based in Bonnyrigg, operating out of the Mingyue Lay Buddhist Temple, one of the largest temples in the Southern Hemisphere. A total of 6 performers – 1 head, 1 tail, 1 drum player, 1 gong player, and 2 cymbal players - were selected from this team to represent the Australian Dragon and Lion Dance Federation. They performed a 10-minute routine featuring a lion crossing a bridge and challenging a snake to search for mushrooms. The team received a score of 8.75 with a deduction of 0.1 marks, which won them a bronze medal and 7,000 Renminbi, equating to roughly 1,450 AUD. I would like to recognise and congratulate the performers from the Qing Fong Dragon and Lion Dance Team for their hard work and efforts representing Australia. They trained tirelessly in the weeks leading up to the competition, resulting in well-deserved rewards.

CORPUS CHRISTI HIGH SCHOOL

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Corpus Christi High School for their Honours Awards in the STEM category of the Tournament of the Minds NSW South Coast Region in September. Tournament of Minds is a problem-solving program for teams of students from both primary and secondary years. Tournament's aim is to enhance the potential of our youth by developing diverse skills, enterprise, time management, and the discipline to work collaboratively within a challenging and competitive environment. The combination of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics principles provides an integrated approach for students to deepen their conceptual understanding and use their creative and critical thinking skills to solve the challenges within an authentic context. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Corpus Christi High School on this well-deserved award.

LAKELANDS PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Lakelands Public School for their Honours Awards in the STEM category of the Tournament of the Minds NSW South Coast Region in September. Tournament of Minds is a problem-solving program for teams of students from both primary and secondary years. Tournament's aim is to enhance the potential of our youth by developing diverse skills, enterprise, time management, and the discipline to work collaboratively within a challenging and competitive environment. The combination of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics principles provides an integrated approach for students to deepen their conceptual understanding and use their creative and critical thinking skills to solve the challenges within an authentic context. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to congratulate Lakelands Public School on this well-deserved award.

SHELLHARBOUR JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Shellharbour Junior Football Club for their outstanding achievements of their clubs in grand finals over the weekend of 7 to 8 September 2024. The following teams won their championships; Under 16 - Division 1, Under 15 - Division 2, Under 13 Girls - Division 1, Under 12 - Division 1 and Under 12 Division 4. On behalf of the Shellharbour electorate, I would like to

congratulate Shellharbour Junior Football Club for these outstanding results. I would also like to thank the hard-working referees, coaches and volunteers from Shellharbour Junior Football Club throughout the season.

URANA COURTHOUSE ART EXHIBITION CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to acknowledge the Urana Progress Association for its dedication in organising the Urana Courthouse Art Exhibition. This annual celebration of creativity transforms the historic building into a vibrant gallery, where our region's most talented artists, display their work. This year marks a special milestone, as the exhibition proudly celebrates its 25th anniversary. From October 17 to 22, the courthouse's storied walls were graced with over 100 stunning artworks, showcasing the craftsmanship of our talented artists. The exhibit bringing together the rich artistic heritage of Urana with its deep agricultural roots, offering a unique experience. The event attracted art lovers, collectors, and visitors locally and from afar, and offered a unique experience to appreciate the charm and history of the cherished venue, the Historic Urana Courthouse. I thank the Urana Progress Association's for its ongoing commitment in creating a space for emerging and established artists, whilst ensuring continued growth of art and culture in our region.

MARY DOOLAN

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Mary Doolan is a principal at Coonabarabran Highschool, and she has recently been awarded first place for the Rotary Inspirational Women's Award. The Rotary Inspirational Women's Award was established to recognise women who exemplify Rotary's motto of "Service above self". Mary was nominated in the Rural category and was recognised as the first female principal of Coonabarabran High School, a dedicated educator and community leader in rural NSW. Mary is not only a committed principal, with previously being a solicitor, commits time to supporting vulnerable people with the legal system, fund raising for charities, and advocates for women's issues, particularly the local domestic violence crisis house. I would like to congratulate Mary on receiving this award. Your dedication to the school and the community is very much appreciated.

KIARA VLAHOPOULOS

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Kiara represented Narrabri Junior Soccer club at the 2024 Rale Rasic Joey's Mini World Cup in Inverell last month. After scoring four out of six goals for her side, she was selected for the Joey's 13-14 years girls' team for the next year's Germany Playing and Coaching tour. Kiara started playing soccer at 10 years old and at the age of 12, she successfully trialled for Northern Inland Academy of Sport [NIAS], playing in striker and winger positions. Kiara played for NIAS for two years and took out the NYPL championships. I would like to congratulate Kiara for being selected for the Joey's world cup. This is an amazing opportunity for you, and I look forward to hearing the outcome next year.

NSW RURAL FIRE – TEAM BLACK ANTS

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate the Lavington Rural Fire Brigade junior members, known as "Team Black Ants" for their success at the NSW Rural Fire Service Sam McPaul Cadet Championships, in Holbrook, October 20th. The "Team Black Ants" dedication and skill were prominently displayed at the event as they successfully defended their title for the third consecutive year. The championships featured teams competing in over a dozen events, each showcasing their hard work and commitment to training. It was truly an honour for me to present awards to these talented young firefighters. A massive thank you to all the trainers and volunteers who played a crucial role in providing such an important opportunity for our future firefighting leaders. These efforts in mentoring these young individuals are invaluable, and I am proud of the achievements of this next generation of heroes, who will continue to protect our communities and environment. Let's continue to support and celebrate their journey.

ALBURY TENNIS ASSOCIATION

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate Albury Tennis Association Director Phil Shanahan, President Peter Penny, and Committee Member Trish Moore, for their outstanding achievements at the 2024 Tennis NSW Awards. The ceremony took place at the Le Montague in Sydney, where the Association was honoured with the prestigious NSW Tournament of the Year award for the Margaret Court Cup. I express my gratitude to everyone involved in making this tournament a success. Your dedication and hard work in promoting tennis within our community is truly commendable. Additionally, I would like to recognise the remarkable accomplishments of the other award winners, including Jordon Thompson, who was named Player of the Year, and Cruz Hewitt, awarded Male Junior of the Year. This year's tennis awards was particularly special as it celebrated the 90th birthday of sporting legend Ken Rosewall, adding a memorable touch to the already significant occasion. I look forward to even more passion and commitment at the upcoming 2025 Margaret Court Cup.

EASTWOOD BUSINESS CHAMBER AGM - LUKE COLES

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Luke Coles who was recently elected as a Committee Member at the 2024 Eastwood Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting. Luke's election marks an exciting step forward for the Eastwood Chamber of Commerce, which plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration, advocating for local business interests, and driving community growth in and around the Eastwood area. We know there are big plans ahead for the future of Eastwood, and I am confident that with Luke representing a new generation of leadership, the Chamber will bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas that help drive the success of our local community. On behalf of the NSW Parliament, I wish Luke Coles every success in his new role, and look forward to collaborating with him throughout the term ahead. Congratulations.

EASTWOOD BUSINESS CHAMBER AGM - MARINA MOSCATO

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Marina Moscato who was recently elected as a Committee Member at the 2024 Eastwood Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting. Marina's election marks an exciting step forward for the Eastwood Chamber of Commerce, which plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration, advocating for local business interests, and driving community growth in and around the Eastwood area. We know there are big plans ahead for the future of Eastwood, and I am confident that with Marina representing a new generation of leadership, the Chamber will bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas that help drive the success of our local community. On behalf of the NSW Parliament, I wish Marina Moscato every success in her new role, and look forward to collaborating with her throughout the term ahead. Congratulations.

ERNA LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATION EVENING - NICOLE BARRETT

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I ask the House to join me in congratulating Nicole Barrett, for her outstanding achievement in receiving the Senior State Titles Coaches Player Award and Premier League Teams Presentation Coaches Player Award at the ERNA League Representative Presentation Evening. Nicole's dedication and sportsmanship have shone brightly in her contribution to her team's success. This prestigious award is a testament to her skill and leadership on the court and her strong commitment to her teammates and the broader Ryde community. Her contribution to netball has fostered a sense of pride and inspiration, especially among the young athletes in Ryde. We are fortunate to have such talented individuals like Nicole, who continue to elevate our local sporting community. This achievement reflects her hard work and passion, and we are proud to have her as a representative of our region. Congratulations again, Nicole—your accomplishment is well deserved, and we look forward to your continued success!

JOSHUA BELL

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)—Joshua Bell, an Australian Olympic shooter, made his debut at the 2024 Paris Olympics, competing in the Men's Skeet event. Joshua grew up in Camden and attended Good Samaritan Catholic College in my electorate. His journey into shooting began as a bonding activity with his father, which quickly turned into a passion. Joshua first gained attention in the shooting community by winning the B grade at the 2011 NSW Skeet Carnival. Despite juggling his career as a plumber, Bell has managed to maintain a high level of performance in the sport, securing his place on the Australian Olympic team after strong showings in various international competitions, including a silver at the 2023 Oceania Championships. Joshua's participation in Paris marked a significant milestone in his career, and although he didn't medal, his journey from local competitions to the world stage is a testament to his dedication and skill, congratulations Joshua!

IZAAC - CLANCY CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)—I have the pleasure of celebrating a remarkable achievement by a student from Clancy Catholic College. I extend a huge congratulations to Izaac, who has been selected for the Under 14's NSW Samoan Junior Rugby Union Team! This is not just a testament to Izaac's athletic talent, but also to his unwavering dedication to the sport. Being chosen for this esteemed team at such a young age speaks volumes about his skills and potential. Izaac, has shown us what it means to chase your dreams with passion and commitment. His success inspires us all by embodying values of resilience, teamwork, and excellence. As he tackles this exciting opportunity, I have no doubt that Izaac's achievements today lay the foundation for even greater successes in the future. We are all incredibly proud of you, Izaac. Keep shining bright, and enjoy every moment on the field!

SD RAIDERS 2024 LEAGUE ONE WOMEN'S PREMIERS

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)—It is with great pride that I extend my sincere congratulations to the SD Raiders Football Club, who have been crowned the 2024 League One Women's Premiers. This astounding achievement is not just a testament to individual talent, but an inspirational model of determination,

team effort and diligence. The success of the SD Raiders FC is a collective endeavour. Each player has contributed to this triumphant season, demonstrating sporting excellence at every game. Their commitment and tireless support for one another on and off the pitch has been truly moving. I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of individuals recognised at the 2024 Gala Awards: Taiana Almeida, awarded Player of the Year; Natasha Pentecost, awarded Goalkeeper of the Year; and the team's coach, Zakaria Abboud, who won Coach of the Year. These awards reflect not only personal dedication but also the spirit of teamwork that defines this exceptional club. Congratulations once again to all members of the League One Women's team on a phenomenal season. Your hard work and perseverance have brought great pride to our community.

RECOGNITION OF INVERELL PUBLIC SCHOOL GIRLS' RUGBY 7 TEAM

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of Inverell Public School Girls Rugby 7's team for recently winning the IPS Girls Rugby's 7's side, at NSW Primary Schools Sport Association [PSSA] Championships in Sydney. I congratulate the girls that played with excellent teamwork, defence and attacking play, which helped achieve victory over their tough competitors. The winning side included Olivia Partridge (Captain), Grayce Gleeson (Captain), Ellie Botes, Hannah Nicolle, Lillanah Griffiths, Eloyse Griffiths, Ava McIlwain, Mekeahri Strong, Kiara Rose and Grace Tickle. I commend the girls of Inverell Public School Rugby 7 team for their dedication and commitment to their training. I also acknowledge the girl's families and the Inverell Public School community, including: the School P & C; Principal Mrs Ally Campbell; Coach Mr Nigel Henley; teachers Miss Ashlee Doak and Mr Sam Cross; and office staff, for their assistance and organisation and support, enabling the girls to travel to Sydney to compete in this event.

MUNGINDI COMMUNITY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements the Mungindi Community Education Association [MCEA] for being the driving force behind acquiring a childcare centre for the children of Mungindi. I congratulate the MCEA for their foresight, initiative and can-do attitude in organising, purchasing land, erecting a building/supporting infrastructure, securing a provider and staff to operate the centre. Thank you to the hardworking committee: President Lisa Orchin, Vice President(s) Katherine McMillan and Taylor Beale, Secretary Holly Orchin and Treasurer Nick Tobin. Special thanks to: Platinum Sponsor McGregor Gourlay; NAB Foundation and GrainCorp for grants totalling \$35,000; Balonne Shire for \$50,000 funding; Moree Plains Shire Council for \$950,000 and Childcare Provider for the proposed facility; donations from Mungindi Progress Association, Show Society, Cotton Growers, Boarder Riffle Club; and local grain growers for donating some of their grain to secure the remaining \$100,000 to fund this integral community project. I commend all involved with this project for their hard work and commitment ensuring the long-term sustainability of Mungindi, by offering an integral service for their community. I also commend the people of Mungindi and district, for their wonderful generosity and tremendous community spirit.

WALCHA HOSPITAL AUXILIARY CELEBRATES 90 YEARS

Mr BRENDAN MOYLAN (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of the Walcha Hospital Auxiliary on their 90 year milestone! The group was formed with the aim to raise funds to purchase much needed items and medical equipment for the local Multipurpose Health Service, as well as general health care needs. I congratulate the members for their tireless efforts to raise funds and recently presenting \$13,000 of vital equipment to the local health service. Special thanks to committee members, including: President Margaret Cross; Vice President(s) Linda Cross and Pam Clare; Secretary and Deputy Regional Representative Vicki McIvor; Assistant Secretary Sandra Laurie; Treasurer Marie Spink; Assistant Treasurer Cecilia Brennan; Patroness Molly Hunt; Patron Mayor Eric Noakes. Organisations in regional towns benefit greatly from the ongoing support and commitment such volunteers give. Thank you also to the Walcha Bowling Club for providing the venue for the celebration, along with the Emporium on Derby and the Paperdolls House of Walcha, providing fashions for the Fashion Parade held during the festivities. I commend all those involved, for their hard work, selflessly giving to better their local community and to improve the lives of others.

50 YEARS OF FRANK'S FRUIT MARKET HABERFIELD

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I would like to congratulate Frank's Fruit Market, Haberfield for 50 years of operation. Established in 1974 by Frank and Mary Bonfante when they took over an existing business, Frank's Fruit Market is a traditional, local, fruit and veggie shop. Frank learnt the trade from his father and was just 22 when he and Mary established their store. Now proudly run by current owners Bree and John Velluti, they are committed to maintaining the legacy of fantastic fresh produce and great local customer service set by Frank and Mary. Next year the shop itself will have been operating continuously as a fruit shop for 100 years, and this is recognised on an Ashfield Council plaque on the footpath. A celebratory dinner for Frank's Fruit Markets 50-year anniversary will be held on 6 November in Five Dock, where founders Frank and

Mary will be special guests. Congratulations again to Frank, Mary, Bree and John and I am excited for many more years of having Frank's a local staple in my community.

MIDJUBURI CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—The Inner West Council rounded off NSW Aboriginal Languages Week with the Midjuburi Children's Festival last weekend at Marrickville West Public School. Aboriginal Languages Week is a celebration of Aboriginal languages and the importance of keeping Aboriginal culture alive and well. This year's theme was 'Languages Alive, Culture Thrives' in recognition that revitalising and sustaining languages will ensure Aboriginal culture continues to grow and strengthen for future generations. The Midjuburi Children's Festival was a great end to an important week. The fantastic and free family event saw lots of fun for children and their families, with exciting performances, delicious food, and interesting educational workshops. The educational aspect of the day saw both children and their families able to learn about everything from waste management and robotics to native seed planting and Dharawal language. I encourage everyone to take some time to learn about their local Lands and languages. I would also like to thank everyone who has worked to put together this year's Aboriginal Languages Week, and to Mayor Darcy Byrne and all involved from Inner West Council who put together the Midjuburi Children's Festival!

MARRICKVILLE LEGAL CENTRE 45TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—Congratulations Marrickville Legal Centre [MLC] on achieving your 45th anniversary, providing critical legal services and highly influential advocacy for so many in our community. Beginning in 1979 from a small, committed group of law students with a vision for better access to justice, MLC has grown significantly now reaching a catchment of over 1.5 million people. Originally occupying a small room at Marrickville Town Hall, MLC set out to provide free legal assistance to individuals in the local area, particularly the growing migrant community. Today MLC occupies dedicated office space and is a leading organisation in the community legal sector, delivering innovative programs and services including an AI chatbot to improve service delivery and assist in supporting more clients. MLC is hosting an exclusive Gala Dinner on 31 October to celebrate this significant milestone, back where it all started over 4 decades ago, at Marrickville Town Hall. Founders, supporters, alumni and partners of MLC will come together for an evening of celebration, reflection and connection. Congratulations to CEO Vasili Maroulis and the entire team at MLC on reaching this milestone and I look forward to a bright future!

SISTERS CANCER SUPPORT 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast)—The Sisters Cancer Support group is a community based, not-for-profit, charity organisation that provides support for women and their families who are affected by cancer. For a decade this group has been a lifeline of compassionate care, offering essential resources and developing vital connections for individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities that are affected by cancer. This group works tirelessly to support those with cancer across the Illawarra region and has played a vital role in our community for a decade. I have been fortunate enough to secure funding for this amazing organisation in the past and nominate their Founder and Chairperson, Nyan Thit Tieu for the Local Keira Woman of the Year in 2024. Over the past decade, the team have been dedicated to improving health access and cancer literacy for better screening and treatment outcomes for countless women. I would like to pass on my congratulations to Thit, the team and everyone involved in the group for all the incredible work that you do. The Illawarra region is a better place because of your services, and I cannot wait to see all that you accomplish in the next 10 years to come.

2024 NSW CHILDREN'S WEEK

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—Saturday 19th October 2024 to Sunday 27th October 2024 marks NSW Children's Week. It is an opportunity for us to raise community awareness for the needs, rights and achievements of children. Part of raising this awareness involves a variety of events and activities being held in communities across our state. This year's theme is based on Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'Children have the right to a clean and safe environment'. I commend the Advocate for Children and Young People Zoe Robinson for her initiative in highlighting the importance of this week and engaging with the many events that are occurring to mark the occasion. I also thank the outgoing 2024 Youth Advisory Council for their service and wish them the very best for the future. I congratulate the 12 incoming members of the 2025 Youth Advisory Council and I look forward to their contribution as they commence their important role in advising the NSW Government on issues that are relevant to young people across the state.

JAYDEN KASTELAN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—On behalf of my electorate of Badgerys Creek, I commend and congratulate Luddenham local Jayden Kastelan on being declared a joint winner of the Bob Kandelas Medal

for 2024, alongside fellow rugby league referee Ben Raymond. The medal was presented to the two worthy recipients during a ceremony at the Western Sydney Conference Centre in Penrith on 12 October 2024 in front of 120 members and guests hosted by 7News and Sunrise journalist Liam Tapper. The medal is the Penrith District Rugby League Referees' Association's top award for 'Referee's Referee' and is voted on by the members. The prestigious medal is named after the late Bob Kandelas, who began officiating as a member of the Balmain Referees' Association before joining Penrith in 1969. Jayden was also awarded the Joe Beacroft trophy. I congratulate Jayden on his achievements, including also winning the Joe Beacroft trophy and I thank him for serving our community and visitors alike as a distinguished referee. I wish Jayden continued success on his refereeing journey.

MACARTHUR FOOTBALL CLUB

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I congratulate and commend Macarthur Football Club for being crowned the 2024 Australia Cup Champions, with a 1-0 victory against Melbourne Victory in the Final clinching the club its second Australia Cup title in 3 years. It was a thrilling match with Macarthur FC displaying prowess in all parts of the field. Their defence kept their opponents scoreless, ensuring that Marin Jakolis' 59th minute goal, off a Jed Drew assist, proved the winner. Special mention must also be given to goalkeeper Filip Kurto for pulling off some breathtaking saves and to coach Mile Sterjovski and captain Luke Bratton for leading the club to victory. I'm delighted that Macarthur FC have carried their strong form into the commencement of the 2024-2025 A-League season, with a resounding 5-1 victory against Perth Glory in Round 1 of this season. I thank Macarthur FC for representing our Macarthur region with pride and wish them continued success.

2024 ELDERS LOVE LISMORE SHOW - NORTH COAST NATIONAL

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Lismore Mayor Cr Steve Krieg gave my apologies for the 139th Lismore Show but I would like to share some highlights as captured by the North Coast National's Facebook page. This year's Outstanding Exhibit Award in the new PopZone Pavilion went to Michelle Hewitt, of Steampunk Naked Clocks for her steampunk-inspired creations. Winners of the 2024 TURSA Art Prize were: Acquisitive Prize – Down by the sea by Dellene Strong; Grand Champion – The Nail by Angela Parr; Country Life – Night in the Forest by Katka Adams; Issues in Contemporary Living – No More Trains by Christine Cameron; Landscape – In the Forest Deep and Dark by Angela Parr; Townscape – A Ghost of the Town by Christine Cameron; Domestic Animals and Wildlife – Reef Raider by Angela Parr; Portraits – Jake by Anna Ballarin; Primary and Under – Fox by Ryder Halt; High School – Lindsey by Eva Skeet; Popular Choice – winner Ruby by Andrea Cheers, runner-up Good Job Girl by Angela Parr. At the Young Woman and Teen Showgirl Dinner, Maddy Dillon was announced as the Young Woman 2024 and runner-up was Charlie Murray. The Teen Showgirl for 2024 was Rose Mills and runner-up Shenae Flanagan. Congratulations to all entrants.

VALE, RODNEY GIBSON, CHIEF CATTLE STEWARD, NORTH COAST NATIONAL

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—The 2024 Elders Love Lismore Show (North Coast National) was an emotional one due to the tragic passing of Chief Cattle Steward Rodney Gibson after he attended the led steer auction last Friday. My condolences go to Mr Gibson's family, his work colleagues at Elders and friends on the sudden loss of a leading light in the agricultural sector. As a mark of respect, a minute's silence was observed for Mr Gibson before the start of this year's Grand Parade. Mr Gibson managed the successful Medlyn Angus Stud at South Gundurimba, established by his parents Lismore Show Society President John Gibson and wife Ellen in 1984. Tributes are flowing for a generous man who put his heart and soul into making the North Coast National an iconic event. The Northern Co-operative Meat Company posted: We are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Rodney Gibson. Our hearts go out to the Gibson family during this sad and difficult time. Rodney will be dearly missed by all who knew him and remembered for his hard work and passion he brought to the North Coast National and the family Medlyn Angus Stud.

CRICKET LEGEND LYN LARSEN AM OPENS 104TH NIMBIN SHOW

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Former Australian women's cricket captain Lyn Larsen AM had the honour of opening the 104th Nimbin Show recently. The Nimbin Show was making something of a comeback after a three-year break due to Covid-19 and severe damage to the Nimbin Valley from the 2022 floods. Writing in The Nimbin Good Times newspaper, Nimbin A&I Society Secretary Michelle Agioritis hailed this year's show a spectacular success. Highlights included the ever-popular dog high jump, the Wildlife Twins with their entertaining and informative live shows and display, classic car display, and of course, the Grand Parade. Michelle made special mentions of the Nimbin Show's supreme champions – Cameron Bennet (cattle), Tim Coates (poultry) and Janice Rose (needlework) whose exhibits were judged outstanding in their respective classes. In opening the show, Lyn Larsen, who was raised at Tuntable Creek, shared some of her own family history, including that the Nimbin Showgrounds were purchased by the A&I Society from her great grandfather. The Show Committee thanked announcer Peter Crawford for keeping everyone on time; judges for cattle, horses, poultry and pavilion;

the regular 'Tuesday' grounds maintenance crew, and volunteers for keeping Nimbin's country traditions very much alive.

COASTAL TOWNS BUSINESS CHAMBER

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)—Coastal Towns Business Chamber are recognised for the second year-round in receiving the Outstanding Local Chamber at the 2024 Business NSW Central Coast Awards held at Crowne Plaza Hotel in Terrigal. Congratulations to the Board Members President Axel Starviking, Vice President Toni Oliver, Treasurer Rosemaree Rettenmund, Secretary Amanda Nielsen, Board Members Mary-Louise Clifford, Joanne Johnson and Gabe Condon. The members were ecstatic when Coastal Towns Business Chamber was announced and their chosen theme song started to play, Nutbush, as they made their way to retrieve the award.

WYONG DRAMA GROUP

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)—Congratulations to Wyong Drama Group for receiving 6 awards at the 26th annual Norfolk Island Theatre Festival 2024. The Drama Group had 17 people attend including actors, directors, and supporters, performing over 2 days presenting *It's Complicated*, *The Monologue* and *Allocateeism*. Members of the Group were also in the XYZ Theatre Production of "*Allocateeism*" Directed by Robyn Weidlich. The awards included Best Actor for Laszlo Weidlich in the play *Allocateeism* directed by Robyn Weidlich and Best Ensemble for *It's Complicated* written by Sal Bartley with the cast of Sal Bartley, Julie Bailey and Helen Herridge, directed by Debbie Clark. The play also received Best Original Script. Best Supporting Male Actor went to John Czerniecki in the play *The Monologue* directed by Ron Baker and Best Comedic Performance went to Cathy DeVries also for *The Monologue*. Adjudicators Range Award went to Julie Bailey for her different performances in two plays, *Allocateeism* and *It's Complicated*. Wyong Drama Group has been entertaining the Central Coast for over 70 years, currently situated at The Red Tree Theatre, Tuggerah.

TOUKLEY LIONS LADIES AUXILIARY

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)—I would like to acknowledge Toukley Lions Ladies Auxiliary for putting in a mighty effort supporting the Toukley Lions Club as well as supporting local causes. The small group of women raise money throughout the year from raffles and this year donated more than \$8,000 to local charitable groups and causes, such as Shirley's Shuttle, Wyong Hospital Cancer Centre, Lions children's cancer research, Toukley Neighbourhood Centre plus supporting people and families in need. The women meet regularly for morning coffee and lunch and are always looking for like-minded women to join them.

WEST STREET NOWRA CROQUET

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the West Street Nowra Croquet Club for their outstanding commitment to the game and their community. This committed group of players meet three times a week, and not only enjoys the challenge and camaraderie that croquet brings, but also takes pride in maintaining the club's beautiful grounds. Their hard work ensures that the club remains a welcoming space for members and visitors alike. Croquet is a sport that combines skill, strategy, and patience. Played with mallets, balls, and hoops, the aim is to navigate the course with precision and control, making it an engaging and mentally stimulating activity. It fosters not only physical fitness but also sharpens focus and coordination. Beyond the game, the West Street Nowra Croquet Club is a place where friendships are formed and strengthened, as members enjoy each other's company in a supportive and fun environment. I commend them for their dedication to keeping the sport alive and thriving, and for the positive impact they have on the community.

SHOALHAVEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Shoalhaven Presbyterian Church on the momentous occasion of its 150th anniversary. Established in 1873, this historic church has been a cornerstone of the community, providing spiritual guidance and fostering deep connections for generations. Over the past century and a half, the church has seen countless weddings, baptisms, and community gatherings, and has played a pivotal role in the lives of many families in the area. As part of its 150-year celebration, the church is proudly showcasing its rich history through old photographs, memorabilia, and special events that honor its legacy. From humble beginnings to the thriving place of worship it is today, Shoalhaven Presbyterian Church continues to stand as a testament to faith, community, and resilience and remains a cherished part of our local history. Congratulations to the Shoalhaven Presbyterian Church community, its

parishioners, and all those who have contributed to its enduring presence. May the next 150 years be just as bright and impactful for future generations.

WAMINDA 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)—Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and congratulate the South Coast Women's Health and Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation (Waminda) on the remarkable achievement of celebrating their 40th anniversary. As part of this milestone celebration, Waminda continues to bring the community together with the vibrant and successful Yilaag Marring Family Fun Day recently held at the Nowra Showground. This event was a joyous occasion that showcased the strength of community spirit and togetherness, with families and community members of all backgrounds coming together to enjoy a fun-filled day that included delicious food, market stalls, rides, a petting zoo, weaving workshops, and local performances. The event also provided an important platform for supporting local Aboriginal businesses, showcasing their talents and contributions to the region. The highlight of the day was undoubtedly the amazing performances, including the highly anticipated Aboriginal rapper BARKAA, whose energy and talent added a special touch to the festivities. This day truly captured the essence of Waminda's commitment to enhancing the health and wellbeing of women and families on the South Coast. Congratulations once again to Waminda on this remarkable milestone.

KIAMA HIGH SCHOOL REUNION

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Kiama High School 50th reunion students. On Saturday 12th October 2024, sixty former Kiama High School students reunited in what, for some, was once their old primary school classroom at The Sebel Harbourside Hotel in Kiama. I acknowledge the following people in attendance including: Shona Kirchen, Jen Walker, Dianne Parkes, Philip Suckling, Merrilyn Groenwald, Bruce Lay, Annie O'Sullivan Richard Stomps, Robert Willets, Tony Pearson, Kerrie Smilie, Louise Jeffrey, Jenny Williams, Carol Holz, Don Beverly, Russell Oakes, Rodney Weekes, Mick Cook, Dianne Parkes, Shona Kirchen, Victoria Roberts, Maxine Morphett, Richard Flanagan Wayne Richardson, Dianne Parkes, Leanne Clark, Joe Chittick, Keith Ross, Ingrid Holland, Sue Ross, Denise Duncan and Glenda Chittick. The old ex classroom was filled with lively chatter and laughter as former Kiama High students reminisced and caught up on each other's lives. Just like in the old days, they danced as they had in the school gym, even forming the ritual conga line when 'Running Bear' played. A huge congratulations and well done to these former Kiama High School students on their 50th reunion celebration at The Sebel earlier this month.

JACOB ROULSTONE FROM JAMBEROO

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises Mr Jacob Roulstone from Jamberoo. On 20th October 2024, Jamberoo local Jacob Roulstone finished 13th in Round 17 of the 2024 MotoGP World Championship at Phillip Island. At just 19 years old, this marks Roulstone's debut campaign in the world championship, and the race at Phillip Island was particularly special as it was his first MotoGP event on Australian soil. Roulstone competes in the entry-level Moto3 category. With his family cheering him on and the nation behind him, he secured a commendable finish. In a quote to MCNews, Roulstone said, "It was very special to race for the first time at home! I loved all of it, and it was nice to see some flags with my logo around the track!" Finishing in 13th place awarded Roulstone valuable points in the overall Moto3 Championship standings, bringing his current rank to 15th. Fellow Australian Joel Kelso led early in the race but ultimately finished in 11th place. The next Moto3 race is set for Thailand on 27th October 2024. Congratulations and well done to Jamberoo local Joel Roulstone on his achievements so far.

SUCCESSFUL KIAMA TRIATHLON

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises and congratulates the first Kiama Triathlon. The hugely successful local event was hosted by Elite Energy on Sunday 13th October 2024 and attracted hundreds of competitors and visitors to our beautiful region which was also an important boost for our local economy in Kiama. The event saw 458 athletes tackle the standard and sprint events, bringing a crowd of visitors to the area to watch the competition, providing a significant boost to local businesses and amenities. I acknowledge and thank the Kiama Triathlon Club Vice President Mr Geoff Besnard for the outstanding work that was undertaken behind the scenes with various community partners. 23 members of the Kiama Triathlon Club [KTC] competed and many of those earned themselves a place on the podium. Other than competing, members of KTC and the local Kiama Run Club volunteered to ensure the event ran smoothly. The overwhelmingly positive feedback signals that the event could become an annual fixture for our Kiama community. The Kiama Triathlon Club also expressed its gratitude to both KTC and Kiama Run Club members who volunteered to ensure the event ran seamlessly.

YOUNG PLAYERS SHOW WHY PENRITH'S RUGBY LEAGUE IS THE BEST IN NSW

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—Last weekend, I had the pleasure of attending Panthers Juniors Rugby League Presentation Night and presenting the Player of the Year Award for the Open Women's Division to Grace Makalio-Harris. I am proud to announce that nine players were honoured with Player of the Year titles for their respective divisions. A huge congratulations to the following players on representing the sport with sportsmanship and for your dedication not only to your clubs but to the game: Hannah Ison – Under 16, Dominic Vella – Under 16, Hunter Bell – Under 17, Elyssa Myers – Under 18, Jack Attard – Under 19, – Open Women, Torie Willie – Feltis OM, Sione Fifita – Nicol OM, and Clayton Barker - Cameron OM. I also want to congratulate Emu Plains Rugby League Club on receiving this year's Barry Nicol Shield Club Champions of the Year for 2024. Thank you to Emu Plains JRL Club for inviting me to your club's gala presentation day last Saturday to reenact the presentation and celebrate the success of the growing girls' participation at the club.

DIWALI

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—It was wonderful to share in the festivities and excitement as Western Sydney community members, Parliamentarians and Councillors came together at Blacktown Showground last Sunday to celebrate the start of Deepavali. Deriving from Sanskrit, Deepavali, or Diwali, is the Hindu festival of lights and has become the most important Indian festival celebrated worldwide by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. The Hindu Council of Australia (HCA), a national umbrella organisation brings together over a hundred organisations and Hindu communities across Australia each year to celebrate Deepavali. First started in Sydney in 1999, this year marks 26 years of the celebration of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and a renewed commitment to friendship, religious tolerance and spreading the word of peace and harmony. Diwali recognises the triumph of the human spirit. It is inspirational to see people from all nations getting involved by wearing colourful clothes, decorating their houses with festive lights, and exchanging gifts and sweets with relatives and friends.

PENRITH REFEREE'S ASSOCIATION BOB KANDELAS MEDAL

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith)—I am proud to announce that experienced rugby league referees Ben Raymond and Jaydon Kastelan have been crowned as joint winners of the Bob Kandelas Medal for 2024. The prestigious award bestowed by Penrith Referee's Association honours the late referee, who began his officiating journey at the Balmain Referee's Association before joining Penrith back in 1969. The presentation night saw veteran referee of 23 years Lindsay Packer awarded Life Membership of the Penrith Referee's Association – a title granted to only 55 individuals since 1970. Congratulations to the following individuals on being honoured on the night: Charlie Xuerb – Peter Browne Award, Jack Kearney – Barry Beveridge Award, Hayden Raymond – Yvonne Lewis Award, Jayden Jobson – Phil Sanders Memorial Award, Hunter Smith – Len Manuel Award for Rookie of the Year, Karlee Clarke – Reg Newsome Award for Most Improved, Logan Cooney – Michael Grady Junior Merit Award, Ben Raymond – Russell Turner Award for Touch Judge of the Year as the Sarah Ford Trophy, Travis Cochrane – Fred Lucas Award for Most Improved Senior Referee, Rohan Best – Don Courts Award, James Fitzgerald – Ray Steele Award, Jayden Kastelan – Joe Beacroft Trophy, Josh O'Neill – Jack Harris Senior Merit Award.

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL STROKE UNIT

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I am extremely proud to recognise and commend the outstanding work of the St George Hospital Stroke Unit, who was recently awarded the World Stroke Organisation Angels Award. For many years now, the unit has offered a high standard of care, from optimal treatment time, coordinated levels of care, appropriate scans and expert patient care. The dedication and expertise demonstrated by the team at St George Hospital's Stroke Unit have made a profound impact on the lives of countless patients and their families, ensuring that those affected by stroke receive the best possible treatment and care. This prestigious global accolade is a true testament to the unit's unwavering commitment to their profession and looking after our local community. Their success is a source of great pride for our community, and I wholeheartedly congratulate them on this well-deserved recognition.

MARIA DALAMARAS

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I wish to congratulate and acknowledge Lugarno business owner and Peakhurst Heights resident, Maria Dalamaras, who was recently awarded the Business Achievement Award for Outstanding Professional Services at the 2024 St George Community Awards. This marks the third consecutive year that she has received this recognition, which highlights the contributions of local businesses to professional services. Maria's dedication and contribution to her business have been truly outstanding. As owner of Rio Consulting Group, she has made significant strides in the fields of web design, digital marketing, and social media management, providing invaluable support to small and medium-sized businesses. Her self-taught expertise

and commitment to mentorship have not only led to the growth of her own business but have also empowered numerous women to realise their potential in both their professional and personal lives. Winning this award once is an incredible achievement but winning it three times is a testament to Maria's unwavering dedication to her work. I want to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Mrs Dalamaras for this well-deserved recognition and to acknowledge her invaluable contributions to the local business community.

TYLER EVERINGHAM

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker..... I would like to acknowledge Dubbo local Tyler Everingham for his recent generosity fundraising and raising awareness for Breast Cancer Trials. When he's not working in his hometown of Dubbo as an electrician, Tyler is behind the wheel of a V8 Supercar! Starting his passion karting from age 10 to co-driving with Thomas Randle in the Tickford Racing Castrol no.55 Mustang for the Bathurst 1000 and the Sandown 500, Tyler has climbed the ranks in the sport he loves. Tyler's race helmets are very personal to him, having kept every one of them since he started driving karts as a kid and through his V8 career, but Tyler saw the need to contribute to a good cause, and offered up his custom painted BELL HP7 Carbon Race Helmet that he wore during the 2023 and 2024 Supercars Endurance rounds and 2024 Bathurst 6 Hour. Donated to the Pickles Race for a Cure Charity Auction, Tyler's Helmet, a one-of-a-kind piece of memorabilia and true collector's dream raised \$7,600. Tyler, your passion for your sport and contribution to causes close to your heart deserve to be commended and celebrated. Well done mate!

COUNTRY PRESS NSW AWARDS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—Speaker..... Regional papers are a critical source of information for our residents, and I am thrilled to acknowledge the local outstanding papers and journalists who were recently recognised at the 2024 Country Press NSW Awards. Wellington and District Leader took home two awards, winning Best Human-Interest Photo and Best News Photo. Their captivating images beautifully capture facial expressions and body language, telling powerful stories through photography. The dynamic sporting duo from Dubbo Photo News, Geoff Mann and Mel Pocknall, truly shone with their work, earning the Photo News the award for Best Sports Coverage. The publication was also recognised as Best Free Newspaper and was joint winner of Best Print Advertisement alongside Riverine Grazier. Narromine Star was also well rewarded, being named Best Small Publisher for their well balanced and solid coverage of news, sport and community affairs. Sharon Bonthuys of the Narromine Star was honoured with the prestigious Journalist of the Year Award. Her distinctive writing style is known for taking readers on a journey, engaging them with a unique approach while maintaining their interest throughout. Congratulations to all the winners and thank you for your outstanding work!

GEORGE PITTAR

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, it is a little-known fact that in 1964, Manly Beach played host to Surfing's first ever World Championships. Sixty years later, local North Steyne Boardrider George Pittar has ensured that Manly's bond with Surfing's world stage remains intact and as strong as ever. I am delighted to announce that at just 21 years of age, George has turned dreams into reality and qualified to compete on the WSL World Championship Tour in 2025. George secured his spot on day 4 of the final Challenger Series event for the year in Saquarema, Brazil, after a solid year of results which included wildcard entries for the iconic Bells Beach Pro and the Margaret River Pro – posting an incredible semifinal finish in the latter. As one of only a handful of Manly-based surfers to make the 'Dream Tour' in recent decades, George will now join elite company, taking on the world's best. With only 10 spots on the World Championship Tour available for those competing on the Challenger Series, this is a truly phenomenal achievement. I congratulate George and wish him all the best as he embarks on this exciting new chapter of life.

VALE JON 'WALLABY' MITCHELL

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, I wish to pay tribute to local rugby legend Jon 'Wallaby' Mitchell, who I am saddened to hear has recently passed away. Jon was a prominent member of the Manly Marlins Rugby Club throughout the course of his life. In his playing days, he was a dominant back rower known for his stamina, speed and strength. In his post-playing days, Jon remained heavily involved with the Marlins, taking on roles as a selector, administrator and board member of the club, playing an integral role in helping secure the Club's 1983 First Grade Premiership. Jon's love of rugby union was in many ways informed by his passion for fitness and staying active. He was a keen member of Manly Surf Life Saving Club, a fearsome trainer and a lover of sailing and the outdoors. Outside of his rugby career, Jon was also a successful architect. It is plain to see that Jon lived a rich life, leaving a lasting impact on those who were fortunate enough to play alongside him, and those who were less fortunate in having to compete against him. My thoughts are with Jon's family during this time. Vale Jon 'Wallaby' Mitchell.

MANLY ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM CENTENARY

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker, this Friday 25 October marks 100 years of the Manly Art Gallery and Museum – an incredible local asset which also happens to be the oldest metropolitan-based regional gallery in NSW. Born out of a local art competition organised by the Manly Daily in 1923, this special institution now houses a unique and diverse collection, comprising over 6000 works thanks to the generosity of donors and local government over the last century. Today, the Gallery boasts a proud record of celebrating emerging and established artists and plays a crucial role in preserving Manly's unique and colourful history, attracting over 100,000 visitors per year. At its heart, this milestone encapsulates the enduring local community commitment to the arts and culture on the Northern Beaches. In this vein, I acknowledge the many individuals and organisations across the Manly community whose ongoing support and generosity has ensured that the Gallery stands today as one of the finest regional galleries in the country. I also wish to recognise the committed Gallery staff and volunteers and in particular the Manly Art Gallery and Museum Society. I congratulate the Manly Art Gallery and Museum on this historic occasion.

DAVID CHANDLER'S CONTRIBUTION AS NSW BUILDING COMMISSIONER

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—Today, I want to recognise David Chandler, a proud Willoughby local, for his incredible work during his tenure as NSW Building Commissioner. David has been instrumental in driving much-needed reform and accountability in the building industry, playing a pivotal role in cleaning up the sector and ensuring higher standards of construction. Throughout his time in this important role, David demonstrated an unwavering commitment to improving the quality and safety of buildings across the state. His efforts have significantly improved transparency, accountability and public trust within the industry. As David steps down from his position, I extend my heartfelt thanks for his dedication and contributions. His work has left a lasting positive impact on the building sector and will continue to benefit future generations. I wish him every success in the next chapter of his career and am proud to count him among the remarkable individuals in our Willoughby community.

NORTH SYDNEY BEARS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the North Sydney Bears for their hard work and dedication to our community through their various sporting clubs. As most winter sports have wrapped up for the year, the Bears continue to be a pillar of excellence in the Willoughby community. For decades, the North Sydney Bears have fostered a strong sense of community, teamwork and sportsmanship, inspiring athletes of all ages in a range of sports such as bowling, squash, cricket and touch football. Their commitment to developing local talent, providing opportunities for recreation and promoting healthy, active lifestyles has had a lasting impact on the community. The Bears are more than just a sporting club; they are a symbol of community spirit and pride. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved with the North Sydney Bears for their unwavering dedication, which continues to enrich and inspire the community. We look forward to seeing the Bears continue to thrive, both on and off the field and to their continued contribution to the sporting and community landscape of Willoughby and beyond.

AUSTRALIAN TAIWANESE FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION 27TH TERM INAUGURATION

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—It was a great honour to be invited to the 27th term inauguration of the Australian Taiwanese Friendship Association in Chatswood. This wonderful event was a true celebration of the strong ties between the Taiwanese community and the broader Artarmon community. The Taiwanese community has a significant and continuous presence here and is an integral part of our vibrant and diverse society. Their contributions to the cultural, social and economic fabric of our community are deeply valued and I am proud to stand alongside them in this shared journey. I want to extend my sincere thanks to the organisers of this event particularly Jeffrey Wang for their dedication in bringing us together. The evening was a reflection of the friendship and unity that binds us and I look forward to continuing our work in strengthening these vital connections. Thank you once again for the invitation and for the opportunity to be part of such a meaningful occasion.

SAM MCLEAN

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—I wish to acknowledge XPT driver Sam McLean who drives the Sydney-Melbourne route. Sam is one of only four female long distance train drivers in NSW. She lives and works in Junee where she is the only female driver based at the NSW TrainLink depot there. Like many of our drivers, Sam loves her job, especially having a front-row seat for some amazing views such as sunrises, sunsets, shooting stars and lightning storms and she believes in the importance of regional rail. She told me about how her job driving trains has led her to fulfil a dream of living in the country after a post-COVID tree change in 2022. Sam said she believed in the importance of rail travel and

one of the keys to having a flourishing regional community was to have a proactive rail network. Thanks for all the great work you do Sam getting our customers safely between Melbourne and Sydney!

HUNTER LEGACY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Hunter Legacy on their passion, commitment and hard work supporting the families of our veterans. Legacy is an iconic Australian charity that was established in 1923 and founded on a promise made from one digger to another and is still kept today – "look after the missus and the kids". Hunter Legacy covers the Maitland, Dungog, Cessnock and Kurri Kurri areas and directly supports 143 Widows and 13 Families with 29 Children from infants to university students. Proudly, this year, the organisation supported two students who graduated from the University of Newcastle. Hunter Legacy runs thanks to the efforts of a small and committed team of volunteers. The assistance the group offer include transport to medical appointments, assistance for older community members with ensuring housing requirements are of satisfactory standard, providing social support, financial assistance and welfare support and care connections. Children and young people are supported through additional family outings and funding for the provision of educational requirements from infants to university.

MAITLAND RIVERLIGHTS FESTIVAL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Maitland's Levee transformed into a global village on Saturday 12 October with dance, food and music filling the streets thanks to the Maitland Riverlights Festival. An estimated 10,000 enthusiastic attendees over the five-day festival were able to see, taste, feel and experience over 40 different cultures from around the world by sampling food, music, dance, language and heritage at the bright and vibrant stalls, presentations and workshops. Riverlights has become a key event on the Maitland community calendar since its inception in 2012 and is delivered thanks to the support of Destination NSW 'Regional Event Fund', the Multicultural NSW 'Stronger Together' grant plus Maitland City Council. The Saturday event kicked off with Maitland welcoming 17 new Australian citizens – a true symbol of the multicultural community we enjoy. This year's Ambassador, Adam Liaw, featured in the Global Kitchen whipping up a batch of pancakes with a distinctive multicultural twist. The 5-day event finale on the banks of the Hunter River was a standout with a spectacular lantern parade from The Levee Shared Zone, a lantern river flotilla, music, dance and a dynamic light show. Maitland was truly awash with colour and culture thanks to the Riverlights event.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)—The NSW Northern Rivers Volunteer of the Year Awards were held in my Electorate earlier this month and I had the honour of presenting several awards and meeting award winners. Award recipients included Agape Outreach, based in Tweed Heads, who were named the 2024 Northern Rivers Volunteer Team of the Year. Agape support people experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity and financial instability. Well done to Agape on being recognised for the very important work you provide within our community. Tweed local and well-known former Tweed Shire Councillor Warren Polglase was also recognised, being nominated in the Senior Volunteer of the Year category. Congratulations to all award winners and thank you for committing your time and efforts to volunteering. Volunteers are integral to our communities and deserve endless recognition.

TWEED COAST YOUTH SERVICE

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)—Tweed Coast Youth Service [TCYS] in Cabarita has been supporting Tweed youth since 2009 and continues to be a key service provider in my Electorate. It is a volunteer-run organisation that provides mental health and wellbeing support, educational support programs and can aid in the transition from school to the workforce. TCYS also offers school holiday programs and afterschool activities and provides a safe and nurturing environment for young people to be heard and supported. I applaud the work of TCYS, coordinated by Chairperson Leanne Webber and her dedicated team, and the difference they are making in the lives of young people in the Tweed.

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)—Congratulations to the new team of Councillors elected to Tweed Shire Council at the recent local government elections. This new team comprises six returning Councillors: Chris Cherry, Reece Byrnes, James Owen, Rhiannon Brinsmead, Meredith Dennis and Nola Firth. Kimberly Hone was elected for her first term as a Councillor. Congratulations also to Councillor Cherry on being re-elected Mayor and to Councillor Dennis on being re-elected Deputy Mayor. I look forward to working alongside this new team to represent the people of the Tweed.

WEST BEST BLOC FEST

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—I would like to congratulate the organisers, attendees, and performers of this year's West Best Bloc Fest in Newcastle. On the 6th of October, 100 bands came together to perform across nine venues on a single block in Newcastle's West. Although this was only the festival's third year, West Best Bloc Fest has established itself as Newcastle's biggest celebration of live music, attracting over 1,800 people each year. Newcastle has a bustling live music scene, and this West Best Bloc Fest is a prime example of our area's celebration of local music. It was incredible to see such a large turnout. Congratulations to all that were involved to make such an energetic and exciting festival a reality in this city.

2024 HUNTER ACADEMY OF SPORT AWARD WINNERS

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—Congratulations to all the 2024 Hunter Academy of Sport Award winners! The Hunter Academy of Sport provides excellent training programs in the Hunter Region, and it is paying off for these young athletes who have received this recognition for their contribution to Newcastle's sporting community. Congratulations to Hayley Dell (Cycling Athlete of the Year), Kensington Steele (Rowing Future Star), Dylan Molloy (Para-Sports Rising Star and High-Performance Gym Athlete of the Year), Willow Frazer (Mountain Bike Rising Star), George Carr (Sailing Rising Star), Charlie Niell (Volleyball Athlete of the Year), Finnarr Harrigan (Volleyball Rising Star) and Paige Jessup (Volleyball Rising Star). This is a wonderful achievement and I look forward to seeing all you can achieve in the future.

CHILDRENS FESTIVAL FUNDRAISER

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—On the 27 of September the Childrens Festival successfully held a fundraising dinner and book launch in Bankstown to support their upcoming Children's Festival. There were more than 430 attendees including the Federal Minister for Education the Hon. Jason Clare and his family, State MP for Cabramatta Mr Tri Vo, Mayor of Canterbury Bankstown Councillor Bilal El-Hayek, Councillor Rachelle Harika and many community leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds. The fundraising dinner showcased a diverse range of performances, including cultural dances from various youth associations and community groups such as the Thai Community Language School, Bollard School of Dance, Philippine Community of NSW, VietAus Little Stars and many more. The audience was treated to a spectacular show that celebrated the rich tapestry of cultures present in Australia. One of the highlights of the evening was the book launch of Children's Festival for Australia: A 25-Year Journey, a publication that encapsulates the incredible history and achievements of the festival over the years. Thank you to the President of the Childrens Festival, Mr Thuat Nguyen AM for his dedication and commitment in serving our community and for continuously putting together an amazing fundraiser and festival every year.

AMUST - 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF PUBLICATION

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—I would like to acknowledge Australasian Muslim Times [AMUST] on their 10-year anniversary of publication. AMUST was founded in 1991 and made its debut as a multilingual community newspaper, representing the voice of the Australian Muslim community. While Australia boasts a diverse range of mainstream newspapers and media outlets, there was a notable absence of a credible, professionally produced newspaper that would present news and perspectives from an Islamic lens to the rapidly growing English-speaking Muslim community. As AMUST celebrates its 10th year, it has solidified its position as a well-established multicultural, multimedia platform dedicated to spreading positive news about the Australian multicultural community and important global affairs. Through various mediums, including a monthly print newspaper, a monthly digital e-Newspaper, a weekly Email Newsletter, an actively updated website, and a strong presence on major social media platforms, AMUST strives to disseminate news that fosters dialogue, communication, and interaction among individuals from diverse faiths, indigenous groups, and ethnic communities. With its commitment and dedication to ethical journalism and community empowerment, AMUST continues to be a driving force behind change, understanding, and conversation in Australia and internationally. Congratulations to AMUST on this milestone!

A SAINT IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD LIGHT SHOW

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—On Wednesday 9th of October, in their jubilee year, St Charbel's Monastery in Punchbowl commemorated and celebrate the enduring legacy of their beloved Saint Charbel. Rev. Fr Assaad Lahhoud, the Congregation of Monks, and the community gathered to commemorate the canonisation of St. Charbel. The show illuminated the site and, through audio and colourful visuals, depicted the life, miracles, and message of St Charbel. This celebration drew more than 2000 attendees on the first night, with

more than double that the next evening. In 1972, Cardinal Freeman permitted the Lebanese Maronite Order to establish a mission in Sydney. St Charbel was himself a monk of the Lebanese Maronite Order and was canonised in 1977 and in the following year, St Charbel's Monastery was completed. The Lebanese Maronite Order embarked on a mission dedicating itself to the service of the Maronite Catholic community, in terms of faith and academic education of the next generation. This mission was realised through the founding of St Charbel's College in 1984. Congratulations to Rev. Fr Assaad Lahhoud and the St Charbel's community for a successful celebration of their beloved Saint.

CUNDLETOWN AND LOWER MANNING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to recognise the Cundletown & Lower Manning Historical Society for their Cundletown Hall centenary celebrations. On October 19, the community celebrated the 100th anniversary of the laying of its foundation stone. The hall, first established in 1924, has held many gatherings and events in Cundletown. It was originally constructed to honour the soldiers from the district who served in World War I, with their memory preserved in the hall's honor roll. Throughout its history, the hall has been used for dances, concerts, community meetings, and celebrations. It is an important piece of local heritage, reflecting the work of those who, a century ago, saw the need to create a space for remembrance and community engagement. The people of Cundletown, past and present, can take pride in this building, which is now occupied by the Cundletown and Lower Manning Historical Society and the Cundletown Museum. Congratulations to all involved in marking this special milestone, It was a pleasure to attend and be part of this historic occasion.

NATURAL WAFFLE ICE CREAM PARLOUR

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—October is Small Business Month and I would like to acknowledge The Natural Waffle Ice Cream Parlour, a local business that has been serving delicious New Zealand ice cream in Forster for over 40 years. Recently expanding with a second parlour in Old Bar, this family-run business offers so much more than ice cream – their menu includes smoothies, sundaes, milkshakes, freshly made waffles, lollies, birthday cakes and even Nutella filled waffle cones. The owner, Trudy Potts recently appeared on Sunrise with Sam Mac, in a weather segment putting the spotlight on what many locals consider the best ice cream on the Mid North Coast. I want to thank Trudy and her friendly team for serving up sweet treats with a smile. It's never too cold to have an ice cream at the Natural Waffle!

PAUL BACON

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to recognise Wootton artist Paul Bacon for his success at the 2024 Sculptures in the Garden exhibition in Mudgee. Paul was awarded \$10,000 for his work, Wren Temple, a welded steel sculpture inspired by the landscape and informed by his practice of working with figures and drawings. Paul has been an established artist since graduating from the National Art School in 1992. He has held several solo exhibitions at galleries in Redfern and Darlinghurst and has previously won notable awards, including the Balnaves Sculpture Acquisition Award in 2000 and the Sculptures in the Garden Friends Acquisition Prize in 2017. His works are now represented in both public and private collections. This recognition is a fantastic achievement for Paul. I congratulate him on this well-deserved award and look forward to seeing more of his work in the future.

ROTARY YOUTH VET AWARDS

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—The Rotary Youth Vocational Education Awards recognise the importance of vocational educational training as a gateway to future careers. Congratulations to students from Arthur Phillip High School, Catherine McAuley Westmead, Parramatta Marist High School, St Patrick's Marist College Dundas Maronite College of the Holy Family and Our Lady of Mercy College, for receiving a Rotary Youth Vocational Education Award. For VET Business Services, Elaha Ali, Charlize Anjoul, Elliana Coles, Jessica Bechara, Daniel Janjis and Leah Nakhoul. For VET Hospitality, Amelia Eid, Soman Ahmadshahi, Amela Chadszinow, Anthony Gene Samson, Abbey Parnell, Caitlin Burke, James Thompson, Lauren Crofft and Ofa Taani. For VET Retail Services, Joyce Yaacoub and Annalies Marsh. For VET Sports Coaching, Jarrod Chadszinow. Thanks to all the educators for their hard work in guiding our youth to achieve their goals. Special acknowledgement was made for VET Business Services to Ms Banita Dawood and Mrs Poonam Relan. For VET Hospitality, Ms Michelle Cortese. Special thanks to Cheryl Deguara, President of Rotary Club Parramatta, and Stephen McKee, President of Rotary Club of Granville. Their clubs play an important role in supporting young people in undertaking their vocational pathways.

KIDS' VOICES ART COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—Twenty four talented children aged 5-19 have been named winners in the Diocese of Parramatta's first-ever Kids' Voices Art Competition. The Diocese of Parramatta includes

47 parishes, 80 schools, daycares and social service agencies. The competition was launched in June to encourage children and young people to share their creative voices on the theme 'My Church community is a safe place for me'. A ceremony was held on Tuesday 15 October at Saint Patrick's Church, Mary Queen of the Family Parish in Blacktown. Four of the winners were from Parramatta: Emma Cunningham (Catherine McAuley Westmead), Thomas and Zoe Aguilera (both from St Patrick's Cathedral Parish Parramatta), and Caleb Caga-Anan (St Monica's Parish North Parramatta). Around 115 artworks were submitted from 13 parishes; showcasing the creativity and passion of children across the Diocese. The winning artworks were judged by a panel of parishioners, and the People's Choice category received nearly 1000 votes online. Bishop of Parramatta, Bishop Vincent Long Nguyen OFM Conv congratulated the winners. The winning artworks will be considered in the design of new Diocesan visual icons to promote age-appropriate online safeguarding resources for children and young people.

KING CHARLES III AND QUEEN CAMILLA

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr. Speaker, I congratulate King Charles III and Queen Camilla on a successful tour to Australia. We look forward to future tours from the Royal Family.

THE HON MATTHEW MASON-COX

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank and congratulate the former president of the Legislative Council the Hon Matthew Mason-Cox on instigating and setting the platform for a successful celebration of the bicentenary of the Legislative Council and successful royal tour.

THE HON BEN FRANKLIN MLC

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)—Speaker, I congratulate the Hon Ben Franklin MLC, current president for the legislative council, and parliamentary officers on a wonderful celebration of the NSW Legislative Council's Bicentenary, and a successful visit to the NSW Parliament by their Royal Highnesses, King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

COUNCILLOR SAMEER PANDEY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations Councillor Sameer Pandey on being re-elected as Councillor of Parramatta City Council, Parramatta Ward. Sameer was a small business owner, whose passion for community inspired him to join local government. First elected in 2017, Sameer progressed into Deputy Mayor in 2022 and became Mayor of Sydney's second CBD in March 2023. An inspiration to the Indian diaspora who call Western Sydney home, Sameer became Parramatta's first Lord Mayor of Indian origin. Home to a vibrant community and the second-largest economy in NSW, Parramatta is abundant with opportunity. As Councillor, Sameer is committed to optimising our city's potential. He collaborated with Councillors to shepherd key projects, including the Parramatta Aquatic Centre, the Riverside Theatre redevelopments, and Harris Park's 'Little India' transformation. Sameer joined Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Harris Park in 2023, supporting bilateral relationships between Australia and India from within Western Sydney. As a first-generation migrant, Sameer is building bridges for our multicultural communities. Congratulations again Sameer. It's been a privilege to collaborate with you on a professional and personal level for many years. I have no doubt that you will continue to serve our Western Sydney community to the highest standard this term.

CUMBERLAND CITY COUNCIL – MAYOR OLA HAMED

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations of the Parliament of New South Wales on the election of Councillor Ola Hamed as Mayor of Cumberland City Council. First elected in 2017, Ola is now serving her third term as Councillor, and is returned to Cumberland City Council with a passion for social justice and equality. A graduate of Western Sydney University, a wife and mother of two young children, she has been a strong advocate for our local community over many years, particularly for Cumberland residents who are also State constituents within our local Prospect Electorate. Ola's election as Mayor of Cumberland City Council is a fantastic endorsement of our vibrant, diverse and harmonious multicultural community in Western Sydney. Upon her election to the Mayoralty, Ola highlighted that one of her top priorities would be to unify both the Council and the community, and she is as committed as ever to work with our local Cumberland community and make a difference. Ola's term as Mayor will run until 2026, and I would like to personally congratulate her on this fantastic achievement, which is a wonderful and promising appointment for our local Cumberland community.

CUMBERLAND CITY COUNCIL – MAYOR BRAD BUNTING

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations of the Parliament of New South Wales on the election of Councillor Brad Bunting as Mayor of Blacktown City Council. First elected in 2016, Brad is returned to Blacktown City Council with a deep passion for social justice and

equality. A lifelong Western Sydney local and father of three, he has been a strong advocate for our local community over many years, particularly for Blacktown residents who are also State constituents within our local Prospect Electorate. Brad was elected Deputy Mayor of Blacktown City Council in 2022 and was first elected Mayor earlier in 2024. He is eager to support investment into Blacktown and to provide even more opportunities for Western Sydney residents to work and live. He also supports a number of our local sporting clubs across Western Sydney, including Mount Druitt Town Rangers Football Club and Tallawong Park Little Athletics Club, where he is a proud Life Member and former President. Brad's term as Mayor will run until 2026, and I would like to personally congratulate him on this fantastic achievement, which is a wonderful and promising appointment for our local Blacktown community.

CONNOR PERRING

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of Connor Perring in his quest for the Vision Impaired and Disability Community. Not only on World Sight Day, but every day, Connor advocates and supports this extremely important and essential campaign. Connor has lived with low vision and been legally blind since birth but has never let that stop him. Connor loves to enhance the experiences of others living with vision loss and is committed to keeping these issues loud in the community, advocating for others to be seen and heard. Six years ago, Connor contributed to a groundbreaking project in Australia, Step-Hear, which was launched in major Central Business Districts nationwide. This initiative aims to assist people with vision impairments in navigating public transport and finding significant landmarks. Today, Step-Hear has been recognised globally and continues to expand its reach, making a meaningful difference in the lives of those who face vision challenges. Well done Connor and keep up the great work!

CASINO NEWSAGENCY RETIREMENT

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to recognise Ros and Lyn Ward, who have successfully run the newsagency in Walker Street, Casino for the last 20 years. The newsagency has been for sale on the market for the last five years. With no keen buyers, Ros and Lyn have decided that they'll shut up shop at the end of October and settle into their well-earned retirement. I'm sure Ros and Lyn won't miss the bright and early 5am starts and long hours that they've dedicated their lives to over the past 20 years. For many years when the Northern Star was published, they had to open shop at 3:30am to roll the papers. Ros and Lyn were always flexible in helping the locals during their time at the newsagent. They would shut at midday on Saturdays, and often get called back in to open the shop later in the day when someone needed cardboard for their kid's school projects. What a great commitment to the community. I would like to congratulate Ros and Lyn on their remarkable 20 years and wish them all the very best for the future in their retirement.

ORANGE OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I would like to acknowledge the exceptional work of Orange Out of School Hours Care and the vital role it plays in supporting local families. The team at OSHC provides a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment for children aged five to 12, offering before and after school care during school terms and vacation care during holidays. This service is indispensable to many parents and carers in our community, providing peace of mind that their children are in capable, caring hands while they manage work and other responsibilities. The importance of this service cannot be overstated. It not only ensures the well-being of children but also offers a reliable support system for parents and carers, allowing them to maintain their commitments with confidence. The creative and engaging programs, which include art projects, Friendship Day celebrations, and STEM-based Lego activities, highlight the team's dedication to fostering learning, creativity, and personal growth in a fun, inclusive setting. The tireless work of the OSHC team has a profound impact on children and their families. I extend my heartfelt thanks and recognition for their invaluable contribution to our community and the continued well-being of its youngest members.

HARRISON FIELD

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I rise today to congratulate Orange TAFE student Harrison Field, who has returned from the World Skills Championship in Lyon, France with a bronze medal. Australia sent a team of 32 of its best apprentices, trainees and young professionals to the world titles which attracted 1400 competitors from around 70 countries with 59 vocations represented. Harrison, who is an apprentice with AOK Fabrications, produced the Australian team's best result, placing third in the welding category which had a field of 41 competitors. During the worlds, competitors had 18 hours to complete four modules, the second of which was the showpiece pressure vessel, an oddly-shaped vessel which needed to be fully sealed when filled with water and then pressure tested to 1000psi. To qualify for the Australian team, Harrison won gold at the Australian Skills Championship held in Melbourne late last year. He was encouraged to take part by his teacher at Orange TAFE, Nathan Kelly. Australia is in dire need of more tradespeople – it's great to see this young man gain the training he

needs locally, training that has given him a world-class skill set. I congratulate Harrison Field on a wonderful result.

JODIE GREENHALGH

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Mr Speaker, the Canola Cup racing day is the signature event of the Eugowra Harness Racing Club and I was delighted to see that at this year's running, one of the club's hardworking committee was recognised. Long-serving EHRC secretary Jodie Greenhalgh was presented with a Harness Racing Australia Lifetime Achievement award for meritorious service on Canola Cup day, a timely honour considering the countless hours she has spent helping develop the day into a major date in western harness racing. Jodie joined the Eugowra Harness Racing Club as a 17-year-old and is now recognised as the driving force behind its two meetings each year. The almost two decades of experience she has gained were put to the test when Eugowra and nearby Forbes were heavily impacted by the November 2022 flood event. While Eugowra township was almost wiped off the map, its harness racing track was spared yet Forbes' facility was not as fortunate. Jodie set about working with the Forbes club to ensure its meetings could be run out of Eugowra, despite her own family losing almost everything. I congratulate Jodie on her Australian Harness Racing Honour and thank her for her hard work.

CELEBRATING HELLENIC CULTURE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I recently attended the Let's Go Greek Festival, hosted by the Greek Orthodox Parish and Community of St John the Forerunner, and I must say, it was a great day! The festival took place along George Street in Parramatta and offered a wide variety of food and market stalls. The day was filled with cultural musical and dance performances, all of which were incredible to watch. On the day, there was much emphasis on the importance of maintaining the Greek culture and language amongst its people. Now, I do say this time and time again, however I truly believe that the cultural diversity in our great state is what keeps us strong! It is cultural events like this that enrich our society and foster a sense of belonging among individuals. By preserving cultural heritage, we not only honour our history but also promote understanding, and social cohesion. I would like to congratulate Kos Dimitriou and The Hellenic Orthodox Community of Parramatta and Districts for putting together the event. I would also like to thank all performers, stallholders, and attendees for making the day a joyful celebration.

BURWOOD MOON FESTIVAL

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend the Burwood Moon Festival, held at Burwood Park. The Mid-Autumn Moon Festival is an important celebration in the Chinese Calendar as it honours the full moon, a good harvest and emphasises family togetherness and appreciation for life. Burwood Moon Festival has been well known as one of the biggest annual events for the local community, and it is events like this that enhance the cultural diversity of our state and fosters community connections. On the day, we were delighted with joyful performances from various Asian community groups, all of which were outstanding. There were also different food and activity stalls commemorating the Moon Festival. It was a fantastic celebration indeed. I would like to thank Mr Ricky Hui and AC878 Chinese FM for their warm invitation to the event. I would also like to thank all event organisers, performers and stallholders who did a fantastic job organising the day. It was a great day of fun and festivities and I hope to celebrate this important celebration again in next year's event.

CHARLESTOWN CRICKET CLUB

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—I'm pleased to recognise the extraordinary efforts of Jed Dickson from Charlestown Cricket Club whose quick thinking and action saved the life of one of own of his players, eighteen-year-old Kade Sutton. During a warm-up jog at training Kade suffered a heart attack and collapsed in a seizure-like fit, and he was actually clinically dead for a period of five minutes but survived to tell the tale because Jed performed CPR on him until paramedics arrived. As luck would have it, Jed had just completed a CPR refresher course for his job in the disability sector a fortnight before, and so knew exactly how to respond he Kade collapsed. Jed saved Kade's life, and as is typical of the Australian character has downplayed his heroic efforts and focused on all who provided assistance on the day to Kade. But given what he did is literally life-saving, I'm pleased today to be able to recognise and pay tribute to Jed in the Parliament of New South Wales, and wish him and Kade all the best for the coming season.

SPLASH OF COLOUR SWIM PROGRAM

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—For those of us who live near the coast, learning to swim is an essential part of growing up, and is fundamentally important for all of us who live in and around Lake Macquarie, which is the largest saltwater lake in the southern hemisphere, and we are privileged to live close to

so many beautiful beaches. Some of our newest neighbours who have become citizens, for a myriad of different reasons, often do not know how to swim, and so it's great to see that Charlestown Swimming Pool is again hosting the Splash of Colour program, which is a free, 12-week swimming programme for international women. In the course about to commence women from Kenya, Zimbabwe, India Peru, China, Venezuela, Rwanda, Nigeria and Colombia are participating. Ennia Jones, the Program's lead rightly notes that "Swimming is not just a recreational activity but a vital life skill that enhances safety, health, social integration and cultural empowerment for CALD adults", and I wish Ennia and the team at Charlestown Pool the very best for the coming months.

PORT MACQUARIE WOMEN'S CHARITY GOLF DAY

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today, I am excited to acknowledge the Port Macquarie Women's Charity Golf Day which raised over \$5,000 for the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute. The Port Macquarie Women's Golf Sub-Committee are a collective of dynamic, trailblazing ladies committed to raising vital funds for cancer care in our local community. The Committee coordinated by Chair Di Collocott and Captain Sheena Gunn focuses on breast cancer awareness and raising funds to support breast cancer patients on the Mid North Coast. This year's charity event was held on 16th October at Port Macquarie Golf Club. Although the weather was overcast, it did not dampen the ladies' spirits as flocks of pink outfits, an assortment of coloured bras and plastic breasts adorned the golf course for the annual fundraising day. The Breast Cancer Day featured a four person Ambrose, with 107 players taking to the green to compete for bragging rights. The major sponsor of the day was Fran Scutts from Kentucky Fried Chicken Port Macquarie, contributing \$5,000. Fran has been the major sponsor and donor for many years ensuring the day is always a huge success. Congratulations to all the volunteers on another successful fundraiser.

NEWMAN SENIOR TECHNICAL COLLEGE – AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—The Year 12 Final Assembly and Major Awards Ceremony for Newman Senior Technical College was held on 24th September to congratulate the Graduating Class of 2024 and to recognise those students who achieved academic excellence. Proud family and friends attended the special occasion reflecting on the student's journey from Kindergarten to Year 12 and everything learned and achieved as they transition into the next chapter. Congratulations to Year 12 students recognised with major awards. The Principal's Award was presented to students Maddie Cottrell-Dormer, Bayden Connerty, Katie Ebbs, Taylah Davidson, Will Rosenbaum and Bella MacCullagh. The Grit Award recipients were Jasmine Ferguson, William O'Neill, Lewis Hartup, Jordan Barrance, Brooklyn Hudson, Emma Wright and Mia Burg. Newman College Trade Award - Max Goodear ; The Saint Newman Service Award - Ava Rosetta; Workplacement Trade Award - Elian Merrell; Workplacement Service/Commercial Award - Harrison Whicker; University of Newcastle Academic Excellence Award -Katie Ebbs; School Based Apprenticeship Award - Oscar Spinks; School Based Traineeship Award -Isabella Tarpey-Carney; Sportsperson of the Year Award - Ava Glassie; St Agnes Parish Service Award -Hayley Purkis; All Rounder Award - Sofia Williams. Congratulations on your achievements and best wishes for the future.

CAMDEN HAVEN QUOTA

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I recognise the end-of-an-era for the Camden Haven Quota Club after dedicating 37 years of service to helping those in need. It was sobering news indeed to hear about the closure of Camden Haven Quota Club which was first established in August 1987. Over the years its members have championed support for vulnerable families, particularly women and children as well as promoting equality. Jennifer Peters is the outgoing President of Camden Haven Quota Club. Her message is not to underestimate what a small organisation, made up of women can achieve in a community. Examples include assisting the homeless through Camden Haven Community at 3 along with regular contributions made to local schools and supporting children with hearing impairments. Camden Haven Quota has also undertaken various international projects to improve the quality of life of people in impoverished countries. The closure of the Club saw \$6,436.57 donated to Camden Haven Community at 3 contributing significantly to the provision of essential needs of their clients facing financial hardship. I know I speak for all Camden Haven residents in thanking Quota for their longstanding contribution which will continue to benefit the community for generations to come. Thank you.

THE METROPOLITAN ORCHESTRA JUNIOR STRING CAMP

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today I acknowledge the work of the Metropolitan Orchestra in bringing together its annual Junior String Camp. This camp is an opportunity for primary school aged children who love music to learn, make friends and perform. I was delighted to attend their recent concert at Leichhardt Town Hall, the culmination of three days of hard work. It was incredible to see how much students were able to achieve in such a short time. It was an honour to hand out certificates to all the participants and to see first-hand their enthusiasm for the Orchestra. The student's performance was fantastic, and the tutors and organisers who

brought them together inspired them with performances of their own. It was a brilliant afternoon. Congratulations to the TMO's managing director Bevan Rigato, Artistic Director Sarah-Grace Williams, Concertmaster Victoria Jacono-Gilmovich, as well as all of the tutors, organisers and students. Each of you should be very proud of your achievements over the course of the camp. I'm sure you're families were immensely proud to see you perform.

SYDNEY STREETS GLEBE POINT ROAD

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)—Today I acknowledge the work of organisers and participants of Sydney Streets on Glebe Point Road, who brought together entertainment, activities and food along Glebe's main street on October 12. I was delighted to see so many members of our community attend this year's celebrations in Glebe enthusiastically supporting our local institutions and discovering the unique and creative hidden gems of our local area. One of those is the Glebe Youth Service, who opened the doors for their After Dark program during the event. This award-winning program has been running for 15 years, offering events every Friday and Saturday night that include a delicious healthy meal and lots of fun activities including basketball, music, art, movies, Hip-Hop, and cultural workshops. Congratulations to the Project Manager of the Sydney Streets Project, Tony MacGregor, Mitra Gusheh and the After Dark volunteers at Glebe Youth Services, JP Alexandre at Greenplot and the Computer Project, and each of the organisers, business participants, stallholders and performers. Thanks for your contribution to this wonderful community event.

CENTENARY GORDON DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB'S TRUMPER PAVILION

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On 2 November 2024, I will be attending the 100th anniversary celebration of the Trumper Pavilion at Chatswood Oval, that opened in 1924. The pavilion is named after local and national cricketer Victor Trumper. It is appropriate this celebration also takes place on his birthday. Trumper became a local when he and his family moved to our community in 1909 and he then joined the Gordon District Cricket Club. I recognise Gordon District Cricket Club office bearers for 2023-24 led by President Michael Cant; Honorary Secretary Andrew Falk; Assistant Honorary Secretary Jim Cattlin; and Honourary Treasurer Geoff Keevers. The Trumper Pavilion is the place to be for spectators of cricket, rugby and rugby league and it gives me great pride to recognise Gordon District Cricket Club and acknowledge its role in the history of Chatswood Oval and the Trumper Pavilion.

ST IVES NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL MARKET DAY 2024

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Sunday 3 November 2024, I will be attending the inaugural St Ives North Public School Market Day. A combined effort of the school and its students, the St Ives North Public School P&C Association and the community, the Market Day promises to have something for everyone, with cake and bake stalls, a sausage sizzle, bands playing, ensembles, choirs and performances by dancers and sports groups. Market stalls, hired to the community for a nominal cost, will provide a large range of produce, from toys to second hand goods and locally made products. The St Ives North Public School will be a great opportunity for the community to come together and grab a bargain and a sausage, as well as raising funds for the school. I recognise P&C President Roshell Boulton and the 2024 committee Kate Mirk, Nelly Watson, Sophie Ding, Ali Shahnazi, Patrick Faucher and Victor Thieu for their efforts in helping bring our community together.

NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2024

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—In September 2024, the Northern Beaches voted for a new council 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 mayor, Cr. Sue Heins of Frenchs Forest Ward; and deputy mayor, Cr. Ruth Robins of Narrabeen Ward. I recognise and congratulate elected councillors, Cr. Candy Bingham, Cr. Sarah Grattan and Cr. Bonnie Harvey of Manly Ward; Cr. Joeline Hackman, Cr. Nicholas Beaugeard and Cr. Kristyn Glanville of Curl Curl Ward; Cr. Vincent De Luca OAM and Cr Robert Giltinan OAM of Narrabeen Ward; Cr. Ethan Hrnjak and Cr. Jody Williams of Frenchs Forest Ward; and Cr. Rowie Dillon, Cr. Miranda Korzy and Cr. Mandeep Singh of Pittwater Ward. I recognise all retiring councillors Bianca Crvelin, Michael Gencher, Karina Page, Stuart Sprott, Jose Menano-Pires, Michael Regan, Georgia Ryburn and David Walton. 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.

BERNARD BAKER

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Serving his community has been a labour of love for Bernie Baker from the Hill End Rural Fire Service. Bernie recently received the National Medal for 15 years service to the RFS, having chalked up 19 years as a volunteer of the organisation. He is described as being "in a very real sense a representation of the core values upheld by the Rural Fire Service". During his time with the Hill End RFS, Bernie has responded to countless call-outs, having filled the role of Deputy Captain and Captain for numerous years and

is the current Senior Deputy Captain which is a role in which he engages in all aspects of the Brigade's operation and response. During the 2019-20 bushfires and most recently during the 2023 Alpha Road Fire, Bernie's manner and approach towards his colleagues provided a sense of calmness, trust and mutual respect that drew together Brigade members and his presence on the fireground continues to bring out the very best in those he serves alongside. Congratulations Bernie, you are a well-respected figure throughout the Hill End community and are a worthy recipient of the National Medal.

ADAM SHARWOOD

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—The dedication and commitment of Marrangaroo Rural Fire Service volunteer Adam Sharwood has been justly rewarded with the awarding of the 15 years diligent service National Medal. This great honour was recently bestowed on Adam who in fact has chalked up 24 years of service to the organisation. Adam joined the Marrangaroo RFS in 1999 as a junior member and after becoming a senior member has held various positions such as Deputy Captain and currently services as Captain, training officer and Brigade secretary. He was also a Deputy Group Officer for 10 years and is a delegate for the Bush Fire Management Committee. During the Gosper's Mountain blaze in 2019-20 Adam worked tirelessly alongside local crews to help protect the Lithgow community. Adam has also been deployed to a range of areas across NSW for fire-fighting duties as well as Victoria in 2009, Western Australia in 2015 and Tasmania in 2019. The RFS and Lithgow community is extremely grateful to Adam for the role he plays in the organisation and his proactive involvement in mentoring fire-fighters from new starters to crew leaders. Thank you Adam Sharwood, you really are a credit to the RFS.

DANCIN DIVAS STUDIO

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Congratulations to local small business owner Andrea Wills and her team from the Dancin Divas Studio on their success in the recent Bathurst Business Awards. Dancin Divas Studio took out the category for Excellence in Customer Service and to back this up made it to the top three for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion. The business has been a success story in the making for Andrea who takes pride in offering a venue where you can get fit while having fun and making new friends. Their studio encourages everyone to step out of their comfort zones and try a different way to exercise with a variety of different and varying classes. Dancin Divas Pole Studio is also a proud supporter of the LGBTQIA+ community and gets behind local fundraising events. It's great to see businesses such as Andrea's recognised in the Bathurst Business Awards providing a range of physical and mental health benefits and is great for self-esteem as it builds a woman's self-confidence around body image and best of all, everyone can join in, regardless of their circumstances or fitness levels.

FERRAGOSTO COLOURING COMPETITION WINNER

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I rise to congratulate Leo Stewart, who has recently been awarded as the winner of the 2024 Ferragosto Colouring Competition. Leo's artwork displayed the highest level of skill and vibrant use of colour. What truly set his piece apart, was his attention to detail. It was wonderful to see his intricate linework and use of the Italian national colours throughout his piece. Judging this year's submissions was a difficult task. The overall quality of art produced by all members of our community was the highest we have ever seen, and I would like to thank all who took the time to submit their entry. It was wonderful to see so many local children actively involved in Ferragosto this year. This competition was a fantastic opportunity for children to express their creative talents. Leo's artwork stood out among the countless wonderful submissions and I recognise his amazing talent and creativity. Congratulations Leo. This is a truly well-deserved recognition. Keep it up!

WOMAN HOOD AND THE BIKERS HAND

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to congratulate Woman Hood Central Coast for teaming up with The Bikers Hand for their incredible Toy Drive this November. Together, Woman Hood will be collecting toys and toiletries in their signature Pink Bins which are distributed to Central Coast businesses. I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible work of The Bikers Hand. More than just a charity, they are a true community of compassionate individuals, providing essential items to over 30 charities and organisations. With their hubs in Sydney and right here on the Central Coast, they are making a profound impact every day. Likewise, Woman Hood and the Pink Bin Initiative have made a huge difference locally. Keira Smith's vision to collect toiletries for those in need has blossomed into a powerful movement, with businesses and volunteers rallying to support her mission that local individuals in need should no longer need to go without essential toiletries. Joining together, this collaboration is proof of what can be achieved when community and compassion unite. Thank you to Woman Hood and The Bikers Hand for continuing to make a difference to those in need here on the Central Coast.

THE 3 VILLAGES

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—It was a true honour to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our volunteers at the 2024 Central Coast Volunteer of the Year Awards. These awards shine a bright spotlight on the extraordinary dedication and hard work of volunteers from across New South Wales, reminding us of the power of giving back to our communities. I am especially thrilled to extend my sincere congratulations to The 3 Villages Community Group, who was named the Central Coast Volunteer Team of the Year. This team has been instrumental in collaborating with local organisations like the Green Point Avoca Lions Club, Kincumber Rotary, and others to deliver essential community projects. Their work with residents, schools, businesses, and local authorities has helped revitalize old amenities and create public spaces that benefit all of us. Hosted by The Centre for Volunteering, these awards offer a special opportunity to acknowledge the volunteers, whose dedication improves lives across the Central Coast. To President Taia Sansom and everyone involved in The 3 Villages Community Group, please know that your hard work does not go unnoticed. Your commitment is vital to the health and strength of our communities, and we are deeply grateful for everything you do.

MENTAL HEALTH ART WORKS EXHIBITION

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—It was a pleasure to attend this year's Mental Health Art Works Exhibition, a truly special event that has been part of our community since 1999. Held at the Gosford Regional Gallery & Arts Centre, this annual exhibition celebrates Mental Health Month on the Central Coast, offering people whose lives have been affected by mental illness the chance to express themselves through art. Now in its 25th year, Mental Health Art Works is not just an art exhibition; it's a powerful platform for raising awareness and breaking down stigma surrounding mental health. It brings mental health into the light and celebrates creativity, showcasing the resilience, healing, and growth of those with lived experience of mental illness. Artists of all ages exhibit their talents in a diverse range of mediums, from painting and sculpture to photography, writing, ceramics, and more. This exhibition, organised by Central Coast Primary Care, engages the broader community, encouraging a deeper understanding of mental health issues while highlighting the incredible skills and creativity of the artists. Thank you to everyone involved for making this year's exhibition such a success, and congratulations to all the talented artists who shared their journeys with us.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK (SHOWN)

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise to recognise Southern Highlands Older Women's Network. The national Older Women's Network was established by women from the NSW Combined Pensioners Association back in 1985, who recognised there was need to do something for older women. There are now groups in NSW, Queensland, and Western Australia. The network recognises the needs of older women who may find themselves facing homelessness, domestic violence, elder abuse, financial coercion, sexual assault in nursing homes and other issues affecting the lives of older women. At a local level Southern Highlands OWN was established in October 2020. The network work to address social isolation and loneliness by having regular meetings and activities, including walking, book, movie, craft, intergenerational, and singing groups. I take this time to thank Sue Hayward SHOWN Coordinator and OWN NSW Board Member for the work undertaken and the many other individuals who undertake a vital role in the network to support older women within

SUTHERLAND SHIRE BUSINESS CHAMBER

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber on being named a finalist in the Outstanding Local Chamber category at Business NSW's 2024 Business Awards. The Sutherland Shire Business Chamber is a dynamic not-for-profit organisation that seeks to boost economic growth, represent the voice of local businesses and help its members succeed. Through the hosting of social and educational events such as their monthly After 5 Networking Drinks and the hugely successful Evolve Fest which brought together emerging professionals and young business owners to enhance their skills and make valuable connections, the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber now reaches over 1,000 local businesses. Furthermore they also offer free business listings in their Business Directory, newsletters, social media and digital channels to their members. None of this is possible without the hardworking Executive Committee members, many of whom own small businesses themselves, who strive to maximise the economic potential in the Sutherland Shire. I recognise President Jeanne Zweck, Vice President Kamen Tsonev, Treasurer Deborah Power, Secretary Joanne Costanzo and Board Directors Damien Vella, Pamela Wood, Rob Stanley-Jones, Tim Jenson, Verity Woodward and Mitchell Smithson. I commend the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber on their advocacy for local businesses.

RUSSELL LEA WOMENS SOCCER CLUB

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I rise to congratulate Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club for its success at the 2024 Canterbury District Soccer Football Association Awards Presentation Evening, receiving the Bert Harvey Award for Fair Play. The Bert Harvey Award is awarded to a club in the district that

has shown the highest standards of integrity, fair play, and sportsmanship throughout the season. It is wonderful to hear of a local club recognised for their commitment to fair play both on and off the field. This year is the second year in a row and 10th overall Bert Harvey Award for Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club, a true testament to their commitment to fostering a positive experience for all in the sport. I sincerely congratulate Club President Mariam Fabia, Secretary Ben Laws, Treasurer Jae Hwang, all members of the club committee and all volunteers and players for this wonderful achievement. I extend my sincerest congratulations to all players and volunteers who have dedicated their time to shaping the community spirit of the club. Thank you to everyone that has made Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club the tremendous club that it is today. I wish you all the best in future seasons.

GRACE MCGUINNESS

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)—Mr Speaker, I acknowledge and congratulate Grace McGuinness of North Richmond, who recently completed a Master of Special Education at the University of New South Wales. Grace was awarded the Deans Award for Academic Excellence and is implementing the knowledge obtained in this degree to better the lives of the many individuals she works with. Grace's focus for study was based around giving students with autism and other intellectual disabilities voice in the decisions which involve them. She currently teaches at Kurmond Public School in a single-class support unit where she implements this teaching philosophy. Grace teaches a class of highly capable and amazing students who are curious, motivated and engaged in their learning. I thank Grace for her service to Education so far. Her knowledge, patience and enthusiasm for teaching is both admirable and inspiring. I wish Grace all the very best for her career and future studies. Thank you, Mr Speaker

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION HORSES' BIRTHDAY LUNCH 2024

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury)—Mr Speaker, I acknowledge and thank the Riding for the Disabled Association [RDA] Tall Timbers Centre, Gables for the work they do in supporting individuals with disabilities. In August, the association hosted the Horses' Birthday Lunch fundraiser. This event recognised the horses and staff of the centre, who work tirelessly to enrich the lives of those living with intellectual or physical impairment. Originating in 1972 by founder Mrs Pearl Batchelor, the Tall Timbers Centre provided disabled individuals with access to therapeutic horse rides, promoting leisure and skill development. Today, the Tall Timbers Centre operates six days per week, providing a range of horse-related programs for approximately one hundred and eighty individuals. I applaud the work of staff and the volunteers who donate their time and energy to supporting this charity, noting that it can take up to four volunteers for each rider to ensure that personal safety and instruction procedures are met. I thank all those who contributed to the community fundraiser, including the 2023 Hawkesbury Woman of the Year, Fiona Germaine. Thank you, Mr Speaker

ZAHRA NASSER MOSSVALE HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise to recognise Zahra Nasser. Zahra is a Year 12 music student from Moss Vale High School. Zahra has been nominated for Encore; the NES Showcase of exceptional major works created by HSC Music Students. Zahra was nominated for her vocal program of "In the Stars: by Benson Boone, 'nothing You Can Take From Me" by Racheal Zegler and the Covey Band, 'My Funny Valentine" by Rodgers and Hart and "Poverty", an original composition. The final selection for Encore will take place in December and Moss Vale High School is excited that Zahra is being considered for the Showcase event which will be held at the Sydney Opera House. I congratulate Zahra for her achievements thus far and recognise how special it is to have her vocal talents recognised and wish her the very best in the selection process for Encore and for all her future endeavours.

MOSS VALE HIGH SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise the academic success of Moss Vale High School. The participation of Moss Vale High School students in the Australian Geography Competition is a noteworthy achievement, with over 80,000 students from 780 schools across the nation taking part. Special commendation goes to Lydia Glover and Izumi Unsworth from Year 10 for earning Distinctions, and to Prudence Dunn-Luck for achieving a High Distinction, placing her in the top 8% of competitors nationwide. These results reflect not only the individual students' dedication and understanding of geography but also the supportive learning environment provided by their teachers and school community. Their achievements in this challenging competition underscore the importance of academic excellence and a passion for learning. My accolades again to Moss Vale High and well done to all involved for their hard work and commitment.

GULMARRAD RURAL FIRE SERVICE BRIGADE

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I am honoured to recognise in the NSW Parliament the 20th anniversary of the Gulmarrad Rural Fire Service Brigade, a milestone that marks two decades of remarkable service and dedication. Over the years, the volunteers of the Gulmarrad RFS have proven themselves

indispensable, responding to a wide array of emergencies—from bushfires and structure fires to motor vehicle accidents. Their professionalism, diverse skillset, and ability to navigate challenging situations make them an invaluable asset to our community. Rural Fire Service volunteers are truly exceptional individuals. They sacrifice their time, often putting their own livelihoods on hold to protect others in times of need. It is rare to find such a group of highly skilled professionals who serve with such generosity and courage. I extend my deepest gratitude to every member of the Gulmarrad Brigade for their selfless commitment, which has kept our region safe and resilient. Their families and loved ones, whose support enables this service, should be equally proud. On behalf of the Clarence community, congratulations on 20 years of dedicated service. You are true heroes, and we are forever grateful for all you do.
